



Sprung Formal

Issue 15

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Natalie Stein / DELIVERENCING	1
Natalie Stein / ODE FOR THE GIRLS WITH THEIR INITIALS HUNG ON THEIR BEDROOM WALLS	2
Kevin Kilroy / GILLHAM ROAD TO ARMOUR BOULEVARD AND BROADWAY	3
Darby Carlin / “A SPLASH OF LIFE” (AFTER LOUIS ADOLPHE HERVIER)	5
BJ Soloy / <i>from</i> HIM	6
BJ Soloy / BUT LITTLE TO SAY	7
BJ Soloy / [SCREEN IMAGE SIMULATED]	8
Chloe Thompson / 1/28	9
Kevin Hopkins / I GOTTA MAKE IT	10
Hyejung Kook / OCTOBER CENTO	11
Emily Pettit / SPIRAL OF INTERROGATIONS	12
Emily Pettit / OLDER	13
Patricia Orpilla / THIS WAS A MAN	14
Jack Christian / BLUE OVER GREEN	15
Jack Christian / EVENING	16
Jack Christian / WINDY DAY IN MAY	17
Jack Christian / WALNUT TREES AT SUNSET	18
Jim McCrary / SOMEONE ASKED	20
Rowen Foster / HUSBAND WATCHES THE CHANNEL 6 NEWS	21
Patrick Culliton / SIX THEORIES AND A FACT	22
Patrick Culliton / ADDITION	23
Adrian Manzo / EUROPA / 1.315 M/S ²	24
Adrian Manzo / IN HEAVY AIR	25
Isabella Matute / I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO WEAR IN THE MORNING	26

Isabella Matute / YOU'RE GROWING OUT YOUR HAIR, RIGHT	27
Judith Roitman / SOCKS	28
Cameron Morse / DEADBEAT	29
Cameron Morse / GEOFFREY	30
Erin Conyers / THE PRICE OF CONVENIENCE	31
Erin Conyers / NO FUTURE, NO CHILDREN	32
Marianne Kunkel / INFERTILITY	33
Marianne Kunkel / THE DOUBTER'S LEDGER	34
Eva Llarena / SHHHHTUMMYHURT	36
Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer / FROM THE CABINET OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS (TEETH)	37
Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer / THE MINISTER OF THE CABINET OF INDULGENCES PARDONS THE MINISTER OF THE CABINET OF DESIRE	38
Jonathan Bennett / UNTITLED	39
Ségolène Pihut / ARCHIVED SOUND: 5 STELES AND 3 BOOKS	40
Zoe Schweiger / FOLDED IN II	42
Zoe Schweiger / FOLDED IN III	43
Frank Huerter / TAINT	44
Frank Huerter / MARCH 3RD	45
Nick de Krafft / WHAT'D YOU SAY FROM FRUIT LOOP: A ZINE WHAT EXPLORES HOMO MEMORY	46
Nick de Krafft / HAHA FROM FRUIT LOOP: A ZINE WHAT EXPLORES HOMO MEMORY	47
Jackson Wills / AFTER	48
Jackson Wills / THE DOLPHIN MILK CEREMONY	49
Paige Nicole Gordon / THERE SHE IS, MISS AMERICA!	50
Paige Nicole Gordon / THERE SHE IS, MISS AMERICA!	51
Charlotte Samuels / FEBRUARY	52

Charlotte Samuels / FLAT HILLS; A GOOD LIE	53
Zach Comstock / HOUSE 1	55
Zach Comstock / HOUSE 2	54
Paige Edson / 12.28	57
Paige Edson / 12.31	58
Derek Graf / LOVE AND DEATH IN THE ANTHROPOCENE	59
Catherine Lynott and Zac Comstock / WALLS	60
Hadara Bar-Nadav / [YOU ARE AWAKE]	61
Hadara Bar-Nadav / [READ ALL OF THIS LEAFLET]	63
Contributer Biographies	65

Natalie Stein

DELIVERENCING

We are all consulting maps and timetables and tide tables and diaries. We are all weaving ropes that will be enchanted enough to lasso the last of the glaciers onto the roads, un-roading them, relieving them of asphaltum and sand and their duty of flatness. Training glaciers with ropes of flax, and spider filaments, and personal hair, down through I-10. Filling their paths with our own roads, some of wolfsbane or yarrow, and some of cobblestone made up of heavy obsidian blocks and sharpened abalone and muscle shells, nail files, flagstone, the nodes of which are butting up against each other hushedly, like goats horns wrapped in leg warmers. Training glaciers with knitted kelp, and grasses, down through I-90, filling that with mirror shards, forget me nots, marine fossils, lovers knots. We pool our collections of agates gathered in smaller waves, in our blessed attention, amassed to such a pitch that we dreamed them collectively the rest of the night. Training glaciers down I-95 with spanish moss and snakeskin ropes. Filling their paths with mycelium, camphor, pine limbs, granite, adder stones. One of our uncles found a whole owl wing on the ground and it points into our way. The roads are here, divivable, narrowly arranged for their own dismantling, becoming when we call upon them a barricade, a blade, a flexed slip.

Natalie Stein

ODE FOR THE GIRLS WITH THEIR INITIALS HUNG ON THEIR BEDROOM WALLS

Now knowing the letters were spells of forgetting, not of it but for it,
so that the letters became truer then eating, became like the little skins
of queens, all monarchy, and hung like gloves that are gold and true,
that smell of chapstick and candle, all named Bethan, all with cute
malady, all the girls who will trade during recess for erasers shaped
like dolphins and erasers shaped like the death beds of Czarinas, each
cozied and doted on in their rarity value and in the uniqueness of their
signifiers like: one is good, one is Mormon, one is a twin, one is unholy,
one is an extrovert, one has tan lines in the shape of swim goggles, all
indentured forever to their own names, carrying pails of rosewater and
pails of pool water, forgetting something about sabbathing long in the
dark, where no names can go and only the sound of dangerous forts
gleek the air, better than naming

Kevin Kilroy

GILLHAM ROAD TO ARMOUR BOULEVARD AND BROADWAY

unwalked unseen
 behind the hedgerow of thick
 hickory and oak
 smoke trains
 shout the dead to the airs
 a brakeman's song sleeping
 grass seeds beneath the city
 above busted green prairies
 gorged for limestone aluminum
 gypsum air a tallgrass
 within the music
 I found music
 within the stars
 I found stars
 within the prairie
 within the map
 here I am
 afraid of being caught by death too far from home
 these streets a pile of shadows cornered
 pulled me hustled
 into an ornamental row
 pulled me south pulled north
 pulled city
 unwalked unseen
 so I stare
 smear my face with it
 so I can see
 through what I can see
 across what I can walk
 asphalts cement these spaces between beings
 go home I have work
 to do pull north pull south
 for the city for the salt
 the cockroach I step over
 someone dreaming
 my father is not a poet
 my poet is on a ladder
 crossing streets in the airs with the dead
 my soul is not a city
 my city is a window
 I behold what I am holding

but the Neon blurs the hickory the oak
the humidity brings these sidewalks into existence
souls at midnight I am taking
something sacred to the mailbox
in the building's recess my sleeping body blanketed
again I am sitting at the bar
head cranked near the door watching
while I wait at the Walgreens bus stop
staring at the hippy turn-on shop
a church of faces falling off slow moving trains
I sleep in the cells at the plasma center
the figure who passes me I ask of it
the eyes I've learned to droop and call forth
my permanent uptown
Gillham Road breakdown
I shout at the airs and the airs move
these sidewalks and the buildings shake
a human body bridging
a sweetness
a leaf
a hydrant leaks
my soul is not a city
my city is a window
so I can see
through what I can see
across what I can walk



Darby Carlin

"A SPLASH OF LIFE" (AFTER LOUIS ADOLPHE HERVIER)

BJ Soloy
from HIM

A summer death is preferable to a winter's death
for the pliable surface of the idiot earth,

the lengthening days,
welcoming nights. Sheetless sleep &
windows open, can you tell

if I'm sleeping or thinking or dead?

