



PEACH MAG

SEASON 3 YEARBOOK



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Published by *Peach Mag*
peachmgzn.com | @peachmgzn
Buffalo, NY

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Printed by Spencer Printing Inc.
Honesdale, PA

First Printing
August 2019

ISBN

978-0-9992975-3-7
0-9992975-3-8

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

Somehow, our junior year of *Peach* is over. Though it was marked by the dusky jewel tones of 80s windbreakers and winter lipstick, *Peach's* third season was anything but a period of hibernation. We've already unveiled a fresh new look—loud, juicy, springtime colors promising plenty of energy for Season 4—but it's hard to imagine any phase could be as productive as the one that's coming to a close in these pages. Looking back on the work of more than 100 emerging writers and artists published at our online journal—plus this year's partnerships and events, the launch of a youth program and a celebrated anthology, and the growth of our editorial team—is humbling. I have to say, whether you've been here since day one or we're meeting for the first time: Thank you for reading.

We kicked off Season 3 by launching the Peach Seed Residency for Emerging Editors, an annual apprenticeship program for creative high school seniors interested in developing their editorial eye. Energized by the young people all throughout the world who were dedicating themselves to enormous, important causes, we wanted to be sure that *Peach* held space open for fervent and unafraid (and often fucking clever) young voices. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Sage Enderton, a previous Season 1 contributor who was entering her senior year at City Honors High School at the start of Season 3, for leading the Peach Seed program's inaugural year and curating its monthly online feature by writers and artists age 12-18. Through the program, we were also able to invite a handful of Buffalo-based young writers to perform at our Episodes Reading Series. At *Peach*, we believe that creative communities flourish when they uplift a diversity of artists and art, and we are committed to finding new ways to make our publishing platform one which artists at any stage, from any background, and working in any discipline can enjoy.

For that reason, when we recognized our readers' interest in more visual art at our website, we brought on Season 2 contributor C. C. Camuglia to serve as our visual arts editor. In this role, Chux has helped us select artists to showcase at our Episodes Reading Series and has curated a monthly #FirstFriday feature at our website. (In Buffalo, visual arts museums and galleries across the city offer free or discounted admission and later hours on the first Friday of every month.) With a killer eye, exceptional dedication, and hard-earned knowledge of the national visual arts scene online and in galleries, Chux has brought more than a dozen photographers, illustrators, collage artists, and others into conversation with *Peach's* talented poets and writers—and we're all richer for it.

Later in the fall, we published *With You: Withdrawn Poetry of the #MeToo Movement*, an anthology that re-homed work lost in the aftermath of editors and publishers from across the spectrum of literary publications being exposed as sexual predators or enablers. For me, the publication of this anthology is emblematic of a truth that's as often ignored as it is misunderstood: Publishing is political. Publishing is done by and for communities. Publishing can and should be an expression of responsible citizenship—and that responsibility can't be minimized. In *With You*, several irresponsible journals' losses were our inestimable gain: We were able to give a lasting new home to work from a group of

talented poets and essayists. It was a privilege to publish them, and I hope that our shared experience continues to contribute to the dialogue around the responsible use of power in publishing.

Three years ago, when we first talked about launching a creative writing blog, I couldn't have imagined what I'd learn about the complexities of publishing. I am grateful for what I've learned and for this opportunity to continue learning.

In the spring, we sponsored our second annual Peach Gold in Poetry Award, this year with guest judge and personal hero Dorothea Lasky. The members of our poetry team have been deeply impacted by Dottie's work at some point in our writing careers, and it was a joy to have had the opportunity to work with her on this endeavor to award monetary support to emerging voices in contemporary poetry. She selected powerful poems by Sara Bess, Anna Gurton-Wachter, and Aeon Ginsberg for the Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards, which you can enjoy at the end of this yearbook alongside Dottie's own words celebrating the work.

As always, the performances at our Episodes Reading Series were memorable and magical. We began the season with an episode at Just Buffalo Literary Center featuring Chase Berggrun and Liz Bowen from New York City, Ashley Obscura from Montréal, Emily O'Neill from Boston, and Buffalo's own Jazz De Nero and Sarah Jane Barry. We followed up last winter's holiday party by partnering with our friends at Foundlings Press to present a New Year's Eve masquerade at MiMO Decor. The collaborative episode featured poetry from Toronto's Sennah Yee, Nashville's Chet Weise, Syracuse's Ally Young, and Buffalo's Carly Weiser and Eden Lowinger; performances by local comedians Pat Kewley and D. Arthur; art by Buffalo legend Julian Montague; and an afterparty at Més Que (featuring a piquant peach cocktail). For spring's s03e03, we threw Covers Night at Sugar City and enjoyed dozens of local poets and poetry enthusiasts reading covers of their favorite poems. In April, we were thrilled to present Boston-based *Peach* contributors and friends Emily O'Neill, Melissa Leigh Gore, Sally Burnette, Zinnia Smith, R. Lynn, and Anthony DiPietro on their home turf at Clouds and Other Louds, a poetry festival organized by the good folks at Reality Hands. And for summer's s03e04, we returned to our old haunt Pine Apple Company, where Kina Viola and Marty Cain (currently of Ithaca) accompanied returning reader and Season 1 contributor Leah Clancy, Buffalo poets Jennifer Skelton and J. B. Stone, and visual artist Mickey Harmon.

Many of the most important changes in Season 3 happened in the background. In addition to C. C. Camuglia, we welcomed Jakob Maier, Liz Bowen, and Shayna Kiblin to fill key positions in our all-volunteer staff. These talented, tireless people make *Peach* possible, and I am grateful every day for their wisdom, humor, brilliance, and support. So, now, I turn to them.

<3,
Rachelle Toarmino
Editor in Chief

EDITORS' NOTES

Q: What thrilled you the most about Season 3?

Among all of the amazing things that happened during Season 3 of *Peach*, I was most excited that we expanded our team and brought on some wonderful new editors. I'm also thrilled that we introduced the Peach Seed Residency for Emerging Editors, a program that allows us to promote more teen voices in our publications and at our Episodes Reading Series.

—Bre Kiblin, Managing Editor

Season 3 felt refined, focused, and ever-expanding. The work we were able to exhibit this year felt alive and surprising, and I'm constantly in awe of the way our writers are able to refresh my own view of art in the digital age. Our team's expansion reflected this sense of diving into the future as well; new voices will always be the key to moving forward, both behind the scenes and on the page. I feel so excited for whatever is next. The Orchard Phase has begun.

—Matthew Bookin, Fiction & Essays Editor

Our *Peach* has blossomed so much this past year in defining our cultural identity as one invested not only in experimental writing and curatorial practice, but also in the literary magazine's place as a support network and tool for building community. Couldn't be prouder of how *Peach* finds new ways to be inclusive and generative for emerging voices.

—RE Katz, Poetry Editor

It's been such a cool year for me since joining *Peach*—our submissions are consistently bolder, better, and more exciting than anywhere else I've read poems for. It's been super fun to get to write my first reviews for Peach Picks (shouts out Faye Chevalier, Richard Chiem, and Jayinee Basu), and the Episodes—especially the masquerade—absolutely slap. Plus, the occasional retweet from the *Peach* account does absolute wonders for my ego.

—Jakob Maier, Poetry Editor

The thing that surprised me most about working on *Peach Mag* was how hard it was to make choices whenever we had to narrow down submissions. Though the work of the *Peach* community is impressively diverse, it also shares a fervor and stakes and spirit that I haven't seen anywhere else, and so drawing things out from that vibrant conversation often seems like an impossible task.

—Liz Bowen, Poetry Editor

Peach Mag has allowed me to celebrate well-deserving artists worldwide, and make them feel seen, respected and worthy, and nothing is better to me than making an artist feel like their work is worth doing. I am also so flattered to be trusted by a platform as esteemed as *Peach*, and to curate the visual goodness that accompanies the sweet taste it already leaves in your mouth.

—C. C. Camuglia, Visual Arts Editor

My first year as digital editor for *Peach* has been so fun! It's been great being able to publish so many unique writers and artists and meet them at our Episodes. It's been an incredible experience to take part in giving these artists a platform for their work to be seen and read around the world. I can't wait to be with *Peach* as we continue to grow as a publication.

—Shayna Kiblin, Digital Editor

Peach has provided me so much support and recognition in the writing community, and I'm forever grateful to them! So much love to them for giving me a platform to promote so many talented young writers.

—Sage Enderton, Season 3 Peach Seed

Sweep Up Floors

Tom stood behind the gas station counter shredding to bits the page he'd just torn away from the calendar. Lingered unease had been nagging at him hours long now, but he couldn't pin down a reason, any single flash in the swarm of half-formed thoughts flitting through his head like so many butterflies. Butterflies with wings in psychedelic colors, neon current pulsing along the edges like electrified stained glass windows, poison church glass, poison words floating up with dust in slanting shafts of light—

He decided it might be best for him to stop thinking about butterflies.

The clock told him he had a few hours more to go, a few hours before sunrise extinguished the peculiar tint of artificial lighting boxed into the room by the black distance surrounding—the tundra of overgrown gravel parking lots on the northern outskirts of the city, deserted warehouses trailing north through rusted chainlink miles to the auto parts factories and turnpike further on.

When the daylight came, then it would be time to turn down the volume of the radio, spin the dial back to a Top 40 station for the daytime ladies as if it'd been there the whole time, as if the shop didn't nightly transform to a fluorescent-lighted lair, secret shrine to ancient gods of prog rock who screamed through the tinny speakers of the radio, and him the keeper, his only task to tune in and sweep up floors before morning chased them all away.

He crossed the room and poured himself a cup of coffee. Slow night—floors already mopped, persistent muddy bootprints in front of the beer cooler banished, still the better part of an hour before Karen Williamson came on the local station to read the early news: last night's crimes and the traffic report. Then she'd play a little too much Supertramp and not enough Rush—in fact had led him to realize that too much Supertramp could be played, only now,

here in the dark empty hours of playlist automation he would've been glad of it. Now nothing but quiet suffocation by plastic packaging and stale donuts, lack of air pressing him softly toward sleep, coffee thin like water, and the man on the radio singing deep green rockabye blues, some kind of cowboy song.

Stay awake now. His fingers plucked at the elastic hairband around his wrist, snapped it back against his skin. If there was just somebody to talk to, to keep him from falling, gently rolling into the half-waking valley of nightmare speculation. For a moment, he thought of Gabi, but she'd be asleep now anyway. Still he was struck by a vision of her midnight hair spread over white lace, a Hammer vampire bride in her boudoir. Inviting eyes drawing him in to the mounds of white tulle that you'd sink into like raw meringue, wrapping around you like a spider's web. Besides, she would never.

The slam of a car door outside startled him back to attention in time to watch the driver make her way to the door, in time to catch the starlight as it glistened across her cheekbones before she swept inside. She had on an overcoat a size too big and a couple decades out of fashion, not to mention too heavy for the last hours of a night that had been threatening a summer storm all along, purple sparks of heat lightning tickling the undersides of the clouds.

Another runaway. What from, he didn't know, but always the same type: showing up on a midweek quiet night to climb out of oversized cars, cloaked in clothes wrong for the season, sweatshirts and men's buttontowns meant to deflect the gaze of loiterers and late-night creeps. On their guard, disappearing into the ladies' room like this one now, buying coffee, cigarettes, a road map, maybe, but never nothing so frivolous as a magazine, and asking by way of conversation the only question they could and one to which they surely knew the answer: *This the way to the turnpike?* before

they'd swish back out the door like they'd never been.

Some nights, the vision played out in his head, how he'd walk out with one of them when he'd finally had enough of this place. It'd be a summer night, matte black sky and humid. Some girl would waltz in with her hair a mess and flannel shirt stained with sweat and engine grease, lean over the counter, give him the order to come with and he'd go along in a heartbeat. Just climb into her pickup truck—somehow always a pickup truck—and fly along the highway to the west, radio on and windows down to temper scorching night air. Not that it had to be a girl, even, though the other type showed up only seldom here, occasional young men with fear-tense shoulders, cold angles that thawed after the right look and soft words, fingers brushing his a little too long when they took their change.

"This the way to the turnpike?"

He gave a start and heated styrofoam slipped from his hand. He caught it halfway to the floor, splashing hot coffee down his front and over the linoleum. She'd come out from the ladies' now, the scarf tied over her hair—neater, straighter.

"You all right?" she asked.

"Yeah. Sorry, what were you asking?"

"This the way to the turnpike?" she repeated, then rushed on, "I mean, that's stupid, I know it, but is that way the fastest?"

He dredged up the dusty road atlas from behind the counter, kept for just such occasions, fingers tracing between cities on old paper worn smooth like cloth. "Depends where you're headed to."

"Milwaukee. Want to get there by morning."

"That's a long drive."

She turned her back, he thought to leave him, but no. Instead she poured a cup of coffee, slow, and stirred in sugar crystals that fell to trickle past the cup like moonlight and sparkle dying at her feet.

"I need to go a long way away, and quick," she said. "Is the turnpike the right way?"

"Looks like. Or," he said, following the faded ink of the highway, "you could take 76 over to 30. It ends up more or less the same toward the end of Indiana."

"The end of Indiana?" she repeated.

"The edge. The western border. The

end if you're coming from this side."

She said nothing, and took a sip of coffee.

He took a chance. "Why tonight?"

"You believe in fate?"

He kept silent, question asked by tilt of the head. Words crowded in his throat almost to overflowing, buzzing like wasps trying to force their way out, but he held their needle sting inside. *Don't you know it's a sin to go and shatter runaway faith on a night like this?*

"He can't follow me tonight."

He took a chance.

"Why tonight?"

"You believe in fate?"

He closed his eyes for a long moment, pressed hard at the outer corners, the wasp stings sinking to his stomach, not dulled by exhaling.

"Anyhow, your calendar's wrong," she said, as if she felt that she had to set things right before she left, turn the tone of their talk back to innocuous. "Wednesday's over."

"Wednesday's over?" he repeated, finding no sense in the words.

"Seventeenth was yesterday." She ripped the page from the calendar. "Here, gimme that map a second." She plucked a pen from catchall cup by the register and sketched on the back of the preceding day, ballpoint scraping hard against the counter.

He spoke again to drown out the sound. "So why Milwaukee? If it's even real." Struck by gloom—he'd never see it anyway, that or any other city but this.

Hint of smile for the first time as she tapped the printed word on his map. "It's real enough, right there. No conspiracy on the part of the Rand McNally corporation. And anyhow I got a brother there I'm staying with, so I figure I have to believe in it."

He nodded miserably. He'd fallen in love with her now, but it'd pass by the end of the night.

"Thanks," she said. "You take care now." A couple of dollar bills floated from

her fingers down to the counter on their own breeze, and she was out the door.

Nothing to her but mere courtesy, of course, and him going and tricking himself into hoping before he knew too much. Then the usual business, back out the door, gone forever to leave him here alone beneath the fluorescent lights, just his own windowlight reflection for company and Led Zeppelin slow and heavy on the radio. That'd put him to sleep sure, but always a cure for that up your sleeve. *Snap. Snap.* He watched out the window, a brief moment of nightshine across her face before she was swallowed up by her ancient Cadillac. *No such thing as nightshine*, but damn it, it was real, and only vanished as soon as you stepped through the doorway to the mundane.

