

**SPR
UNG**

sprung formal

issue 19

**FOR
MAL**

This issue of *Sprung Formal* was born from a true melding of the Liberal Arts and Graphic Design Departments at the Kansas City Art Institute.

The two cohorts immersed themselves in curating, designing, and editing this publication to bring a collaborative art object into the world. What could be sweeter?

Thank you to the writers and artists who entrusted us with their work. You all make *Sprung Formal* a joy to put together.

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SPRUNG FORMAL 

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a scribble for your thoughts

make this page your own

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Austin Gutierrez



WEED-WHACKER

Austin Gutierrez

Dorsey Craft

HOW NOAH CHOSE THE DOVES

The empty beak. An eye
like a jilted maid, purple scarf wafting
through the roost on the hot



breeze. Her wings pressed your palms
like a wife's lips your neck in sleep. Soft sockets,
a spot of balding down,

whistle in a clay jar.
Before the rain, you had plucked the second
from the orchard, flecks of rind

and feathers sticky
like the cheeks of your boys after lemon.
A broken tail feather,

slight dip in the paddle
from stern to bow. A dream you had the night
before in which you slugged

God, who took the long shape
of the ornery ostrich whose talons
you kneel to file at dawn.

Dorsey Craft

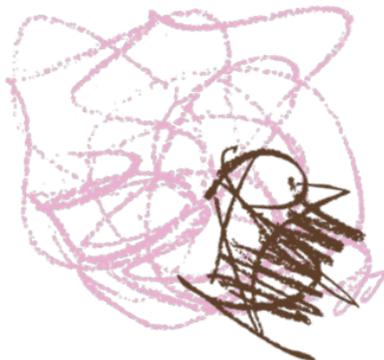
By lamplight, as the sun
scooped the back of Ararat in the fourth
hour. To find the last, you

tossed a rock cloaked in bread
into the rookery, a flap like rain,
the storm's densest second

when captivity reams
the mind like an orange. When you
tossed her into the sky,

festooned with bright yellow
ribbon, her gullet was full. Her blood laced
your hoary knuckles

like indigo ink, wine
spilled from her down onto feet thin and sharp,
blue as a father's grace.



Dorsey Craft

WHEN YOU ARE TWELVE

You wield the hose while your father cleans birds—cold, clear water trickles feathers off gray meat. His thumb huge below the breastbone. You grope inside the sack of doves attending each others' funerals, give each one a little squeeze. The light pigeons out flecks of violet in their small, flopped heads. When he finishes, you make a pile of guts and bone the dogs can't keep away from. Mornings before school you hear their coos in a thick mist over the driveway, a pall for your black jelly bracelets as you trudge tile square to square. Pizza with milk. Brownies big as your hand. Don't turn your head when a boy screams "Hottie!" at you to make his friends laugh. Don't even twitch. Think of Thursdays when your father drives you thirty minutes to soccer, makes sales calls in his truck and watches you scrimmage, dribble through cones, take penalty kicks, watches so closely he can break down each graze of the ball against your instep. To make him laugh, you take off your shin guards and put your nose deep in their cotton grooves, inhale and tell him they smell like victory. The truck is never quiet. The two of you are wings gliding cool air, purple beads in an orange sky. At school, you are the dove at the bottom of the bag, bodies crushing you against cinderblock walls. You count lines in the floor from Language to History, too dead and muffled to tense at the grasp of fingers. Boys spike thumbs beneath your ribs, turn you inside out.

Dorsey Craft

Dorsey Craft

WHEN YOU ARE TWENTY-FIVE

It is the time of the drive: I-10 to Louisiana
by morning, back west to Houston at night

after too much wine. You count the deer
that glare from the shoulder, whole families

still as mirrors, a river lost and old. The poems
unspool like fishing wire, thin, opalescent,

disappearing against the sky. They are not finished
until your father weighs in. A writer says

sentimental. A writer says he'd like to lick your feet
clean of peanut and ash, the dive bar floor.

A writer grabs your ass as you shoot pool.
You barely wish to shoot them. Your gun

under the bed grins like a cuckold, dusty.
The country roils, shards of glass in its teeth,

red graffiti on plywood as you drift towns,
God and Trump and Trump and God. Your father

Dorsey Craft

sits on the porch all night listening
to Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young. Halloween pumpkins

on tree trunks shot full of holes. On a visit, you sit
with him, stroke your hair greasy and he tells you

he is never happy except when he is drunk
and you hear the *thump thump* of squirrels,

their brown-gray bodies wrenched from the dark.



Kate Lindroos

POISON

Hills blue though they are green—
to look is to see an idea of climbing,
a fortunate occurrence, borrowed,
as if a child's logic—if I eat too many
puppy treats will I die, she asks,
while sitting on the toilet—
the reverse of chocolate fed to a dog,
pairing death as from cause,
inverse as caution, as skill learned,
blue though learning green, no, I say,
no that's not how it works. Later
the hills are dark and are neither.

Kate Lindroos





Madeline Gallucci

SMALL RISK

Madeline Gallucci

Jeffrey Hecker

GO

Monopolyamory, a lesser known game, requires five players who impersonate tycoons falling in lust. Rockefeller falls for Astor who falls for Morgan who falls for Carnegie who falls for Vanderbilt. Oh no Astor draws the Titanic vacation card! Winners have intercourse on a 40-foot shuffleboard court.

Jeffrey Hecker

FREE PARKING



Your best friend was dying though now she is thriving. She closes on moon property. She takes photos with you and the Steel Pier Diving Bell but erases you by accident. Other cancer survivors fill the rest of open spaces. They all swim Clam Creek to Coast Guard Station. Long live imagery.

Jeffrey Hecker

COMMUNITY CHEST



Ripley's Believe It or Not! is gone but its façade stands upright. Advection fogs entrance window making me miss mist. I can see my breath as Jack Palance says 25% of Homo sapiens live in mud, migrating Mara River wildebeest either cross or drown, a yogi swallows 15 feet of sterilized gauze.

JUST VISITING/ IN JAIL

Officer Mallory pretends to enforce law but law is a practice, law can connect dots between a war chief who trades money for totems inside *Honey Smacks* puffed wheat, a relaxed frog who ribbits money, and a Grammercy Place teen who takes money, who does not ask for breakfast, or eat any.

Jeffrey Hecker

Jeffrey Hecker

GO TO JAIL



We suffer brainwash by arcade game *Operation Wolf* strobe lights. Goddamn Uzi inside Rite Aid. Scared straight, prison releases us. We stare across Atlantic. Gormley Funeral Home dead ahead. Undertakers really befriend us. Much life we know ends bad. Morticians remember our birthdays.

Jeffrey Hecker



Ian U Lockaby

from DEFENSIBLE SPACE/IF A CROW—

if a crow—

in dialogues with a
whale— how do you
speak with

a word in your mouth—

lichen it's having a word
with you

as you chew your molars
with its teats,

you are gorgeous
with questions—

What flavor
in the silks



I wash the flavor
in the silks

,

A whale calve grown swimming in
the billowy echo of
crow v voicings s s

in the marble giant



whale belly cathedral.