A winter's death is preferable to summer's
for the preservative
quality of a freezer, its
traditional scripture
against rot.

Evergreens provide a theme
or some shit, the woods eventually an orphanage.

BJ Soloy

BUT LITTLE TO SAY

At Chez Charlie the jukebox doesn't change
but it's free. Hours pass in a montage of me

seated all drawn in as if bracing for contact:
a tree just before timbered across the choking

creek, a bridge out or a mucilage needing this all
to connect. Montage ends with my naked

lonely legs & our fridge's naked lonely light.
I've never been the same. My face slacks

from this day-long process of falling asleep.
I collapse in bed & sleep comes short-lived

as screaming cat sex, yowls solid as crystal
breaking under the dumpster. Never

been the same. All the lights go out at once.
You get out of the hospital & we get a new cat

& she never shuts up & you love her something
stupid. At Chez Charlie, there's a coffee cup

named Uncle Joe for the funeral fund of a day
-time regular. Custer shoots his own horse

through the head. The landscape slows
& reddens. Spreads as if the snow itself

is wounded. Tourists, if you see a hill, climb it
or at least name it. Back door opens & closes,

no one comes in, the freezer starts to sound
like dogs fighting. We are not a good people.

BJ Soloy

[SCREEN IMAGE SIMULATED]

I looked at the pattern on our sofa couch for the first time
tonight. It doesn't really make all that much sense.

This is ultimately the end. I brought an apple
& a knife. It never makes the news.

I'm codifying my symbols & beliefs

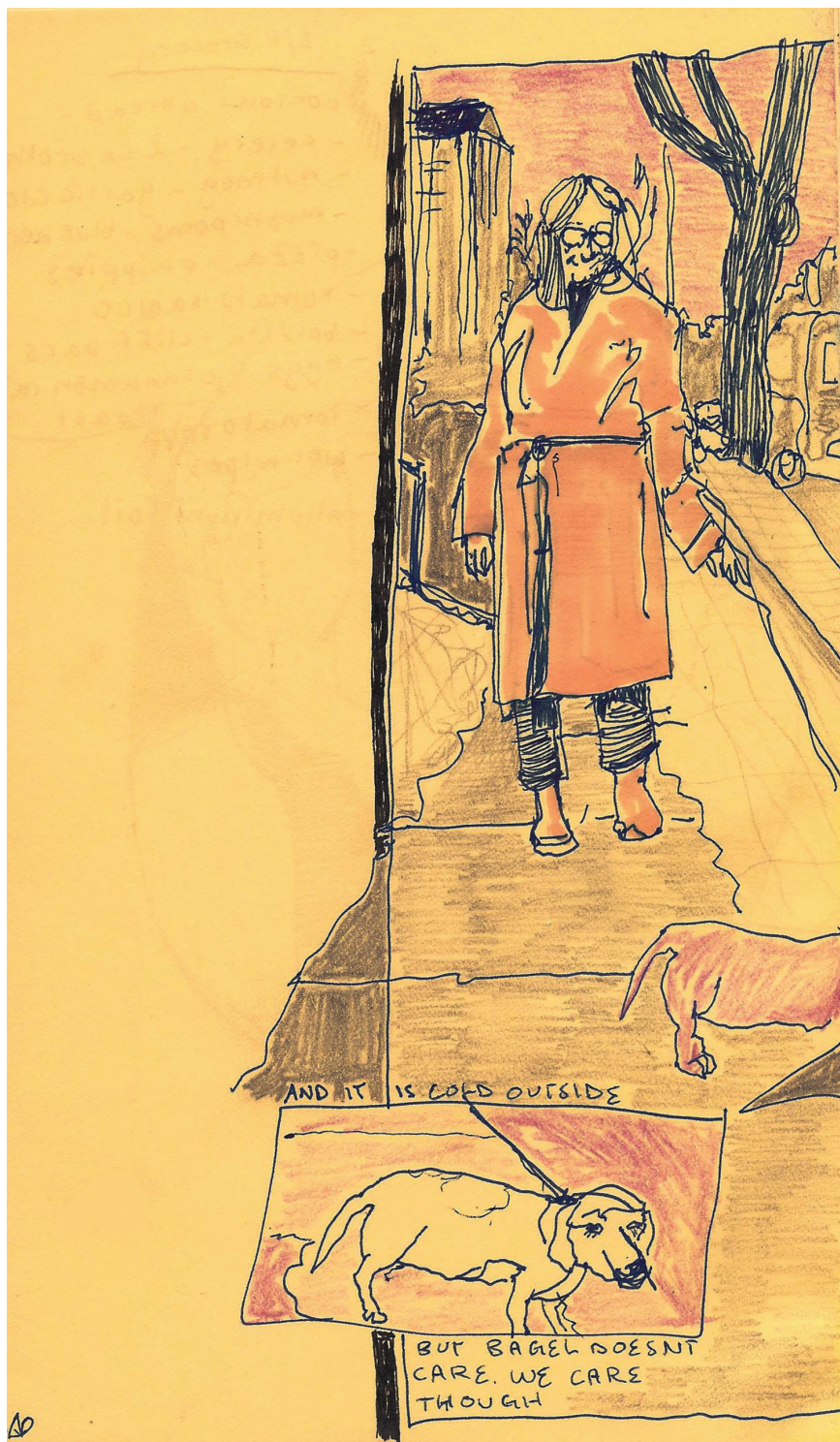
as they're shooting mourning doves on the Travel Channel
or I'm brushing my teeth then spitting out ants