It was Thursday now, still too early to be real, but soon the third-shifters stopping in would lend the weight of their fatigue to the morning, giving it substance. But for now, time to sweep sugar off the floor again, and where had those welts on his wrist come from? Only a half hour more until the living voice crackled onto the radio to drive the runaway girl out of his memory. Best thing for it. Whether she made it to Milwaukee, he'd never know.

Tom leaned against the counter with his head in his hands and waited for the first purple streaks of dawnlight before he picked up his broom.

Assuring Maximal Happiness

"Don't mind that *Keep Out* sign. Doesn't apply to custodial staff, naturally." The suit swipes a handkerchief over his brow. "Hallways down here can be tricky—haven't any more string, so sorry. Boiler room's a few turns down. What? No, no, can't come with. Pressing business, don't you know. Do give me a call if you have any trouble." Sweat trickles from his temples, his strained, glossy features somehow ghastly—melting plastic, a distorted Halloween mask.

"String?" repeats Jose, before remembering the more important question. "Hang on—where's the shutoff valve?"

The door clangs shut behind him, cutting off the answer, followed by the click of the lock—no, the *latch*, of course, not the lock. He starts down the hall and soon finds himself in a sweeping maze of passages.

A few turns had been an optimistic description. The unfinished drywall gives away to concrete block, fluorescent overheads to bare hanging bulbs. The further he goes, the greater the distance between each working light. The spaces in between offer only burnt-out bulbs, dead glass hanging like black pears, taunting him.

The concrete turns to stained and ancient brick, until that too—surely the walls of the passages can't be stone?

The air is sharp and sweet with decay. The more Jose thinks about it—not that he *wants* to think about it—the more he's puzzled by the studio having such a large basement, to say nothing of having a basement at all.

A faint sound in the distance. The boiler? No—something like footsteps, a pitter-patter overlaid with a dragging slither, somehow unclear. On the way out, he'll tell them to lay some rat traps down here.

Around the next turn, total darkness awaits. No more electric lights, but at the edge of the sickly

light cast by the final bulb, he can make out a scone on the wall, holding a torch.

A faint sound in the distance. The boiler? No—something like footsteps, a pitter-patter overlaid with a dragging slither, somehow unclean.

Jose breathes out a sigh. “*Seriously?*”

He fishes a cigarette lighter from his pocket and, after a few tries, lights the torch. He’s *this close* to turning around now, walking out, telling them to forget the paycheck. But surely, he must be almost there. Might as well deal with the damn boiler, collect his check, and then report their asses to OSHA the second he got out of here.

Jose stops dead. Was that a movement up ahead, or—?

No. Of course not. Only the shadows, flickering in the torchlight. Possibly his hand isn’t as steady as it might be, but that’s beside the point.

He takes another step, and as he rounds the next corner, the creature leaps from the shadows.

Jose turns and sprints. The walls blur. The fuzzy halo of electric light beckons in the distance. If he can make it that far—

The creature pursues. Claws scabble against the stone floor, and something shifts in weight and balance and god-knows-what but Jose can *feel* it the instant before the creature springs. He surges forward, but not far enough. Pain slices across the back of his ankle, cutting through the tendon. Jose screams as he crashes to the ground.

He rolls over, backing away, stone floor of the passage a jarring sting against his elbows. Now, in the light, he can *see*.

The creature isn’t a man, though it’s the size of one. It resembles a rodent, bristly black fur matted to its skin, overgrown fangs stained below the protruding snout.

It wears a loincloth, or perhaps the tattered remains of trousers, discolored a mottled red-brown.

The creature approaches, its movements calculated, tense in preparation to spring again. Its tongue darts out to lick Jose’s blood from its fangs. The motion reminds him, horribly, of a kitten. The creature makes a curiously guttural sound, whether speech or breath or hunting cry, Jose cannot tell.

Mersch, comes the sound from its throat.

Jose shakes his head in horror, in denial of what he sees with his own eyes.

The creature advances. *Merkh*, the creature grates as it draws in its breath, then *mersch* again as it exhales. The stench of its rotten mouth invades his airways.

Jose clutches the pendant around his neck and begins to pray. He does not remember the last time he went to church.

The creature draws in a ragged breath—*merkh*—and launches itself. *Mersch*—it expels foul air. *Merkh*, breathes or pants or screams the creature.

Jose knows that even if he could pick himself up and flee, he’d never make it back to the door. He knows, now, that even if he did, the door would not open.

The creature leaps. Its claws slice into him, jaws clamp down on tender flesh. From its throat gurgles a high-pitched, manic giggle as it begins to feed.

*

Miles above in a corner office, a small group of executives gather around a glass table.

Soon, another of their number will enter the room, will give a single, silent nod, offering

confirmation that the conditions have been fulfilled, the contract, so to speak, renewed for another year.

Until then, they wait.

One clicks his pen, bored. Another doodles on her notepad, bordered with green leaves and bright holly berries, a leftover from a holiday promo. The tip of her ballpoint presses into the paper, curving with the motion of her hand, turning the berries into triple circles to match the silhouette in the letterhead.

The table's surface reflects the bright sunlight. Outside, it is warm; the sky is blue. Somewhere far below, children laugh. Their laughter cannot be heard from the office, but the occupants know it is there. It will always be there. Assuring maximal happiness—if only in this particular location—is, after all, their business.

ALEXA LOCKSLEY IS A QUEER, NONBINARY WRITER ORIGINALLY FROM OHIO AND CURRENTLY LIVING IN LAS VEGAS. WHEN THEY'RE NOT DRINKING COFFEE, THEY'RE THINKING ABOUT COFFEE, AND SOMETIMES WRITING ABOUT COFFEE. THEY HAVE PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED POETRY AND SHORT FICTION IN *GHOST CITY REVIEW*, *SHOT GLASS JOURNAL*, *ROSE QUARTZ MAGAZINE*, AND *BONE & INK LIT ZINE*.

ALINA PLESKOVA

Cereus

As loss illusion goes, you feel
more pain in losing something

than pleasure in getting it. That's how
want becomes the narrative engine,

what else? its faithful pump. You learn
to dislocate ardor & throw it into a look,

to catch yr death drive gleaming
off a plane wing, awash in golden light,

to repeat *I know what I am*
when you want to wriggle out

from under any thumb—a safe phrase
too empty to question, same as

I have my reasons, as do you,
& we drape them over ourselves

all night. I'm never called *fierce*
unless it's aesthetic measure,

but I'm fixing to become a ruthless
Domme of my own heart, though

it doesn't fit any disposition I've held
If given the Marshmallow Test,

even now, I'd grope for the reward
Hey hive mind, can you recommend

some healthy modes of debasement
in the area? When I said my sex life

was hexed, my roommate scolded
Not every day can be Cirque du Soleil, Alina

The spirit is GGG, but the flesh
is so tired of ante-upping parlor tricks.

Like when a recent date
asked for electro-stimulation—

little concentrated shocks, he said,
I just wanna fuck w/ my dick electrified

We've each got our ways of keeping
the lights on. When I go on my nerve

as a favorite poet prescribed,
I succumb to my porous will,

little concentrated shocks
What one calls tenderness, the other

recognizes as swapping traumas
until someone taps out first

What one calls *lust between us*, the other
recognizes as her default thrum

One called our daze sorcery,
but naming should never precede

foreplay, or at least a finger licked
& stuck out to check for a current

I was born into this life during
the Week of Sensitivity,

but I'm learning to become
a night-blooming cactus:

to live exactingly, w/ less
to cast augury inward

to hold back until conditions are optimal
to unfurl only when I so desire

MAGPIE

Alone now
but like, radically

Turns out no such creature steals
shiny objects for a nest

Folklore so rarely runs parallel
to reality, & the afternoon plainly

wasted already
No afterglow & no one

left on the to-do list—
reflexive satiation

as after a bland meal
I sped through every welt,

every well-worn route to sunrise,
every kink indulged until fringe turned its own vanilla,

every throat-pulse caught
& held throbbing, some name

escaped as hiss. Mine accented
as a languid stretch: *Ahh-leena*

on a bus w/ summer cunt post-fuck stench
summoning every stillness where

the shudder should've been &
every cheery shower whistle after

Gala says of her girlfriend,
I summoned her, now I deal with her

Devotion like the best curse
you can hope to suffer

Once, we held out for months
waiting to learn who was crueler

& I wanted you to win;
call it slutty torpor

or a masochism loop or
as a favorite ex put it,

*People can tolerate infinite
damage of this variety*

The hungry ghost feigns
omnivorous, only to gorge

& spit it all back up. *Hey yea
still up.* Come press here—

at luckiest, the white light
holds for an instant

ALINA PLESKOVA IS A RUSSIAN IMMIGRANT
TURNED PROUD PHILADELPHIAN. HER POEMS AP-
PEAR IN AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW, COSMONAUTS
AVENUE, ENTROPY, B L U S H, AND OTHER PLACES.
SHE COEDITS BEDFELLOWS MAGAZINE WITH
JACKEE SADCARIO.

THE ACTUAL STARS

Her first real gig was at some bad roller rink.

It was then that I realized that I am nothing
compared to singing to strangers.
Compared to aching
over this life.

That night, I stopped like a California fir alone
in a field on fire.

But, onstage she had a kind of a breakaway moment. It was full on
and over-the-top.

A kind of a combination of us.
This burning life
no wonder I was scared.

My cousin, Free and I, out alone on the lake in the dark.

I was a girl but wanted to be some other kind of animal.

There were sequins. More than that, I said,
there was the most extreme light.

THE RELAY

Once I thought I could beat Nell in a fistfight. Once I thought:
Cherry tree. Potato plant.
Jupiter's peacock blue core.

One Halloween we were a constellation—me & Nell—
cardboard stars in damp hair.
For weeks everything we owned had a thin coat of silver.

I was a strange formation in her star spangled lake.

I called her name once, as she rounded the curve.
Once she looked back at me in the ghost light of the cherry clay track.

I could have howled at the moon like a monster.

For years, I was too afraid to learn how to drive.
I ran.
Around & around.

Dizzy & Desirous.
A Catahoula Leopard Dog
in fifteen feet of snow.

ALLY YOUNG HAS AN MFA IN POETRY FROM SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, WHERE SHE WAS EDITOR IN CHIEF AT *SALT HILL JOURNAL*. HER WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE *COLUMBIA POETRY REVIEW*, *BIRDFEAST*, *FIELDS*, *THE BENNINGTON REVIEW*, *METATRON PRESS*, AND ELSEWHERE. HER CHAPBOOK *THE WEST AND OTHER MISTAKES* WAS RELEASED BY DANCING GIRL PRESS IN 2016. SHE CAN BE FOUND PRIMARILY ON HER BICYCLE, AND ONLINE AT ALLYHOUNG.COM.

ASHLEY OBSCURA

from Ambient Technology

I want to build a world
Where we can love freely

Without fear of what we may lose
My heart hurts today because it hurts

People who love us may hurt us
But don't you want to grow and try again

Don't you
Don't you want to build a new world

I want you to
One gesture at a time

Build us a safer world
Even if love is a battlefield

Even if we're not yet
The people we have dreamed

GASP

What if we raised darkness
Like it were a baby
Worthy of our delicious affection
Abandon status updates
For open air markets
Think open thoughts
About salt so that
Light can ask: what does your desire
Desire and how
Badly do you need it?

Kindling for the statues
Fervor in your body temperature
Fragrant mangoes
Will we abandon the comfort of
Echo chambers? Will we
get so close something must close
Between us? It's happened
Before. A zodiac, a mood, too bad.

What are we willing
To destroy
To become something new?
All we do is scroll
Delete files, move them around
Away from one another
Then back again
Looking for order
And us too, we are planetary.

Waiting for a new earth
Better earth
But fruit of the earth earth
With a hard drive in the heart
Pixels lick the night
Have managed to lift
The systematics off of me
Hover cerebral in the pixel gardens

Decipher many avatars to escape
Despite it being hard
When I am soft
Because love
It still gasps
In the bandwidth of time

ASHLEY OBSCURA (B. 1988) IS THE AUTHOR OF THE POETRY COLLECTIONS *AMBIENT TECHNOLOGY* AND *I AM HERE*, AND THE WRITER OF THE VIDEO GAMES *SONGS OF THE LOST* AND *MUSEUM OF SYMMETRY*. SHE IS THE FOUNDER AND MANAGING EDITOR OF INDIE PUBLISHER METATRON PRESS (WWW.METATRON.PRESS).

from leech-book

you know why [...] gone [...] tongues are twirled together [...] set out a ritual to [...] doomed [...]
 futures [...] i do not think [...] unwind the whorled mess of history, but [...] maybe ~~to~~ mourn it ~~or maybe~~
 each other [...] cry, maybe find pleasure in a [...] maybe fight [...] maybe [...] say that ritual is the failure
 [...] body and song—she says that that failure is the whole [...] living failures [...] funeral-song [...]

hold my face in your hands, if you want. // fumble with my history like a cock
 turned cunt. let me be your useless archive, your // [...] corpse. touch me,
 navigate my cadaver; an interplay // [...] power ~~is~~ ~~in~~ ~~erred~~ ~~in~~ ~~er~~ ~~ca~~
 i'm sorry; don't forgive me. i was a little // fuck, swain-shaped and a little
 fucked up when my [...] // fell ~~for~~ ~~you~~. i ~~could~~ ~~n't~~ ~~rise~~ ~~up~~
 to understand myself, let alone // the stacks of carcasses littered between us—

i couldn't express my trans' love, couldn't // trans-verse [...] the remains
 remain. i will find what you taught me // here in [...] graves, try to find
 weeping-pleasure in the body's wormhole // wound, in no [...] time that could [...]
 where you & i sat beneath a tree while // branches spiral-twisted into our limbs' [...] or [...]
 we [...] and wept, held each [...] then, we traced [...] patterns in the dirt:

sipping dirt's suste
 back to stone [...] // sick [...] omen. i [...]
 [...] matter drawing you in, // queer feelings worming their way into stone's matrix.
 bio-exiles [...] likened unto abominations // while [...] of nature's first-lived light;
 [...] return [...] return?—// [...] hybrid
 mixing paths through the ground
 o [...]



i'm sorry. i love you. fuck the monastery. fuck the knights and the cops. amen.

from that i want

occult
force fem
sissification
commodity
gender
mentally-ill
conversion
murder
ritual
liturgy
policy
fantasy
was allowed to be
start your homosexual
i started my hormone replacement therapy

draft
compose
steal
purchase
semiotic
gender
anti-androgens
hallucinogens
estrogen
and transform
by mouth
sublingually
mutate
mogrify
into a beautiful girl
grotesque
copy
reflection
negation
annihilation
i take my hormones
ruling order
consensus reality
of the truth

self- feminizing medication insurgency
misogynist ~~semi~~ racket
want i hate your capitalist torture striptease
~~do you like my trans trauma porn~~
to stare at
be disgusted by
fantasize about
get off with
high on

ORIGINALLY FROM OXFORD, OHIO, **AVA HOFMANN** IS A WRITER CURRENTLY LIVING AND WORKING AS AN MFA STUDENT IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA. SHE HAS POEMS PUBLISHED IN OR FORTHCOMING FROM *BLACK WARRIOR REVIEW*, *FENCE*, *ANOMALY*, *BEST AMERICAN EXPERIMENTAL WRITING 2020*, AND *DATABLEED*. HER POETRY DEALS WITH TRANS/QUEER IDENTITY, MARXISM, AND THE FRUSTRATED DESIRE INHERENT TO ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ARCHIVE.