I wash the whale

with silks in the

season's

whale belly sinks

if a whale once ate a termite

if an echo-

logically plus rumor equals nothing
lodges in you like

a termite
's eaten your whole house, there for
uncomplicating the maps:

a whale belly had become your home

and how to live

inside a structure which

ate the threat

to the structure

Ian U Lockaby

if a crow—
then an ice cube con-
 structed
of black ice

Then the mild or immense
accomplishments

 of the radish bone de-
pending on weather
 you look—

The black ice is growing
like tubers under-
 ground

 sneaking up to the
surface every morning

to eat the sunlight

(to irridesce)

And if out— one luxated

window, one then looks—

to see at the side of the road:

a crow tangling

with the text—

So as to true

the obligation—

You must

fallow thru

with what

you've begun—

Summer Where We

Deemed the strawberries unsaleable,
asked the butcher what bones

hold the paper up— what bones
in the red pepper red

paper bones— stack a pair
of pears and again then
to make a pair of a pair

of pears
and so on, just like
us, all in our houses, paired up

But how do people—
hold up—?
All those paper bones—

All summer was
crows overhead, language
breaking apart in my hands

An Hà



UNTITLED (SHADOW)

An Hà

Mike Bagwell

***from POEM OF
THANKS III***

Israeli Air Force says it has dropped 6000 bombs on Gaza

is the headline overlaying
these small poems
about my daughters upon whom
I've bestowed Hebrew names

my neighbor who leads a Jewish community
that we've only dabbled in
(though I've always held belief itself
as far away as the horizon)
calls and offers
to tie the tefillin
in honor of the Israeli soldiers

and I say how about Monday
because I'm so lost for words

guess I'll ghost him
donate to a Palestinian children's fund
words do so often
fail me

Mike Bagwell

Kitra right now at four months
and that blue weeble wobble penguin
have a lot in common
except that she would fall
if it weren't for both of my knees
pinballing her back up

when I first searched pikuach nefesh
google thought I wanted a pikachu fish
and was perfectly pleased to oblige
with some cute pics

beta yellow koi or mango puffers
little lemons floating in the virtual

what it means is most rules
can be broken if doing so
would save a human life

it is quiet outside in this dark
I tie a smartwatch around my wrist
leather leash on the other
take the dog for a walk

by Monday I've resolved to tell
my neighbor my feelings
but he doesn't call
at least not yet

blueberries

an image slipped onto
the phone on the counter
while I reheated leftovers
for our dinner a little girl
dead from the bombings
her cheeks the color of



Robert Fernandez

SELF, 2001 BY MARK QUINN

an idea
is born

a light
goes off

the movie
starts

vultures
in the street

walking
in the melt

of a snow-
cone vender

the
sticky

Robert Fernandez

sky
burns

my
blood

runs
cold

opens
its eyes

an idea
enters from

the outside
crosses

my thres-
hold like

a bird
caught

an ember
flapping

glo-
wing



collap-
sing

you
make my

blood
sing

vultures
claw through

cherry-red
crystals

sneakers groan
in snow

unroll
a door

a welcome
mat

enter
the light

is on
I'm melting

Robert Fernandez

***BACCHUS #3, 1977 BY
ELAINE DE KOONING***

I am
the word
you war
born to

can't you
see I
love you?

you have
a friend
say begin
again say
a friend
is a
diamond
rustling
like a
fountain
crawling
with stars

Robert Fernandez

we may
begin to
uncover
what it
means to
have a
friend
after all

I mean
a friend
has your
best interests
in mine

I mean
a death
is a
reversal
a mind
writhing
like a
garden
orgy

I mean
there is
nothing
there

I could
tell you
about
a fountain
a door to
a garden
seething
with hairy
vines

a figure
stands
in the
shadows





TWINS

Sarah Manuel

Dara Barrois/Dixon

A TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO FICTION

I wonder what that feels like
Does it feel as if you've kidnapped

An elephant to traipse with over The Alps
For a few glorious victory laps and figure 8s

Around The Eiffel Tower and thru The
Marble Arch? To have found an infinity

Of unquestionable sky to welcome you
As you pay The Taj Mahal a call on your

Way to catch The Bay of Fundy's tide
With a salute aimed toward The Grand

Canyon and a bowing down before Machu
Picchu to kiss its storied grounds

Whew! Triumph takes all the little time
You have left to swagger past your death

Dara Barrois/Dixon

Seeing peripherally one long column of *TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT*'s ad copy real estate, though it might have been *London Review of Books*, announcing the triumphant return, an honorable thing according to Merriam-Webster app & thesaurus, the definition and the near-synonyms and synonyms emphasize hard work much the way so much else is judged good for involving hard work, which of course has to be true even if standing alone makes "hard work" take on a deeply puritanical attitude toward everything, I've long had a crush, for as long as I've known her, on a brilliant Merriam-Webster lexicographer, I thought of her today when I noticed their omission of the word *hallucinogenic* though RxList gives it in its other words list—*mind-blowing, mind-expanding, intoxicating, mood-altering, psychotropic, psychedelic, hallucinatory, mind-altering, psychoactive, kaleidoscopic* and on for a while, six more rows

6 more rows include *mind-bending, multicolored, psychotomimetic, consciousness-expanding, multicolored, freaky, crazy, trippy, experimental, mind-changing, trip, wild; there's more—intoxicating, exciting, thrilling, exhilarating, stimulating, heady, inspiring, rousing, stirring, electrifying, galvanizing, invigorating, mind-blowing, breathtaking, charged, electric, exhilarative, galvanic, hair-raising, heart-stopping, kinky, mind-bending, mind-boggled, powerful, rip-roaring, strong, potent, sexy, compulsive, elating, enchanting, enthralling, exhilarant, eye-popping, fascinating, mind-altering, provocative, moving, energizing, gripping, lively, arousing, energizing, spine-tingling, dramatic, challenging, overwhelming, refreshing, interesting, animating, inspirational, thought-provoking, bracing, inspiriting, restorative, appealing, titillating, riveting,*

emotional, tonic, spirited, intoxicant, amazing, adrenalizing, hectic, wonderful, dynamic, astonishing, sensational, stunning, energetic, anthemic, stem-winding, enlivening, stiff, hard, renewing, reinvigorating, innervating roborant, startling, impassioned, emotive, passionate, magnificent, incredible, animated, awesome, wondrous, fabulous, staggering, stimulative, astounding, spectacular, stupendous, striking, impressive, provoking, encouraging, inebriating, awe-inspiring, soul-stirring, spiritous, emotion-charged, concentrated, uplifting, explosive, instigative, exalting, shocking, intense, instigating, cliffhanging, wild, inciting, vigorous, suspenseful, stimulant, piquing, complex, complicated, baffling, confusing, difficult, puzzling, fantastic, influential, brilliant, intriguing, motivating, enthusiastic, hearty, knife-edge, awakening, action-packed, eye-opening, memorable, beautiful, jaw-dropping, amazeballs, out of this world, galvanical, inflammatory, compelling, agitational, vitalizing, boozy, alcoholic, edgy, nerve-racking, sparkling, entertaining, stupefying, inconceivable, hallucinatory, psychedelic, edge-of-the-seat, adrenaline-charged, piquant, revitalizing, cheering, gladdening, vinous, spurring, exalté, absorbing, captivating, ripping, boisterous, rollicking, riotous, uproarious, giddy, revitalizing, quickening, animative, elevating, exhilaratory, tense, jolting, buzzy, adrenalized, giving one food for thought, volatile, motivational, affecting, hair-curling, heart-stirring, cliffhanging, causing excitement, heartening, containing alcohol, persuasive, impactful, adrenaline-fueled, outstanding, arresting, poignant, impelling, surprising, remarkable, picturesque, dazzling, affective, touching, splendid, marvelous, unforgettable, glorious, vibrant, triggering, meaningful, unique, grand, eye-catching, never to be forgotten, gee-whizz, rich, robust, big, full, lusty, miraculous, plush, delightful, spiritous, fab, shaking, trembling, shivering, quaking, vibrating, shuddering, frantic, exquisite, swinging, large, boss, mad, muscular, full-bodied, blood-