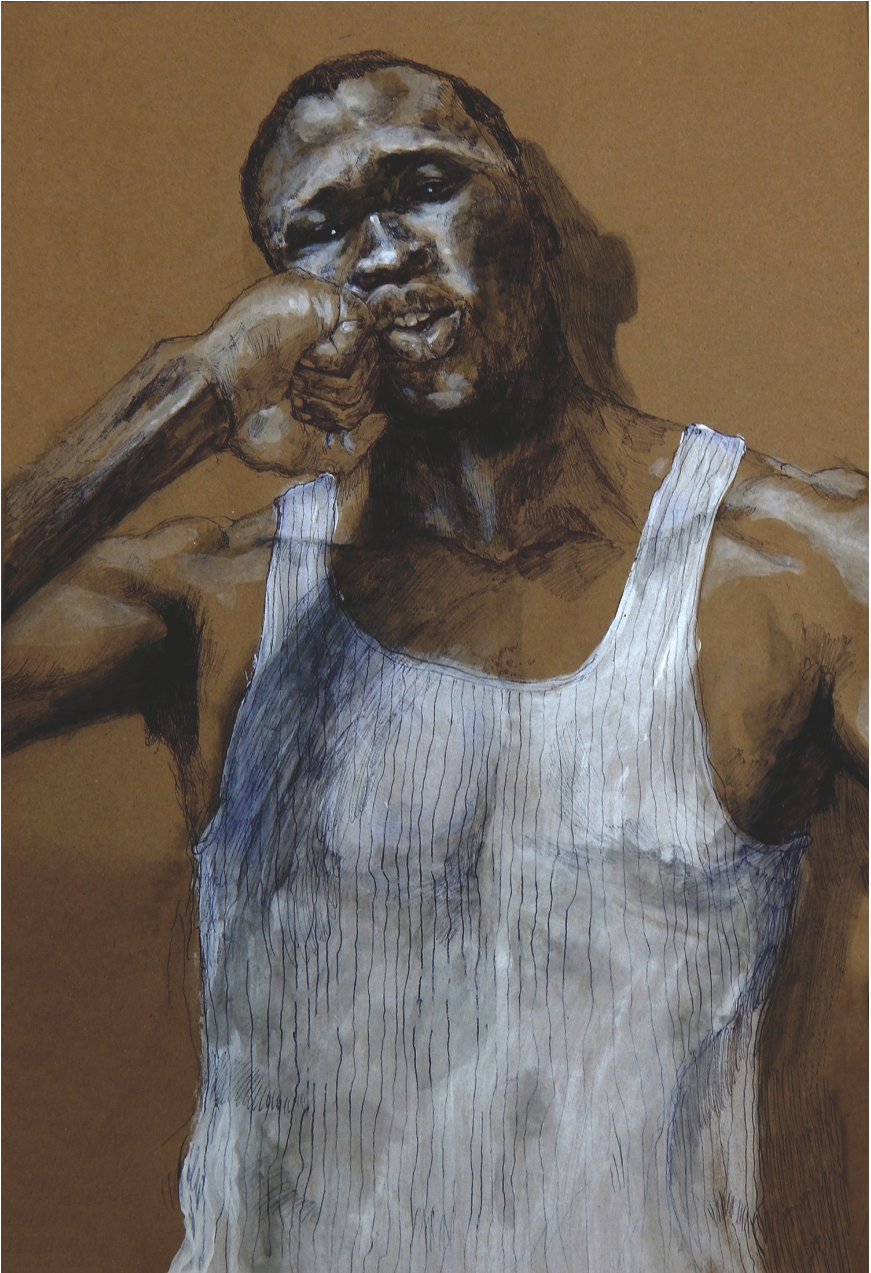
into our rental sink or the president's son
on a river is loading a weapon. I believe in the world,

which never makes the news. An ant cascades over
my wrist & I'm tired. Somewhere, a pregnant woman

is pissing her pants. You break a glass. A sports star
thanks God, commercials charging the gate.

Ants everywhere on the bathroom floor, & the announcer says,
"What a wonderful moment."





Kevin Hopkins

I GOTTA MAKE IT

Hyejung Kook
OCTOBER CENTO

That luxurious repose. That readiness
 taking the width of each pomegranate seed
 has nothing to do with the fact that I never listened when
 we walked to the ocean's mouth.
 A motionless ocean, forcibly quaked—
 it is all relative pain.
 It's like a pear being bruised by air.
 How long has it been
 since we parted?

There was a sensation of emptiness; a very short moment
 of warmth between morning and night.
 A blue fish lies next to another,
 flows together like clouds
 and the cold outside sent lightning across the glass.
 See me, pressing up,
 how we seem to be
 the same length, curved
 scissored, spooned,
 an accumulation of tender tension,
 black webbing and uneven holes
 all around.
 It gets dark very early
 and is always dark.

Let me tell you how I started to speak to you.
 Each blade's singular length of silence.
 And the faithful pale drum,
 how *baram* means wind
 or wish, how your name means light.
 I let you open up my chest to find a mirage of
 an old wheel that lopsides its bumpy way,
 I think of a fig, flower inside the fruit,
 I'm run out of hollow clay vessels
 to hold my breath and salt in.

Emily Pettit

SPIRAL OF INTERROGATIONS

Tyrell Michel was spiraling out of control. All Tyrell Michel could do was draw spirals. Tyrell Michel filled a space with spirals then filled another space with spirals. A spiral seen. The spiral itself. The twisting spiral. One long spiral. And spirals yet. The spiral disguised. Sending a spiral. The fear of an accelerating spiral. The spiral through. A spiral of fewer. A spiral of form. The endless spiral. The night spiral. The spiral inclination. Spiral of interrogations. Tyrell Michel wants to know if they will ever be happy again. Someone says, *Yes, but it won't be the same.*

Emily Pettit

OLDER

Remi Broder leaned over a surface. Remi Broder held her hand closer to her face. Her face in the mirror. Remi Broder's head tilted slower. She stood in a corner. Remi Broder was in shadow, the light below her. Remi Broder closed the door. She held a handle. Remi Broder had an obvious change in attitude. A decision considered to be a betrayal. She grew older. She was shocked.



Jack Christian
BLUE OVER GREEN

The unreal becomes inevitable:

A toadstool falls in love
with a scorpion.

The image of their love
trends longer than expected

until one day it's the new flag.

Under this flag,
gas cans sprout flowers.

Garages long neglected
become sacred rooms,

themselves idiosyncratic
responses to upheaval,

pre-dated by stacked stones—
all of it ritualized by the new religion,

whose emblem is a perfect patch
of green bisected by sky.

To worship, you place yourself
on the fault line,

holding two rectangles
where they always, almost repulse.

Revelation is in the attempt:
How it nearly pulls you apart, then does.

Jack Christian
EVENING

The balding guy is me
I remember.

Obtuse body
of the guy I am.

Dumb hill on the edge
of an outdoor compartment.

The night as a ventriloquist
of quiet.

Night I revisit
as a glitch in shadows.

This thing I'm not.
Crazed boxelder in darkness.

Jack Christian
WINDY DAY IN MAY

And to think:
once we were pants

frozen cleverly
in a Northern lawn,

one voided pant leg
for each of us,

and joined at the crotch,
and now it's summer

forever
in the predeceasement.

If in the dossier
you could locate

schedule 4,

the one approaching
complete acceptance:

The lethal
waste we'll be.

The rot that loved
each other.

The word 'fantastic'
ringing from office cubes.

Jack Christian

WALNUT TREES AT SUNSET

1.

I'm for toxicity
and long process

and new purpose
for cancer.

Mountain print out
with worshipers
knelt importantly.

Iceberg in the collection pond.
Arm beyond the vanishing point.

The self metastasized.

Cathedral in your pocket.

2.

The new policy
was now there was a policy.

The new policy
was we would say we liked it—

its two choose-able expressions
more preferable

than different from before.

3.

A difficult problem,
you called it.

Not consciousness
but where the bur
would grab on next.

Fresh wing in the offertory.
The river silt remembered.

Keeping us desiring
something worse.

Jim McCrary
SOMEONE ASKED

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

LEAVE ME

Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

ALONE

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May

YOU BLOODY

And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

FUCK

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

NO MEANS NO

And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,

Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,

When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.



Rowen Foster

HUSBAND WATCHES THE CHANNEL 6 NEWS

Patrick Culliton

SIX THEORIES AND A FACT

Books get moldy because they are
living things. House plants house
photos of their wild habitats in their roots
and weep over them when we sleep.

