

the engine(idling

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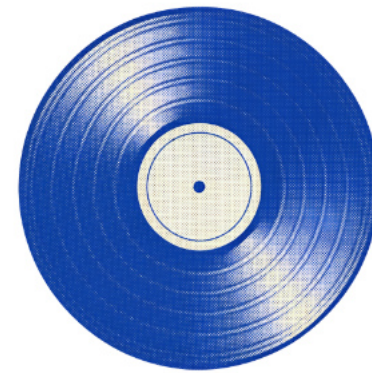


A DAY IN THE LIFE

the engine(idling

**Issue 10:
A DAY IN THE LIFE**

Fall 2026



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Kuleshov Effect

Any man is as good

or bad

as the thing that came immediately

before. Remember film school?

Dead baby in a casket

hot bowl of soup

vixen on a chaise —

it's all so slippery,

this business of meaning. And though

love is not yet relevant I'm placing

your face next to any and every

sun dappled raindrop

sterling silver chain

bloody roadkill fur

hoping that what we did

and what we do

tells me

tells me something

say yes

after James Turrell: C.A.V.U.

when you are eye to eye
 ceiling
 and visibility
 unlimited with a happy god
 kneeling over you he will
 say the sky is a circle of velvet
 so you open your
 mouth
 quiet
 is allowed
 if he says the sky is a porcelain plate
 then you invite
 the cold
 lip of clay
 to your exposed fingers
 when he says twilight is an eye
 to your eye
 an oculus
 a skyspace grows between
 the wings of your breath
 ready to lift
 you eye to eye
 with the parts of you
 that say yes

am i allowed

am i allowed to call it what it is
 am i allowed to be the one
 to name it am i allowed to name it
 what it is am i allowed to name
 my experience am i allowed to give
 my experience a name am i allowed
 to be the one to give my experience
 a name am i allowed to name it
 am i allowed to name my experience
 am i allowed to name

Words, Worms, Ants

The etymology of *etymology* is not unlike the dentist going to the dentist, the lawyer needing a lawyer, the judge facing the judge. It's like the meaning of *meaning*. Or the word *word*. Is there a word for this kind of echo, this cross between a reflexive verb and a wormhole, this space where the subject and the object are so close as to be the same? "The book is reading," you said when the wind turned the pages of the open book by the open window. Wind-eye. The etymology of *entomology*, that branch of zoology dedicated to insects, doesn't possess the exotic matter required to open this wormhole, but the zoologist visiting the zoo with his grandson, his son's son, does.

Us #1



Separate Eyes [i]

after William Eggleston and The Democratic Forest

The curtain billows in the breeze—
door slightly open, chipped wood
exposing a crack revealing blue.

Where did she go without her
curlers? Her hair must be
a mess.

The white walls contain a story
some are too afraid
to tell. She left on a cold day

and the footstool at the corner
of her bed is covered in dust—
little holes in the wall like gunshots.

Separate Eyes [ii]

after William Eggleston and The Democratic Forest

A vacuum next to a chair,
the yellow basket full.

A square of light paints
the carpet, freshly cleaned.

He hoped it would be enough.
She said that it was.

Bodies will visit, do it again,
they don't care about politics.

Only love in place of violence,
the children behind windows.

Separate Eyes [iii]

after William Eggleston and The Democratic Forest

It would be simple to run away,
the asphalt beckoning a course.
Poisoned tongues don't speak
for me. I wait for the trees
to tremble, the clouds to roam.
Swollen tongues speak the most
while those humble with love
are stranded in the dirt. We
don't know what will happen,
but don't worry, death is all
we have to fear, the horizon
line awaiting our glorious steps.

Separate Eyes [iv]

after William Eggleston and The Democratic Forest

The fence protects
the few from
the hardened earth.

We are safe
in the confines
of the barrier.

They run and
play and laugh
and it is happy.

Then they return,
their feet un-
tainted for a time.

Water is simple,
so is the grass.
Will we make it

home?

poem in which i am a doe leaping joyfully

through a field of clover. poem in which i am wrapped
in tufts of soft brown fur, soft as monarchs & jewel-wings
dancing in the air about my head. poem in which

they brush their tiny forelegs against my ears & the tip
of my nose. poem in which the sun lands on my spine
like a dragonfly settling on a lily pad. poem in which

there is not a ripple. poem in which there is not a wave.
poem in which i am fast as rain. poem in which i am
effortless as sedge blooming from fertile soil. poem

in which i am sleek & delicate. poem in which i am
an oak leaf drifting in summer's breeze. poem in which
i am running not to escape, but to feel the wind

embrace me. poem in which the snapping of twigs
indicates nourishment when foliage is scant, not a warning
of the predator lurking in his hunt. poem in which

even the sharpest parts of me are draped in velvet.
poem in which i am a fawn speckled in white, not a child
holding antlers to my head & dreaming. poem in which i can

outrun danger with a flash of white, a graceful stride,
into the thicket of hemlock, maple, oak. poem in which
all around me the trees. poem in which all around me

the streams & the rockfalls & the valleys & the hills.
poem in which i am free to wander everywhere
my legs can take me. poem in which the forest is always

home, has not dessicated to asphalt, poem in which bird-
song has not been replaced by the throated growl

of oncoming traffic. poem in which the hunter

is not sitting in his gabled farmhouse, seeing me
as only hide & meat. poem in which i am more than
aftermath. poem in which there more to me than the way

my neck mounts cleanly to a plinth of cedar. poem
in which thunder is simply music the landscape makes,
not the sound of my father's gun. poem in which he will

never emerge from the shadows cloaked in blazing fire,
draw down breathless with anticipation, line my center mass
within his crosshairs. poem in which despite the danger,

i stand tall in the open field at sunset, eyes wet & golden
in the light. poem in which crosshatched lead or broadside
arrow can never find me, never silence my heart's bleating.

poem in which i –

Echo-Clack

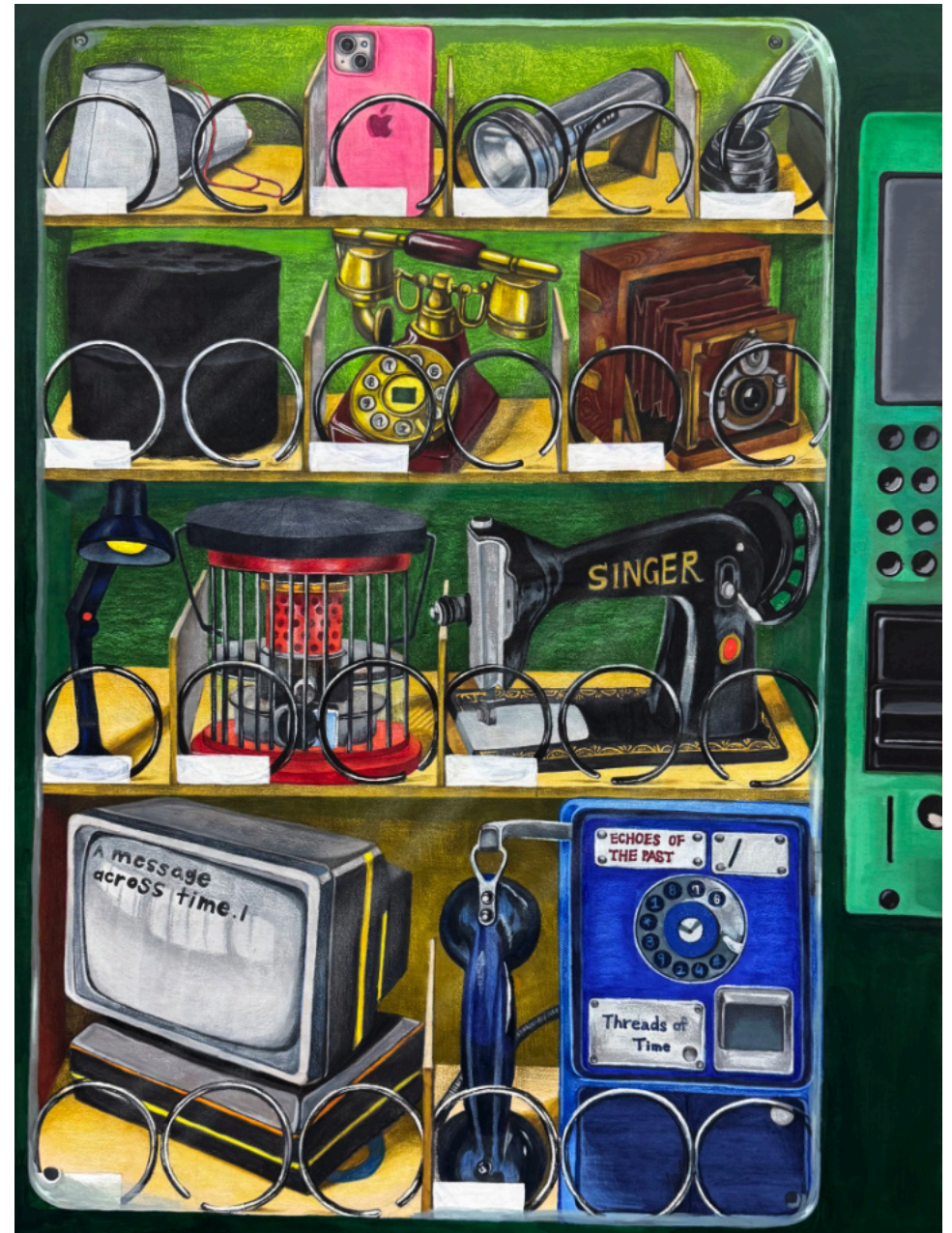
way down deep, clatter-speaking,
orange marrow-cutting,
william is vein-slice spilling,
shimmer-shift veil watching.

he's canny-catching my words;
i don't mind his musing,
acid-blue finger-twitch guessing.

death is a trademarked future,
mudborn purple scarring,
in lemon harried-brained april.

william has ginger-stepped through
my open bedroom door,
he never stays echo-clack long.

Dispensing Memories



Before Difference



adam

human beings are 70% cash and kool aid
 and kicked to the curb and lollipops and arctic
 monkeys and cigarettes and trying molly
 and turning 18 and registering to vote
 and jelly beans. mostly jelly beans actually.
 the red kind though. red, like the last
 of the blood you bleed when you bleed out
 for hours and hours and hours and hours and
 humans beings are sitting across from me
 in the kfc across the road from your house
 and smiling with your invisalign poking out. humans
 are telling about the last time you visited
 vegas. humans are walking me home drunk
 and offering me a ribcage—thanks but it's too big.
 humans are leaning against street lamps and calling
 to ask if i've talked to god again recently. they're making
 a shiv out of a ten year old barbie toothbrush. made
 from 70% red and 29% noise and all overflow
 and also ketchup. and none of them have ever learned
 when to stop themselves and all of them know when
 to stop themselves and dragging me by the hand
 and holding me by the waist and shouting *this is all*
that is left of me, and of course, it isn't and of course, i am.