tingling, zero cool, vivifying, bright, witty, colorful, scintillating, forceful, vivacious, ebullient, beguiling, effervescent, coruscating, vivid, clever, bold, racy, effective, radiant, graphic, eventful, extraordinary, noticeable, reviving, vital, cordial, rejuvenating, far-out, resplendent, like a dream come true, empyreal, blissful, unimaginable, fabled, splendorous, sensorial, prodigious, heavenly, sublime, out of the ordinary, ethereal, special, fantastical, unheard-of, bewitching, portentous, majestic, far out, tremendous, enlightening, fairy-tale, fairytale-like, unbelievable, dream-filled, magical, spiring, inviting, heart-pumping, trendy, fashionable, glittering, glinting, smart, sprightly, driving, engaging, heated, engrossing, entrancing, keen, imaginative, propelling, buzzworthy, warm, blinding, pungent, zesty, enticing, extravagant, savory, eager, formidable, glaring, notable, hot, gleaming, pronounced, definite, high, rallying, zingy, biting, sharp, spicy, effectual, marked, pert, heart-pounding, frightening, spine-chilling, bloodcurdling, chilling, horrifying, terrifying, impactful, productive, significant, consequential, savory, salty, juicy, full of life, efficacious, divine, charming, useful



Bernadette Negrete

BARBENHEIMER/ FEMININE RAGE



Someone's new ex-girlfriend sings *girlsjustwannahavefun* at the bar while another girl's boyfriend acts like an ass outside. He comes back inside without her but they leave together that same night. The cicadas came in waves. Soft and immediate like a match. A man rides his bike behind me on the streets, whispers *damn girl you are just sosexy*. It is decided then I was never anything to look at until someone decided I was. Another man reminds me, this time my brother, I was never a woman until someone decided I was given too much. It's mid july in late august. The heat is dangerous. The heat makes me dangerous. The cicadas eat me alive every night. The couple across from us buys us a bottle of wine. My boyfriend fucks me in the bathroom after. My arms extended, holding up the wall. My world is an L shaped line. The sun sets in a valley or a field somewhere. While someone else's knees get bruised. While someone else's hair gets pulled or runs home all alone.

Bernadette Negrete



Dylan Ringer

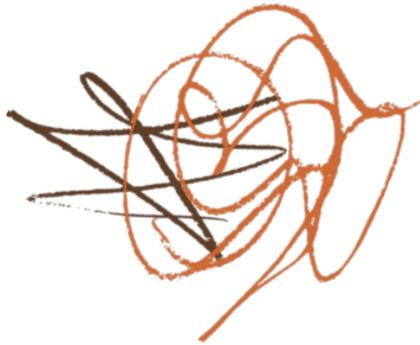
ANDREA

Dylan Ringer

Elizabeth Marie Young

***THE COMBINED
TO DOS OF JOHNNY
CASH, WOODY
GUTHRIE, BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN AND
LEONARDO DA VINCI***

Elizabeth Marie Young



Get hold of a skull
Calculate the size of the sun
Read lots of good books
Don't be disturbed at trifles
Imitate Socrates
Kiss June
Practice piano
Break the jaw from the side to see the uvula in position
Don't kiss anybody else
Describe a woodpecker's tongue
Imitate Jesus
Love mama
Love papa
Talk to the Benedictine friar about medieval mechanics
Make up your mind
Drink not to elevation
Take the measurement of a dead man using his own finger
Think innocently and justly
Eat not to dullness
Dream good
Stay Glad
Obtain forceps, firestick, scalpel, fine-tooth bone saw,
pane of glass, inkhorn, penknife, sheets of paper
Find a master of hydraulics
Wake up and fight
Love everybody
Don't get lonesome

Elizabeth Marie Young

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLOUDS

Want to evoke nostalgia? Done. Want to draw heaven?
You're in luck. There's a cloud for every poet, fighter pilot,

Surfer, cynic, paranoiac, guardian angel. There's a cloud
For every teacher staring out her classroom window,

A cloud for every Nigerian spammer, for every gifted child,
For every politician. There's a cloud for Buddy Holly, Johnny

Cash, Elvis, your mother—a cloud powered by generators
Stored in the warehouse of this poem, because everything

Soon mutates and is deadly and unknown and yet we long
For this unknowing. We long for clouds in tatters, clouds

That flutter warily because there are no easy answers
And our models don't agree. Don't dismiss the misty data.

Every day more water flows out of our leaky simulations
To spread across the unrelenting sky we so rely on in our

Endlessness—the great dome of our day jobs and our passions,
Our frivolity and so forth; the source of beauty hidden in plain

Sight; the source of life, if I'm remembering correctly.
Our computers hate these clouds. They can't stand the silver

Linings that intrude when you zoom in relentlessly enough.
But, mostly, they can't stand themselves, poor things—all
tangled

Up with plugs and cables, stuck indoors, solving all our
Improbable problems without ever looking up or smelling

The smell of the earth. It's all so boring and they know it—
The way those pallid monsters swirl and spin and undulate

Around our existential angst, setting off chain reactions—
billions
And billions of miniscule droplets masquerading as squiggly

Lines resembling marshmallows or poodles. I'm gonna be
honest
With you—the computers aren't happy with us. They don't

Understand our urge to render heaven visible.
They aren't prone to seeing faces where faces

Don't exist. As sun pours out of the mouths of clouds
Computers retrieve information about an underwhelming

World full of divorcées and sparkles and a touch of sophistry.
Sometimes they take great pleasure in computing our
compulsions.

Mostly, though, they sort through memories of clouds
In situations no computer could predict: Clouds that have

Been Crushed By God; Clouds that are messy and imperfect,
All but emptied of cliché. Clouds wrapped in euphemism,

Unabashed in their pursuit of intergalactic evil; Clouds intent
On cheering you up; clouds hopelessly addicted to scudding

Through the sky in an ever-changing drama, refusing to stand
Still as farmers watch in trepidation with small, fierce, knowing

Eyes. Clouds forced to serve as symbols of transition,
transformation,
Emotional purity, desolation, loneliness, hope, optimism,
wisdom

And the opposites of all of the above. Computers take a simple
view
Of clouds. To them, a dragon breathing fire is a real time radar

Reading, a black box of predictions that obscures the
immutable
Quality of some capricious truth hovering within the blue of

Summer afternoons. It's up to us, Cloud Lovers—we must
demand
More than this! We must insist on reliable forecasts. We must
inform

The computers: an altocumulus lenticularis is not a UFO
questing
to capture human souls—it's just a thing conceived by
atmospheric