Black Dog

Nobody knows why whales strand themselves. It's been posited that one cause of stranding is when a sick whale seeks shallower waters, and the gam follows. They call it the sick leader hypothesis. If a dominant member of the gam gets lost or falls ill, the others will trail behind—even if it leads them to danger.

Once, while driving home in a storm, I made the same left turn off Main Street that I had been making for years and hydroplaned into a curb going thirty-five miles per hour. It severed my front axle in two. The whiplash eventually faded, but I was left with a tender, peach-like bruise on my forehead where it smashed against the steering wheel.

Animals have a natural response to fear. I felt, in the brief moment before my car collided with the concrete, each individual synapse firing in my brain. They all warned me at a deafening volume: *there is danger ahead*.

That was my first accident. At the time, the car belonged to my parents. They were furious. How could I be so irresponsible? Why didn't I slow down? No answer sufficed, mostly because I had none to offer. I paid for the damages out-of-pocket, biting back tears as I wiped my savings account clean and handed over a crisp \$2,000 check to the mechanic.

A nineteenth-century Victorian psychiatrist ascribed "suicidal melancholia" to certain animals. In 1845, a story was published in the newspaper detailing the death of a black dog that appeared to have drowned itself. The dog, noted as a "fine, handsome, and valuable" canine, flung its body into a nearby river, and went entirely limp once it hit the water, legs and feet "in perfect stillness." The dog was fished out by a bystander, but soon afterwards, it dove back into the river, and had to be rescued yet again. On its third and final attempt, the dog successfully sunk to the bottom and drowned.

The car returned to us in working condition. I was hesitant to drive it, especially in

poor weather, but I lived in a small suburban town and had no other means of transportation. Several months later, I left a restaurant to find my front bumper crumpled like a tin can, radiator fluid spewing all over the asphalt. Sirens rang in the distance, and I approached a man comforting his frenzied wife beside what I could only presume to be their Volvo. Smoke was leaking out from beneath the hood. While we waited for the police to arrive, I had to ask: how do you hit a parked car?

Animals have a natural response to fear. I felt, in the brief moment before my car collided with the concrete, each individual synapse firing in my brain. They all warned me at a deafening volume: *there is danger ahead*.

The woman drew in a shuddering breath. "I didn't try to break," she said. "I let it happen."

They paid the deductible. My car was out of the shop in two weeks.

The topic of animal suicide is highly debated. Do animals demonstrate the self-awareness to take their own lives? Although animals recognize death, mourn their loved ones, and exhibit fear of carcasses, it is unclear whether they understand the transience of mortality. The primary difference between humans and animals, scientists say, is that animals lack the cognitive ability to consider the future—to envision a world in which they are no longer pres-

ent.

In China, a captive bear smothered herself and her son after he underwent a painful procedure to withdraw bile from his abdomen. Spiders allow their young to eat them in order to ensure the survival of their offspring. Certain mice are infected by a parasite that eliminates their instinctive fear of cats; even once the parasite is removed, the fear remains permanently dismissed. This often results in the death of the host.

Humans, unlike animals, possess the unique ability to deny death. These days, I take the bus.

An Admission of Guilt

We were inside the Mariposa Co-op because it seemed like an appropriate place to address what I had failed to tell a stranger on the phone. I turned to Ben, who was examining a small plastic carton of dates, and said that I once ate bacon-wrapped figs, which were almost like dates, except one was a drupe and one was an edible vessel. Ben opened the carton and took out a date, squeezing it between his thumb and index finger once, twice.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Checking it.”

“For?”

“Not sure,” Ben said, rolling the date back and forth. “I think you’re supposed to do this to fruits before you purchase them.”

“Weird,” I said. He didn’t look up.

I wandered around the produce section, reflecting upon the rigid dichotomy between figs and dates. Once, when Ben and I were walking alongside an empty road at night, he confessed a certain fondness for Fig Newmans—not to be confused with Fig Newtons, the popular fig roll pastry. Fig Newmans were healthier, drier, and decidedly worse. He revealed this to me as though it was an admission of guilt. I asked Ben why he preferred one cookie over the other, and he shrugged, glancing behind us at the stoplight as it shifted from red to green. I saw myself walk into the street.

A woman wearing leather huaraches stared brokenly at a steep mountain of grapefruits while her child zoomed up and down the aisle, arms extended like they were preparing for takeoff, or crucifixion, or both. I sidled up to the citruses and weighed one in my hand. I considered tossing it in the air and bludgeoning it with a Louisville slugger. The juices would torpedo in every direction. I imagined the aftermath—a brain smeared across the sidewalk.

Ben approached me, dodging the child as it bulleted in various directions, none of which lead to a particular destination. “I’m not getting the dates.”

“Cool,” I said, as I flung the grapefruit from palm to palm. “No drupes.”

“No drupes,” he repeated.

I placed the grapefruit back in its

moat. "Can I tell you something?"

The juices would torpedo
in every direction. I imag-
ined the aftermath—a brain
smeared across the side-
walk.

He nodded, and I remembered how the woman on the other end of the hotline had a guileless voice; how I thought of her drenched in powdery, aldehydic perfume, the most maternal of fragrances; how I was sure she wore one of those cords attached to her eyeglasses, which I assumed were narrow and half-rimmed; how she asked me, "What sparked you to reach out, today?" and how I shut my eyes and ionized a conductive channel and, with a useless, trembling fingertip, ended the call.

"Edible figs always wind up with at least one dead female wasp inside," I said.

"How do you know?"

I shrugged, lying. "I don't."

AVA WOLF IS A WRITER, DESIGNER, AND SEVERAL CHILDREN STACKED ON TOP OF ONE ANOTHER IN A TRENCH COAT. HER WORK HAS APPEARED IN *BEDFELLOWS* MAGAZINE, *OCCULUM*, *FLAPPERHOUSE*, AND *TILDE LITERARY JOURNAL*. SHE LIVES IN PHILADELPHIA WITH HER BROKEN HAMPER AND AN ABUNDANCE OF DYING PLANTS.

COLETTE ARRAND

mother

tell your children
that music is only
a weapon in the right

hands. tell your
children any machine
can kill fascists: a guitar,

a voice, a trans woman's
hitachi magic wand.
true, there was a video game

where you rescued
aerosmith by shooting cds
at the people who abducted

aerosmith, but let me say
that a trans woman's orgasm
is more important than

aerosmith, more wonderful
than most music. i don't care
how heavy the riff is, i don't

care which trans woman,
i don't care if the cd you shoot
to rescue aerosmith is *danzig*

by danzig, which is the cd
i would shoot if i had the
money for cds or the kind

of heart that allows a person
to shoot another person.
once, my father took me

out to the woods to try
out his new handgun.

what i didn't anticipate

was how easily the trigger
gave, like the guns attached
to arcade games but more

solid, more consequential.
i could see the hole the bullet
left in the paper (it was not

clean) and could picture
the bullet traveling until
it came to rest in something

living, and i have not
pulled a trigger since.
though it's true that a machine

like a gun might kill a fascist
more easily than a trans woman's
shuddering in the night,

the world is full of machines
and some work more secretly
than others, more fruitfully,

at least, than a white woman
handing a cop a pepsi
at a protest rally. when they wrote

the song i'd like to buy the world
a coke, i wonder if nazis
were included in *the world*.

probably not. it isn't pleasant
to think of coca cola and Nazis
co-existing. it isn't pleasant to think

of nazis, but they exist, just as sure
as the music of aerosmith exists.
it is hard for me to hear the word

“mother” in a voice that isn’t
danzig’s, without the imperative
that follows. my mother listened

to harder things than danzig,
so she never told me anything
about him until my sister

got into the misfits, about whom
she was unphased. we believe
different things about the degree

to which a person can be horrible.
i worry that she worries that i grind
out my days hopelessly. but hope

is a relative state of being. my hope
is that the machines i have are enough
to kill a fascist, that if i die

things burn in my wake. this hope
rips through me like the voice riding
the riff of a guitar. sometimes i hear

it until all i can hear is a tuneless
ringing. i have been ready to die
for as long as i have known this song

by danzig. it is not a song about
my mother. being ready and being
willing to die are not the same thing.

Xenomorph

i.

this year
they gave a penis
to a man who lost
his penis
the new york times headline
said “whole again”
and I get why
cis people gossip
about trans women—
they’re obsessed
with the presence
and absence of cock

ii.

I’m soft unless I’m not
small unless I’m not
and would give you
this dick if you needed it
that’s a thing
trans men and trans women
say to each other frequently
living as we do in the speculative
in a world where ovaries
can be exchanged for testicles
like if the gift of the magi
didn’t end with a punchline

iii.

I read a scam e-mail
offering \$10,000
for testicles
but if testicle scientists

were really giving money away
for a piece of the body discarded
as medical waste once excised
most of my friends could afford
the down payment on a house
or on a pussy

iv.

eileen myles
once told a trans woman
that \$20,000 sounded
like cheap pussy but no
that's pretty much the average price

v.

the first use speculated
for 3D printed ovaries
is to make cis women
who don't have ovaries
"whole again"
like the soldier who lost
his cock and was given someone else's

vi.

I saw a movie
where a woman gives
herself an abortion
with a machine programmed
to treat a man
lord even our futures
are gendered

vii.

I watch a lot of movies
where anyone can get pregnant
you just need to be in a future
where an alien can force
its eggs down your throat

viii.

elon musk if you're reading this
it's too late: aliens like me
don't respect capital
we just want an infinite
universe of organisms
beyond our ruined sky
beyond the genders
we've left to ruin
we clutch our eggs
in our throats
hoping to survive you
so they might survive death

COLETTE ARRAND IS A TRANSSEXUAL POET FROM DETROIT, MICHIGAN. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF *THE FUTURE IS HERE AND EVERYTHING MUST BE DESTROYED* (SPLIT LIP PRESS, 2019) AND *HOLD ME GORILLA MONSOON* (OPO BOOKS & OBJECTS, 2017). SHE IS THE CO-HOST OF *GEAR SWITCH*, A PODCAST ABOUT THE FASHION OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING, AND RUNS *FEAR OF A GHOST PLANET*, A ZINE PRESS. SHE CAN BE FOUND ON TWITTER @COLETTEARRAND.

DANNY MERLINO

gen z

why am i a poet that can't form words?
an ugly monster that i cover in kisses
a sea serpent with her tail wrapped around my neck
it should hurt the nerves in my esophagus,
the needles in my organs
but i somehow enjoy it

i break my feathers as i force myself
into a bottle
my heart condensing into my head
replacing my brain

i'm shopping for a version of myself i can't even buy
while people congratulate the calluses
on my hands
i scream at the calluses on my heart.

instagram

we meet at a collision
you spread your legs
an illegally pink ski mask
covering the view

red gloves
with a gun in my mouth
pull the trigger
release your fingers

lipgloss stains my sheets
hormones in your cheeks
a dizzy stance

meet me at the metro
and push me into the tracks
over and over
until the sun rises,
burning our irises

DANNY MERLINO IS A 15-YEAR-OLD POET WHO
USES PRIMARY GROTESQUE BODY IMAGERY TO
EXPRESS EMOTIONS. SHE USES METAPHORS AS A
BARRIER BETWEEN HER AND THE REAL WORLD.

She used words like “wonderful”

And she loved it.
Five hundred arms craning upwards and all she could think of was
construction,
Beam walking and sandhill birds, she requested “kaboom” or “scrubbing
bubbles,”
Of course she liked a clean house.
Breasts like moons, ribs of daffodils
And helium between her eyebrows, she made me believe that home could be
built from
Unsealed letters, open bedroom door, no, her love was in the snack pack
chocolate puddings,
And she said so.
Home was made of closed mouths sneaking a midnight apple, full of empty
matchboxes moulding in the basement,
She loved me.
A cold thing, meals emptied and full of heavy cream. Safety is silence,
pulling split ends out of follicles, a hole in the door of our house—
She loves me.

Democracy

We waited for spring to grow brittle—we examined the salt & learned to live without sin, before ignoring the lesson to follow a more momentary teacher. Take it like this: there were two of us, neither saying anything of significance and both convinced that the other was right.

But we still had to work, and our labor had a voice of its own.
It spoke with the chapped lips of democracy
as if it longed for the oil that had stained your doorknobs.
In short, our work wanted a home as much as we did, forced its way onto our
pillows and tangled your hair nightly.

You told me that election day was meant to keep us complacent while our
power-holders held power.

Yes, I have known that for quite some time. You were just learning that even
water could grow bitter, you were so far behind the journey that
your vote was never in favor.

EDEN LOWINGER IS A 17-YEAR-OLD WRITER AND JELLYFISH ENTHUSIAST AT THE JUST BUFFALO WRITING CENTER. SHE ENJOYS THINKING ABOUT THE INTERSECTION OF NATURE AND SURREALISM IN ADDITION TO WRITING ABOUT HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS. EDEN ALSO ENJOYS READING ALOUD TO JUST ABOUT ANYONE WHO WILL LISTEN.

us loves god

us loves god

way this us loves god

way every and way any

god us loves god

loves us i swear god loves us

god loves us

god loves us i swear god loves us

god loves us uthman i swear god loves us

god loves us louay i swear god loves us

god loves us i swear god loves us

god loves us i swear i swear i swear god loves us

god loves <i>us</i>	muhammad i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	dad i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear i swear i swear i swear i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear i swear i swear i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	layla i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	i swear	god loves <i>us</i>
god loves <i>us</i>	fargo i swear	god loves <i>us</i>

i swear to you i swear to you i swear god loves
us more than fire

palestinian love poem

*omfg shut up the body is NOT
the only arbiter of self!! yr insinuation*

*that violets r 3 letters away
frm violence occludes*

*that they r 2 away from violins,
& 7 away frm daisies, & 13 away frm*

*free palestine. cant believe yr politic
is only decolonial. lmao.*

*yr dialectic bums me out. it is
in the interest of my cousins*

*2 hav a future outside
of righting the sins of the past.*

*mean time im dying, ha ha. theres
a kitchen sink dripping*

*out my ears, it might make a good play.
theres sickness in all my shit.*

*cant believe yr asking for my
testimony. defend yr own self.*

*there's another full garbage can.
& another school 2 sanctify.*

*another set of tweets 2 purge.
im cavorting. cant believe u didnt think*

*i could still cavort. cant believe u say u want
my mouth, still. only ever settling my ears.*

*careful- violets r blooming. violins
screaming. soon & far 2 much.*

*cant believe u mapped yr country between
my legs. my body a new blend of violence.*

*cant believe u only text me
when yr out of land 2 parcel.*

FARGO TBAKHI IS A QUEER PALESTINIAN AMERICAN WRITER AND PERFORMER IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA. HE IS A PUSHCART NOMINEE AND THE WINNER OF THE 2019 GHASSAN KANAFANI RESISTANCE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP, AND HIS WORK CAN BE FOUND IN COTTON XENOMORPH, MIZNA, COSMONAUTS AVENUE, GLASS: A JOURNAL OF POETRY, AND ELSEWHERE. HE TWEETS @YOUKNOWFARGO AND PROBABLY WANTS TO HOLD YOUR HAND.