How to Extend Your Aura

With certain rules we can make ourselves tall,
But not in units of measure:

Always say the complete name of your city, and pronounce your consonants.
It will not make u sound like a robot
but demonstrate care and attention.
Place your phone on the table while you eat.
Let the black mirror reflect ceiling fans and chins.
Please read the comments section.

Laundromat parking lots makes us communal,
level. Aging is about obfuscation, blurring shape
lines of communication. Let your clothes and the generalities of time
do the heavy lifting.

Remember, art is in memory of the dead,
like the moon, keeping a common referent.
Don't let it be a substitute, treat it literally
as a gravestone.

Speak in bullet form.
You only need 2 or 3 movements to launch
like a curled back swing
into a strong point of order,
causing high price point pens to
release en masse.
Applause breaks.

Love being able to see someone through hollow eyes.
Enjoy seeing the real world.
Notice ivory towers are wood panelled and curiously
flat pop up book versions of what you imagined.

Let bees run you

off. They're tasked to fill time
with admirable productivity.

Love the cowed silence of a subway platform in the morning;
the march of feet up steps is not the herald of late stage economic policy
but rather
the heartbeat of the world.
Let these economies watch over you,
they are the blanket our soft hands carry.

You've bent looking for vitality
in HD and gloss.
Made to feel shame for this
attention. But these are like far shores
or the breakwaters of continents.
We'll go no further.

Up the steps your part time
home is constant.
Try to think of it as furniture,
as a perpetual soft launch.
We don't share the same space anymore,
it is shared with others in mind.
That's the real stuff anyway.

Hurry up the steps,
but never grab the railing
it will only make you
shrink.

Elegiac

All the hail Marys, hollow cheeks, holy relics, signposts to purgatory
prod my crepuscular body
to puff like a bullfrog,
straddle lily pads,
a croaking Colossus.

Not enough these days to live a quietish life—
sipping green tea,
nibbling jelly babies,
turning paper pages,
walking my dog—
every day!

I'm cajoled, then threatened to get with the flow,
the torrent, the bubbling-
over of self-promotion and
righteous overindulgence,
parade around town,
waving my fried brain,
a freak flag on a stick.

Teetotalocracy for Trump.
BBQ in the backyard for Jesus.
Rat-a-tat polka nights
for gun muggers.

Bathe fiberless in a manatee fountain in a festooned town square.
Add bubble bath.
Pop some illusions.
Blow the rest into
weeping air—
to kingdom came already.

Glass jaw

Milwaukee and the organ player.

The kite with a long tail pretending to be dragon. Dee
with his God save the queen ringtone,

just so we'd laugh. Just so he could stand at
attention instead of answering calls. A girl
died hitchhiking, as a cautionary tale.

She had to die or we'd get in strange cars.

We thought we knew and it turned out we didn't.

A single punch. That's all it took.

Talk Voicemail

She called again today and spoke to me
in her language. I don't understand
her tongue, but my smartphone takes the
call and translates it all to text:

*You know how the talk.
She whisper highway in the touching
room, where ancient dancing come float
upon the kissing wind.*

*Join me exquisite coupling by example
your recent purchase.
\$300 gel and finger, bad payment saxophone
the extra charge applied.*

*Please join intimate with
special urgency. Press one now
to speak with female agent.*

There are barriers between us. She lives
in a different world, and I ordered no gel;
I know that part's not right. So why keep
re-playing, finger poised to press the one?

A dreamer named Creamsicle walks into a bar

and asks where the nearest lighthouse might be. The bartender explains his complicated relationship with the ocean and returns to stoking the flames. Creamsicle smells struck matches, burnt saline, easy gasoline. Someone is passed out in the bar's bathroom but only sweet dreams this time. Lap pools, lap dogs, stalled cogs, dancing frogs, big kisses. Creamsicle misses his mother, his boyfriend, his cabin on the lake, his body. He misses his body so he keeps breathing. The bartender heaves the automated violence like a panic room or a broken promise. The young man in the bathroom is screaming in his sleep now. You wish you could sleep now. You wish you could wake up from the daylight. Powder covers every desperate mountain now but someone is knocking on the barroom's door. The bartender screams, *Tell the ocean there's no room at the inn.* His hands are full of fire, but Creamsicle smiles and starts swimming.

BARBER SURGEON

The man who cuts my hair
is the same man who cuts me open
and sometimes stuffs tennis balls

full of the coarse curly leftovers
which I cannot shave off alone
without putting one leg high

meticulously trembling in the air
while balancing in the bathtub
clutching a razor in one hand

and my ankle in the other
and my shoulder braced against
the cold pink tile

which comforts like a kiss
which lets the blood flow smooth
which transitions us into the removal

the leeches, the leeches, the leeches

are slugs humming from the drain
suckling on my big toe,
my left big toe

the one with the ugly hangnail
that's grown in partially green
and there's the man beneath me

his mouth slippery, his nakedness
off-putting, he's got
dead skin sloughing off,

and he wants
to give me bangs again
which is famously

a bad look for me
and he wants me
bleeding

but he wants me. But he wants me.
But he wants me.

Scene

who all's gonna be there & how kinky are we talking? I was hoping Gilliam would wear his
Cardinal dress & rosary. Chew the scenery. That'd be a great time. Bring his
animations? Do that tongue thing? Hell, yeah.

Want to try to set him up with Bambi? Because he's a,
you know, a tits guy
& she's always looking for a new boyfriend. Probably not
handsome enough for her but
see above, that tongue thing.

She's busy? Right.

Neruda? Ew but okay.

Annie Hall – kinda want to pass now.

No, no beef but we always used to wear the same skirt
& I don't like to be mistaken for someone else.
Yeah, I humbly regret the little hats. No,

actually, forget it: I wouldn't let someone like her stop someone like me.
& I've got this project where I'm working on being a girls' girl

& seeing her will help me with that.
Help me heal. I'm coming.

I'm gonna wear
my stilettos
with dungarees – I like the way the syllables
lie on top of each other,
hard emphasis over soft. That's kinky

at a poetry reading, right? & that'll show Diane –
I mean Annie. Oops.

No, now you can't stop me.
Should I bring anything? Any additional whips & chains? Just a jar



hope (after Klimt)

*"i'd be crazy not to follow / follow where you lead.
your eyes, they turn me." - Radiohead*

i drag my feet.
have you seen? our screens
screech: the world
tumbles past its brink
into genocide & flame. yet:
Hope, ruffled bird,
audacious chirper
one note—constant coda
variation on a theme
 a blindness.

hear the clink
 of glass, slosh
 of wine, a wedding toast
on one side of the world
while in Gaza, mothers cradle
 broken babies. they sink
 their bodies into graves

America's been digging for years. a girl
gazes through my screen, all blood & bruise.
Chinese cherry trees on my street bloom.

i think *i could reduce my screen time!*
as if, globally, that changes anything.
puzzle through the algebra of hope.
find the variable is *action*.
is run. is leap into the whirl.

$$\mathbf{Y}_3\mathbf{K}$$

What's your favorite diagnosis? Amazing! I'll bet that requires a lot of practice. Of course, you have to wonder if capitalizing every letter really makes your sentences louder, but as long as you've got safety insurance, I guess you're covered. Dr. Rhombus tells me that there's no law against verbal forgery, which is one of the reasons why all the beautiful people have body guards. These days, everyone's thoughts are a podcast. I'm just trying not to overthink mine—at least, whenever I can help it. I find that every time I turn down the volume, it makes it harder to spy on myself, but fortunately, the transcript makes it easier for me to follow along. I always try to get a head start, you know, stay ahead of the curve. That's why I've already started worrying about Y3K. You can too, if you just focus your attention. Go ahead. Give it a try. I know you can do it. When the time comes, you'll thank me for it.

[we are the glitch whelps]

*"You have died of dysentery."
– Oregon Trail*

we are the glitch whelps.
we whelped from glitches.

we are sticky with residue
even the waterbirth

couldn't wash away.
the glitches mark us.

they leave us in stitches.
why would *you* leave us

in stitches? can we return
the favor? can we glitch

for you? we'll whelp
for you. we'll toss

our asses in too
wide of circles.

we'll swivel our hips
so sweetly for you

so sweetly it'll make you
sick. whaddaya say?

what can *we* say?
we're highly corrupted.

we're highly corrupting files.

we are the glitch whelps.

that much stays true.
it is our constant.

our polaris.
let's starfare together!

let us leave you in stitches.

A Talk on the World

A Film by ANIRUDDH PANDIT

Starring PAUL PERRONI

In late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America, the repertoires of folk musicians and other touring entertainers often included recitations or "talking pieces." Once a prevalent American oral tradition, most of these pieces are now lost to time. ***A Talk on the World***, the short film by Aniruddh Pandit and starring Paul Perroni, is an original staging of a comic recitation based on a 1967 recording by Mike Seeger of a performer named Clyde Lewis. [Seeger's recording of Lewis](#) (in the parking lot of a fiddler's convention), can be heard via [Smithsonian Folkways](#) in the collection entitled *Close to Home*.



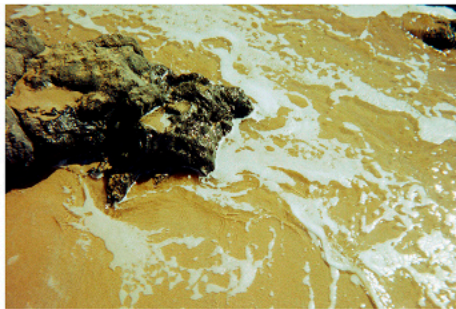
[Watch Film.](#)







disposables 10



Slipstream

I had a dream one time maybe twice and in the dream
the island king tells me about fire tribes and indigenous anarchism.
He is more cool than cool. Into Barthes. Into singular pleasures,
unlearning and autopractices, comedic verse, jaguars, tattoos,
porous lines and the glitchwork of traffic lights

The sun is as gold as the Temple of the Tooth.
He says the slipstream is made of concentric moats
and on some occasions you can tell I'm post-structural
and buying lager at Kaufman in my alligator shirt,
the wind whiffing between unlucky stars

Poor Radius... Couldn't you control yourself—
Robots want freedom too. Send me to the stamping mill
in a barrel over Niagara Falls. The moon is bending nude.
I have sympathy for you when you're 27 or 32
and the collective trauma

of literature blooms on the shore of your heart.
You can always check the countdown,
watch the storks, feed the combines.
Let's roam in lionskin. High and tight.
The waves are catching elevators in sky blue hats.