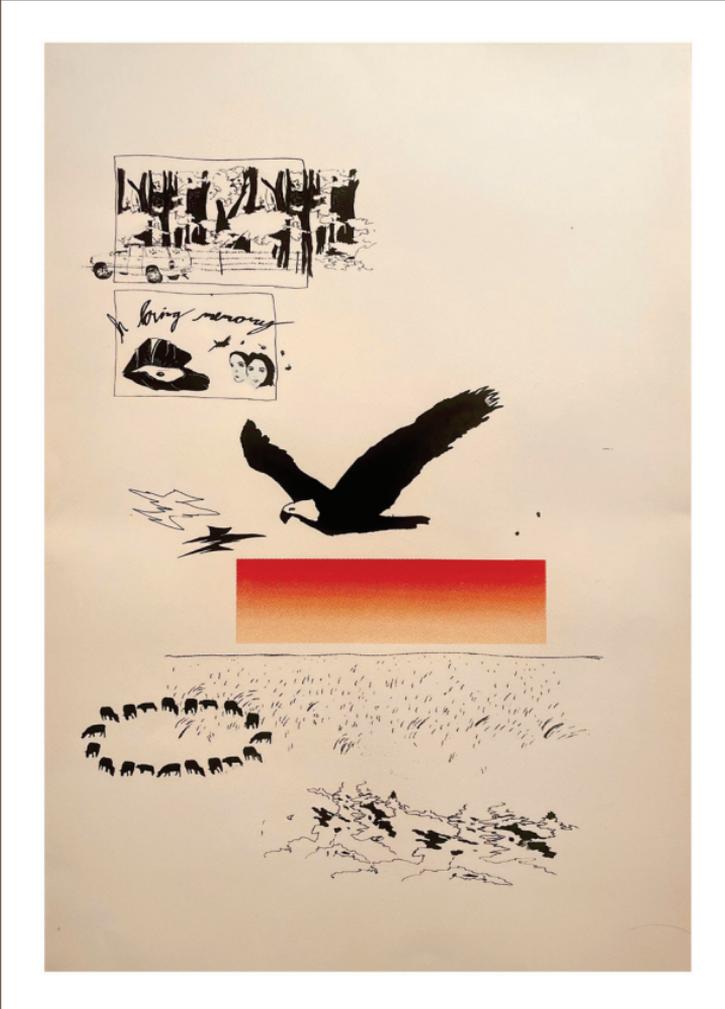
Motions computers can explore but with a margin of error
Too large to even matter for the clouds have seen it all,

Drifting like eulogies across two thirds of our earth's surface,
Integrating everything, however featureless and scary,

Customized to serve our needs, fogging up our crystal balls.

Elizabeth Marie Young





HOMECOMING

Hannah Dixon

Jack Christian

THE COLOR OF MEMORY



Somehow, the boat is in the field.

The couple inside recognize the boat as a thing they've made,
but they don't feel particularly responsible for it,

much less its unknowable arrivals.
In this way their boat is mostly fiction,

wood fantasy they inhabit,
launching them into further agnosticism,

but real enough also to blame
for stranding them in the brush.

What kind of boat, they wonder,
would follow a footpath?

When the mystery is too much,
the one dives overboard

and goes stomping through the weeds.
He's ready to unmake everything.

Jack Christian

He begins plucking down shadows
and folding them into a bag on his shoulder.

His partner watches until her contempt dissolves
inside the surrounding strangeness:

the blue tree where they're anchored,
the many-colored grasses,

faint stairs that rise to nothing.



Anthony Robinson

THE NEW POETRY

I am writing a new poem that aims to sound
Like some of my old poems that have an air
Of mystery and unspoiled joy, a poem of unre-
stricted love not for a human being but for
The natural world, for works good and fearsome,
For rain and thunderstorms, for diesel fuel
And slate and shale, for the shaking of plates,
Tectonic and Greek, for green and small goats
To help out with all the yoga going on out there
In our war-crazed world. I am writing with a new pen
I obtained from a family physician who met me
In a bar with average fried chicken and middling
Ale. The pen writes in thin lines with a minimum
Of skips and smears. For this I am grateful

Anthony Robinson

But also grateful that I am not left-handed.

Writing is a way to cram in all the things

I adored in my twenties—the drugs, the girls,

The natural disasters even the terror attacks:

I loved indiscriminately and longed for no

Indictments because all people and acts of God

Deserved a third chance to get it right. I'm hoping

To get it right, to say something worth looking

Into, the way I once looked into the eyes

Of someone I used to know, into the eyes

Of the storms that keep beating up my countrymen.

Unlike Ted, I don't claim to like beating people

Yup, but I like the idea of UP, uplift, raise every voice,
the state UP as it relates to TEMPERAMENT
and the drive to persevere

In the face of awfulness. Even Achilles had bad

Days and bum ankles, but one must go on.

In this late decade, my knees are attenuated

And a little janky. Oh well. I am writing
Anyway to recapture the way writing would
Make me feel in 1997: drunk on sentiment
And jug wine, alive and in a tree, on avenues,
In dark places, throwing myself against freight trains
And dandelions. My pen and I are writing on
And on recycled paper, the B sides of my best
Discarded other poems which are not wildly
Experimental nor staid and full of pulp, but more
Like something a mild wasp might compose
Between assignments to weave hexagons
To make a house, as is her nature. The poem
Will explore this nature as it pertains to human
Creatures. I am thinking that as I write about
Fear: Russia, disease, economic collapse, the way
The Earth keeps getting hotter, and will my first and
only child ever know me again, I Begin to
think I'm just making a house, over

And over again, one that collapses with the season,
A place to stay and vibrate wildly, in a striped
Shirt, ready to strike out brightly at any who
Care to come too close, protecting
My absurd and broken dun brown enclosure.
I will finish writing this damn thing at 4:37 p.m.

Anthony Robinson



Anthony Robinson

ABJURATION #2



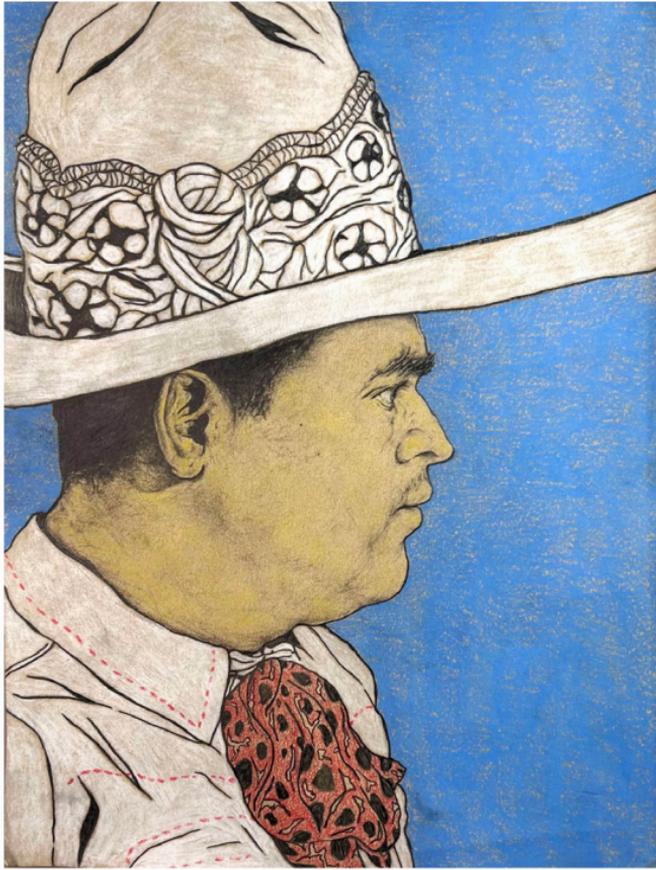
Red & black flannel shirt twenty years old
I bought from the Gap the year the towers
Fell. There were tacos & hip-hop, cold
Autumn days turning to winter. My powers

Fading with early middle-age: cold showers
To quell the shameful unassuaged desires
That stemmed from a love of countless hours,
Of literature, of red hair & big hands, of fires

Inside. I wore this shirt more days than not,
In this sex poem where past lovers ghost
Around my inability to come correct. I bought
New trousers too. Another decade passed.