The headstone of anyone that died after
World War II has a small television
in its base. Seashells are Poseidon's
pocket change we steal from his dresser

but he doesn't get upset because he did
the same thing to his father. Birds eat
the air we laugh out and make songs
with it. Roses are carousels for ants.

You're blind in one eye and see
me better than anyone else.

Patrick Culliton

ADDITION

When your childhood friend can't find lightning
to lay at his sister's grave
you step into the dream and help him
tap on the oak with a mallet
until a bolt bouquet
gathers between your feet.

Adrian Manzo

EUROPA / 1.315 M/S²

11:05 PM

i'm crafting a ritual to stop feeling so flat

i imagine immersing my body in saltwater space

jupiter's sixth satellite is an entire ocean

Adrian Manzo
IN HEAVY AIR

It's a long drop, polypropylene.

the world is full
and the landscape is crooning for blood.

i am praying to a hospital bed

magnolia in decay

gunpowder

invisible

matter

mineral springs

veining
hands bound in color

the delicacy of her outline.



Isabella Matute

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO WEAR IN THE MORNING



Isabella Matute

YOU'RE GROWING OUT YOUR HAIR, RIGHT

Judith Roitman

SOCKS

that is a cute girl fingers to lips shhh shhh shhh the birds sing shhh shhh shhh
it's from my mother it's so cute the plants are killing us don't tell anyone
I can't tell anyone someone put me on this cart my daughter wheels me around
on a pendulum on a cart with a pendulum BINGO! that's how they torture us
the plants behind the door and a little bench you can't get to why would
you want to get to it BINGO! I left my pencils in my locker holes all over
why would you want to change anything the turkey the sauce the giblets
my mother threw out the giblets threw them down this hole threw them
with the celery and the mashed potatoes everything went away somebody
wants to be nice to us they come in shhh shhh shhh cover everything
with gobbledygook cover everything with turkey wattles and yoga pants
if you live long enough your life runs down your legs nobody cleans up
after you get on your knees scrub your own floor eat your own shit like a
prince like a queen everything runs out runs down all the yoga mats
in the world can't hide this candles melt trees drop their needles
like hamburgers somebody thinks pie will save you not even breathing
will save you you are your oxygen shhh shhh shhh leaking like socks

Cameron Morse

DEADBEAT

Snorkeling snot, the boy chokes
on his choice pacifier—won't sleep, won't stop
screaming. Shell-shocked on another rainy
fourth of July, I feel my tumor crackle
into my right temple. Lie down on the living
room couch while my little brother whips weeds,
wearing dark shades in the rain.
I'm having trouble holding up my head.

Bring new meaning to the term *deadbeat*.

Thunder stomps in the crawlspace. Distant reports pop
like a catcher's mitt, hawked phlegm.
Theo's white dinosaur shirt emerges from the dryer
with brown streaks, black smudges on the yellow
hand towel. Lili wants to wash the sick out
of the fitted mattress cover and pad. Theo wants me
to unbuckle his booster seat so he can
practice buckling it back. He likes to empty
the dog water. In the rain,
he empties it.

Cameron Morse
GEOFFREY

Theo makes me drink by unlatching my canteen.
He makes me take out the trash by picking up the bag
I toss on the front porch.
Grandma scolds Uncle Cory for padding grass-stained
boots over her rug of blue

butterflies, forbids Theo from swinging her gray
whale mug in oily hands.
She says Sherlock barked her awake
because of an adverse reaction to the okra
Theo dropped during lunch.

The grass in the back yard is long and forlorn.
Uncle Cory broke his brand-new dream
mower, the Honda Husqvarna. Theo's diaper begins to sag,
then swing between his thighs. We once had a foster
boy who would call from the toilet,

Can you wipe me? His name was Geoffrey
and his brother was Josh. We had them while their parents
were going through a breakup, which was
before my parents broke up.



Erin Conyers

THE PRICE OF CONVENIENCE



Erin Conyers
NO FUTURE, NO CHILDREN

Marianne Kunkel

INFERTILITY

Who is this baby I can't have,
a no-show, a slacker who keeps
slapping the snooze button?
The keys to where I am—
why won't it get off the sofa,
turn off reality TV,
and look for them? I didn't
raise this baby to act this way.
I haven't gotten to raise him
at all. I've considered
he could be a *she*,
this baby too engrossed
in sending her 100th
text message to make
an appearance on my home
pregnancy test. She blows
gum into bubbles bigger
than my unfertilized eggs.
This baby has been wearing
the same gray bathrobe
for days stretching into months
and years. Where did it learn
such bad habits? Not from
my husband, a Microsoft Excel whiz
who creates spreadsheets for bills,
his Fantasy Football league,
relatives' birthdays. Nor me,
who treats a phone call
from my mother as time
to scrub the bathtub
while chatting. Oh, that we
could be the petite
parents of a long-limbed baby,
or blond parents of a redhead,
who can't see
a resemblance and can still
laugh that life is good.

Marianne Kunkel

THE DOUBTER'S LEDGER

*...they had been taught by their mothers that
if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.*

—Alma 56:47, *The Book of Mormon*

I'm the kind of mother who doubts the safety of roller coasters, the sanitation of ready-washed spinach, the likelihood that a freckle on my child's neck is simply a freckle. I'm the kind of mother who's not yet a mother, one newly pregnant for the first time and already making plans to wield doubt the way other mothers find power in coupons, knitting, refusing vaccinations for their children. My husband says he's worn-out from my worrying but I doubt he'll stop asking how well I'm eating, just as I doubt I'm eating well—too much sugar in the puffed-wheat cereal that soothes my nausea. I learned a lesson the day I gorged on store-bought hummus, not only to first read lists online of unsafe foods, which reveal packaged hummus has bacteria that triggers miscarriage, but also the lesson that I'm better off questioning everything, doubting and doubting more how a fetus can calmly marinate inside me when I trip and fall carrying a small box of books, when like a dragon I spew red-yellow mucus during allergy season. Then again, I doubt my doubt began there; it was with me in waiting rooms of fertility clinics, and I made space for it as I would a child, clearing magazines off the seat beside me. I doubted the number four, which is how many artificial inseminations it took until I heard *pregnant*—a higher number than the average given by a doubting nurse who tsk-tsked my charts. For the three years my husband and I tried and tried, each Kleenex someone handed us came with a side of doubt—friends suggesting we stop and adopt, a local support group second-guessing our doctor's training, my Mormon mother explaining some couples wait forever if it's God's will. But no arms could wrap doubt around me more tightly than my own;

it comforted me from the start, the night we ditched
our unused condoms and baby names leaked from our lips.
Mid-sex, I screamed *Oh my God* and what I wanted
was any faith but Mormonism, which teaches
that my marriage to a non-Mormon is wrong
and our children will never be welcome in the top tier
of heaven, no ice cream cones made of clouds
for them, no perfectly-tuned harps to strum.
I doubted my body, my husband's body, our joy
in the face of sin, my ability to wiggle
out of indoctrination as I would an old bra.
Then I orgasmed and the pleasure pounding me
was doubt, a gray ocean wave flooding my lungs. I gasped
to think how I ever breathed without it.