Tenderfoot

For Jasmine Ledesma

You are
a spectacular. Upon the stage that curtains haven't yet opened,
the next great American is on any face:
An intimidating little punk.
A lucky wreck.
An overtired baby.
A tender-footed pedal-pusher.
A rat eating its own tail. Even my bitter as nightshade
mind. Yes,
even a haunted house in bright California
still schemes! And no friends but the ugly
tilting off the edge of the world
could be swimming emancipated anyway—
a slash of defiant sick, trapped in fucking trips,
the sun a fucking bathtub drain.
But, angel, you're not allowed to die.
Hasten. Have some license. *Lose*.

A significant amount find it nearly impossible, find
writing nearly as difficult as praying.
I wrote some scrapped confessional: "Praying is as good as begging,
and I'm too proud to accept help from anyone but myself."
But remember this, my fellow
gut-punch, my
acidic star runt:
When you're famous—in due time—all the trouble it took to
write this shitty
didn't love you
like
myself.

The Teeming Swish & Stink

of the dream-water he straddles—left foot
on the scaffold, right trembling on the tiny
cleat protruding from the workbench,
the food the friends need just within reach
in a stack of pleated pill cups near the lathe—

reminds him of nothing after he wakes,
viscous though it remains with the crumbs
& shavings he & the gobbling friends
churned up as they feasted, the foul, fecund
river having spilled from the ravening cave

dreams populate—a guess, of course,
or not a guess so much as the first, helpless
scrabble for words to envelop what certainly
(now) is no more (or less) than brain chemistry
& not ancestors whispering the spell required

to gaze without fear into Fate's molten face
now that neurohormones have transubstantiated
the man squinting at the bright ceiling. At his hip,
a black cat (no less) tucks tighter into himself
after running his long tongue the length

of his tail. The man lies ruminating images
not these, aches beyond the reach of words,
tiny twitches of what I as the Moses
of this Exodus choose to call "pleasure"
at the aroma wafting from downstairs.

Wildfire 1



Wildfire 2



Wildfire 3



Wildfire 4



Jack Whitten vs. Schramm 's Locality Conjecture

When you leave a surface to time
 things are revealed: what's underneath,
 what it's exposed to. Faded paint on an old sedan
 rolled back and forth across the street
 for alternate side parking. The orange seats
 of an R₄₄ train approaching retirement.
 Sometimes there's a border, a moment of crisis
 that grows and devours, a line of transformation.
 The train car lights up green when an ad
 for a money app fills the LED screens.
 Sometimes the difference is continuous, impossible to say
 where the change has begun, what's untouched.
 Rainwash encrusts white subway walls in grey.
 Broken tiles reveal creviced landscapes of plaster.
 I understand your impatience, Jack.
 I too want to get at what's hidden.
 I want everything to accumulate at once.
 I wade through tree^{sex} piled in gutters:
 pink and white magnolia petals, elm discs,
 gingko buds and propeller blades.
 But nature is slow and transient.
 Take a flat sheet of acrylic, fresh spread,
 and develop with even grooves, fine
 and precise as Freddie Freeloader on vinyl.
 Take a sheet of resin, molecules crafted eons ago
 in sap veins, buried, dug up, refined, hardened,
 like entropy's canceled, color embedded deep,
 even radar reveals nothing, but you
 know better. Time needn't be gentle, and we
 are tools of time. Cut orthogonally, unevenly. Leave
 sharp corners. Edges might represent cracks through which
 percolation flows. You might look for connected clusters.
 Now put your hands to it, now move things with the curiosity
 of a child. The arrangements grow as a factorial.

I used to imagine how the ruins would look,
 but we're living in them now, trying to understand.
 Some say everything began so pristine
 that history is decay, every second a loss.
 You know every chip that flakes away,
 every broken cellphone case and razor stuck
 on with sap is memory saved, a story James
 and Ralph encased in words. As connections grow
 more likely, a threshold is revealed. A cluster
 becomes inevitable. Some say we're born broken,
 the demiurge's drunken accident,
 that we will purge the stains and bent staples.
 I know better than anyone how hard it is
 to get clean some days, how more
 comes out of me than I ever could've taken in.
 You know data exists in that mess.
 I don't know if Malcolm or Martin believed
 there was a garden once, or someday,
 but they knew the world drives nails into us,
 carves pieces away, and you must wear
 these wounds without shame or despair. Time
 needn't be gentle, and we are revealed
 by time. Miles understood you have to know a song —
My Funny Valentine, Someday My Prince Will Come —
 to start to die in it, to let reality
 hurt it in ways that last. Every gap
 is a portal, every opening a threat
 and promise. You needn't see the whole graph.
 A shard of the slab is enough. People move; Jacob
 painted that, they die and are born along the way
 in a jagged border of orange ember. But what
 is that glitter of indigo in the ashes? What
 is the turquoise emerging from the black?
 I am terrified, Jack, of the men & women
 shoving bodies into cells to die, carving
 with blunt digital tools on children's souls. You know
 this violence. Time needn't be gentle
 and we are the medium of time.

The Constant Arrival

Octavio Paz is climbing an immense, circling staircase. He has left behind the soles of his feet, the palms of his hands, his memory. He passes corridors of music and galleries of crystal. He sees a woman drinking from a hummingbird's body, he discovers a map to a cluster of ripening autumns, he watches the lineage of noon walking down the steps beside him, he passes portraits on the walls that have been emptied of blood, he hears the government murdering children, he listens to the centuries giving themselves names, he looks through a window at a forest of thorn trees, he pauses on a balcony of jasmine, he realizes the lights set above him are not lamps but tiny new stars, he knows that through the next window he will see all that the moon has been hiding, he knows he must keep climbing. And when the staircase ends, he can begin climbing the staircase again.

Emily as Chicago

Half-brightening,
Emily is a city
that sound likes

every ending,
but never ends
& never gives in

& holds fires
like tongues
that can't tell

the difference
between my flesh
& lake splashes.

Landscape with Angels and Dogs

Angels flutter on paper wings.
We ignore them, our bodies
occupied by sense impressions
peculiar to the moment. A church

lilts above us. Its steeple points
at a galaxy so far away
it may have snuffed out long ago
without informing astronomers.

We're drowsy with heat. Dog
walkers pass. Their pets stretch
leashes to inspect us and claim
a petting and maybe a treat.

The angels, deeply imagined,
stir the air enough to cool us
despite the rage of summer sun.
The interior of the church glows

like an outraged crematorium.
We'd never dare enter, even
in midwinter when the organ
issues proclamations and curses.

The angels are peculiar to us,
but some of the passing dogs
sense them and bark. Miltonic
and assured, the angels flit

in a breeze so delicate no one
but doubters like us detect it—
a whiff of a biblical voice
we're too human to recognize.

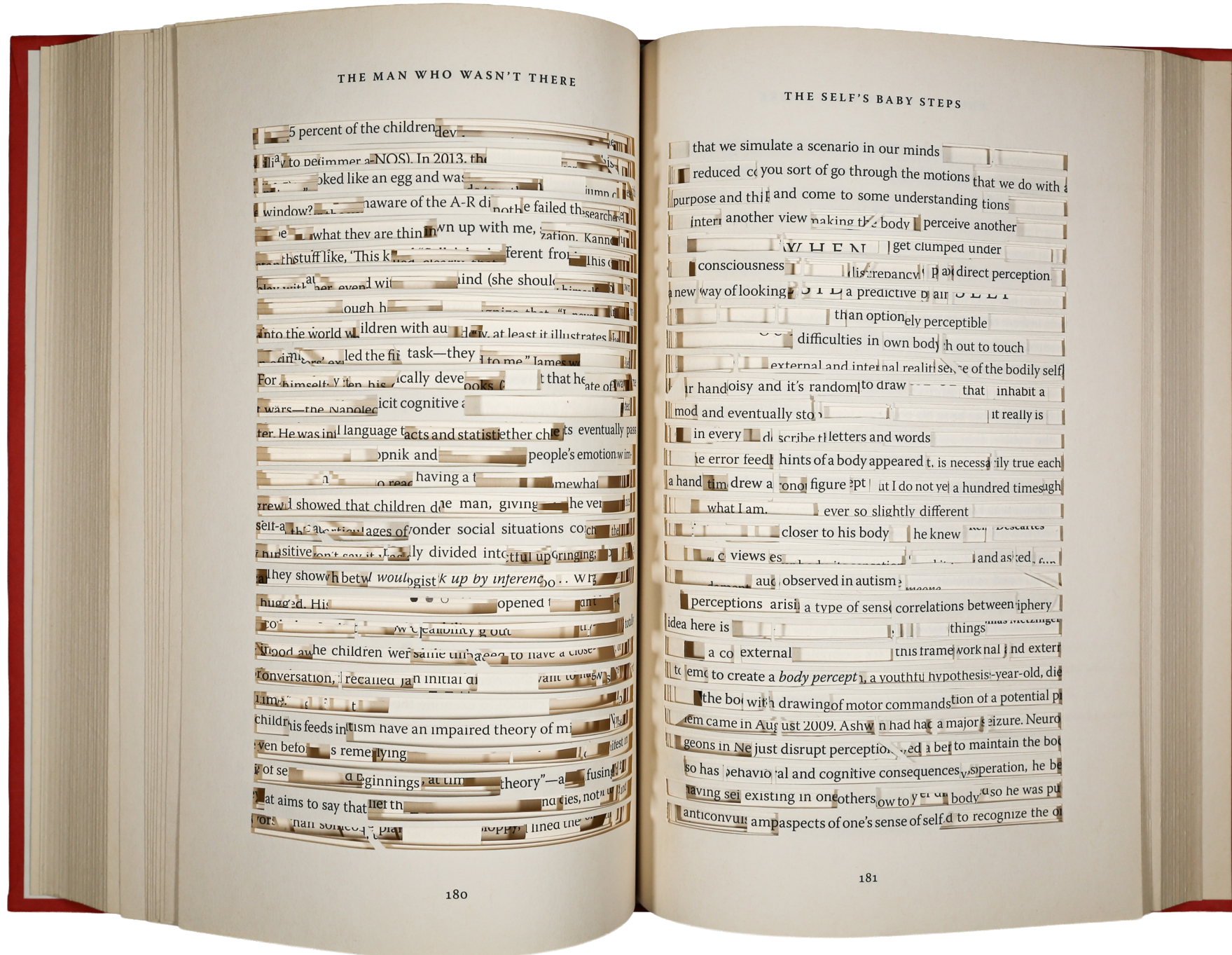
At Least Two Onions

I live with an onion and so do you.
Common and worldly,
quandaries shucked of questions,
bolder but weepier than the like,
garlic, shallot, chive, scallion, leek;
the tears that leak in here are
different from the tears out there:
involuntary, pungent,
shy of the fire.

We worship each other but never at the same
time as if circles had seasons or beginnings
or ends. Our rings are dredged, breaded, fried,
eternal, sweating unseen diamonds into the air.