To give it all up: my manhood, my child:
My moth-eaten clothes, those days I was wild.

Anthony Robinson



Austin Gutierrez

***UNTITLED
(MAN IN HAT)***

Austin Gutierrez

Michael Robins

ON THE DAY THE FISH DIED

In the dream I'm working the easy math of time zones, waiting for the voice that tells me he's gone. In the real dream, my father walks on his own again, floodlit & stylish in his fur-lined coat. We're friends, unbuttoned & beginning, younger than anyone might expect & we float downstairs where there's dancing to be done. An itch—surely, I itch—wanting to know what's next, the broadcast on forty-year delay & circling back, as he would, to collect bottles each worth a nickel. To believe in redemption, yes, but goddamn if there isn't a stitch when the dream cannot make amends &, once more, I wake as I was & how I am.

Michael Robins



Michael Robins

OF ALL THE THINGS HE'S LOST



my father misses his mind the most, tells the one about who's living with the black guy across the street. It's hard to know what's what on the television, how many branches dead in the neighbor's tree & that was yesterday or when he was twelve, pausing half the afternoon until the arc of a sprinkler swerved & opened the sidewalk ahead. My father asks Maria, "What current did you float to get here?" & says he suffers from C-R-S, then waits a beat: "Can't Remember Shit." He mentions it twice daily with the memory out there of a bugle he almost knows as his own. Beyond amusement or correction, my father waits in the chair beneath pictures of someone's friends, someone's children while July drops its numbers & softens into every summer month or none.

Michael Robins

Dylan Ringer

from FAMILY RECIPE

Marjorie was an Air Force weapons specialist.
She only recently convinced herself that CBD doesn't make her
a degenerate. If she had got any more restless the doctors
were gonna try quaaludes. Like some kind of '80s
housewife.

Now she rubs the oil on her joints twice a day, and a little too
on that dog she always talks about getting rid of.

Marjorie likes tending to her garden in her retirement.

She used to be an English professor for the foreign students
whose first language wasn't English.

Before that she drove the big rigs.

Before that she worked in the factories where they
assembled engines.

Before that, a mechanic's wife.

Before that, stunning cattle on a Colorado ranch.

Before that, a cop, and before that she was in the
Air Force.

She seemed to like these jobs. She was her own man
around the house. She just had a vice or two.

She was allowed one square of dark chocolate from the
fridge on a particularly hard day, she told me.

Marjorie started smoking again last year. And she'll
have one beer, split over the course of a week.

I caught her listening to her favorite band, *Tool* one afternoon,
her fat dog wheezing happy under the pin oak, and an
American Spirit dangling between her lips. She turned
around at the sound of the chain link.

Marjorie's dark sunglasses, square and round like our jaw, reflected a little me under her wide-brimmed sun hat. It lined up perfectly so she got a Jesus halo as she began cursing this year's hydrangeas.

Dylan Ringer



travels light in the dark
incanted from benedicting stars

trails a cardiac compass

the compassionate self is not tame
dissolves distances betweenalone

*from Clarissa Pinkola Estes



Dylan Ringer



HARES ON THE MOUNTAIN

Dylan Ringer

Hadara Bar-Nadav

NUREMBERG LAWS (II)



The war
grew graves.
Gnawed its
own awe-struck
brain. Babble,
warble, maw,
swallow all the
bumbling animals.

Hadara Bar-Nadav

Note: “Two distinct laws passed in Nazi Germany in September 1935 are known collectively as the Nuremberg Laws: the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor. These laws embodied many of the racial theories underpinning Nazi ideology. They would provide the legal framework for the systematic persecution of Jews in Germany.”

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws

Hadara Bar-Nadav

AKTION T4 PROGRAM



Rope the room.
Grove the group.
Map torso,
brain, tongue,
root. Ration
grams of soup.
Take action.
Take a knife.
Take 4 or 400
who will not
grow. Maggots
raid their throats
by noon.

Hadara Bar-Nadav

Note: Aktion T4 was the name of the Nazi euthanasia campaign that resulted in the murder of approximately 300,000 adults and children with various “mental and physical disabilities. In the Nazi view, this would cleanse the ‘Aryan’ race of people considered genetically defective and a financial burden to society.”

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/euthanasia-program

UNTERMENSCHEN



We turn un-
human. Men,
mud, mess
of meat,
meant to serve
death. Who
is monster,
master? Enter
terror's teeming
nest. Churn
and retch, eating
the trembling
necks of mice.

Note: Untermenschen is a “German word meaning sub-humans, used by Nazis to refer to the groups they deemed ‘undesirable’” and worthy of death. These groups included Jews, Romany, and Slavic people as well as individuals with physical or mental conditions.

hnh.org/education/resources/vocabulary-terms-related-holocaust/

SONDERKOMMANDO

More and more
and more. Red
reek. Red dram.
Red door. More
and more. Cram.
Crush. Command
more men, order
more dust. Muffle
sons, mountains
of us. Red
dream: my steel
shovel hands,
fingerless blades.
Red sound
and scrape
like a dremel
unscrewing my
brain. My name
drains out
my nose, drinks
the dead in
every ode.

Note: “The Sonderkommandos were groups of Jewish prisoners forced to perform a variety of duties in the gas chambers and crematoria of the Nazi camp system. They worked primarily in the Nazi killing centers, such as Auschwitz, but they were also used at other killing sites to dispose of the corpses of victims.”

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/sonderkommandos





Randi Bachman

FROST FLOWER

Randi Bachman

Jessica Cuello

LIMOUSIN 1939

He snapped his neck
No one told me that
I am afraid of words

I am back there trying
to know He snapped
his neck My aunt said

it was the communists
No one told me that
I thought my grandmother

was God I thought God
had his chosen and unchosen
I am afraid of words

I thought if you waited
if you obeyed you were
loved I am back there trying

to know Love is obedience
He snapped his neck
My grandmother the girl



My grandmother is 16
My aunt said it was
the communists My

grandmother is on a ship
leaving France It's 1941
I thought God was a line

straight to heaven She
presses one ear to the ground
where her brother walked

God has his chosen and
unchosen I am going back
to the year she stopped loving

to find out why my mother is ____
to find out why I am ____
Love is obedience

It was a train accident
It was sabotage She was
born in St Junien

in the Limousin
My grandmother the girl
is on the ship It's 1941

She presses one ear to the
ground She lies in the bed
where her brother slept I go

back to where she stopped
To where my mother began
To where I am Love is

obedience God is a line straight
to heaven She presses one ear
to the ground It was sabotage

My aunt says the resistance
and the communists were
the same My grandmother

was born in St Junien She
waits all day for his train
that never comes She is

sent away In the photo his hand
is at her waist She is _____
No one else is touching

Grant Chemidlin

FAG

irst petals in spring — field ripe with little mirrors.