Eva Llarena
SHHHHTUMMYHURT

Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer
**FROM THE CABINET OF
UNCONSCIOUSNESS (TEETH)**

It is recommended that you see someone
for nightmares

Tidal waves chimera promontory monsters keep you
from sleeping and nothing helps

An irate boar chasing you turns out to only be
a llama but it's still fanged

What flesh would you not sink into
were you so tusked?

Jungian analysis teaches you
to let the creatures overtake you

—the nightmare is nothing
only a horse in the dark

But in the dream
your analyst overtakes you in the doorjamb

and she is more terrifying
than the loose animal

which does not set out to harm you
but cannot help itself

Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer

THE MINISTER OF THE CABINET OF INDULGENCES PARDONS THE MINISTER OF THE CABINET OF DESIRE

For errant wants assurances of passing
files lost data (serendipitously) not recorded

For the will to will unhappy accidents averted gazes
the benefits of doubt

For jagged spite and sullied joys festoons
of blooms nosegays of swooning disbelief

For every bloodied knife a blade wiped clean

For every dumpster of hard evidence a fire in the woods

For every body a disappeared body 6-mil black plastic a guy who knows a guy

For every lie a judge with milky irises a hand in his robe a hand moving someone
else's hand a wad of yellowed dollars

For every longing hanging dripping in the air more air around it
a bucket of disinfectant a discrete team of professionals to scrub you
clean as sunshine head patted curls coiled behind the ears un-undone

No one ever has to know

you think on and off more than you ever
care to admit



Jonathan Bennett
UNTITLED

Ségolène Pihut

ARCHIVED SOUND: 5 STELES AND 3 BOOKS

1.

When a Sound erupts, it is like a sunspot, an unsettlement that possesses the body and then disposes of it. What else mimics the emotional seizing of the body, in such a tangible manner? What else is so true? Sound is a manifestation of the ethereal beyond.

2.

Sound is not ethereal. Sound is not intangible. Sound is a heavy object that we throw between each other as young girls. Sound is not vapour, it is not a film, it is not a pudding-top. Sound is a thud on the clitoral prepuce, on the tip of a rubber pinky cochlea, chewed into a cornucopia, cracking the shifting baw of a virus pulled up on shore (the movement following the curved hooks of wet sugarcane).

3.

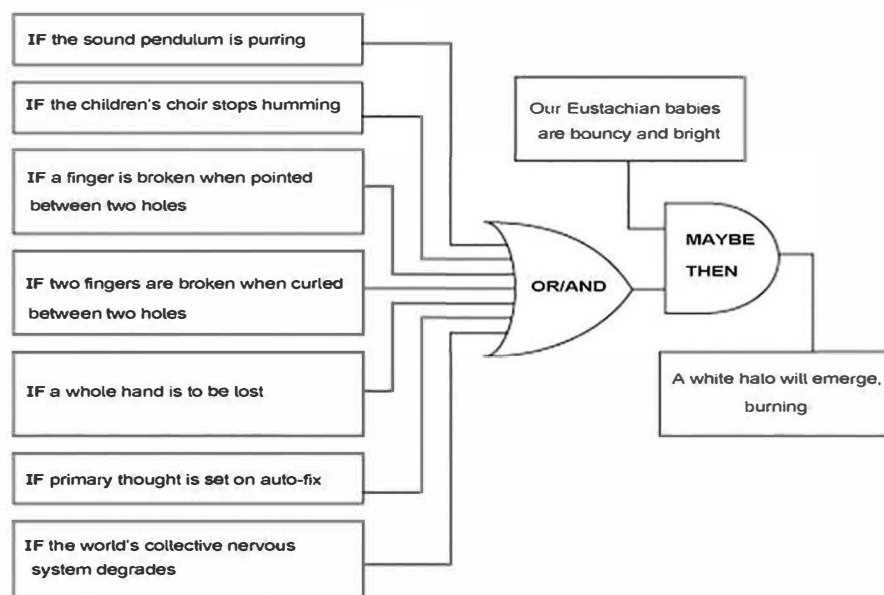
Sound is an Archive, and without Sound preserving the crystalized embers of dry-spotted brain, The host would self-destruct. Artaud would be there, and Sound would be fucking them both, in violent shit-stained fury.

4.

But when Sound comes into Life, from a crunch in a bare wooden box, catapulting through testicular tunnels and shufft into an expanse of bilbious fleshie and inflates for the first time, breathing through puppylungs and crarumbling into a crack of a bark, a canine odour- nothing visual is coming now. My dog who lives in a waft of Sound and smellie. My Lad.

5.

Human beings are cognizant of this festered (see putrefaction, see ball-busting, see job hounding, see joblicking, see figure 107. See this flatheaded baby in this) feature on this Sound landscape. Human beings (*homo sapiens*) are conscious (wether led, or was ledded to, or away) that these præscience (from latin, *praescientia*, with an invariable stem, and a feminine gender [it only is a man when it only is a job]) occurrences, alter these sonic calculations in the real time. How am I to know when Sound manipulates me? A baby is crying to Sound, then gurgles to the same noise. A man breaks his hand on Sound, yet knows this is the closest to ascension, to ecstasy. Here is a chart on real time.