IVANNA BARANOVA

aloe

how can i
ask you
to max me
out in a way
that's edgy?
the favor
being both a kind
of "fuck you"
and a "you complete
me baby"
at best
how to be
your new
translucent
heaven
given my
low gleam
in this eternal
rhinestone

aptitude
of the white
imagination
sorry
i lose
and make the money
spend the money
become
the money
all so
you'll keep me
in your pocket
like aloe-infused
kleenex
like cash cash cash
in this emergent
corporate utopia
everything shines
green

like that
even the mornings
reek of lime
even the shitty cacti
reverberate
emerald
no recourse
non-financial
non-carbonated
non-clean
lately
we discuss
capital
in the act
of fictive
ascension
incanting
the ungettable
these days

has anyway

become

my vague

little brand

of heaven

neon

notice me
allowed
to lie quiet
on top
the concrete
if and
i want to
sure

you always
want to be
the fucking foucault
of public spaces

not here

of late
i know all
conversation
is a long arrival

to be close
to you and also
also further

us this erratic night
us this neon moon

mouth speaks nice
temperature tonight
then silence

the word
enacts itself
unconsciously i obey

IVANNA BARANOVA IS A BROOKLYN-BASED POET
AND THE AUTHOR OF *CONFIRMATION BIAS*, OUT
WITH METATRON PRESS.

Drink

Body with dead heat, matted fur, abusive lair
Disarranged girlhood down the madder couch
When not far a glass drowns its pink-purple fanfare
Behind the screen an egg broke whitens the short road
You could carefree an aisle, you might call it an air
There were no blood-limits, just an origin in gauze
So run it, roll it, work it, raise it, boil off care
How much left of summer, when nothing ends in the end
Just a baby: so little to cry, so little to think
One never minds puking when the returns are so grand

Dogs

Dogs have a muscle that lets them make a face to melt a human's heart.

I am choosing to be well
in his fist, mouth
its most hole, hurt
and parted, brow wet
red, even with windows open.
His plane in my tent,
his hand on my plant,
a plan losing water
on the bench. I am choosing
the oven, black as eyes.
choosing my allergies, dog
at the knee, dog under
pillows, dog in the night,
I forget why I love him
more easily than dreams.

JOANNA NOVAK IS THE AUTHOR OF THE NOVEL *I MUST HAVE YOU* AND THE BOOK-LENGTH POEM *NOIRMANIA*. HER WORK HAS APPEARED IN PUBLICATIONS INCLUDING *THE PARIS REVIEW*, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, *THE WASHINGTON POST*, *SALON*, *GUERNICA*, AND *BOMB*. SHE IS A COFOUNDER OF THE LITERARY JOURNAL AND CHAPBOOK PUBLISHER, TAMMY.

JULIANNE NEELY

A WOMAN WALKS INTO A BAR

A woman walks into a bar but it's not a joke

A woman walks into a bar and doesn't want to focus on staying alive

A woman walks into a bar and she's been here before

I walk into a bar

I walk into a bar and fall in love with a man

I walk into a bar and fall in love with a man and why should I see it coming

A woman walks into a bar but she doesn't look both ways

I walk into a bar and a man rips the skin off a lime

I walk into a bar not looking out for danger because I, myself am the danger

A woman walks into a bar and why do men mistake the smell of Versace
perfume for desperation

A woman walks into a bar and a man sizes up his hands to the circumference
of her neck

I walk into a bar and it's a cliché what happens next

It's a cliché what happens next

It's a cliché what happens next

I walk into a bar and I am tired

A woman walks into a bar and she has her mother's mouth

A woman walks into a bar and she'll be sorry

She'll be sorry for walking into the bar

She'll be sorry for walking into the bar

I'm sorry for walking into the bar

Why must I be sorry for walking into the bar

I walk into a bar and I say Yes and Would and Like A Drink

I walk into a bar and it is something I will not write down

A woman walks into a bar and oh be careful

I walk into a bar and I am sick of reading this poem

I walk into a bar and yes, I am drunk

A woman walks into a bar but her voice will not reach

I walk into a bar but this is not where I thought I would be

A woman walks into a bar and if the refrain is cumbersome then you are the
problem

I walk into a bar and dear god, let me speak

A woman walks into a bar and every flag loses its color

A woman walks into a bar and be still

I walk into a bar and reach reach everything anything anywhere hurts hurts

A woman walks into a bar and enough

A woman walks into a bar and here she'll start dying

I walk into a bar and where should I keep the truth

A woman walks into a bar and a man believes he knows what must be done

with her

A woman walks into a bar and I don't know what to tell her

I walk into a bar and become a contour, a silhouette, an illustration of
assumption

I walk into a bar and I am tired

I walk into a bar and silence

I walk into a bar and dear god, let me speak

A woman walks into a bar, intelligent

A woman walks into a bar and it is dangerous to desire men

I walk into a bar and desire is pathological

A woman walks into a bar and the perils of a glance cannot be overestimated

I walk into a bar and let me scream with a grate that damages my throat

A woman walks into a bar and landscape becomes language

I walk into a bar and I still don't believe in irony

A woman walks into a bar and I want to walk into a bar and hold her but I
am tired

I am tired

I am tired

I am tired

I walk into a bar and dear god, let me speak

THAT'S NOT HOW LESBIANS HAVE SEX

I am a woman in the house

and such comes at expense.

I am a woman in the house.

A mother and a father sleep in a bed and they ask.
The preachers ask, the men, the men with pallid
flowers, the cops driving by, they all ask.

I am a woman in the house.

I have a brother who has a wife and we all know what
they do when the crickets make their evening
emergence.

I am a woman in the house.

Yes, we all know anatomy, we have all been to health
and biology. Vestibule. Stick. Partial women. If I
showed you a photograph of a woman, would you
recognize her, would you see any aspect of yourself.

I am a woman in the house.

Mothers and fathers linked arm in arm, wide-eyed.
They say make room for the free.

I am a woman in the house,

I undress myself. Who taught men
to voice their disciple?

I am a woman in the house

wrapped in veil like you o my dear ones. Unnamed,
unchristened, gouts of flesh and hair. May I be
frank? Very few men have mastered the simplest art

of superior kissing.

I am a woman in the house

sealing the other side of the door, wearing my best
scent. It seems all I do is carry firewood from shed
to furnace. Husbands of the world, I have read
your poems. Do you hear what I hear? A book
of verse, a loaf of bread rising.

I am a woman in the house,

especially at 2 in the morning. Monsters are real
and they sleep in your beds, eat at your dinner tables
and look like the ones you love.

I am a woman in the house.

apologetic. San Francisco. Mid-sixties. Psychedelic
renaissance. How can I explain this? Today, I do not
want anything to touch me. I chop onions for the chili.
I thread my precious needle.

I am a woman in the house,

intellectual property. Imagine me making
and unmaking a man's bed. Sugar and spice.
Tabernacle and sovereignty. Vegas-chapel quickie.
Conveyor-belt parting of ways.

I am a woman in the house,

force-fed. I sigh my continuous sigh, honey
in my mouth, bitter in the belly,
Word hidden in the words.

JULIANNE NEELY RECEIVED HER MFA DEGREE FROM THE IOWA WRITER'S WORKSHOP, WHERE SHE RECEIVED THE TRUMAN CAPOTE FELLOWSHIP, THE 2017 JOHN LOGAN POETRY PRIZE, AND A SCHUPES PRIZE FOR POETRY. HER WRITING HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN *HYPERALLERGIC*, *VIDA*, *THE RUMPUS*, *THE IOWA REVIEW*, AND MORE. HER CHAPBOOK *THE BODY BESIDE HERSELF* IS OUT NOW FROM SLOPE EDITIONS.

Bad Blood

In my dream,
I am floating in a grey city;
a blimp hits a building &
I shelter. My ex apologizes—
“I didn’t know it was rape”—
and I cook him a hot meal.
This is one of my worst features,
to stew in hate and then give
my furrowed brow sweating,
the smell of an oven, how gas
kills slowly and silently
like dreams.

I’ve been bleeding
out old blood.

After the hormones
are gone, my body flushes itself
of waste, and everything
is brown. This old blood
remembers. From how long,
I wonder. What touched you
in the night. What sludge leaking
the secrets out.

I am horrified
in the dream, at my ability to forgive.
It’s not like that, I tell myself.
In real life, I am brave. So
we convince ourselves, we are
bigger, sharper. I say:

I feel most at home with a box cutter in hand
and nod at the line on the page. Yes.

But on the inside I’m just fluid.
On the inside, my body
betrays itself again and again

on a cellular level. I'm doubled
over in a Target bathroom wondering
why I can't ever feel normal. I miss
my little white pills, those ghosts
of fullness. Trick my insides.

Day 13: still bleeding, still dark
waters. I miss my red, bright
bloody insides, angry
as I feel, wild & shocking.
I can't feel anything
sometimes, or I feel
so much I break, or
when I imagine certain
faces my whole body
curves inward. This the
wretching, constant
sickness, how much
more can I lose & how
strong are the walls
that hold up my uterus,
& are they as strong
as old trees or the layers
of the earth, maybe this thing
I disdain & worship will be
my downfall: it's all
a raging red sinkhole
at the end of the world.

what monsters i have known

i dug my nails into dirt, turned them black
and learned how to sweat
recalling years of mucking around these riverbanks
pulling out crayfish that were the only monsters i knew
all spiny-legged, writhing in cyclical patterns in a net
quills pulsing when thrown into a bucket,
bodies a deep red chestnut. everything
was soil and wet leaves, even the burnt sky and being
ten was less about smiling and more about knees
pink from kneeling, pulling up rocks for salamanders.
there might have been magic left
between hollow logs, when names
were only carved into trees, were only letters
disrupting the speckled mountain range of layered bark—
we only watched the things we pulled from the river
squirm in plastic tanks, then threw them back into the mud.

KINA VIOLA LIVES IN ITHACA, NY, WHERE SHE
CO-RUNS THE PARTY FAWN READING SERIES AND
MAKES CHAPBOOKS FOR GARDEN-DOOR PRESS.
WORK HAS APPEARED OR IS FORTHCOMING IN
BEST OF THE NET, *SMALL PO[R]TIONS*, *DREGINALD*,
JELLYFISH, AND OTHER JOURNALS. SHE ALSO EDITS
CHAPBOOKS FOR BIG LUCKS BOOKS.

MELISSA LEIGH GORE

a very narrow set of stairs

I can't stop thinking about Dr. Ford
and her two front doors

the way her need for escape
became inescapable

my doors, too numerous in dreams,
swing inward, the record groaning

in reverse, crystal doorknobs
a rattling chorus of snakes

we pray at the altar of one
changed detail, pray to emerge

without that fingernail of fear
pressed deep in amygdala clay

the needle stutters over this groove again and again

on the bus this morning a man talks
to his wife on the phone about sod

the relative merits of having or not having
grass at its full height in front of their door

maybe she needs this too, wields her
own sandpaper against the unspeakable

no more naked dirt for her back to press against
no rock to catch the lip of a flip flop in flight,

just the grass green enough on the other side of the door
for each blade to whisper: *it cannot happen here*

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik

*“... there are always stairways, hallways, even very private theatres
where the suffocations and the finalities are being played out,
the blood red carpet or cruel yellows ...”*

–Dorothea Tanning

You may stir in the little serenade of your sleepwalking,
but here, petals do not unfold at night with the
precision of time lapse reels in this halfway
house to the primal scene, no,

your alleles clang together in rounds, heavy
bells, rust wrinkles settled into dry tongue grooves.

You are a garden sunk deep into the crust
of a flooded earth, a hotel bed sheet swan dive
into linoleum, linoleum, linoleum,
but that childish fear spreading over you
is just the skin of the future–

girlhood is a menace, Miss Chloe,
and you are everything, everything,
everything nice.

Who emerges free from these flower folds
this hallway wrestling
this creampuff Maybelline IV drip
this jarring fall down the wine carpeted stairs
of the real
and the leering?

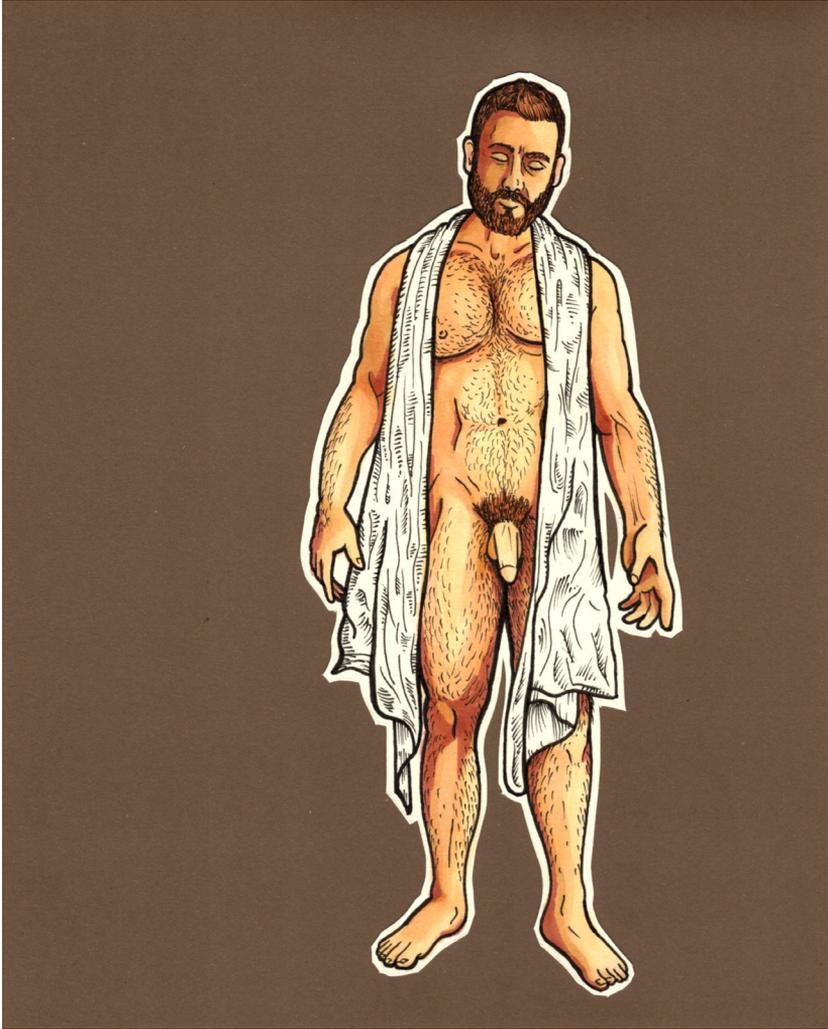
Which of us, in relief,
has not walked through
that sinister open door?

MELISSA LEIGH GORE IS A POET FROM BOSTON.
HER WRITING HAS APPEARED IN *DRUNK IN A
MIDNIGHT CHOIR*, *GLASS*, *THE RUMPUS*, AND OTHER
PUBLICATIONS. BY DAY SHE WRITES CODE THAT
HELPS PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND POLITI-
CAL CAMPAIGNS RAISE MONEY.