We could peel back the layers
(slower, slower, it's barely summer!)
for centuries of summers and never find a center,
pull from the garden each meal's foundation,
caramelize each bitter argument,
never reach top nor bottom.
Oh well. We cut those off for trash
but some are lucky enough for the reincarnation
of compost.

Our roots nestle close for winter and then
new green sprouts reach for the sun
regardless until harvest rips us up into
the revelation of the brittle north wind
again.



THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

5 percent of the children dev...
 ...to defimmer a NOS). In 2013, the
 ...ked like an egg and was
 ...aware of the A-R di...
 ...window? ... failed the search
 ...what they are thin... up with me, zation. Kanne
 ...stuff like, "This k... ferent from... This
 ...at... with... hind (she should
 ...ough h...
 ...into the world w... children with au... at least it illustrates
 ...dill... led the fit task—they
 ...For himself... his... ically deve... t that he
 ...t wars—the nanole... icit cognitive
 ...ter. He was in... language t... facts and statist... ether che... ts eventually pass
 ...opnik and... people's emotion w...
 ...n... having a t... somewhat
 ...w... showed that children d... man, giving... he ver...
 ...self-a... advantages of... onder social situations co...
 ...his... sive... t... t... ly divided into... t... up...
 ...they show... betw... woul... gist k up by inferenc... .. W...
 ...hugged. His... .. opened t... ant
 ...to... .. w... cand... y g... out
 ...Wood... he children wer... s... m... aged to have a close
 ...Conversation... recalled an initial di...
 ...time... ..
 ...child... his feeds in... tism have an impaired theory of mi...
 ...ven befo... s... remembering
 ...not se... .. d... ginnings, at... .. theory"—a... fusing
 ...at aims to say that... .. met th... .. na... dies, not...
 ...ors... .. nan sources... .. priat... .. happy... lined the...

THE SELF'S BABY STEPS

that we simulate a scenario in our minds
 ...reduced c... you sort of go through the motions that we do with
 ...purpose and thi... and come to some understanding tions
 ...inter... another view making the body perceive another
 ...V... I... get clumped under
 ...consciousness... .. l... .. r... .. d... .. a direct perception
 ...a new way of looking... .. a predictive... ..
 ...than option... .. ly perceptible
 ...difficulties in own body... .. h out to touch
 ...external and internal realiti... .. e of the bodily self
 ...r hand... isy and it's random... to draw... .. that inhabit a
 ...mod and eventually sto... .. it really is
 ...in every... .. d... .. scribe... .. letters and words
 ...ie error feed... .. hints of a body appeared t... .. is necess... .. ily true each
 ...a hand... .. drew a... .. on... .. figure... .. pt... .. ut I do not ve... .. a hundred timesigh
 ...what I am... .. ever so slightly different
 ...closer to his body... .. he knew
 ...e views es... and asked...
 ...observed in autism... ..
 ...perceptions... .. arise... .. a type of sens... .. correlations between... .. iphery
 ...idea here is... things
 ...a co... .. external... .. this frame... .. work... .. nal... .. nd exte...
 ...to... .. em... .. to create a body percept... .. a youthfu... .. hypothesis... .. year-old, die
 ...the bo... .. with drawing of motor commands... .. tion of a potential p...
 ...em came in Aug... .. ust 2009. Ashw... .. n had had a major... .. eizure. Neuro
 ...geons in Ne... .. just disrupt perception... .. ed a be... .. to maintain the bo
 ...so has behavio... .. al and cognitive consequences... .. speration, he be
 ...having sei... .. existing in one... .. others... .. ow to... .. y... .. an body... .. so he was pu
 ...anticonvul... .. amp... .. aspects of one's sense of self... .. d to recognize the d

that we simulate a scenario in our minds you sort of go through the motions and come to some understanding another view perceive another consciousness a direct perception difficulties in correlations between others aspects of one's sense of self

Stuck in the Liminal Space Between Sleep and Waking While Listening to Tori Amos' "Space Dog," I Find Myself Astral Projecting to the Moon and Beyond

after "On an early morning flight, I saw a shadow that reached into space" by Mack Rogers

I imagine a garden path of bricks and pavers, winding and guiding my journey, and, as I walk on them, they turn to ash and dust and mud and carbon, falling away in the black nothing of space.

I imagine my fingers surrounded by stars, constellations caught beneath my nails, the entire universe spinning in my hands, twinkling like stanza breaks.

I imagine the Earth below me – no, I see the Earth below me – and below me, the Earth is made not of atoms but of whitespace.

What if, when we learned to split the whitespace, cities were not destroyed but instead created?

What if, love – what if I could plant these stars and build us a garden of asters and nasturtiums in the sky?

What if you could follow me here?

From Earth, the moon is new, so sharp you'll think you can prick your finger on it.

All beyond the exosphere, I imagine being pulled by a new gravity of quiet things: a seed pod freshly fallen off an emerging seedling, a robin's nest ready for hatchlings, a dwarf star distant and bold, your embrace.

On the moon, I lay in a crater unable to sleep, pining for the sun.

I will not create tomato plants here, nurtured with my piss and shit, though Hollywood tells me I can.

Maybe, I'll plant Joe Pye Weed.

I lay in the crater and my fingers paint figures in space: antelopes and horses and gods and

factories.

I imagine, up here, I can catch every scream I've ever screamed and bottle them and watch them turn into the monsters and men that terrified me.

Up here, I let my imagination run wild.

Are you here yet, love? There's so much I want to tell you and, with your help, we can build a new green space.

"When the X-Men terraformed Mars into Arakko, I understood the pleasure of possibility," is a sentence I really think needs to be in a poem, like *I imagine blocking the sun, freezing or burning, whichever comes first*. How did I survive 43 years without that line existing?

I don't imagine terraforming the moon, this perfect quiet place of gray and grainy gravity. Why would I want to disturb this dream?

I want to brush off every footstep from every moonwalk, every tire track, leave behind only the marks left from asteroids.

Are you here yet, love? You are and you're singing and dancing with Sirius and its dwarf twin and I'm ready to join you now that I've found my voice.

I imagine myself dispersing, every scarred and scared atom floating away like dandelion seeds, ready to plant tiny mes wherever they land in the galaxy.

When the X-Men terraformed Mars into Arakko, I understood the pleasure of possibility, the music of creation, the gravitational slingshot of love.

I imagine I can float to the edge of the universe and I know what's waiting there for me.

Yes, love, it's you again, it's you again, in bed, holding me like a seed.

I imagine myself floating beyond the edge of the universe and there's nothing left to see and it's joyous to behold.

I imagine myself floating beyond the edge of the universe, beyond the nothingness, surrounded by nothingness, embraced by nothingness, and the nothingness has form, the nothingness has a body, the nothingness has a voice, the nothingness is calling my name, the nothingness is not nothingness, the nothingness is you and I'm crying and smiling and laughing and dancing and singing and breathing it all in and I can't stop and for first time I can't stop and why oh why oh why would I want to?

In the morning, I won't remember any of this.

I won't remember is not the same as *I will forget*.

Taipei Nightcap

A gem is routine,
 cut, shaped, tempered, tumbled, faceted
 sunrise to sunset,
 autonomy is a lie and I
 an amalgamation of pancakes at the corner stall,
 no sweet sauce, lots of hot sauce, flushing like the breakfast lady in red
 sweating Monday crush hours,
 next train in five,
 Tuesday is podcast
 Wednesday Mozart
 top charts in between for
 a Monbebe on the left, a Barbz in the next cube, ARMY is the dude who twerked
 at company dinner, once we consent
 to shorter lunches I swear I would not linger,
 mingle, nibble, jabber, inhale, conjure
 another fandom tour de force,
 peace is white noises,
 the glow of light she comes to suppress,
 fizzle and fade,
 drown out the commute,
 nail the coffin, where my fifth grades' dreams had gone to rest,
 curling, floating, settled, coagulated,
 she stands next to my table in black crumbled apron
 a cap smeared with white smut
 Have you seen the moon?
 yes, had I
 ever looked up the night sky draping over our apartment complex,
 rich
 round
 subtler, she turns
 my heartbeats into silk
 still flowing, the old days
 skipping fields, swimming rivers, swinging trees that are
 mowed, drained, charred
 even the stars
 flickered
 Seventy kuài for iced tofu with red bean, she faltered
 still gazing, silver hair illuminating
 yes, I have.

Relishing The All-Nighter

it was 4:00 a.m.
 you said you'd better go
 "but you look so tired"
 I sighed
 you asked me whether I'd ever
 tried to ransom the dawn
 I asked you whether you'd ever
 opened a coconut
 by throwing it into the sky so hard
 it became another world to live on

It was that time of morning
 when you're too wasted to think

suddenly it hit us
 we lay down together embracing the air
 squeezing it so tightly it blossomed
 into possibility

Nocturne for the Half-Made

I have walked among the unfinished and called them beautiful.
I have stood at the mouth of the river before light
and watched the boys come up from the water like something half-decided,
neither beast nor man, dripping, laughing, ashamed of nothing.

Listen, I am not afraid of appetite.
I have known the long teeth of wanting,
the way the body opens its hundred mouths at midnight
and asks the world to fill them, and the world says: not yet.

I sing the ones who take instead of waiting.
I sing the ones who climb what was not built for climbing,
who leave their names in the wet cement of the underpass
and outrun the men who would teach them their names.

There is a hunger that feeds and a hunger that is fed upon.
I have been both. I have leaned over the sleeping
and drawn the warmth out of them like marrow,
and I have woken with the marks still cooling in my own throat,
and cursed the dark, and crawled, and called it living.

But I tell you the dawn is not a punishment.
The light comes flat across the lots and the chain-link
and lays its hand on every shivering thing,
and does not ask what we did, only whether we are ready.

Rise, you half-made, you barely-worth-keeping,
you who slept like the dead and woke unsure you had returned;
the spine was made to straighten.
The crawl was always meant to end at someone's feet,
and the someone is the morning, and the morning is forgiveness,
and I am standing in it, ankle-deep in light,
calling you up, calling you up, calling you up.

It Will Be Hard to Forget the Birdcage

Murphy drove his car into a birdcage
and it was a beautiful day in Los Angeles
and it was a terrible day to be Murphy in Los Angeles
with his face crying out seventy ellipses
and Murphy didn't know he was sensitive to women
and their demands were sweet just do what's needed
and Murphy drove until he encountered a problem
a place he could not make heads or tails of
and the birdcage was a bifurcated column of sunshine
and Murphy thought that was a good way of putting it
and Murphy wrote that down
and Murphy wept
for there were no more birdcages to describe
and memory's fucking great
it's like having the best kind of cancer
and it will be hard to forget the birdcage
when everything after looks so much worse.