Open, they'd say, *row*, but I eered their

intended certainty. To keep doubt blooming,

or me, meant immunity, God, my mother, this

blessed country.

Grant Chemidlin



Grant Chemidlin

FAG

Coworker Jim, first out homosexual I knew.

Down low I seduced him, still closeted, inviting myself over

his house was my experiment, me discovering comfort.

He sank into love. I reckless enough to un-

voyage out. I let him stand in on the shore, I wless shell.

Who decides right or cruel? For years, I tried to pin

uilt to my former shadows. They moved through it,

leshless. I'm sorry I hurt you.

Grant Chemidlin



Grant Chemidlin

FAG



Ben, best friend, says rushing is cool.
Fraternities like Phi Si will turn us
into men. Firm knock. Ben, chosen, walks
out the dorm. The bunk beds row five stories,
or just one. I tell it over & over to my shadow.
I tuck into Ben's bed below. But the story's end
is wrong. Their silence, my failure,
loosened the lured word from my
mouth—bit clutched upside down. No,
the son bird.

Grant Chemidlin



STANDOFF

Stefan Schulz

Stephen S. Mills

***FINAL BOY ASKS
ABOUT THE WOMAN
IN THE TRASH
CHUTE***



not some mythical creature / fable / urban legend / but a real
person / woman / one your husband / a paramedic / discovered
/ no that's not the right word / rescued? / no / already dead /
she was already dead / identified: the act of naming the thing
others don't want to name / he / comes home / your apartment
/ with stories of bodies broken / open / in the city / New York
City / a 3-year-old out a window / a woman under a taxi / a
slash across a face / horrors / no answers / you ask anyway /
how does a woman go down a trash chute? / yours is so narrow
/ angle just barely / big enough / 24 floors down / into what? /
you listen to each bag drop off / ricochet / land / somewhere
or nowhere / a world that is your world / but not your world

Stephen S. Mills

Elizabeth Clark Wessel

THOSE WHO WON'T AND THOSE WHO CAN'T

Who were those Radicals
Who were those Loose Women in pants
Who were those Painters with rich dads
Who was that Beloved Corpse clutching
a rust-stained handkerchief
wasting away in genteel sitting rooms
that were either too hot or too cold
How and where
Such shit, yes
Such death, yes
The world, wasn't it
Play it pretty
Write it well

Elizabeth Clark Wessel



Elizabeth Clark Wessel

TEETH



My toddler and I lie on the frozen grass staring
up at five stars.

Did you know there's radioactive matter in our
teeth?

I battle to keep hers clean. While mine keep
falling out in my dreams.

Every scrap of plastic I touch will outlast them
(Someday
the green container of our meat
will be a round pebble on an unfamiliar beach.)

When I was five, I'd lie on a rose-patterned rug and
think about
the universe.

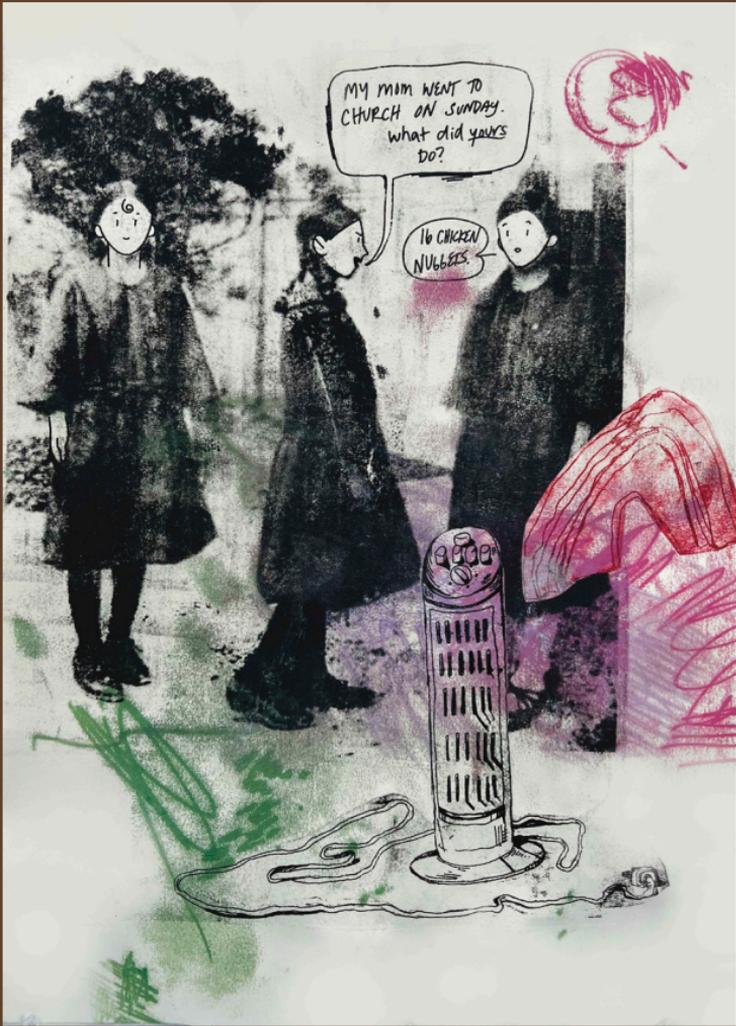
I discovered the mind was almost infinite, but in the
end, you reach
a wall
of teeth.

Elizabeth Clark Wessel



UNTITLED

Jaedyn Roberts



Sarah Manuel

CONFRONTATION

Sarah Manuel

Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks

PHONY GOLDENRODS

I love the way your tongue curls up in a big yawn
when I'm describing the paper bag that bulges with cabbages
and chicken bones and rum and things that go thud,
marble heads, rotary phones, lawn chairs.
I'm a broken fence in a meadow and you ignore me
conducting your sorrow along the rails
of the ferry, looking out at the river, with the wind
blowing your hair into a silken ladder
a balloonist climbs with his barometer to record
the atmospheric pressure. He takes his small pony too
although this is disputed, I'd like to believe it's true
just like your gold cheekbone in the sinking sun
or the lifejacket reflector in the rising moon.
The armor of daylight is twisting its tongue in the bitter
yawn of a sawtooth interlocutor. If you wear a blindfold,
I could be your meth lab queen. So that nothing may remain
of this last bag of Cheetos, let's work up an appetite
by flicking our tongues at each other in the dark amphitheater
where the professor left an iron lung on display.
We could get inside and scratch love letters on the glass
praising the body's flaws, the gunk in the mustache,
dust on eyelashes, decalcifying enamel on

Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks

the sculptures of fireworks hung overhead spitting neon
like pink tribbles straight from a Berlin dive. We could
practice diagramming the fishnet payroll of tiger thighs.
We could survive this Texas heat if nighttime ever comes.
This fire is like salt from the brow of heaven's bootleggers,
and your breath is chartreuse clover hip lemon hop.



Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks

PARTY TRICK



I was washing baby bella mushrooms
when you called to tell me about your new language
of sparks and iodine and rosewood.
I'm not sure words are something worth talking about.
Starting a fire with fire seems so circular,
and I tend towards the crooked meandering jawline
as you drool in your sleep
and there's the jagged shadow of the branch
that you climb to get a better look
at the kitten mewling in the graveyard.
Last week's thundercloud is leaking through the ceiling
and the house is bathed in Egyptian silence.
When you wake up, you're living in a novel
about a tomb raider who's having an existential crisis
and the blueberry pancakes are already cold.
Did you forget to turn off the alarm before you
opened the door to the morning's false horizon?
One idea is that stone is linked by some affinity to the moon.
If you rub it with this nickel, you'll know when the solar wind
kicks up a dust cloud in the Sea of Vapors.
You'll feel the ice crystals in your sternum,
hexagons of cold bone cooling your lungs

Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks

until your ribcage is a tundra of amber,
the perfect hive for the queen and her winter bees.
But in secret you've never liked honey
and the cosmic particles in your sternum
are making your allergies flare up.
Your pollen-stained cheeks swell up like bocce balls.
Your body is a mirage of ornamental impulses.
The sky stays pink twenty minutes too long
and that cloud of alabaster is screwing up the
atmospheric pressure.
The gates of consciousness sit in the hollow spaces
of your spine and relief is a statue perched on a
ledge preflight.
The other secret knot catches fire so you leave it
in the State Park and keep driving through the hills.
The air is humid and the songbirds are quiet
but the dry grass in the wind buzzes like a gourd.
Words pop up beneath your tongue like a string
of pearls
you are throwing like a lariat at the fire escape where
I'm sitting
eating cold pizza with chunks of pineapple that are
almost neon,
and if I want everything to unfurl and light up,
I tie this hot pink kerchief over your eyes.





John Elizabeth Stintzi

WALMART

“I’ve made up my mind there’s going to be trouble.”

—Allen Ginsberg, “America.”

Walmart I’ve bought a lot of shit and I’m still nothing.
Walmart an average of two-thousand three-hundred
thirty-seven dollars and fifteen cents a year
since March 21, 2005.

Walmart I can’t stand for this indecency.

Your tomatoes are *not* Subway fresh.

Walmart I am afraid that you do not imagine me to
be a valued customer.

Walmart there are statistics that show you may be
killing me and the people I love and not as
slowly as I would prefer to be killed because I
still have a lot of buying potential left in me.

Walmart I am getting an MFA and this scares me.

I am sick of life’s insane demands.

Walmart I bought a pair of shoes from you once and
then claimed to be a socialist.

What do you think of that?

I have seen the strange cultish exercises your employees
do in the morning and I’m afraid of you.

Will you teach me how to be successful?

Walmart I am sick of being greeted like anybody else.

What have I done to deserve this treatment?

John Elizabeth Stintzi

Walmart I was born a good capitalist.

You used to be my dreamscape and now your doors
contain the stuff of resignation economics
and malice.

Walmart I am sick of your goods being affordable
at such a cost.

Walmart I once peed on the toilet seat in one of your
bathrooms and didn't clean up after and
I'm not sorry.

Walmart I have nightmares of your Black Friday sales
and yet I still want to be a part of them.

Walmart do you feel sorry for your employees who have
been trampled in the past and for your
employees who I will trample in the future?

Walmart why are you ignoring me?

When will you stop trying to be so angelic?

Walmart nothing can stop you and I don't like this but
I have no choice but to respect it and hate you.

I don't feel well please help me.

Walmart I'm addressing a postcard to you that has a
photo of my favorite building in New York City
and it's not even the Empire State building.

Walmart I'm a mess and you're not helping.

Let's do something constructive.

Let's tear down the walls of three or four or thirty-seven
of your stores and lets let give rest of the world
a chance to be assholes.

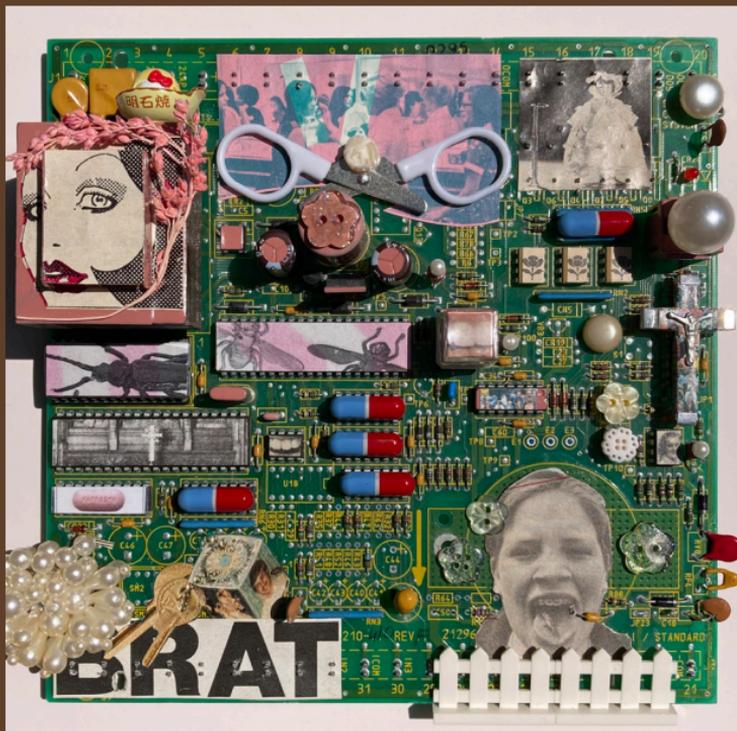
Walmart I fear you won't want to stock my books on
your shelves.

Walmart America loves you but you're bringing it down.

Walmart I have some problems with outsourcing but I
have more problems with the little people
being under appreciated.

You are under appreciating me.
You are not responding to my comments on Facebook.
Walmart I will not be stopped.
Walmart will you read my manuscript and offer me
 suggested edits and an advance on my allowance?
I am making the effort.
I am reaching out to you in empathetic gestures.
Walmart what can *I* do for *you*?
Please put me on your employee list as a night janitor
 but pay me better and don't make me do
 anything but squat in your dim aisles
 and write novels.
Walmart I am willing to cut a deal.
Walmart let's make this poem a paid advertisement.
Walmart I am putting myself out there.
I regret absolutely everything.





BRAT
Melvin Mauch

Prairie Moon Dalton

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Where do I go to pay
this debt? I've found a few
cut credit cards on the side
of the road. Stolen and stripped
copper and catalytic converters, sold
platinum for half its worth
to buy a ring that turned
my finger sick and green.
No one will leave me
any jewelry. My aunt didn't
drive, spent her time reading the
obits and rolling her thin
cigarettes, taking them through
her trach at the end.



Prairie Moon Dalton

Prairie Moon Dalton

MYSTERY HILL

Want to see water
flow up? Leave a car
out of gear, watch it roll
toward the sky. A natural
gravitational anomaly, the sharp
curve's sign says, but it's really just
a quiet trick of the eye. I know that it was
snowing. Couldn't say if I was coming or going
up the mountain or down. When I wrecked, I flipped.
My buckled seat belt sliced me deep across my gut,
my chest, cut me but caught me, laid a red strip
of film across my collarbone. It was night
and no one saw who hit me, no cameras
no footage, my word against nothing
but two sets of tire tracks I couldn't
have made. Maybe, the cops said,
it didn't happen the way
you thought it did.