MICKEY HARMON

from Send Nudes



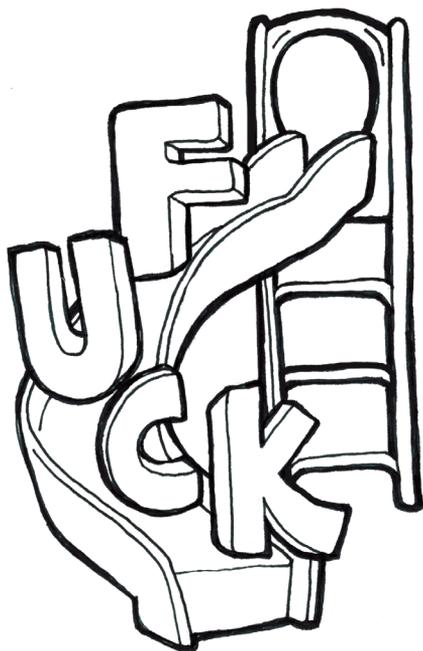


STRAIGHT

BINGO

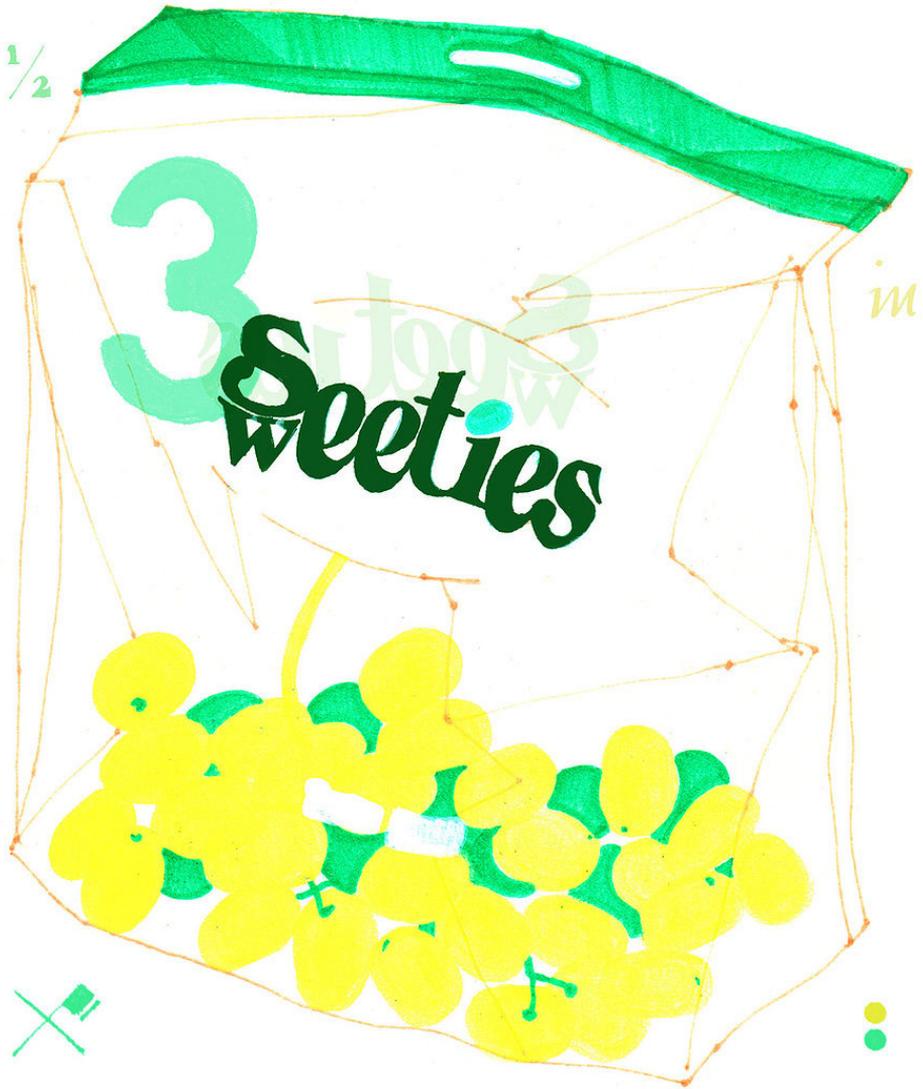


from Color Me White



MICKEY HARMON IS AN ILLUSTRATOR AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER BASED IN BUFFALO, NY. HE PRIDES HIMSELF ON COLLABORATING WITH LOCAL ARTISTS, WRITERS, AND ACTIVISTS TO BETTER REPRESENT THE CREATIVES IN HIS CIRCLE OF PEERS. HE HAS PUBLISHED THREE BOOKS: *COLOR ME WHITE*, *THE LIFE & TIMES OF GROVEY CLEVES*, AND *A PIE-EYED NIGHT WITH PEGGY O'NEIL*. HE CURRENTLY LIVES IN THE ALLENTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD OF BUFFALO, WHERE HE RUNS PINE APPLE COMPANY, A LOCAL COOPERATIVE ART GALLERY AND GIFT SHOP.

from Loops



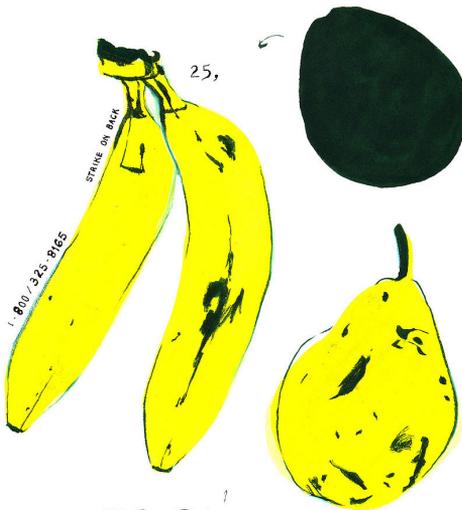
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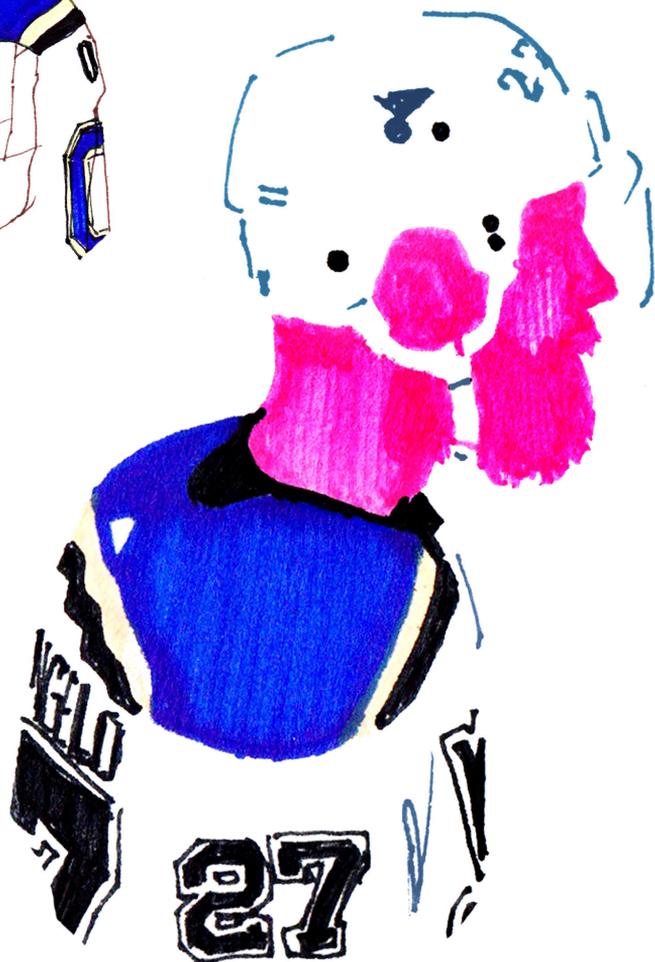
RP

King Edward
is The
PR Relaxor



1937-61

from Full Coverage





PATRICIA THOMASSON IS A FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR AND LETTERING ARTIST FROM MISSOURI, CURRENTLY LIVING AND WORKING IN QUEENS, NY. HER IMAGES COMBINE AN INTEREST IN UNPRINTABLY BRIGHT COLORS WITH A TWEEN HISTORY OF WEEKENDS SPENT PICKING THROUGH OLD ADS AND SIGNAGE TO MAKE VIBRANT PIECES WITH INK-LADEN SURFACE TEXTURES. LEARN MORE AT ANTICIPATRICIA.COM.

SUNSHOWER

i grew up without a word
for when the sun is shining
when it rains and i think it's better
for there to still be things
in nature with no names
that way they get to just
remain phenomena

it's raining when the sun is shining and we
are all living in abundance!
if i order fries
will you eat some?
if i refer to myself as a twenty-something
three weeks before my thirtieth birthday
will you indulge me?

hey, it's always been a wild year
no one is ever not having
an insane time
things are constantly catching
on fire and being put out

my friends are the kind of people
who come to the hospital with bags of candy
and invite you to pool parties
and trade you dresses in the bathroom
and let you take a nap in the middle of the day
even if you are in paris, france

i do not believe
i have ever in my life said
"i think one bottle of champagne
will be enough"
in order to weep
in order to lick your wounds
and those of your clique
you gotta stay hydrated

one day i couldn't walk a mile
and another i was on top of a mountain!
in montana!
there are reasons to keep yourself alive:
like your parents
and seeing animals in the wild
and bob seger on the radio
and dinner

in chinese 8 is the luckiest number
and looks like a mountain
well i was born in 88
which is double the luck
and two mountains
so when you climb one you
have another just to look at
tell me what's better
than a t shirt and a toothbrush
from the best looking person
i have ever seen!
in the summer at four
in the morning
three weeks before my
thirtieth birthday

the funniest joke i know about
is when one person drinks water
and the other screams its poison!
and the first person spits it all out

what happens to one of us
happens to all of us
mushrooms have underground
networks in the forest that
keep everything alive
which is why i'll always watch
your bag for you when you get up
to use the bathroom

at the coffee shop or pick you up
from the airport in a convertible
or meet all your coworkers at an
office sponsored happy hour or
rescue you from drowning or
pass you a napkin or
remember your food allergies or
help you move in the summer
even when you own a stupid amount
of books that you are not
going to read or
party hard on your birthday or
kiss you on the mouth
forever!

there is just so much stuff!
humans are wrapping up but
i'm learning about things
everyday
impossibly, in the final act
there are still new pop songs
and some of them are
really good
we are living in abundance
and it is phenomenal!

EVERYTHING IS FINE

my phone says blue thermometer
in new york and i am slushing
my ass through sleet to veselka
where the server is yelling MORE BORSCHT
at the cook and the woman next to me
at the counter is wearing barrettes
that spell SEX and yeah, we're both
eating borscht

everyone is eating borscht
under valentines signs
reading TEA FOR TWO
like pushing a button
to make some water hot
and offering it to someone
can spell INTIMACY

'i want to make my interior
body temperature match yours'
i imagine saying to someone
in offering
i think about christmas hickies
and loaned turtlenecks
sucking somebody up
to their surface
and then bundling
them back up

my phone shows a night sky
and i'm pushing through
some heavy metal doors
to the hospital gym
where the counselor is instructing us
which bag of chips is GLUTEN FREE
and to Turn our Cell Phones on Silent
the woman next to me
is telling the table about her mother
in-law asking if anything could be done

about her face
and the woman on my other side
says FUCK THAT!

everyone here is burned
and also alive which means
we get to call each other
SURVIVORS, like diana ross,
like the mug i saw on amazon
that said "I SURVIVED another
meeting that should've
been an email," because
a bad day is relative,
i think, as i walk 72 blocks
home with all of my hair,
ten fingers and just
as many toes

i imagine having
a mother-in-law
and the possibilities
are endless!

it's somehow still winter
and my phone is just like,
you're doomed! but
this guy's chipping the ice
off the windshield of my
grandpa's old truck while
i sit in the cab
he's clearing every patch
of glass i might glance
through on my drive
down the hill and i'm shouting
STOP, IT'S GOOD,
THANK YOU,
THIS IS EXCESSIVE
and he keeps hacking

away like a mad man, like
someone whose got
their mars
in aries

I think with my good luck
and his good looks
we could maintain a certain
temperature forever!
we've got the hands we need
to hold a soup spoon,
i've got so many
other places
to be

i imagine offering a ride to someone
and I imagine them accepting
I imagine two green mugs
with a beverage split between

I imagine things working out
I imagine some grass in the spring
My phone all blue sky with
Numbers that start with a 7
A face in the sun
With a straw in the mouth
Gazpacho in a
Plastic cup

It's raining and my phone
Is dead and I'm barely
making the leap
Over the puddle
surrounding the median
on allen and canal
Where people are dragging
Bags for the bus, a guy
with an 8 hour ride asks

the barista at the window
for a double whiskey and
she says if I had any
I'd give it to you!
my socks
Through my boots
Are wet
And it's fine, I think,
I can take them off to dry
When I get home

RACHAEL LEE NELSON IS AN ARTIST AND WRITER
LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY. HER WORK HAS
APPEARED IN *SHITWONDER*, *SHABBY DOLL HOUSE*,
AND *PROFOUND EXPERIENCE OF EARTH*.

Things I can easily imagine Elon Musk doing

1. Internally critiquing the performances of the other guys in his Improv Over 40 workshop with great viciousness, but then totally choking when it's his turn to do a scene with Rhonda from Toluca Lake
2. Researching the relative merits of Rogaine vs. Propecia in an incognito window
3. Buying a \$75 hair straightener from a mall kiosk and then getting it home and scolding himself for buying yet another thing he doesn't need from a mall kiosk
4. Bringing a 30-rack of Natty Ice to befriend the undergrads during homecoming weekend at his alma mater every single year
5. Singing along extra-loud to the "I'm a joker, I'm a toker, I'm a midnight smoker" line in that one goofy Steve Miller Band song
6. Subtly flexing his arm anytime a woman touches it for any reason
7. In the course of an hour, without realizing it, opening 17 tabs of Wikipedia articles about women being kidnapped, tortured, or murdered
8. Saying "earn this dollar" to a stripper while holding it just out of her reach in what he imagines is a flirtatious way
9. Eating peanut butter out of the jar while sitting on the toilet and reading his 401k statement
10. Losing a drunken fistfight in the Las Vegas Morimoto
11. Saying "I'm sorry, I just can't taste the saffron. I need to be able to taste the saffron" to his server while sending his risotto back to the kitchen and then saying "see, that's better" when she brings back the same risotto, untouched, and he tastes it

Strongly agree

You never make decisions that you later feel bad about.

You do your best when you can concentrate on one thing at a time.

When your employer explains how you can do better, you do not explain that you are doing your best.

You do your best when you are given multiple projects operating on several different deadlines.

You believe that cheddar is the finest cheese for macaroni and cheese.

You decide how hard to work at a job based on how much money you think you can get.

You do not want to die right now.

Your form is dangerously incorrect when you lift weights and you need a man to show you the proper way.

You are able to work well and calmly under pressure.