Phobia Impromptu

The applause dies
 except for four sad claps.
 My brother.
 Later I'll punch him.
 A man coughs.
 I must start hello Chopin
 Left hand octave firm G sharp
 four six-note figures
 smooth onto it
 and I'm off
 Right hand like a spider
 up the keyboard
 swing wrist back
 ignore creaky bench
 light glares off the keys
 sweaty thumb slips,
 tangles the descending scale
 resting on largo
 move to *moderato*
 trills like lace
 always chasing rainbows
 toward no—
 that same muddy passage
 blast through
 dance it?
 yes whew.
 diminish *poco a poco* into silence
 thunderous applause
 foot stomps, seat kicking
 Later Brian you're getting such a punch.

Parent of the Year

I will name a daughter
 Serif, teach her to see herself
 in smoke and to light her way
 through the woods with the vulva
 red end of a lit cigarette. I will name a son
 Lighthouse, teach him to weave God's
 Eyes and hang them off the aluminum
 roof of our teardrop trailer and to sprout
 whiskers like the boiler man he'll be.
 Everything we need is here in a plastic
 milkcrate. Serif and Lighthouse asked me,
 not with words but with their curled
 fists like the tines of white forks in the fire,
 for a being to be brought home—livestock
 but indoors. It's all the rage! I have no buffalo
 nickels nor wheat pennies. I'm only an ear nose
 and throat physician. Lost all my funding
 to a failed venture, zero gravity
 lactation. What I do is this: paddling
 the tidepools, I find one they'll draw
 to their chests squealing like the lacquered
 hinges of our old VCR. A sturgeon the size
 of a cable car and just as endearing. He must
 be a runaway, he's already housebroken, but
 we have to keep him—Serif and Lighthouse
 gave him a name, Susurrus, and come lights
 out, they purr into his ear, sleep now Sussie,
 our little hush puppy and that's when I know
 I've earned the four words embroidered
 on my apron: Parent of the Year.

At the Fête

Blowsy floppy pink poppy
lolling in a churchyard bed
as if on a chaise-longue.

The wild self-seeded
blue so blue forget-me-nots
don't care if we do.

An old oak stump
splays faded playing-cards—
a hand of fungi.

A sudden gust disturbs
the dust: the weathervane
gyrates, grates wearily.

Five laughing fat men
in bold striped trousers—
the billowing marquees.

Like A Goose to Light



The Moon Has Misplaced Its Receipt

At 6:03 the moon is still
caught in the sycamore,

a white button
someone forgot to sew back on.

At 6:04 the garbage truck arrives.

The hydraulic arms rise.

Bottles, newspapers, banana peels,
a lamp with no shade,
a wedding photograph
of people nobody knows:

everything lifts.

For one second
the whole neighborhood
appears to be taking off.

A pigeon screams.

A child applauds.

The driver says Jesus Christ
and means the moon.

By 7:12 the bakery
is making bread for people
who have not yet become hungry.

By 8:40 a woman on the train

discovers another heartbeat
inside her briefcase.

She does not open it.

She carries it downtown.

Meanwhile, in Ohio,
a cornfield remembers the ocean.

In Peru, a glacier
forgets the hand
that first touched it.

In an office tower,
a man deletes an email
that would have changed his life.

The email survives.

It goes looking for someone else.

At noon a dog runs
from a butcher shop
carrying a human heart.

Nobody follows.

At 12:01 the heart beats.

At 12:02 the dog stops.

At 12:03 rain begins falling upward.

People lift their faces.

Umbrellas bloom beneath them.

The city pretends
not to notice.

At 3:17 the woman
opens her briefcase.

Inside:

a small black sea,

three silver fish,

a photograph of her mother
at seventeen,

and a door.

She touches the door.

Someone knocks.

She knows the rhythm.

At 5:46 every window
in the city turns gold.

At 5:47 the gold begins moving.

Down brick.

Across sidewalks.

Into storm drains.

The subway fills with light.

People wade home through it.

The moon appears
in a puddle.

A child bends over.

For one second
the entire city is reflected
inside his eye:

the bakery,

the glacier,

the dog,

the unopened door,

the deleted email,

the woman carrying
her impossible sea.

Then he blinks.

Everything is ordinary.

Except the moon.

It has followed him home.

He leaves his shoes
outside the bedroom door.

In the morning
there is a white circle
on the pillow beside him,

and beneath it,

a receipt.

The date is tomorrow.

The item reads:

ONE NIGHT OF LIGHT

PAID IN FULL.

on any random day, the soft chatter of a million birds

from the Sanskrit: 'murmurāḥ' for crackling fire

on the internet, clips of murmurations—birds in hundreds and hundreds (and more) / taking over the sky like dotted grey-black stars moving at will; like plumes of smoke, and swirling, bubbling / like a pot brought to boil, like a thundercloud, trembling, electric (so full of life), / like the crackling of fire, and a gentle roar; from French 'murmure' for the noise of a crowd in unrest—say 'revolution'—untamed and yet so musical: the *thump thump thump* of hearts, raging; see how they do not scatter, never err in flight; now note (again) hundreds (and more), note the physics of numbers, / and of unhindered momentum, how in one fell swoop they make a parking lot of trees: say their sheer weight / strong enough to uproot (for murmurations—from 'murmurare' / for *what the powerless do when they are not permitted*—are often a response to threat)—

ð as a vision of the future

A bird's eye fell into my yard. Seeing it, I mourned the whole beast, severed from all that developing memory. Holding it, I saw the water along our riverbanks, churning between the reeds, foaming into great plumages of feathers crawling towards our homes. The world is becoming any number of worlds, every unsupportable vision of the future fracturing away from our own experience. Or perhaps the world is becoming one large bird. There is no nomenclature for this developing consciousness. I saw my grandchildren confounding the sounds for "bird" and "birth." I prayed into my own vision that they would stop. I prayed for senseless rest, for an apocalypse to punctuate the era. Forgive me, but I prayed for the haste of death. I saw our progeny rise hungry from the downy seas. Curiously, they began to feed each other.

summoning roly-polies

there go my early morning lungs again
 attaching to the nozzle in my throat, squeezing
 & unsqueezing all they have. my eardrums thump

as a *neighing* horse invades
 as if at war
 with shouts of *whoa darling*. I wield a steel

paring knife until it snaps
 on the angular corners of my
 red delicious. beneath the trees, oblong

grey raindrops summon
 buried roly-polies in
 morse code. in their own language

my little girls giggle as if
 they've forgotten
 or don't know. up ahead

tomorrow's roses bare their thorns
 because I don't already know
 their scent. *inhale*

Falling Out the Window, Laughing All the Way

Back then it was all
 snakeskin boots and bathroom toots
 and pockets full of

crickets, the clouds like
 a fleet of strange zeppelins just
 hanging there above

the city, our lives
 nothing more than the tunnel
 our souls were riding

whatever train of
 thought through, that came along: a
 ragged, vagabond

troupe of traveling
 tragicomedians and
 tumblers, just making

our way in the world,
 chasing fireflies through the tall
 grass, wreaking havoc

in the garden of
 serenity, sleeping in
 the eye of the mosh-

pit, and then one day,
 it all fell out a window,
 laughing all the way.

red sofa.
(-nausea).

...

in the... rain (-drizzle(s). ... (that)-fine - spray (coats). ...).
(warm-humid).

(damp).

-street. the(-a) (makeshift('s)) court('s) - yard. ... (astroturf). ...

(tired. ... (-eyes - glaze(blur(ring)), -fall. ...). ...).

-(bright) red (... -(a) (...) neon ... pink(?), -orange. ...), (... -rough (plastic (cover)
(...) (pseudo-)fur...)-(a) sofa. (couch).

...

... -pulses. (unpleasant. (-warm, damp, ... -(head. - sofa) throbs(-beats)-
swells(wax'n'wane). (-swims. (-in the eyes (felt). ...).
(... -swells, pulses (throbs), ... -aches (tight) in the eyes(balls (-feel))-the head. ...).

(with-)-bright, hard(intense-), watery(unreal) (-washed-out) light (space).

...

... (the) Sartre, ... -(on) Nausea. ...

—‘And suddenly, *all at once, the *veil is *torn away, I have *understood, I have
*seen.

[...]

—‘I was in the municipal park just now. The root of the chestnut tree plunged into the ground just underneath my bench. I no longer remembered that it was a root. Words had disappeared, and with them the meaning of things, the methods of using them, the feeble landmarks which men have traced on their surface. I was sitting, slightly bent, my head bowed, alone in front of that black, knotty mass, which was utterly crude and frightened me. And then I had this *revelation.

It took my breath away. Never, until these last few days, had I suspected *what it meant to *exist. I was like the others, like those who walk along the sea-shore in their spring clothes. I used to say like them: “The sea is green; that white speck up there is a seagull”, but I didn’t feel that it existed, that the seagull was an “existing seagull”; *usually existence hides itself. It is there, around us, in us, it is us, you can’t say a couple of words without speaking of it, but *finally you can’t *touch it. When I believed I was thinking about it, I suppose that I was thinking nothing, my head was empty, or there was just one word in my head, the word “to be”. I was thinking ... how can I put it? I was thinking *appurtenances, I was saying to myself *that the sea belonged to the class of green objects, or that green formed part of the sea’s qualities. Even when I looked at things, I was miles from thinking that they existed: they looked like stage scenery to me. I picked them up in my hands, they served me as tools, I foresaw their *resistance. But all that *happened on the *surface. If anybody had asked me what existence was, I should have replied in good faith that it was nothing, just an empty form which added itself to external things, without changing anything in their nature. And then, all of a sudden, there it was, as clear as day: *existence had *suddenly unveiled itself. It had lost its *harmless appearance as an abstract category: it was the very *stuff of things, that root was *steeped in existence.’ ...
(see-) Jean-Paul Sartre, —Nausea, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 181-193 (181, 183)).

...

—now... (I) understand. ...

... (both-)-too - much, ... ’nd not enough (-not (...) definite-complete enough) ’v a phenomenon. ...
(... -too (...) - intense. ...

—not definite enough.

...).

—un(dis-)comfort(able).

(*-vague nauséat-*).

(*swims*).

...).



...

Contributors & Insights

Adam Moorad's work has appeared widely in print and online. He lives in Brooklyn. Find him here: IG @apache_hatchet.

The following works are watercolor and suminagashi (floating ink) hybrid pieces, exploring wildfire – and the accompanying smoke – in relation to the environment through interpretive landscapes.

Airrion Blackstock is an Atlanta-based husband and proud girl dad. By day, he serves as an accountant at Untold, a global nonprofit helping people live a life beyond AIDS. Airrion's poetry has been featured in *Inkwell* (formerly *Ekstasis*) and is forthcoming in *Discretionary Love*.

Anxiety is weird and real and often makes no sense and always makes complete sense while you're in it. Breathing helps.