Zoe Schweiger
FOLDED IN II



Zoe Schweiger
FOLDED IN III

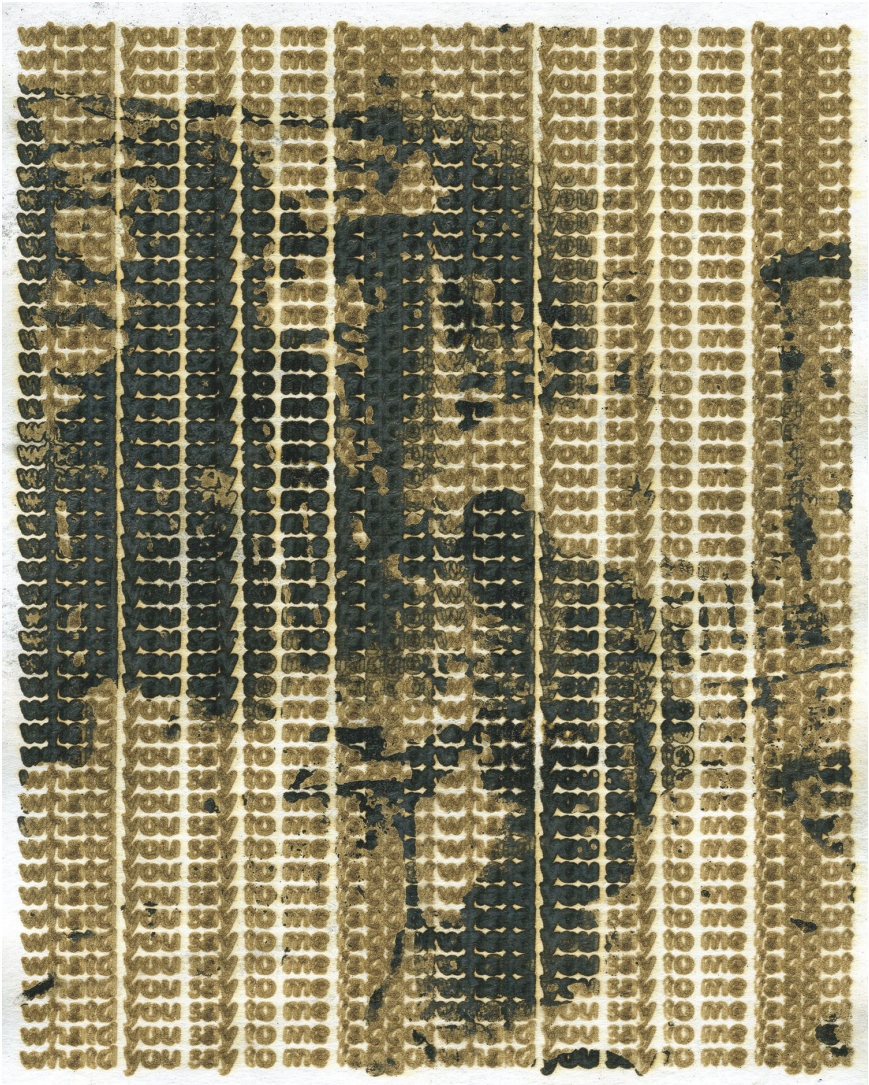
Frank Huerter

TAINT

He is literally just loafers and a sweet hat that smells like a hot scalp.
But I was wrestling him on the floor in a sleeping bag,
And he's so tall, I think he might have had a twin who was crying
in the bathroom.
I couldn't comprehend half of it anyways.
But so we were wrestling all over the dirty concrete floor
And hes probably not even gay is the thing.
But his eyes are hazel and he's the one at the door that takes the money.
I have to ask,
Have you ever been this lonely?
I just want the whole military and I want them all to make their beds
with me inside.
I want to be run over by cars with nice subwoofers.
I want to stumble home drunk, all cute and earbuds in.
The saddest part is that it's not even romantic to drink alcohol anymore.
It's actually quite ugly and studious and awful.
Although it is very romantic to eat sardines or salami,
And to always know the shoe size of your crush.
Wait, let me make myself clear.
Being studious is actually quite romantic.
When you are studying together, in the library.
And underneath the table you sort of take your loafers off,
To reveal your gray, possibly navy, jersey socks.
And you sort of aim your feet at your crush.
It's all pencils and lined paper,
Oh, and you aren't allowed to kiss in a library which is extremely romantic.
But when you do kiss, later, when he takes you to the ferris wheel,
If his lips don't taste like salty brine or fine meats and cheeses
Please don't kiss the boy again.

Frank Huerter
MARCH 3RD

This one finger,
It smells like coffee grounds and blood.
How romantic, but you wouldn't
Believe what the other fingers smell like.
I've spent my day rolling
Around on the floor,
On my rug.
I've been laughing and reading
Magazines.
In the dirt and grass, too, at noon.
It's been lovely,
All very clinical.
I've been following the rules, and dancing around
On the floor,
Between my knees,
And in my hair.
I'm wearing a mini skirt, now
With stripes...
Drinking vodka out of the bottle
With the boys now.
They're quite fond of me,
And I'm quite fond of them, really.
Their tans and buckled leather boots.
It'll take me to get run over by one of their trucks.
To leave this town,
On accident.



Nick de Krafft
WHAT'D YOU SAY FROM FRUIT LOOP: A ZINE WHAT EXPLORES HOMO MEMORY



Nick de Krafft

HAHA FROM FRUIT LOOP: A ZINE WHAT EXPLORES HOMO MEMORY

Jackson Wills

AFTER

The jellied mammals
desiccate to death over the course of the tide
that drains for days.
The night rests in its stall for days.
There are mustard bursts of the dead in the meadow,
and iridescent horse hides,
and the shore is a black peach from the fire.
We must race the dolphins to drowning at this bottom.

Jackson Wills

THE DOLPHIN MILK CEREMONY

1.

A dolphin lives in a mucus of roots.
 There are napkins of bats in their lungs.
 Their dark milk is the heavens' substitute.
 Their breath is made of black coils of grass and drugs.
 The Mantu say the dolphins prove,
 every time they breathe
 inside the water to fill the liquid in their veins,
 that we are the colors that contain.

2.

The Mantu drown in the dolphin's black milk
 until it fills their lungs like silt,
 with every aquatic breath to feel
 the great reveal
 of the humanistic eel:
 the great preciousness of annihilation
 and the end of color.

3.

The son of a man and female snakes,
 the dolphin writhes in its mucus on the beach,
 a fish-stiff uncurling its only reach.
 The priestess in the orange robes descends the beach
 for the dark milk that slakes
 all thought, and when she reaches the abrupt
 animal, she pulls out the inscribed dagger which disrupts
 the stomach of the thing, and pulls at ribs
 and clears a path until the image of its inside gives
 upon lungs and its glands of milk.
 She peels these from the fish and blesses with their black.



Paige Nicole Gordon
THERE SHE IS, MISS AMERICA!



Paige Nicole Gordon

THERE SHE IS, MISS AMERICA!

Charlotte Samuels

FEBRUARY

The years of my life have passed in a blur of pearls and blue windows. Now everyone is writing about memory. Alma cuts the ginger up for the bug we are making. Places the small bits into the old Rao's sauce jar. I think I could never burn anything, especially my writing. *I feel like a snake cut up in a bunch of tiny pieces today*, I tell my lover. I feel like a thousand time-pieces of remembering all at once. Simultaneous and afraid and existing alone beside one another. When you touch me I feel so thready.

If we were in an ocean of sawtooth waves, then where would you be? I am tired of looking for you and I want to go to sleep. There is always an airplane disappearing out of the sky. Tchaikovsky playing on a loop in the bedroom. *The string that is strung can make music or a weapon*, he said. I remember when we first met and your chest hurt from bruises. My chest hurt from costochondritis. When you stop making cuts, the writing flows in a way you could have never imagined.

There are many secrets in this poem. I tell Pearl. I have recently introduced her to Barbara Ras who was introduced to me by my South African friend, a hypomanic doctor looking for every drug available except, of course, for *tik*. Pearl, of course, agrees. The poem is obsessively secretive and in turn reminds us of ourselves.

Charlotte Samuels

FLAT HILLS; A GOOD LIE

Kevin smells like fire. I could wander across that forest blind and still find that burning. The branches have branches of their own. The body has arms and the arms have fingers. Driving past January Hills and the 4-H forest in a beat-up car filled with firewood. A big frozen *reservoir*. Not dark as the ones I know in my heart. How strange does it feel to look at a map of the United States now after you crossed it concussed, exhausted, and covered in rug burn. *It feels liberating.* The music screams, *Heads Gonna Roll*. He reaches down to turn it up. It feels like there should be a cemetery somewhere, but I find none.

In my old room not so many years ago, I hung a knife from the ceiling. Not sure what possessed me to do such a thing. Each night, trucks passed on Elm Street, the major road connecting to Route 9, encircling my room in their light. I imagined the knife turning on its axis as the trucks whirled by. Kind of like a story.

This is the kind of day that someone could slip on ice and crack their head open, I told Kevin. And he almost did. We stop to look at the ice that has formed over the moving creek. Beneath it, water still finds a way to flow. It is almost like a miracle. Kevin lights all the candles and they are full of nostalgia with their very sad smell. There is plastic over the windows. I can't get warm. There is a poster of shells and Christmas lights that twinkle. Books stacked up until they are toppling on the floor.