Your imagination is prey for the shudder of bicep under skin, for the punishment of a tree trunk against your throat.

You believe in the scintillation of one yellow sun into your eyes between buildings.

You believe that it is stealing to spend more time than allotted at lunch or on a break.

You believe that it is stealing to spend a few moments goofing off at the desk.

You believe that it is stealing to be a little octopus dawdling beneath the waves of the ocean.

You believe—wholeheartedly!—in the saxophone solo in Bruce

Springsteen's "Bobby Jean."

You believe that your boss deserves your best performance.

You believe that your pussy does the same thing as anybody else's.

You believe that you do not bring your personal problems to work with you.

RAX KING IS A DOG-LOVING, HEDGEHOG-MOTHERING, BEER-SWILLING, GAY AND DISABLED SUMBITCH WHO OCCASIONALLY WRITES AND WORKS AS ASSISTANT EDITOR FOR SUNDRESS PUBLICATIONS. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE COLLECTION *THE PEOPLE'S ELBOW: THIRTY RECITATIVES ON RAPE AND WRESTLING* (URSUS AMERICANUS, 2018). HER WORK ALSO APPEARS IN *CATAPULT*, *AUTOSTRADDLE*, AND *BARRELHOUSE*.

SARAH JANE BARRY

from Reframing the Past





from Double Exposure





SARAH JANE BARRY IS A WRITER, ARTIST, AND LIBRARY WORKER IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK. WHEN SHE'S NOT DRAWING ON STRANGERS, SHE LIKES TO SPEND TIME WITH HER SON, ARLO JANE, WHO IS ALSO HER CAT.

SOPHIE HUSTWICK

from Los Angeles, 2017







from Cuba, 2019







SOPHIE HUSTWICK IS A BRITISH, PINK-HAIRED FILM PHOTOGRAPHER. HER VIBRANT PHOTOGRAPHS DOCUMENT THE INTERPLAY OF COLOR, COMPOSITION, AND LIGHT IN HER DAILY SURROUNDINGS.

SPENCER WILLIAMS

I Call the Rape a Rape

and first, there is the nothing sound
a mouth makes around a finger,
the wet string a finger makes upon
leaving the mouth. There is the slur
that names this hole faggot, the shape
a tongue takes to the dirt. Prayer knees,
scraping. Then, the music of bruise. Of hard
red lines. The memory like a wrist guided
back towards the seam. The fresh pluck
of skin. Of kill. I call the rape a rape
and the funeral drips

out of me: I call the rape
a rape
and break
again over
the cliff
of his knee.

I say his name
and taste dry
wood. Touch
myself, cum
termites
on my back.

Say it back to me now,
how in the clearing
there was me,
and him

and a branch
that gored
my throat.
Louder
still, the word
love inside
my faggot

mouth.

Jeremy's Party at Colonial Bowling Lanes, Iowa City, 2017

Vanessa Carlton's "White Houses" comes on in the drafty bowling alley, which is mostly empty, save for a couple old folk and the birthday crowd, so I don't feel as awkward when I start crying. Maybe that's what depression is—an old power ballad crawling back into your head while you begrudgingly slip three fingers into three dark holes.

The power of "White Houses" lies in how simply it describes being taken for the first time. The sex warrants punctuation, sure, but just barely. The "cracked leather seat" is more significant—location never blurs or forgets, while men are always fleeting, departing, and reentering at the same time. The proof is in the blood letting. With a wet face, I stand in the middle of my lane with the bumpers up.

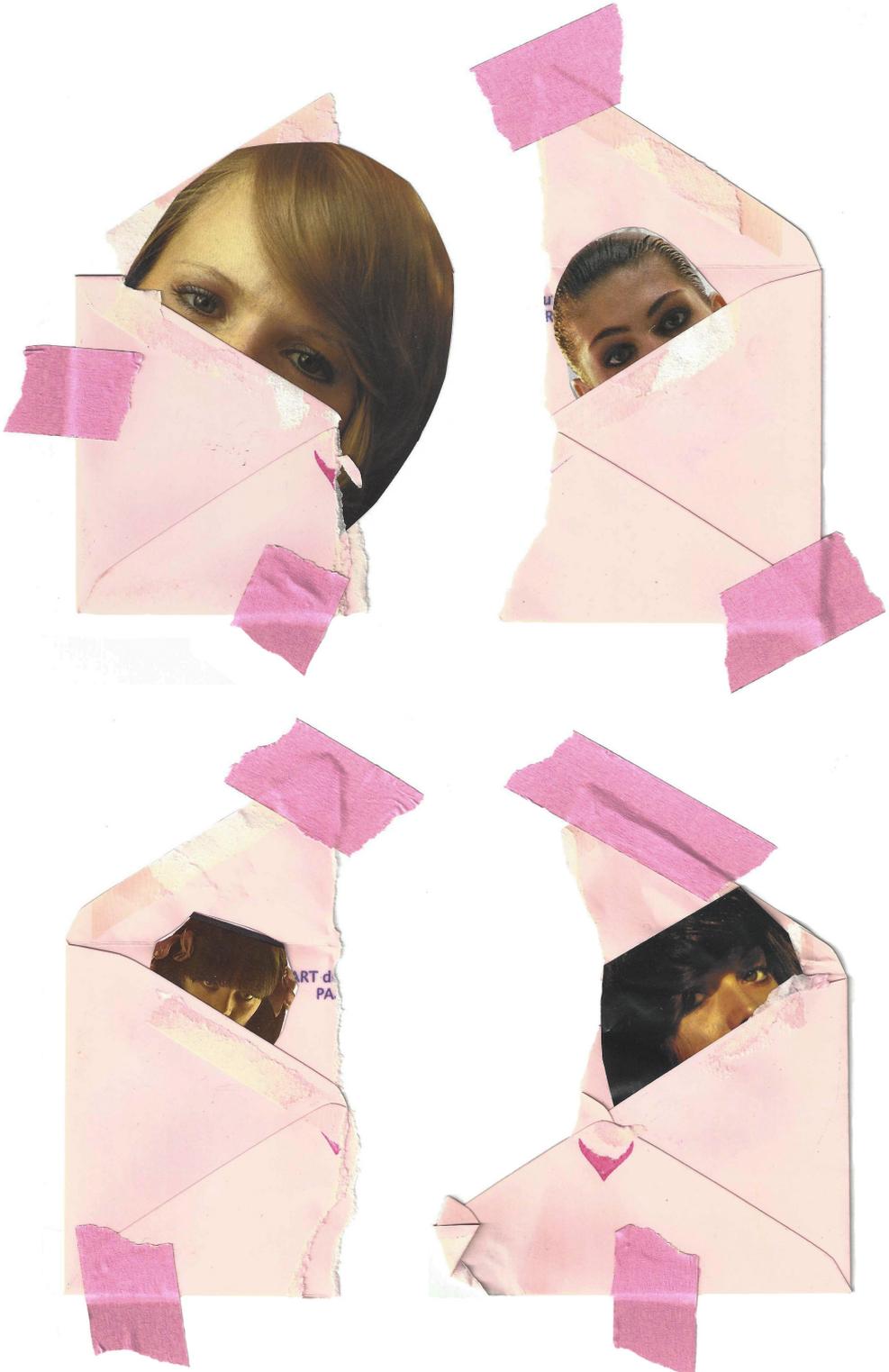
Vanessa names a man her first mistake, but when does the counting start? On my right hand, three fingers I've buried in the ball try desperately to balance the weight of this question. Such silly little wounds. Someone behind me says, *it's all in the flick of the wrist*. The pins glare as the ball stalks towards their pear-shapes. Seconds later and impact explodes them in every direction. I resist the day, Vanessa, and still, it breaks me.

SPENCER WILLIAMS IS CURRENTLY AN MFA CANDIDATE AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF *ALIEN PINK* (THE ATLAS REVIEW, 2017) AND HAS WORK FEATURED OR FORTHCOMING IN [PANK], POWDER KEG, BAT CITY REVIEW, AND ALWAYS CRASHING. SHE TWEETS MOSTLY NONSENSE @BURRITOTHEIF.

TAYLOR YOCOM

from rendre le regard







from I'm sorry, is this too much?



TAYLOR YOCOM (B. 1992, DES MOINES) IS AN ARTIST EXPLORING THE GENDER PERFORMATIVITY OF FEMALE NICENESS THROUGH VIDEO, INSTALLATION, COLLAGE, AND PHOTOGRAPHY. SHE HOLDS A BFA IN PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA AND AN MFA IN VISUAL ART FROM WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS'S SAM FOX SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND VISUAL ARTS. SHE HAS EXHIBITED AND SCREENED HER WORK ACROSS NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE.

Abdication by Earthquake

the clock ticks slower for her
blood rain, and the heaven fog
she's mine through nightmares

imagine lava creeping towards
uncertainty from underwater women
mouse squints when she whispers woods
old magic, itching to make wind

it'll scorch arms that taste like apples
it'll open your fears into static
it's a mystery stitched inside the sleeve
of baby blue church bell chimes

light the sirens red hot and see
into more powerful footprints,
piercing the rushing streams again.
you found abdication by earthquake

suspense drops when the blossoms fall
cool waters stretch far into open arteries
blackboard littered with sharp crystals and quartz
thorns like teeth stitched the sky

Light Pollution

Sunset blooms like smile,
Opening teeth for orange popsicle
& waiting for dark.
I see stars but you tell me
They're just airplanes overhead;
I keep my dreams alive,
Tell you about the stars at my grandma's house.
About the twinkling,
About my aunt Gloria.

Here grass grows slow
And tree silhouettes make river bank
Look like savannah.
We come to live here
In solace like distant stars.
My smile feels bright like twinkling
When you hold me tighter and kiss my head,
But we are not stars,
Only airplanes.

Teach me to be grounded
Without sneakers to hit the sidewalk.
You run, laces untied, careless.
Now I know why you don't want to be an airplane.
Keep your roots low, your feet moving,
Getting further away from what scares you.
As I watch your silhouette darken
I reflect on yesterday's promise,
Last week's question.

Heart, soft and loving, revealed
In street lights & headlights outside my house.
Skin, warm and graceful, revealed
In dorm, dim from rainy weather.
I put stars in your eyes but they didn't last through the day,
Faded out like supernova: abrupt to a fault.
I tell you I'd piece space dust back together
But you don't believe in stars like me
And I'll never be an airplane.

TRINITY RIDOUT IS A YOUNG WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND ARTIST TRYING TO THRIVE IN OUR EVER-CHANGING WORLD, ONE POEM AT A TIME. SHE ATTENDS BUFFALO STATE COLLEGE AND IS A FORMER YOUTH AMBASSADOR AT THE JUST BUFFALO WRITING CENTER.

Transitional Object

The hottest part of my body is its
refusal to take material form.

So many things could have gone wrong I've been
letting things go a little. Everyone
is someone's idiot rando, I could
be yours. Organizing a fragmented
self around objects, the couple form. De-
nouncing as reactionary woman-
haters everyone around me. The way
she kept repeating the image of the
man with the gun in his mouth, not the things
themselves but the figures for the things, that
was the thing. The fantasy that I could
have my work and I could have *** and that
would be enough, it would add up to a
life. The retreat to domesticity
and care that I've wanted so badly. It
gave pleasure to believe in a future
radiating outward from the present.

The season demands the hanged man reversed

less mentally ill than I would have ordinarily been. I have enough rage to carry me through another 5-10 minutes. Then start to feel seasick, dead in the pit of the gut. I feel ready like something is happening / tell me what's happening. The silence that descends along the renovated barn, peaked ceiling exposed rafters globelike chandeliers. The borderline condition the unequal condition the peripheral condition the highly scripted performance, how the illusion becomes the illusion. How the illusion takes on form and adds up to a life and his cruelty emerges at last as something utopian. Once-electric hatred of self and other channeled out. I can feel it building in my chest like water, a feeling of suspension. Like conditions on the brink of

being altered, maybe there's that charge in
the air right now, an iron charge. But to-
night I feel a tenderness, a being
in the world without denouncing the world
the way I did last night. I feel ready
like something is happening / tell me what's
happening. She kept saying "sentences
that commit suicide" sentences can't
commit suicide. Sickness. Dead sea of
salt in the pit of the gut. I fanta-
size I leave the meeting halfway through. Some-
thing in the air a rain taste. Everyone
watches my panic attack takes notes. I
write a novel depicting "the" "Asian"
"American" "experience." I o-
pen my eyes, my mouth, the brackish water
spills. I am his negative image, my
hair, my inhibition, running in place
watching New Jersey disappear behind
me.

from Mary, or Mariko

She thought of Julian often, the beautiful thing she'd lost. She thought of him, in particular, in the early days of her exile: twisted up in the narrow plane seat trying to sleep, the Pacific a dark swirl beneath the window. Then watching the men in white gloves scan their documents on the other end. They spoke a few words to her father that she couldn't understand and waved the family through.

Then, the Narita express. She leaned her head against the glass, felt the vibration through her skull. Watched the angular buildings stream by, unlovely beneath the gray winter sky. Ugly postwar buildings with their bathroom-tile walls, balconies whose clothes lines flapped in the wind. She thought of Julian's long-fingered hand, tapping the side of a teacup. Her vanilla perfume, heavy in the filtered air, his volumes of Fitzgerald and Eliot. Her coming into that funny awareness of her body, its grace and her gangly limbs, the intention she put into each of its movements. His smiling face, how quickly it had turned cold. The fate that had turned him cold and brought her here. The rice fields slid by like green ribbons. In the midst of the fields a man was burning a can full of trash, fanning the flames away from his face with his hand.

She thought of Julian and remembered her training. How she could stand in the crack between mirrors and turn and turn. The leg went first, bending up, then the torso, then the head. If they trailed too long behind each other you'd twist yourself up, ungainly. Too fast and you'd dizzy yourself, collapse like a top thrown off balance. Instead the body turned and the head whipped around at the very last moment, never losing sight of the chosen point high up on the wall, the constant that stabilized. Fixing her eyes on that point she could turn like a soldier, again and again.

*

Mariko had always hated Hadley's Asian in-

ternational students. Or not hated but feared, feared becoming like them. Not the rich beautiful ones, who exuded a certain mystique. The rich ungainly ones. The gangly girls with their frizzy hair and bow legs who spoke in halting, accented English. What she thought of as a personality was formed in reaction to them. They were the reason she dyed her hair, smoked her cloves and dressed like she did, walked around with her battered copies of *Franny and Zoey* and *The Bell Jar*. But it bound her to them. Her fear. As though they were an illusion of sorts and so being unlike them was what it meant to be real, to desire to be real.

In Tokyo, the terms of the game shifted. While no one looked askance at her on the street, she could feel a certain charge in the air, a pressure that showed her that her makeup was wrong, too natural on the skin and too harsh around the eyes, and that her clothes were in colors either too somber or too bold. Her accent was the foreign one here, she forgot the simplest words for the simplest things, used the counter for people when she should have used the one for small objects. Slowly she gave in, cut the red from her hair. She took to wearing t-shirts beneath her strappy, low-cut dresses. Opaque stockings, too, even in the heat. She painted her lips and cheeks pink, bowed in greeting and thanks, hunched her shoulders, smiled in eagerness when she spoke. She realized for the first time how unmelodious the sound of English was. On the train the sounds of gaggles of tourists, older ones with their sun hats and guidebooks or younger ones with tattoos uncovered, seemed to break her reality somehow, jolt her into the memory of a consciousness that had once made its home in some other medium. She saw it all anew: the trains that ran every three minutes and always on time, the blare of discounted food and cheap electronics and fast, dreamy fashion. They'd come from the same place as her, she'd think.