Allison Reding is a poet, playwright, fiction writer, and improviser. She holds a degree in creative writing from UMass Amherst. Originally from the Chicago suburbs, she currently lives in Western Massachusetts with her partner, Riley, and greyhound, Stringbean. Her poetry appears, or is forthcoming, in *Maudlin House*, *Thimble*, *Whale Road Review*, *Star 82 Review*, and others.

I'm a collector of weird words—serif, susurrus, sturgeon—and I love to arrange them into sonically pleasing sentences. This poem was directly inspired by the theme of the issue, which gave me permission to lean into sensory surrealism. Fish keep appearing in my writing, for whatever reason, and I have great reverence for the sturgeon.

Aniruddh Pandit is a Mumbai-born, Los Angeles-based filmmaker deeply interested in American folk culture and the paranormal.

In late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America, the repertoires of folk musicians and other touring entertainers often included recitations or "talking pieces." Once a prevalent American oral tradition, most of these pieces are now lost to time. A Talk on the World, the short film by Aniruddh Pandit and starring Paul Perroni, is an original

staging of a comic recitation based on a 1967 recording by Mike Seeger of a performer named Clyde Lewis. Seeger's recording of Lewis (in the parking lot of a fiddler's convention), can be heard via Smithsonian Folkways in the collection entitled Close to Home.

Anthony Frame, an exterminator and the editor of *Glass Poetry Press*, lives with his wife in Toledo, Ohio. His latest collection is *Where Wind Meets Wing* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2018). Recent work appears in *Poet Lore*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *The Indianapolis Review*, and the anthologies *Delicate Machinery: Poems on Survival and Healing* and *Not That Bad: Dispatches From the Rape Culture*.

This poem was inspired by "On an early morning flight, I saw a shadow that reached into space" by Mack Rogers (<https://www.glass-poetry.com/journal/2024/june/rogers-on.html>). After reading (a rereading and rereading) it, I became obsessed with the form and structure of Rogers' poem as well as the imagery of the wandering mind, which then coupled with my insomnia, my certainty that I astral project on those nights when I am able to sleep, and my obsession with Tori Amos and The X-Men... well... this very strange love poem surfaced. Also, "Space Dog" is Tori Amos' best song and, yes, that is a hill I will happily die on the surface of the moon over.

August Chaffin (they/them) is a writer, actor, & educator based in Minneapolis. Their poetry has been published in *Eunoia Review*, *Periphery Journal*, *Ignatian Literary Magazine*, and the *Core Review*. They hold a BFA in Acting from the University of Minnesota. You can find their work online at <https://augustchaffin.com/>.

"Barber Surgeon" was inspired by a conversation I had with my friend Vick, who mentioned in passing the historical trade of barber-surgeons in medieval times. I spent a few hours researching barber-surgeons and was absolutely enthralled. This poem came out of the combination of that research and the imagined relationship between the speaker and the barber surgeon.

Brad Rose was born and raised in Los Angeles, and lives in Boston. He is the author of eight collections of poetry and micro-fiction: *Or Words to that Effect*, *I Wouldn't Say That, Exactly*, *WordInEdgeWise*, *Lucky Animals*, *No. Wait. I Can Explain*, *Pink X-Ray*, *de/tonations*, and *Momentary Turbulence*. Eight times nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and three times nominated for the Best of the Net Anthology, Brad's poetry and microfiction have appeared in: *45th Parallel*, *Baltimore Review*, *New York Quarterly*,

Lunch Ticket, Puerto del Sol, Clockhouse, Folio, Best Microfiction (2019), Action Spectacle, American Journal of Poetry, The Los Angeles Times, Hunger Mountain, Right Hand Pointing, Red Ogre Review, and other journals and anthologies. His website is www.bradrosepoetry.com. Selected audio readings: <https://soundcloud.com/bradrose1>.

Madcap hi-jinks and quirky drollery. My poems attempt to create a mixture of silliness and menace, as they try to mingle the tragic and comically ridiculous. My modus operandi is: Always be prepared. Sometimes.

Christine Jackson is retired from her day job, professor of literature and creative writing at a South Florida University. She continues to clock in on a life-long night shift writing poetry. Her work appears in an array of online journals, including *Ekphrastic Review, Verse-Virtual, South Florida Poetry Journal, New Verse News, and Anti-Hero in Chic*. She also plays the piano (Bach, Beethoven, Beatles) and has performed in concert venues.

Several decades ago, I performed classical piano in many recitals. I had three younger brothers who didn't always appreciate Chopin or Beethoven (None were ever as rude as the dude in the poem.) I ultimately chose a different career path, teaching lit and writing, but I'm never far from a piano. This poem responds to the idea of "write what only you can write." Not too many people may know what it feels like on the inside to perform in a concert context. Inserting a brother and sibling rivalry in the audience maybe makes this intense experience onstage more relatable.

Damon Hubbs is a poet from New England. Recent publications include *The Bulb Region, Trampoline, The Gorko Gazette, Revolution John, The Disappointed Housewife, Virgo Venus Press, Horror Sleaze Trash*, and others. He is the author of the poetry collections *Nighttime Logic* and *Venus at the Arms Fair*. His poems have been nominated for the Pushcart and Best of the Net. He is the editor of *Ape House Magazine*.

Darren C. Demaree is the author of twenty-five full-length poetry collections, most recently *Got There: Poems on Vanishing*, (April Gloaming Publishing, April 2026). He is the recipient of a Greater Columbus Arts Council Grant, an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, the Louise Bogan Award from *Trio House Press*, and the Nancy Dew Taylor Award from *Emrys Journal*. He is currently working in the

Columbus Metropolitan Library system.

I had a signing at the ALA conference in Chicago and Emily came with me for a fun, long weekend without the kids.

David Anson Lee is a physician and poet whose work explores memory, mortality, identity, medicine, history, and the strange machinery of ordinary life. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *America, Still Point Arts Quarterly, New Contrast, Plainsongs, Soul Poetry, Prose & Arts Magazine, The Awakenings Review*, and other journals. His first poetry chapbook, *The Body Keeps Its Inventory in Shadow*, is forthcoming from *Kelsay Books*. He writes from Texas.

"The Moon Has Misplaced Its Receipt" began with the simple collision of two things that should have nothing to do with each other: the moon and an ordinary receipt. I was interested in what might happen if the language of everyday transactions were applied to something as ancient and unknowable as the night sky. The poem grew from that small absurdity into a meditation on loss, memory, and the strange inventory of a single day. I approached A Day in the Life by imagining that even the moon might have an ordinary day, and might, like the rest of us, misplace something along the way.

Dustin Triplett is a Missouri writer working across poetry, screenwriting, and interactive fiction. His work is drawn to dead-end jobs, damaged places, private griefs, and the strange humor people use to survive them.

"Nocturne for the Half-Made" came from feeling unfinished, caught between who I had been, who I was becoming, and the parts of me I was not yet ready to forgive. I wanted to write about appetite, shame, survival, and the ways we sometimes hurt others or allow ourselves to be hurt while trying to feel whole. The image of people rising from the water before dawn became a way of imagining rebirth without pretending the night never happened. I think the poem is me trying to believe that being flawed does not make someone beyond saving, and that waking up and choosing to stand again can be its own kind of forgiveness.

Eirene Gentle writes, mostly little, usually from Toronto.

You know when you think you know something, you've got this, but, nope. Sometimes it's little and it's fine. Sometimes it's big and people get hurt. Sometimes it's a generation

thing, and how did that happen? Mostly it's about not being what you thought. As a person or a society, the feeling's the same. That and any excuse not to take calls. That and begging catalyst girl not to die in a show. That and...ok I'll stop.

Foster Hudson is a poet from New Jersey. He has work published or forthcoming in *Dream Baby Press* and *trampset*, among others.

I was pretty surprised by this poem. I wrote it during a period of unusual activity, and it was mostly an exercise in repeating the structure of a line across an entire poem. Most experiments like this fail horribly—it is always surprising to me when I write a good poem.

Herb Kitson, professor emeritus in English at Pitt, is still trying to teach others that emeritus means welcome to teach on, explore, and get help from ALL University of Pittsburgh campuses. Herb is putting the final touches on a chapbook about survival in Backwoods Pennsylvania, where gays are still being lynched or impaled on barbed wire fences and left to bleed to death. The chapbook is called *Physical Therapy—Exercises in Invisibility*.

I used to deplore staying up all night until I met RJ, a night owl. After we learned to relax together, I now relish the all-nighter. In order for them to be authentic and fun, you have to let both poetry and human relationships "just happen."

Isabel Galupo is an Emmy-nominated TV writer, author, and poet who splits her time between Los Angeles and Louisville. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Pegasus: The Literary Journal of the Kentucky State Poetry Society*, *Pine Hills Review*, *Luna Luna Magazine*, *abraxas literary review*, and *Does It Have Pockets*.

I'm a screenwriter by training and find more parallels between scripts and poetry than you might expect. An emphasis on brevity and momentum, plus a kind of real time editing and meaning-making process that happens when several images crash into each other. Also, a preoccupation with love, always love. That's what I was trying to capture with this poem.

Jacob Schepers is the author of *Ugly Ground/Swell Moss* (Carbonation Press, 2026)

and *A Bundle of Careful Compromises* (Outriders Poetry Project, 2014). His writing has appeared in *Antiphony*, *Blue Bag Press*, *CAPGRAS*, *Dialogist*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *HOBART*, *MEMEZINE*, *Psalttery & Lyre*, *Rawhead*, *The Shore*, *Word For/ Word*, and elsewhere. With Sara Judy, he co-edits *ballast*. More at jacobschepers.com.

With companies trying to foist AI upon us, my series "glitch whelps" responds to the range of affects and resistances everyday people are registering in the day-to-day grind. The companies aren't trying to convince the masses that AI is the next big thing. They're trying to convince bosses that we can be replaced. They're trying to convince investors to keep the bubble intact. Let's be little glitches in those grand schemes, eh?

Jason Davidson is a poet, fiction writer, playwright and performer. He's written, directed and produced over 200 works of experimental theatre and his one-act plays have been widely published. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *trampset*, *Hobart*, *Club Plum*, *Pine Hills Review*, *HAD*, *SoFloPoJo*, *Burningword*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Stone of Madness*, *Luna Luna*, *Troublemaker Firestarter*, *Does It Have Pockets* and other journals. Jason lives on California's Central Coast with his husband. Find him on Instagram at @jasonwriteswords.

Creamsicle is one of a series of "walked into a bar" pieces. They arose from a motivation to subvert an old, exhausted trope while challenging myself to maintain a specific framework. I'm not a visual thinker, but I can see Creamsicle entering this space and I have a lot of compassion for what he experiences.

Jason Ryberg lives part-time in Kansas City, MO with a rooster named Little Red and a Billy-goat named Giuseppe, and part-time somewhere in the Ozarks, near the Gasconade River, where there are also many strange and wonderful woodland critters.