O the things I will do for a story. I would even burn a church down to the ground. If it meant that I could tell you afterwards what happened. I would dream about frogs and rain. A hill that called itself flat and lie about it after. There is so much hair. There is a tunnel that seems impassable. At the end of the year I took the knife down from the ceiling and I thought, even the knife could not cut to the heart of me. I used to think this was a burden. *Find someone who will create a cave. Find someone touched by God. Someone who has made contact with the other side. Don't rest yet. There is still time.* I take his hand off me. *I am going to go home now.*

Last night I dreamt of the red waiting room in Twin Peaks where Detective Cooper aged 25 years. We never really found out the secret. Sad music played. I wanted to cork my ears but there was nothing to do so with and my hands were busy. I took a video of Arthur and his friends. I was so dispossessed by the laughter. I remember this. I had just come out of homelessness. In real life and dream life it was Arthur's birthday and he was eating takoyaki out of a backpack. The walls were so soft and thick. Through the video camera I caught a small smile. So small, so slight, if you blinked you would miss it. I put the

camera down. I told Arthur; *I am wandering to the state of waking up*. I took his hand and led him through many doors until we finally found the one that opened up to a balcony overlooking the sea. I am dreaming about my own writing. It is a surprise though. It is like putting the camera down for the first time and seeing the world as it really is with the camera that is your own eyes. *We have arrived at the state of waking up*. We are on an open pitch-black ocean.



Zac Comstock

HOUSE 1



Paige Edson

12.28

The car windows driving there are dotted with a sweeping gray – the same gray prodding tin roofs clustered together every few miles, usually followed by a collapsing neighbor barn and water gathering in the highway's ditch. Yellow grass blurs into an ochre band, at times interrupted by a beat of winter junipers.

As a child, the bluff house was as near to the sky I could get without stepping off the porch. The city's color bended and turned while I sat in an iron rocker, feet on the railing, and on July 4th, I watched the sky flash and spark without craning my neck. Inside on a slippery day, the cream walls absorb pink and green hues reflecting off the gold clock and mirroring end tables. A family of movie critics and connoisseurs sit on the white leather couch. Their voices raise with the ceiling's height, borrowing each other's in ways I've always known mine could. They've had more practice. Growing up on a tennis court, they set and matched voices with every serve, ears and mouths a smooth loop so no stray hit would get them out.

No ochre nor gray flies past on the drive back but is now replaced by dark – the type of dark that makes Dad pull off the highway to wait for the headlights to see better. He doesn't say a word, just sits in a gravel parking lot with his hands on the wheel. From the backseat, I can't see his eyes, but I have a feeling the dense pour is drenching him, his hands on the wheel his only anchor. All around, the dark tunnels and swamps, plummets and gulfs. He puts the car back in drive without saying a word.

A person whom I still think of rocked a slow rhythm within me all day as if breathing by my side. He never left even when the light was gone.

Paige Edson

12.31

Midnight rubs our cheeks as if turning scripture pages. Touching palms declare the boat is heading out now. Elliot and Shay have been trying to leave for half an hour: Elliot unable to rope a car and Shay swaying with a rolled smile, pressing into Elliot's chest. The van back is full, no knowledge of limbs, and the driver looks at Shay with concern for his seats.

Daily written words trip forward like cereal into a bowl, an avalanche to a lake. They don't skip but plop as if the water has been awaiting their arrival, preparing a space to sink so the water can rub them over and over, smoothing their edges down. Words expected to float are meant to be repeated: they carry over the waterfall's edge like my great great aunt in a barrel. Otherwise, the new year picks up new debris. New rocks form and fall again.

At the beginning of the night, a blue glass bottle of Grey Goose passed between the three of us while the past year softened in our mouths. Grey Goose rolled the night forward from kitchen table to sparkling bar back to kitchen table. Nora roasts a batch of potatoes in the oven when we get home and gives us each a cup of warm water. Memories of men I regret fucking slip from my mouth. One, an old bald sailor, and two, a sleazy model who took my virginity. He lives in California now. Sells his nudes on social media.

Fluttering circles at the bar, a new decade starts with plastic champagne flutes incapable of standing because their plastic bases fall to our feet. I shift in front of Elliot, hiding from a blonde man who twists to look at me every fifteen seconds. He asks if Emma is available instead. I grab water after water for my friends to drink, and I want to soak my heart in it. Want to dunk it in the cool water and wait for it to smooth over. When letters fall into the river, their ink smears and the paper dissolves. If he had written, his message was lost with the current's grind. I look for him in cavernous throats with a flashlight and a pickax.

Derek Graf

LOVE AND DEATH IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

You've got white sneakers. Clean white sneakers
and a pound of blueberry pie in your gut.

That's all. Until you puke up the blueberry pie
at the airport. But then, you were never really

all that interested in your life. You crush
one ant on the kitchen counter and notice

twenty more in the sink. An entire continent's
on fire this month: kangaroo corpses pile up

against barbed-wire fences. I.e., breaking news.
When you get to the airport she says

we're not right for each other and you say
who is? Everything you own's been stolen

anyway. You've got clean white sneakers
and no prior models for a healthy relationship.

You're bothered by the voices in porn.
You're bothered by the voices in real life

too, especially your own. The bathtub
turns into a highway that takes you away

from everyone you've tried to love.
It takes you through the grass plains of Montana.

It takes you through the shitstorm of your heart.



Hadara Bar-Nadav

[YOU ARE AWAKE]

—from the Tobradex Package Information (US and UK)

You are awake
for
48 hours

or 24 days.

Shake.

Twist off
your head

in front of a mirror if it helps.

Do not touch.

Do not
talk.

Do not
drive.

Do not
sweat.

Do not
screw.

Do not worry.

Do not take
drugs.

Do not use the bottle.

Do not
breath[e].

Manifestations of

white
harm.

Mother
please

help
me
be

purified
as water.

Gently release
me one drop at a time.

Hadara Bar-Nadav

[READ ALL OF THIS LEAFLET]

—from *Valacyclovir Patient Information and Package Insert*

Read all of this leaflet.

Read it again.

Pass it on to others

like

a virus

kissing.

The eye that continues to come back,

seeing things that aren't there,

delirium

with

a

side

of

pain.

Altered brain function

applies to you,

killing

your ability to

live.

You are

not

immune.

Do

you remember

your

name?

Contributer Biographies

Hadara Bar-Nadav

Hadara Bar-Nadav is an NEA fellow and author of several award-winning collections of poetry, among them *The New Nudity*, *Lullaby* (with Exit Sign), *The Frame Called Ruin*, and others. In addition, she is co-author of the best-selling textbook *Writing Poems*, 8th ed. She is a Professor of English and teaches in the MFA program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Jonathan Bennett

Jonathan Bennett is a graduate from the Kansas City Art Institute residing in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. As an interdisciplinary artist, his work deals with subjects such as appropriation of perversely commonplace imagery, temporality, and consumer-culture. In order to understand the implications of the post-industrial society, his work explores repetition and repurposing of images and how complications of originality and authorship emanate.

Darby Carlin

Darby is a printmaker from Nebraska. They live by the press, and love the Midwest. Keep in touch at @presidentdarb on Instagram.

Jack Christian

Jack Christian is the author of the poetry collection *Family System* (2012 Colorado Prize, Center for Literary Publishing) and *Domestic Yoga* (2016, Groundhog Poetry Press). Recent poems have appeared in *Tupelo Quarterly* and *Yalobusha Review*.