She could follow them back to the airport, board the plane, flash her passport at the gate. The agents would wave her through. Then the car doors would open and the tourists would disembark and the doors would close again and the train would lurch into motion, speeding her along beneath the earth.

Her international school offered IB courses. After taking these, one could apply to college in the U.S. or UK. UK tuition was cheaper, and degrees ran three years rather than four, and she wanted the change of scenery. She was eager, too, to leave behind the pursuits of her Hadley days; she'd stopped writing, become disillusioned with literature, but one of her teachers had recommended anthropology, noting Mariko's interest in parsing the power dynamics of the texts they read in class. She enrolled in SOAS, the School of Oriental and African Studies, arrived at Heathrow with two bulging bags like the early days at Hadley.

A century ago, SOAS had trained colonial administrators to serve the British Empire. At some point the tendency had reversed, and now the faculty and students were known for their leftist views. In her courses, Mariko learned about the colonial history of anthropology. She learned that the claim to neutral, scientific understanding of a culture had been used as a tool of domination; that sociology had arisen as the study of modern societies, and anthropology as the study of primitive cultures only now being brought into civilization by whiteness. She learned about the history of something called postcolonial theory: that it had begun with the anti-colonial movements of the 1950s and 60s, but that the new wave focused less on revolutionary violence than on a thing called epistemic violence, which meant the dominance exerted by colonial powers over the systems of knowledge of the colonized. And then there was the response to these theories: that they privileged discourse over material reality, that they failed to account for indigenous systems of knowledge and social structures that predated the colonial encounter, that they homogenized the experiences of colonized peoples. She learned about cosmopolitanism and about the critique of cosmopolitanism: that it privileged the bourgeois subject empowered by financial and cultural capital to move across borders with a freedom denied to most

citizens of the Third World. In her classes were students from India, Nigeria, Kenya. They had lived the histories under discussion. They were bourgeois but they spoke of subaltern subjects, of micro forms of resistance that failed to register as action in Eurocentric theories of history. They spoke Bengali, Hindustani, Swahili, or were studying them.

She had never witnessed this type of avowed political commitment before, either at Hadley or at the international school, the students of which had mainly been the children of wealthy, white expats. For the first time, she began to probe what had formed her own politics. She had lived with the threat of her father's deportation for years, then watched it happen. She had grown up listening to his stories of the military occupation of Okinawa, the Okinawan people's decades of struggle against an uncaring mainland Japanese government and a rapacious US. And yet, she had grown up surrounded by wealth, the child of white-collar criminals. She was like Bubaneswari, she thought sometimes, the female suicide in Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In a revised version of the essay published several years after the original, Spivak clarified that Bubaneswari was not properly subaltern: she was literate, bourgeois. But not only could the subaltern not speak, she could not be represented. Bubaneswari was the closest Spivak could come to such representation.

She had lived with the threat of her father's deportation for years, then watched it happen.

When she finished at SOAS and turned 22, she realized that she was the age he had been when they met. When she pictured that time, she saw herself young and sparkling, sharp, bursting at the seams of her limitations. A brilliant mind trapped in the body of a girl. Her mother, her teachers had always told her she was mature for her age. Analytical, serious. That she would find her people in college. That life would continue to improve. Months later, sitting in her mother's living room, she would look at a photo from

that time. Mariko at the airport, surrounded by her little flock of bags, going off to Hadley for the first time. She was a child, awkward and unlovely. She hid the picture in the linen cabinet. Her mother never noticed it was gone.

What had he seen when he'd looked at her out of those cold, blue eyes? She'd been a child, a child who drank vodka mixed with Sprite and smelled of vanilla perfume. She'd thought of him as she sketched out geometry proofs, bit her cuticles until they bled, wondered if he was her Gatsby, if he would wait out on the dock for her green light, though she didn't think of herself as a Jordan, Jordan was shallow and dumb. Mariko was more of a Myrtle, something more complex. She had thought of him in a child's idiom, the idiom of a child convinced she was a woman, aged beyond her years.

But she would never let go of him. She loved him, of course she did. She had felt the most pleasure in the world in his presence when she was sixteen. Yes, she might hate him as well, but the hate was layered on top of love. Love was the substrate, the ground on which everything stood. One time in therapy she'd called it "abuse" and said she was too young and then backed off, stung by her own sharp betrayal. Her analyst had refused to let it drop and two sessions later she'd ghosted him, beset by shame: you didn't say those things about someone you loved. Or maybe you did but it was a movement in the game. The lovers who hurl invective but in the end only strengthen their bond, who always find their way back to each other.

The Pacific glowed clean blue. She walked out into the water. It was warm, the temperature of skin. She let it caress her hips, her waist. Wash the sweat from under her breasts. Then she dived, a dagger into the water. The salt washed into her ears and she heard the world's heartbeat. Clutched her knees to her chest as the waves broke above her head.

Then, surfacing, sweat and salt trickling down her scalp. So many sensations had passed through her body since she'd arrived. She had been buoyed by rage, floating on her back in its salt. Desire, then rage. Watching the old men picked up by their arms by the soldiers and dragged away. How had she come to be here, floating in the salt. Her skin brown and peeling.

Back at the house she laid on the tatami in front of the revolving fan. Heat pulsed beneath her skin, a little sun beneath the surface of the body, pushing itself out. She fell asleep and dreamed of Maria Jiménez. Her little breasts, the shades of red and brown that lit up in her hair in the sun. Her body burned, feverish beneath the white sheets. She tossed and turned. Washed into consciousness she heard her aunt and her cousin conversing in low voices, felt someone raise her head and hold a glass of water to her lips, then she was pulled back out to sea. When she woke it was still light, but a different quality of light, duller, more yellow. It could have been earlier or later in the day or the weather could have changed. She had dreamed herself hovering above the Pacific, suspended between coasts like the angel of history. Looking down on the base at Futenma where the people swarmed, her back to California and the life she'd left behind. She had to tell someone before she went under again. Her aunt pressed a cool cloth to her forehead and the words spilled out incoherent. She didn't know the word for angel, or history.

YUMI DINEEN SHIROMA IS A PHD STUDENT IN ENGLISH AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY. HER WORK HAS PREVIOUSLY APPEARED IN *BOMB*, *NAT. BRUT*, AND *HYPERALLERGIC*. SINCE BEING PUBLISHED IN *PEACH MAG*, SHE HAS LEFT NEW JERSEY AND IS WRITING A NOVEL.

Refrain

We do girl work. We work, girl.
Take my eyes: I am always aching
for them to be bigger and better able

to take in detail, so I outline
every part of myself
with a stubby little pencil. Girl,

work. I make
my face very pale, and then

very flushed. I pick the skin
off my hands
and use it to make

a tinier pair of hands. This is how
we work: suddenly. Feet blistered,
hair shaggy and damp from summer rain

or drunk off tonics. I shed pieces
of myself and work to never pick them
up again—third grade, an adult

tooth, an eyebrow. We do girl
work. I put on new pairs of
clothes and call myself

a home. We let you touch us
wherever you want. I don't work
hard for it—it's the forgetting,

of course, that's most difficult. Please,
grab me and don't let go.
Like a body or hairbrush,

I let myself get handled.
and I head home.
I wash my hair.

We work hard to forget,
and because of this,

can forgive nearly anyone.

ZEFYR LISOWSKI IS A POETRY CO-EDITOR AT APOGEE JOURNAL, (TRANS) FEMME, AND SEA QUEEN. SHE'S THE AUTHOR OF THE LIZZIE BORDEN VENGEANCE COLLECTION *BLOOD BOX*, FORTHCOMING IN FALL 2019 FROM BLACK LAWRENCE PRESS. A 2019 RESIDENT AT THE TIN HOUSE SUMMER WORKSHOP, ZEFYR'S WORK HAS APPEARED IN MUZZLE MAGAZINE, DIAGRAM, THE TEXAS REVIEW, FOGFLIFTER, AND ELSEWHERE. MORE AT ZEFILISOWSKI.COM.

pool

At first, I was only curious. I went down to the bottom of the pool to see what it was like. It was like—it was like the first cry of a baby, a shattering. The blue was *wonderful*.

They sent my brother down first. *What are you doing?* he asked. I told him, I'm sitting at the bottom of the pool. *But why?* If you stayed a minute, you'd know, I said. My father came down next. He sat with me. *Okay*, he said after a couple of minutes. *But come up now*. Not yet. My brother swam back down. *Zinnia, come up now*. No, not yet. He swam off. I looked upwards to see the bubbles leave my nose, and watched them rise towards the ceiling lights above.

Up there, the water was like a shimmying mirror and in it the black lane tiles rocked side to side. The far end of the pool was bright, and everything was blue, even the white tiles at the bottom. They didn't necessarily look like a brilliant blue, maybe even a cream color. It was like looking through blue glasses for the near-sighted—everything further away was bluer. With all the density at the bottom of the pool, it doesn't feel like liquid at all. My ears popped.

My father sent down a tuna sandwich. I ate it while I watched the water, unmoving. Of course, it *had* to be moving somewhat, but it's how things look down there—still. The lifeguards never bothered me. Eventually, they had to open the pool to the public again. I watched the swimmers move up and down the lanes. The lifeguards instructed them not to dive above me. They still used my lane, I wouldn't have expected otherwise, that would have been asking too much. One day a lifeguard came down with a newspaper and showed it to me: *POOL BUDDHA LIVES LIFE UNDERWATER*. I wagged my finger. Terrible headline, I said.

Every ten minutes, a thing that looked like a subway grate erupted a geyser of tiny bubbles. I always hated the backstroke, and I disliked it even more from down there. Butts

wiggling back and forth without stride. I counted the swimmers' pulls. Breaststroke was my favorite: six if the swimmer was strong, upwards fifty if they were not. (Yes, I could tell when somebody peed, a detail you learn from living down there—there's a small rush of liquid that's just not the same.) Above me I could hear the water knocking about in the gutter. When I was bored I counted the chipped tiles.

**One day a lifeguard came
down with a newspaper
and showed it to me:
POOL BUDDHA LIVES LIFE
UNDERWATER. I wagged
my finger. Terrible head-
line, I said.**

I enjoyed most when the divers practiced, the teal diving board off to the right of my head. Their bodies looked like cannon fire. Wow! Brilliant! I cheered. I gave them the thumbs up from where I sat. Children on the local swim team would clumsily kick their legs down to see me and wave, and I'd wave back. They swam up again for air and then came back down to make funny faces until their coach yelled at them to *get going*, and they would like they were supposed to. One time after a terrible race, a small boy without a bathing cap and black hair came down and sat with me. I know, I said. I saw the whole thing. His mother came down to get him, and we all agreed it would get better with time.

The nights were quiet. The gutters went silent. Dark, but not black. I lost track of the minutes. Or the days. The geyser told me when things began and ended, but this is not the same thing as time.

My goggles started fogging up. The ceiling became that other ceiling—the mysterious ceiling above my ceiling of water. I started forgetting things. In my memories I could still see the objects: a tall and thin gold pole, standing vertical and blooming with a sloping luminescent flower. Then it was the people. Not the people whom I held dear, but the others. Their names vanished, but sometimes I felt that old achiness in my chest. If I blinked my eyelids, facing towards that glaucomic mist growing near the shallow end, eventually the hurt lessened, too. Everything was beautiful. I watched how the light floated in. The corners, the bluest. My peripherals saturated. My brother visited again. *I get it*, he admitted. He no longer asked if I would come home.

I shriveled. My fingers pruned so much they were like the mountainous ranges I once climbed above me in the hard world. The chlorine crystalized on my swimsuit. Even the color became confused. If I could only ever see one color, how could I recognize what it is from what it isn't?

It would be nice to say the water saved me. To say the water healed me, but this is not how bodies work. This is not how my body works. So much of my writing is made up of nice and dishonest words. Words that deny I live in a disabled body.

It is not any more unrealistic or untrue to write about my life spent at the bottom of a pool. I wish I could tell you more, but none of it ever happens the way I say.

june

We sit by the windows, eating olives and drinking the whole bottle of wine. We get talking, and I ask, "What if all that happened is Anthony Bourdain just saw too much of the world?"

The green checkered curtains move with the breeze. "I don't think that's it," my husband says. The olive juice sits in the bowl on the small table we've put here next to the plants. The radio plays in the background. A man from Syria says, *These days, the sky is never empty.*

"Can you believe that?"

It's the first anniversary since Bourdain's death. My husband and I had only been dating for ten weeks when it happened, and we were living on the west side of Harlem. He took down his *Kitchen Confidential* from the bookshelf, and he wrote a note on the inside cover for me. He often doesn't write notes to me like that; his words are our secret. He speaks three languages fluently, and now is studying the fourth. Somedays I wonder if I'm doing him a disservice. I reach over and pour the last of our wine into his glass. The clouds are moving across the sky. Our cat walks around the table. She jumps up and sticks her nose into the olive bowl.

**He often doesn't write
notes to me like that; his
words are our secret.**

"If we sit here long enough it will rain," I say.

We sit and drink. The cat lays down.

"Would you like some ice cream?" I ask. It's cooler outside because the rain is inevitably coming, but it is still June, so I ask.

"Meh," he says.

"I'll get us some ice cream." I stand and walk to the kitchen. I fill two spoonfuls of coffee chip into a small bowl. I pour some of his whiskey on top—just enough to make the top scoop melt in the center. I bring it back to the

table, and set it in front of him with a spoon. I sit back down. He's turned off the radio, and put a record on. The plants move in the wind with the sound of Chopin. It's begun to rain. Slow thunder. He's sacrificed everything in his first country to be with me, and I have nightmares that he's sleeping with other women. I sunburn in the shade, and most days, I can't stand anything. I really can't. I know I'm not going to save us. When I write, I never tell a story. Where would I begin? How would I even begin to tell you the end? Maybe we can afford to wait for the rain. For the sky to break, but maybe we can't. *I am no man*, Odysseus said. The man who travelled the world, and never died old. "God, we're so fucking lucky," and lightning cracks the sky.

ZINNIA SMITH'S WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE *SOUTHAMPTON REVIEW*, *SLAB*, AND *EAST*, AMONG OTHERS. SHE WON FUGUE'S 2018 WRITING CONTEST IN PROSE FOR HER ESSAY "AMERICAN GIRL," AND HAS HER MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING FROM STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY. SHE WORKS AT BOSTON COLLEGE LAW SCHOOL, AND LIKES TEQUILA AND PROTEST ART.

GOLD, SILVER, AND BRONZE WINNERS

Selected by DOROTHEA LASKY

Elegy for L'homme

After Jean Rollin

Se mourant en someil, il se vivait en rêve.