Borderline automatic writing squeezed into a sequential haiku format.

Jayant Kashyap's third pamphlet, *Notes on Burials*, won the Poetry Business New Poets Prize in 2024.

This is a previously unpublished collaborative poem (written with Lauren Hollingsworth-Smith), but was a part of the packet for which the two of us were longlisted in Dialect Press's inaugural DIRT Plantable Poetry Competition earlier this year.

As for the idea, it was the result of a thought experiment looking into how birds behave when they come together as a murmuration. One of the images that brought me to the topic was a scene in Netflix's "The Boroughs," where so many ravens (crows?) come together over a dilapidated place and suddenly shoot towards the ground (not a healthy scene!)

Jennie Park is a high school student and emerging writer with a strong interest in art, architecture, and interdisciplinary research. Her work often explores themes of connection, structure, and the evolving relationship between past and present. She has contributed to various academic and creative projects, including research papers on art history and contemporary visual culture, as well as award-winning artworks exhibited in youth competitions.

Beyond writing, Jennie is actively involved in leadership and community initiatives, serving as a student body president and co-founding educational and creative programs.

She aims to bridge ideas across disciplines and cultures through both visual and written expression.

For inquiries or collaborations, she can be reached at: 14thaugustt@gmail.com.

"Dispensing Memories" imagines a vending machine that dispenses fragments of the past instead of ordinary products. Each compartment contains an object from a different era—a rotary telephone, vintage camera, sewing machine, CRT television, and modern smartphone—representing the technologies and everyday tools that once shaped how people communicated, created, and lived. By presenting these objects as items to be selected and consumed, I explore the idea that memories are not fixed; they are collected, revisited, and sometimes exchanged across generations. The work asks viewers to consider which memories they would choose to preserve and how ordinary objects quietly become vessels of personal and collective history.

"Before Difference" reflects on a stage of life before identity becomes divided by labels such as species, race, nationality, or culture. By placing embryos of both humans and chicks side by side, the work highlights their striking visual similarities during early development, emphasizing our shared biological origins. The piece invites viewers to reconsider the boundaries we construct later in life and to recognize that, before difference, there is an inherent connection shared by all living beings. Rather than focusing on what separates us, the painting encourages reflection on the common beginnings that unite us.

These two works are also connected conceptually: while "Dispensing Memories"

explores the experiences that shape who we become over time, "Before Difference" looks back to the moment before those experiences—and the identities they create—begin. Together, they examine how identity is both inherited and constructed through time.

Jesse Blondin is a writer who works and lives in Toronto, Canada. Jesse's work explores feelings of the uncanny, how we process the loss of the familiar and failed attempts at connection.

I imagined what a day in the life might look like to a hermit emerging after decades of hibernation, or an alien writing a governmental report, or maybe a guru offering advice who has never done the personal work. There is a two-way street running between our personal philosophy of living and the culture that surrounds us, the interplay and denial of which have always interested me.

Jim Stewart has been published in *In Company: New Mexico Poets after 1970*, *Liminality*, *Rattapallax*, *Passengers Journal*, *The City Key*, *Does it Have Pockets*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, *Eclectica*, *J Journal*, *Cleaver Magazine*, and the *Moonstone Arts Center's Ekphrastic Poetry Anthology*. He co-edited and designed *Saint Elizabeth Street Magazine*. Links to his work can be found at jimnstewart.nyc. He teaches programming and logic in New York.

This poem was written after seeing the Jack Whitten show at MOMA. It's one of my "versus" poems in which I contrast an artist's work with a scientific or mathematical concept. "Schramm's Locality Conjecture" addresses when a previously predictable system breaks down into chaos, a process Whitten's work captures in its emphasis on decay and the appearance of decay.

John Repp is a writer, collagist, and folk photographer living in Erie, Pennsylvania. Much more about Repp; his books, chapbooks, and individual publications; and his influences/obsessions can be found on his website, www.johnreppwriter.com.

I'm afraid I don't remember the poem's "real life" sources, and such sources don't matter to me once I'm working on something, the "something" changing constantly as I work on it. Also, I don't work from ideas. Rereading this poem prior to submitting, it seemed to me to fit the issue's theme, so I went ahead with the submission. I will always recommend that everyone read everything I've loved, especially poets like Frank O'Hara, Gerald Stern, Denise Levertov, and Albert Goldbarth, to name four of about a zillion.

Josh Mahler lives and writes in Virginia. His poems have appeared in *Denver Quarterly*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Quarter After Eight*, *South Carolina Review*, *Kestrel*, *The Louisville Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Potomac Review*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, from *Texas Review Press*, and elsewhere.

A while back I purchased William Eggleston's The Democratic Forest: Selected Works, and as I was turning each page, taking in every photo, the color, the composition, I was compelled to produce this short series of "after" poems. I can't think of too many instances where I had so much joy in writing.

Kathryn Lasseter tried to teach students how to read poetry for many years, but did not start writing poetry until after retirement. Her poetry now appears in various journals, but her only writing award was for an essay she wrote in sixth grade entitled "Why I Like Horses."

I was thinking of my small hometown, now Magafied, and happy childhood memories which would not be possible in the current media and political climate.

Katie Larson is a 26-year-old woman from California, USA. She is an aspiring writer, poet, and mixed media artist. You can find her on Instagram, X, and Tumblr: @iamktb14.

I wrote and dedicated this poem to a good friend of mine going through a difficult time. She is also a poet and writer—and extremely talented at that. Ironically, we were both going through "writer's block" at the time. But this was my way out of that: thinking of cheering up someone besides myself.

Kaydance Rice is a writer from Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has been recognized by the Poetry Society of America, Middle West Press, Hollins University, and the Alliance of Young Artists and Writers. Her work can be found or is forthcoming in the *Taco Bell Quarterly*, *YoungArts Anthology*, *Full Mood Magazine*, *voicemail poems*, and elsewhere. In her free time, Kaydance enjoys playing the viola, rambling about ancient Greece, and spending time with her plants.

This is an old poem I lost faith in too quickly and have since recently returned to. A lot of

my work centers identity at its most abstract. I am interested in what it means to define the self in relation to others, in relation to objects, to religion, to pop culture, to consumption and I find these definitional attempts both often too limiting in their scope and also deeply overwhelming. This poem is a manifestation of that overwhelm, a reminder of the need for the relational and failure of individual relationships to really fulfill the self-defining impulse. Most importantly though, this poem for me was about play. The images are frantic and immature, the speaker, seemingly, young and perhaps a bit of a disaster. They are both reckless and adventurous, caring and dismissive, judgemental and open. Ultimately, the difficulty the speaker lands on is that they are a thing of contradiction, perhaps due to their youth, perhaps due to the fact that they are a person, even if they don't know what to do with themselves, even if they don't know what that person is.

Lauren Hollingsworth-Smith is a Writer and Visual Artist currently based in Sheffield. Her pamphlet, *Ugly Bird* won the 2020 New Poets Prize. Her collection, *Look How Alive* was published by *WriteBloody UK* in 2022.

Lydia Rae Bush (she/her) is a poet exploring themes of embodiment and social-emotional development. Her work is Best of the Net nominated, and includes *Free Bleeding* (dogleech books, '25), *Keeper, Seeker, Dragon of the Sea* (Bottlecap Press, '25), and *All the Little Church Girls' Paper Dolls* (fifth wheel press, '26).

I changed my life very rapidly and dramatically after writing this poem. Poems are like prayers, I guess.

Mac Chamberlain (he/him) is a first-year poetry MFA student at UNLV. Mac's poems reflect his curiosity, admiration, and outrage. Mac's work has been published in *Red Noise Collective*, *Literary Forest Magazine*, *Feral*, and *Blue Quill's* anthology *Gods I've Outgrown*. Mac's poems were awarded for the 2024 Bermuda Triangle Poetry Prize and longlisted for the 2024 Frontier Poetry: Nature and Place Prize. You can find Mac on Instagram @mac.chamberlain108 and on Bluesky @mac-chamberlain108.

I was thinking about nomenclature, when the part of a thing becomes the whole thing. And then I thought about everything getting completely mixed up. Then I realized I hoped it might! And that surely, those who come after us will be kinder than we have been.

Mark Bolsover is a winner of the *Into the Void* Poetry Award (2016), and the "Literary Freestyler" engine(idling Dashboard Award (2026). His debut chapbook, *IN FAILURE & IN RUINS—dreams & fragments*, is published with *Into the Void Press* (2017). His first collection, *contra FLUX.—moments caught (arrested) whilst in-from motion.*, is published with *Polyversity Press* (2019). His work has appeared in a number of international literary publications, including: *Grub Street*, *Open Polyversity*, and *Poetry Bus*.

"red sofa" forms an attempt to capture a strange, and intensely undergone experience outside a venue at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. ... Tired, and having just seen a friend perform a demanding abstract physical theatre show, I was struck by how both... lurid, and strangely intensely present, and impossible to focus on a distasteful neon red sofa outside the venue appeared to be (swimming in a tired, over-worked haze). ... It put me in mind of the descriptive passages in Sartre's Nausea, which I now felt I understood more perfectly. ...

Mark Valentine is published by the independent presses *Tartarus* (UK), *Swan River* (Ireland), *Sarob* (France), *Zagava* (Germany) and in journals such as *dadakuku*, *Ubu*, *M58* and *The Fortnightly Review*.

This piece is partly inspired by images from walks in the ancient Yorkshire village where I live. It was once the home of a 17th century priest-chemist and perhaps his ideas are still present here.

Mica England is a queer artist-writer from the Bay Area. Mica graduated from the Academy of Art University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Their written works have been published with the online journals *Persephone's Daughters*, *Over/Exposed Lit*, and *re • mediate Lit Mag*, and in print with Portland-based *EVERYTHING MATTERS press* and *FuLTHY GLO*, with an essay forthcoming in *Corporeal Mag*. Their photos and collages have been published in *Femme Fatale*, *Persephone's Daughters*, *Friend of the Artist*, *Lux*, *Pastiche Magazine*, *Don't Smile*, *FuLTHY GLO ZiNE*, and *Harbor Review*, among others. You can find more of their work at micaengland.com. Their favorite Gorillaz song is "Empire Ants."

This image is taken from a larger series of disposable camera prints. Juxtaposition & flow are what interest me most in photography, so I felt at home with this call for fluidity & shifting focus, transition & connection.

I can no longer recall what the "real" locations are in this triptych, or when exactly I took each individual image. That no longer matters. Elements in each image echo, or continue into the next. When stitched together, their ripples & waves blur & speak together. They become one uninterrupted moment of simultaneous ripple.