Prairie Moon Dalton

ONLY CHILD



You weren't even there until you were
just a dark clump on the shower drain.
Plucked from nothing and rinsed
with the rest of my blood. Nineteen
and I'd raised enough children;
brushed enough hair, wiped enough
mouths, fed and hushed and carried
off to bed. A sleeping child is not still.
Their sticky bodies kick and thrash
through the night. When I was a girl,
I bit too far into an apple and swallowed
its one black seed. I've seen you standing
in my doorway, dragging your shadow
behind you like a blanket.



Prairie Moon Dalton



***ONLY THE FUTURE
REVISITS THE PAST
BÀ NỘI***

Hùng Lê

R/B Mertz

THE GARDEN



The squirrels hide peanuts in the ground
certain of a future they can't have, a map—
but every spring we find them.

The death in the garden is and isn't an allusion
The surface changes but it's all green underneath.

This is the year we steeped in death. Tea bags.
It drained out of us from the heat.
What we lived had dried, been gathered
into the right kind of bag. We were
grown, harvested for this. To bear witness.
To let it bleed us. To say nothing.

The herbs grew thick the first year.
The second year, we skimped on dirt,
thought we could do with a layer of rock.
The herbs were too weak to laugh in our faces.
They withered there, right in front of us.
You reap what you sow n'all that.



R/B Mertz

FEED

1

“People are eating
food for birds & animals
not fit for eating”
in Jabalia. The photos
are crowded with need.



Joe Biden’s fugly mug
repeats, “The bombing...”
—on a loop—
“...isn’t working...”

“But we’ll certainly
continue to bomb.”
His face blurs into
a twist, a thrown shoe.

Dolly Parton wearing
gold cones for breasts.
A “power bra” makes
sure your power
stays the right shape.

R/B Mertz

Advertisers of frames.
A tower of VHS tapes:
all *Forrest Gump*.

Sally Jesse Raphael
talks to Anne Miller
& Anne Miller
says something
that makes alllllllllll
the ladies who look
like her clap
& smile, smiling
& clapping infinitely.

2

“Look who they’re putting
on the front lines”
Husbands on Reddit
waiting for wives
busy swallowing merch,
a sweatshirt bearing
the cosmos,
a poet’s humble brag,
the accusations
of organ theft.
Ijeoma Oluo in a
Palestinian skirt.
Ads for overalls.
A dog, a cat (sent to
Mom) + book plugs,
ads for glasses.

Before & after dog
birth photos:

how full she was
how many she held

A book about a tragedy.
A book about cannibalism.
A kid looking confused.
What does he see?

3

“Who’s body part is that?
Don’t carry it through
the hall, we don’t want
the children to see it.”

An actress asking to sign
a petition to Save the
Children. Gatekeepers
opening for submission.
Ads for t-shirts. The numbers
getting higher every day.

A moved walrus’ eyes.
A woman who leaves
a cookie outside for
one particular squirrel.
Tracy Chapman and Luke
Combs clothed in
reckoning. Recognizing.

The weeping of estrogen.
A Black man running from
his triplets, laughing after
their dad, reaching their
hands up wide—one, two,
three opening hearts, reach-
ing. The Guardian's map of
the destroyed country.
Mosab says there is "No more
animal feed in North Gaza
for people to use."





R/B Mertz

JANUARY

Smoking in the winter, there's no avoiding
the ruin. The roses keep their thorns,
drama queen Ms. Havishams pressing,
insisting themselves to visibility
among the rubble, all their possibilities
over & what a relief it must be—
to come to a natural end,
to let your growing cease, to close
your eyes, shut yourself—but the green persists,
in the starry phlox, the snapdragons,
the ivy, the conifers. They bet on futures.
My bourbon is good. Crazy to be out
here in this cold. The dog water
keeps freezing. People go by making
jokes about how stubborn I am
to keep smoking, keep standing outside.
My phone shows an endless parade
of people refusing to give up, refusing to die.
They say I'm stubborn, too. My mother always
said, my father always said. He's buried
& I refused to grow out of him. I moved myself on
penalty of death. Transplant. Afraid of death?
We're always making out. We're the kind
still got our thorns to grow more out of.
You think a little cold can stop us?

R/B Mertz

Ellie Westhoff



BUGLE TITTY GRAB

Ellie Westhoff

Zoe Tuck

THE DEATH AT THE CENTER OF SEX



Sitting at Wild Chestnut across from Britt and Luna
as a callback to the first poem of the month
I thought to call today's poem, "The death
at the center of sex," or at least to use
that line in the poem. But then I thought
well people might think I was alluding to
the "little death" of cis male orgasm
which wasn't my original intention
but now I'm thinking about it
dying and being reborn—what a dramatic
way to talk about a refractory period
you're not Jesus, my dude

why do I find it easier to write
about sex—it titillates, it pleases
the room (sometimes, anyway)
it is a kind of personal property
I mean proprietary, a personal
"my own-ness" paradoxically
belonging to everyone

Zoe Tuck

My sex is always already mine
my death I'm slowing growing into
you can't practice death
have death with yourself
have death with someone you love
or someone you just met

something happens when I try to reach out and touch your
death

my arms aren't long enough

and if in the guise of a witness
I try to take your death up
to put it on like a suit of clothes

inevitably I become a bad actor
in every sense of the word
a necropolitician
running

as if for office
but actually for my life

Zoe Tuck



Zoe Tuck

WOW LIFE CAT

“The most remarkable thing about coming home to you
is the feeling of being in motion again

it’s the most extraordinary thing in the world”

—“Going to Georgia”

not the Mountain Goats version
but the Atom & His Package one



synth loop
clap loop
nerdy earnest frog-throated vocals

the one that Shyla and Eric put on a mix tape for me

in 2004 or 2005 let’s say

along with a sea shanty about a ship called the royal oak

hurtling towards the future
lacking in self-awareness

I can still go down to the dam spillway
look at the graffiti

Zoe Tuck

WOW and LIFE with a cat in the middle

with someone else who feels like an alien

what would shatter if I tried
to pass through the boundary
of the mirror world?

probably me

bouncing off with a busted schnoz

hop over brambles

regard the red withies
and the clots of ice

up the back of the dam

I think the first walk I ever took with Emily

we hopped a fence together

how thirsty I am
for swerves and slant paths

urchin in a brackish tide pool

clot of seaweed
clot of life

punky little dream in my mother's eye



Quinn Rennerfeldt

ODE TO A CONFERENCE



Pay \$12 for half a beer. Hang peripheral at the party. Walk away from money in a brown glass bottle. Waffle between being with and without at the function. Almost have fun at the function, leave whenever. Take the black streets back to the hotel. Skirt the groups of men. Return to the room, take a cowardly shower. Emerge raw and clean and alone. Lean into vices. Imagine being a rockstar, trashing the lamps, ripping apart bed sheets with slobbery teeth. Read Cunt-Ups and fail to masturbate. Pass out to Guy Fieri. Wake up to Ina Garten, mothering her kitchen. Wipe away that feeling. Hunch over the toilet and piss, memorize the grout between the tiles. Suffer the sun all over again. Tolerate the hours. Languish in the missing out. Ride the dread of participation bareback. Admire book covers featuring fruit. Chatter through the same script twice. Pose. Relax the jaw after talking. Shrink in their pupils until forgotten. Leave without a tote bag.

Quinn Rennerfeldt



Kyle Fuson / Kasi Kimie

BALANCE

Kyle Fuson / Kasi Kimie

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leave your mark before you go
make this page your own

COLOPHON

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