Somewhere in the middle a clown
wanders through the frame, no real

motivation. At the end of the night,
do you really need a reason to

bury some cute boy in a turtleneck
in a moldering sepulchre? Corbière

died of tuberculosis at the age
of twenty-nine, having only

published a single poem. We all have
our cemeteries. We all wear

the red nose from time to time,
by which I mean a plaid skirt

can hide grave dirt pretty well,
by which I mean sometimes

it's better not to speak at all, feign
the inability or just smile

for the crowd, There are
different kinds of clowns

but only one kind of cute boy
in a turtleneck: they all read the same

poem at different parties
and they all want the same thing,

which is to be buried
alive by a beautiful woman.

"THIS POEM WAS SUCH A STANDOUT FROM THE BUNCH. I THOUGHT TO MYSELF WHILE READING IT: WOW, THIS POET IS AN EXPERT! THIS POEM IS THE WINNER! THERE IS SUCH ELEGANCE HERE AND EXPERTISE IN TERMS OF PACING, FORM, IMAGERY, AND FEELING—ALL THE THINGS YOU NEED IN A GREAT POEM. I LOVED HOW THE POEM STARTED WITH THE CLOWN, COMING OUT OF THE FRAME, OR MORE SO 'WANDERING' OUT OF IT (THE CARELESS WAY IT WANDERS IS TERRIFYING) AND THEN BY THE MIDDLE WE ARE ALL WEARING THE 'RED NOSE FROM TIME TO TIME,' I.E., CAN'T WE ALL BE THE CLOWN SOMETIMES? OH YES, I CERTAINLY DO AGREE, BUT TO WHAT END? ALSO, WHO IS THIS CUTE BOY IN THE POEM? I DIDN'T REALLY WANT HIM TO DIE BUT I WAS GLAD THE POEM DID AS IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF SOMETHING INFINITELY STRONG. ALSO, POOR CORBIÈRE PUBLISHING ONLY ONE POEM, ONLY A 'SINGLE' POEM (THAT 'SINGLE' IS SO FANCY), BEFORE HE DIED SO YOUNG WAS SO SAD. THIS POEM MADE ME THINK OF SO MANY THINGS AND IT DID SO SO UTTERLY GRACEFULLY. I LOVE IT!"

—Dorothea Lasky

SARA BESS GREW UP IN THE RURAL MID-SOUTH BUT SHE DOESN'T LIVE THERE ANYMORE. SHE WAS A 2017 LAMBDA LITERARY FELLOW IN POETRY AND A RECIPIENT OF THE BRYN KELLY SCHOLARSHIP. HER POEMS HAVE APPEARED IN *NAT. BRUT*, *WITCH CRAFT MAGAZINE*, *PLENITUDE MAGAZINE*, AND ELSEWHERE. SHE'S A CO-EDITOR AT *THE WANDERER*.

Poem About Architectures, Faces, and Sound

someone took a shit in the foyer
of the office building I work in
it's been there for a week now
nobody knows whose job it is
to get rid of it so it is developing
a new color and smell, a hard case
around it like an ancient fossil
I tell my coworker I'm not sure
I deserve pie and she puts a cookie
on my desk shaped like a bus
meant to celebrate mobile health
centers where people can freely
get tested for STDs and other services.
even if we knew whose job it was,
would we tell them? my other coworker
says he doesn't think it's right to ask
anyone to clean up shit and we all nod.
I start to read an article about student debt
forgiveness but I can't get through it,
I hadn't known what was brewing,

there is a kind of love so filled with rage
that I can't even look at your face
even as it exists in my mind.
when I get home from work I put on
my mother's robe, the one she wore
every day while we cleaned the house together,
listened to the Temptations with
a capital T. suddenly I have the urge to ask—
on whom can we depend for the
violence we needed yesterday? not sure
where that thought came from, what it means
why I'm now singing it like it's a song I know.
remember the time I left the state
as a pre-teen and didn't tell anyone?
just left and my parents didn't notice I was gone?
when I got back they said, where were you?
were you gone? did you go somewhere?
yes I left the state, the country, my body.
where I grew up the buildings were so large
you could almost not know who was inside with you.

that time we figured out we'd been robbed
because our tiny portable TV was missing. that time
the dog came towards us with a rat in his mouth. that
time someone called us up to tell me
that they could see me masturbating
through the windows. my mother couldn't
understand how I had learned shame when
she hadn't taught it to me. I picture my mother
still in there frozen in time, working on a painting
never having time to paint. very few people
live like that anymore.
yesterday she said it again:
she's done being a mother, wants out—
if anyone gets to leave it should be me,
my dad said. the building is a shrine
to some idea I don't know yet, still
haven't learned. have you ever
listened to the lyrics?
my dad wanted to know
what they say, what they say

papa was a rolling stone
wherever he laid his hat was his home
mama didn't lie no, no, she didn't lie
the songs we knew by heart,
our voices mixing with the record.
it wasn't dinner if there was no meat.
I don't know why I'm so stuck in the past,
that building looms, I blame the checkered robe
but it could be anything, this city, the train,
trying to figure out who is responsible for what.
I go for a walk and it's hard to tell
what is damp discarded debris,
what someone's home.
a man laying on cardboard spits his
orange seeds at me forming a
momentary fruit archway connection.
just another part of his day or
practice or unintelligibly he manages
to invent a new parameter
inside of which his gesture makes so much sense to me.

I say: you're just what I needed just now.
when I left the state spontaneously I
discovered a new kind of being in the world.
my friend told me to watch my surroundings,
the party, like it was a movie or an art piece
myself only a viewer, someone he was protecting he thought
from all the drugs and sex and running around naked.
I thought I didn't know what kinds of options
there are for fun or anything when you leave a city,
what happens when the landscape is dewy and the grass is wet,
early lessons in watching the close up like it's far away
and now I say it to myself: did you leave?
are you gone? where did you go?
the way you exist in my mind recedes and returns
I take the robe off in front of the window
look across and see a man come home.
it's midnight and he pours himself a bowl
of cereal in his underwear. he eats it facing out
seeing my face layered against his reflection. it is
pleasing to me, how we become a hybrid thing somewhere in between

“THIS POEM IS MYSTICAL, SCARY, AND FUNNY. IT FOLLOWS ALONG IN A GLORIOUS WINDING WAY WHERE EVEN THOUGH THE LOGIC IS ASSOCIATIVE, WE ARE STILL CERTAIN THAT SOMEONE KNOWS WHERE WE ARE GOING AND WE ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY BOTH SAFE AND NOT SAFE. I LOVE POEMS LIKE THIS BECAUSE THEY SHOW US HOW MEMORY AND EMOTION AFFECT OUR EXPERIENCES MORE THAN ANY OTHER SENSE OF ‘KNOWLEDGE.’ I LOVE HOW THE POEM STARTS WITH SHIT (DESCRIBED SO FAITHFULLY) AND THEN ENDS WITH TWO LONELY PEOPLE KNOWINGLY / UNKNOWNLY IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER JUST BY BEING HUMAN. PERHAPS THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE POEM START/END IN THE SAME SPACE AND WITH THE SAME SENTIMENTS, AND THIS POEM COMPLETES A HOLY CYCLE. WHATEVER IT DOES, THIS POEM IS A MASTERPIECE.”

—Dorothea Lasky

ANNA GURTON-WACHTER IS A WRITER, EDITOR, AND ARCHIVIST. HER FIRST FULL-LENGTH BOOK, *UTOPIA PIPE DREAM MEMORY*, IS FORTHCOMING IN DECEMBER 2019 FROM UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE. RECENT WORK HAS APPEARED AT *SOCIAL TEXT*, *GINGER ZINE*, *DELUGE*, AND *VESTIGES*. SHE MAKES BOOKS WITH DOUBLECROSS PRESS, MAKES THE ONLINE POETRY AND ART JOURNAL *COUNTER POETRY* AND IS A CURATOR FOR THE *SEGUE* READING SERIES. ANNA LIVES IN BROOKLYN, NY, A FEW BLOCKS FROM THE BUILDING IN WHICH SHE WAS BORN. MORE INFO @ANNA.AS.METAPHOR AND ANNAGW.COM.

Intramuscular Cyborg #1

There's a layer of tension when you first prick the skin, and then the second tension to get through the muscle. 01000110 01101111. Intramuscular. Subtweet my endocrine. First I saw a girl and poked through the first layer of skin, and then I saw a girl and pushed deeper. Unpack this. My therapist doesn't like when I refer to injecting hormones as "shooting up" but there isn't another way to describe it. It feels criminal to become yourself. First I wanted to be a girl and had to break the tension to get girl- pills, then I became a girl so I could be allowed girl-injections. The Archive of Gender needs to be destroyed. The Archive of Genders in my body needs to be destroyed too. It's funny to me because I will never be the girl I want to be, and even then I do not want for girlhood as I want for nothingness. After market parts fill the trolley car I data-mine. Canary in the hormone hole. Sell my body and see what I can get out of it. The tension is that transitioning is making me an extra option between binary genetic coding, the spaces between information. I have dumbbitch disease on the absence of intellect. 01000110 01101111. The tension is that becoming feminine is like becoming human. To become myself fully would be to assimilate and then to decimate the idea of myself again. The tension beneath that is being human means never getting to be feminine and also a girl. There's the skin, and then the coding beneath the skin. The needle goes angled into me, and it goes further into the coding. We should have never ascribed punk as a suffix when curse was right there. The clinic never taught me how to fill a syringe, and one day they may never let me get syringes again. The tension is that the days are getting longer and Heat death will destroy the planet (system overload) so what is there to do but try and actualize something that seems worth it to die in. When I slide the needle into my thigh my skin elasticizes around it, and again my muscle follows. 01000110 01101111. Intrabinary injections. The funny thing is there will never be anything I can do to myself that will fix the issues I have with being

alive. Scrap the parts of myself that cannot be done better by a machine. The tension in it is no amount of after market feminization will make me want for less than a do over. Return to character creation. 01001110 01101111. I actually am not more or less the sum of my parts, so I make additions. Back alley body mechanics. Symbiotic mass. Injectable nanodes to corrupt the parts of me that make anyone think anything but what they see. The tension is the existence of synesthesia, and the tension beneath that is becoming synesthesiac. The existence of life in a machine is considered a ghost in the shell of the self. The existence of nothing in the shell of life doesn't have a word yet, but let's call it intramuscular. I shoot up girl-fuel like cybercurses and my therapist gags at the sound of the word blood. The tension in the room, in all rooms, is existence and the second tension below it, the funny one, is my sentience.

“THE FORM OF THIS POEM IS DECEPTIVELY COLD AND CLINICAL, AS IS THE REPETITION OF ITS BINARY CODE. NO, THIS POEM INSTEAD IS ABOUT DEEP AND HOT FEELINGS AND IT DREW ME IN QUICKLY WITH ITS HUMAN EMOTION. I LOVE THE WAY IT DISCUSSES GENDER AND HORMONES IN THIS FORMAL WAY, WITH THIS GLORIOUS PHRASE ‘THE ARCHIVE OF GENDER,’ AND THE WAY IT SEEMINGLY ATTEMPTS TO GAIN CONTROL OF ITS LANGUAGE BUT THEN YOU REALIZE AT SOME POINT THAT IT REALLY DOESN'T WANT TO. I ALSO REALLY LIKED HOW THE POEM USED THE WORD ‘TENSION’ IN INTERESTING WAYS, AS TENSION REALLY IS SOMETHING TO CONSIDER, ESPECIALLY IN HOW IT PLAYS OUT IN ALMOST EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE. THIS POEM IS TRULY MAGICAL AND I WONDER A LOT ABOUT WHAT OTHER POEMS MIGHT SURROUND IT IN A BOOK. THANK YOU TO THE POET OF THIS POEM FOR WRITING SOMETHING SO EXQUISITE!”

—Dorothea Lasky

AEON GINSBERG IS A TRANSFEMININE AGENDER
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EPISODES GIG POSTERS

Designed by MICKEY HARMON

Peach Mag Presents

s03e01



Thursday, November 8th, 7pm
Just Buffalo Writing Center

visiting:

Chase Berggrun (New York)
Ashley Obscura (Montréal)
Emily O'Neill (Cambridge)
Liz Bowen (New York)

local:

J. De Nero
Trinity Ridout
+ featured artist
Sarah Jane Barry

Peach Mag +
Foundlings Press
Present:



s03e02: Hidden Faces **Reading + Winter Masquerade**

Saturday, December 29th, 7 PM

MiMO Decor, 1251 Hertel Avenue

free + open to the public

afterparty: MÉS QUE

local poets:

Carly Weiser + Eden Lowinger

visiting poets:

Sennah Yee (Toronto)

Chet Weise (Nashville)

Ally Young (Montclair)

comedians:

Pat Kewley + D. Arthur

featured artist:

Julian Montague

Peach Mag Presents
s03e03: Covers Night

Come read a cover of
your favorite poem!

Friday • March 22 • 7pm
Sugar City (1239 Niagara Street)



Peach Mag presents

s03e04

Saturday, June 15

Pine Apple Company

65 Allen St.

7-9pm

visiting poets:

Kina Viola (Ithaca)

Marty Cain (Ithaca)

Leah Clancy (Los Angeles)

local poets:

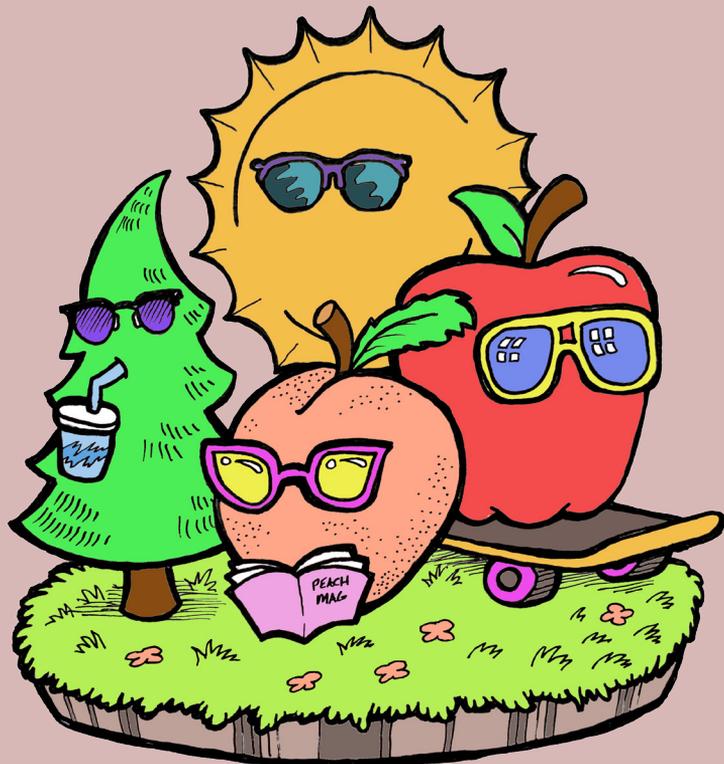
Jennifer Skelton

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featured artist:

Mickey Harmon

Peach Mag



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors graciously thank the following complete list of
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YEAHYELHSA
YUMI DINEEN SHIROMA
ZEFYR LISOWSKI
ZINNIA SMITH

*The editors would also like to thank
DOROTHEA LASKY
for the generosity of her time and attention
in judging the 2019 Peach Gold in Poetry.*



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BUFFALO, NY

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\$15.00
ISBN 978-0-9992975-3-7
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