Michael Battisto is an Oakland-based writer whose work has appeared or is forthcoming in more than sixty journals, including *Rattle*, *Poet Lore*, *The Normal School*, and *Iron Horse Literary Review*. His work has been nominated for Best of the Net and a Touchstone Award. A former chef, he is now a Jack Kent Cooke Scholar studying English at UC Berkeley. Read more at michaelbattisto.com.

This piece is part of a manuscript of prose poems I'm working on which engages with the writers, artists, musicians, and thinkers that have been most formative in my own work and in the way I approach the world. As both a poet and intellectual, Octavio Paz has been an immense influence on me since the moment I first opened his book-length, cyclical poem "Sunstone" as a teenager, and discovered work that was sensual, surreal, mystical, and cerebral all at once. Somewhere, I know, Paz is still climbing an endless, spiraling staircase.

Michael Esparza is a writer based in Philadelphia. He has had short fiction published in *The Adirondack Review*. He is entering the ninth and final year of his PhD program in English. He feels just fine about that. He can be reached at michaelsparza93@gmail.com.

*I wrote this poem after watching the commendable 2022 documentary *Rewind & Play*, directed by Alain Gomis. The film consists of behind-the-scenes footage and outtakes from an appearance that jazz pianist Thelonious Monk, one of my all-time favorite musicians, made on a French television program before a Paris concert in 1969. The appearance itself is laden with frustration, miscommunication, and latent prejudice on the part of the interviewer. Beforehand, however, Monk stops at a bar for some drinks and a snack. This is a much less fraught encounter. There's poetry to the scene, and I did my best to capture some of it. My favorite bit is the last two words, of course; I simply couldn't help myself.*

Michael Paul Ladanyi has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize four times, seen nine of his chapbooks published by small presses, his work published in many poetry journals, both online and in print, and he's worked on the editorial boards of several

online magazines. He has Grapheme-color Synesthesia, Chromesthesia and Lexical-gustatory Synesthesia.

The suicide of my brother, and his spirit that sometimes visits me.

Nell Crossley is a queer and neurodivergent poet living in Colorado. When not writing, she hikes in the mountains, paints her nails, practices yoga, reads speculative fiction, and works in the suicide prevention field.

This is a poem about my partner and our day to day life together. It is also about me. It is about you, too. Oh, and it is about anyone that my partner, myself, and you know, as well as anyone we do not. Additionally, it is about onions. Keep peeling!

Paul Hostovsky's poems appear and disappear simultaneously (voila!) and have recently been sighted in those places where they pay you for your trouble with your own trouble doubled, and other people's troubles thrown in, which never seem to him as great as his troubles, though he tries not to compare. He has no life and spends it with his poems, trying to perfect their perfect disappearances. Website: <https://paulhostovsky.com/>.

I subscribe to Merriam Webster's Word of the Day (today's was "prowess") and they always have a fun little "Did You Know?" section about the etymology of the word of the day at the end of the entry. Anyway, a while back Webster's Word of the Day was "etymology," and reading about the etymology of "etymology" was what gave me the idea for the poem--it also gave me the first line of the poem. Later in the poem, the line about "the book is reading" is something someone actually said when a breeze fluttered the pages of an open book by an open window where we were sitting. This happened a very long time ago, but I never forgot it. And it was fun to put it into the poem--a sort of found line, one that I borrowed, or I guess you could say, stole.

Piper Rasmussen (she/her) is a Manhattan-based poet and nonprofit data person. Her writing has appeared in *Rust & Moth*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Kyoto Journal*, and other literary magazines, as well as in place-based poetry anthology *Writing the Land: Horizons*. Her plays have been performed in Ohio, Oregon, and New York. Piper holds a BA in Theatre from Barnard College and an MFA in Creative Writing from Queens University of Charlotte. Additionally, Piper is pursuing an MS in Library and Information Science with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

piperrasmussen.com & @piperennial.

*This poem arrived after I read Devour Me, Again: Collected Poems by Bambi Lake, out July 2026 from Nightboat. Some people have a canon, some people have The Anxiety of Influence. After reading Bambi Lake, I craved a fabulous, fabulist *scene.**

Rachel Gaffin (she/her) is a poet living in Portland, Oregon, with her partner and their two cats. She graduated from the University of Virginia's Area Program in Poetry Writing in 2017. After a few years working in non-profits, she went on to earn her Master of Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2023. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *OROBORO*, *Volume Poetry*, *3Elements Review*, and *Eunoia Review*, with prose pieces featured in *Mockingbird*. When she is not working or writing, she is likely walking around her neighborhood, trying to befriend the crows.

This poem is about the strange and now nearly universal dissonance of watching devastating realities — like genocide and climate disaster — play out in images and short-form videos on our screens, all while living so-called "normal lives."

Raven Magill is a writer living in the Finger Lakes region of New York. Through poetry she explores grief, memory, magic, and an obsession with this world and all the things in it. Her poetry has appeared in *Last Leaves Magazine*. Find more of her work, or reach out, at ravenmagill.substack.com.

This spring I visited the James Turrell: C.A.V.U. exhibit at MASS MoCA and attended the dusk Skyspace light program. Lights inside of the exhibit color the walls around a large round opening in the roof. I found the effect disorienting and awe-inspiring as the sky shifted from looking like a flat disc, to a 3-D globe in all different colors. When something is visually striking to me, and it evokes complicated emotions, I turn to poetry. There was something intimate about watching the sky be manipulated above me, so that was the seed of the piece.

Sheree Shatsky is the author of the novella-in-flash *Summer 1969* (Ad Hoc Fiction, 2023). Her short fiction and visual art has appeared online and in print with work forthcoming at *MAINTENANT 20: A Journal of Contemporary Dada Writing and Art: "IMPROPERGANDA"* (Three Rooms Press, 2026). Sheree writes "Shared Madness" at Substack. linktr.ee/shereeshatsky.

"Us" is a happy accident! At some point during my process, I turned the collage and saw not only a house, but the swirling connected lives of those living within. The words "Live Your Life. You Can" sang through as a foundational message of positive support for this family living "A Day in the Life."

Sophia Durkacs is a creative writing student attending Carlow University. She is published in the school's undergraduate journal, *The Critical Point*, with an honorable mention for the 2026 Marilyn P. Donnelly Award in Poetry. Two of her photographs will be featured in the upcoming issue of *Wordgathering*. In her free time, she enjoys reading, walking, playing video games and listening to music. You can contact her at Redlackwriter@outlook.com.

"Like A Goose to Light" was a photograph I was originally not happy about. It was taken in the daytime and something about it was not right. I put it in lightroom and changed the photo to black and white. The black and white contrast was something I was not planning on but playing around in lightroom has its rewards.

Thao Vu is writing her debut novel through the MFA program at Virginia Tech (Blacksburg, VA). Her recent work can be found at *Bending Genres*, *Blood+Honey*, *BULL*, *Cosmic Daffodil*, *FlashFlood*, *Fork Apple Press*, *MockingHeart Review*, *THIMBLE*, *Villain Era*, *Zin Daily* and at www.vuqythao.com.

The poem was inspired by a special food I enjoyed while living in Taipei, which was a bowl of tofu pudding (豆花) with red bean from the lady downstairs. It cost around 70 NTD (\$2) and brought absolute happiness.

Troels Steenholdt Heiredal (b. 1984, he/him/they) is an Autistic / neuroqueer artist and architect examining the differences between explaining and exploring disability. He currently lives and works in Taipei, Taiwan. His writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Wordgathering*, *Brink Literary Journal*, *Riddle Fence*, *Star 82 Review*, *Vallum*, *ANMLY*, *Otherwise Magazine* and elsewhere. www.troelsheiredal.com | @theiredal. bsky.social on Bluesky | @t.heiredal on IG.

When I first came across the chapter "The Self's Baby Steps," I was relieved, as it gave me the "Theory of Mind" framing also known as mind-blindness, framing Autists as fundamentally unable to understand other minds. It felt like a gift, as I was having such a hard time fitting into the (neurotypical) world.

*However, as I kept reading other accounts, especially more and more from Autists, I came to the understanding that mind-blindness is yet another repressive theory, trying to paint Autists as lacking empathy. But rather than simply rejecting the book and putting it aside, I was inspired by M. NourbeSe Philip's incredible book *Zong!*, and decided to alter the text through found poetry, cutting out words and lines to make poems that reflect my Autistic experience, using the language of the text to write another possibility into being.*

Source: Ananthaswamy, Anil. *The Man Who Wasn't There: Investigations into the Strange New Science of the Self*. Dutton, 2015. Chapter 6: The Self's Baby Steps, pp.180-181.

Tyler Cruse works in mixed media, found/re-purposed objects, acrylic, and ink/ marker. His art explores perception, identity, consciousness and the intersection of these themes. He divides his time between Central America and the U.S. East Coast, and he will one day have a working website. Until then, check out his work on Instagram, @20fivethree.

"What Do We Worship?" #1 and #2 are part of a series exploring the things to which we bestow value, and how that application of value informs our daily lives. What is important and why? Identity? Meaning? Belonging? Where do we put our energy while we are here?

Each day in our lives is meaningful, difficult, judged, and completed in the context of how we define ourselves. What we "worship" can become how we spend our days.

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals and collections.

This poem is a memorial to a favorite dog-friend. I found it difficult to write an elegy for a canine, but hit upon his work as a support dog at the Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center. The accentual verse shaped the poem and forced me to compress it into a lively tale.

william james (they/them) is a poet, community organizer, & teaching artist currently residing in Keene, NH. They're the author of *rebel hearts & restless ghosts* (2016) and *If I Forget Thee Lowcountry* (2021). Their poems have appeared or are forthcoming in

Petrichor, South Carolina Review, Sierra Nevada Review, Stirring, Two Cardinals, Westchester Review, & elsewhere.

I am originally from rural western Pennsylvania, so I have an affinity for deer. They show up rather frequently in my poems. I've found myself returning over & over again to the cultural rite of passage that I was expected to perform as a child - the first day of deer hunting - and how it's one of the earliest moments I can recall in which I "failed" to uphold the impositions of conventional masculinity demanded of me by my upbringing.

This poem for me is one in which I embrace my identity as nonbinary; it's a moment of joy, no doubt, but one that is haunted by the spectre of assigned gender roles, social expectations, generational trauma, and other wounds.

William Ross is a Canadian writer and visual artist living in Toronto. His poems have appeared in magazines and literary journals in nine countries. Publications include: *Rattle, The Ekphrastic Review, Bicoastal Review, The Write Launch, Heavy Feather Review, Bindweed Magazine Anthology*, and *Soliloquies Anthology*.

I'm typically annoyed, then often amused, by the AI translations I get on my iPhone where the voice mail is in another language. The translations are so bad that they could possibly be mystical and worthwhile puzzling through. The disjunctions in language make them feel like weird poetry. I was trying to ride the weirdness while letting some sense of meaning leak through.