Zac Comstock

Zac Comstock is a visual artist studying sculpture at the Kansas City Art Institute. He makes images and objects which collaborate with architecture and design.

Erin Conyers

Erin Conyers received her BFA in ceramics from the Kansas City Art Institute in December of 2019. Working with recycled or reclaimed ceramic materials and various mixed media, she finds inspiration within the intersections of human construction and the natural environment.

Patrick Culliton

Patrick Culliton is the author of *Sam's Teeth* (Subito Press). He received a 2018 Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council. He works for the Geauga County Public Library system.

Nick de Krafft

Drawing on his upbringing as a queer man in the rural south, Nick de Krafft's work utilizes shock, humor, and appropriation to investigate the rhetoric of commercial objects and to explore the boundaries of queer symbology.

Paige Edson

Paige Edson is a writer and artist living in Kansas City, Missouri. She received a double BFA in Painting and Creative Writing. Currently, she is trying to care for each day as if they are alive and breathing while also treading carefully in case the days turn to quicksand.

Rowen Foster

Rowen Foster was born and raised in TX. She studied sculpture and creative writing at the Kansas City Art Institute and is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Washington where she hopes to find some clarity. Her work has been exhibited in TX, MO, and Bulgaria and she is a published poet.

Paige Nicole Gordon

Paige Nicole Gordon has a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute with a focus in Filmmaking. Her work explores the ideas of personal and feminine identity through the lens of postfeminism, pop culture, sexuality, and performance.

Derek Graf

Derek's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Journal*, *Portland Review*, *The Boiler*, and elsewhere. He received his MFA from Oklahoma State University, and is currently enrolled in the PhD program in Creative Writing at the University of Kansas. He's also a current Studio Resident with the Charlotte Street Foundation. He lives in Kansas City.

Kevin Hopkins

My work is inspired by the adversity I face as an African American man from a lower to middle class background.

Frank Huerter

My name is Frank, I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska with 3 sisters and a brother and a dog named Louis who bit my head growing up. I am a third year student at Kansas City Art Institute in the painting department, and I like to write and knit and crochet in my free time.

Kevin Kilroy

Kevin Kilroy is a writer and educator who works to blend genres and reimagine learning. His triptych, *The Chicago Window*, is out from Spuyten Duyvil Press (Spring 2020). Currently, he is a Writer-in-Residence at the Charlotte Street Foundation in Kansas City. @kevinkilroykc Instagram/Twitter

Hyejung Kook

Hyejung Kook's poetry has appeared in *The Denver Quarterly*, *Pleiades*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, and *The Massachusetts Review*, among others. Hyejung was born in Seoul, grew up in Pennsylvania, and now lives in Kansas with her husband and their two children. She is a Fulbright grantee and a Kundiman fellow.

Marianne Kunkel

Marianne Kunkel is the author of *Hillary, Made Up* (Stephen F. Austin State University Press) and *The Laughing Game* (Finishing Line Press), as well as poems that have appeared in *The Missouri Review*, *The Notre Dame Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Rattle*, and elsewhere. She is an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing and Publishing at Missouri Western State University, where she directs the creative writing program. She is the editor-in-chief of Missouri Western State University's national literary journal, *The Mochila Review*, and advisor of its campus literary journal, *Reach*.

Eva Llarena

Eva Llarena is a Miami based artist pursuing a degree in fiber arts at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Catherine Lynott

Catherine Lynott is a Sculpture student at the Kansas City Art Institute from Colorado. Catherine's art focuses on the human's interaction with the outside world and nature.

Adrian Manzo

Adrian Manzo is a multidisciplinary artist and poet based in Kansas City, MO. They are currently pursuing their BFA in Creative Writing and Fiber at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Isabella Matute

Isabella Matute is a performance artist, photographer, and writer from Miami, FL based in Kansas City, MO. Her works engage with metaphorical depictions of identity, beauty ideals, gender expression, cultural diasporas, and in general the female experience.

Jim McCrary

McCrary lives in Lawrence, KS. Recent work in *Otiliths* magazine published by mark Young in Australia. Also work in an *Anthology of American Haiku*, 2019. Latest chapbook *A Yearbook from Shirt Pocket Press*.

Cameron Morse

Cameron Morse lives with his wife Lili and son Theodore in Blue Springs, Missouri. His first collection, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award. His latest is *Terminal Destination* (Spartan Press, 2019).

Patricia Orpilla

Patricia Orpilla is a visual artist and writer who works primarily with site-specific painting and sculpture. Recently, she had a solo exhibition, titled *Pillars*, at Kiosk Gallery where she exhibited sculptural paintings. She holds a B.F.A. from the Kansas City Art Institute with a double major in Painting and Creative Writing.

Emily Pettit

Emily Pettit is the author of *Goat In The Snow* (Birds LLC) and *Blue Flame* (Carnegie Mellon University Press).

Ségolène Pihut

Ségolène Pihut is an multimedia technologist and interactive artist whose work stems in prehistory, sexual media and the human voice.

Judith Roitman

Judith Roitman's books are *Roswell* (theenk Books) and *No Face: Selected and New Poems* (First Intensity Press). Her chapbooks include *The Boar King* (Magnificent Field Press), *Provisional* (dancing girl press), *Slackline* (Hank's Loose Gravel Press), *Furnace Mountain* (Omerta), *Ku: a thumb book* (Airfoil Press), and *Two: ghazals* (Horse Less Press). She has published in a number of journals including *The Rumpus*, *Horse Less Press*, *Talisman*, *YEW*, *Otoliths*, *Writing Disorder*, *E.ratio*, *the tiny*, *Equalizer*, *DREGINAL*. She lives in Lawrence KS.

Charlotte Samuels

Charlotte is a poet from North Jersey currently studying anthropology at Smith College with hopes of becoming a medical doctor. You can find her feverishly writing down her dreams upon waking and recording the stories of her life in her Google Drive. She lives in Northampton, Massachusetts with her cat, Stanley.

Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer

Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer is a poet and installation artist in St. Louis. She is the author of the poetry collection *Cleavemark* (BOAAT Press, 2016) and the children's book *The Cloud Lasso* (Penny Candy Books, 2019). She frequently collaborates with artists, and her work can be viewed at criticalbonnet.com.

Zoe Schweiger

Zoe Schweiger is a student at Maryland Institute College of Art who primarily works with figural painting and soft sculpture. Born and raised in Miami, she is greatly influenced by her home, family, and health. You can find her work on Instagram: [@zoeartsch](https://www.instagram.com/zoeartsch), as well as her website: zoeschweiger.com.

BJ Soloy

BJ Soloy is the author of *Our Pornography and other disaster songs*, selected by Ocean Vuong as the winner of the Slope Editions Book Prize, and *Selected Letters*, out with New Michigan Press. He lives with Julie Rouse, Solomon Longfellow, Shitstick the cat, and a brand new baby this summer. He can't wait for spring to come, but he's waiting anyway.

Natalie Stein

Natalie Stein is a poet and graduating senior at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Chloe Thompson

Chloe Thompson is an artist based out of the Kansas City Metropolitan area. She focuses on archiving her day to day Midwest living through drawings and written word. In addition to her practice she is apart of a group that builds the Harrison St DIY Skatepark located in Columbus Park, KCMO.

Jackson Wills

Jackson Wills takes care of his daughter during the day, and works the cooler in a liquor store in Baltimore city during the night.

