

*Berkeley Poetry Review* Issue 49

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In a previous edition of this journal, the title of Chen Li's poem 自修課 (tr. Elaine Wong) was misspelled as 自學. We apologize for the error.

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COVER IMAGE

Nicki Green

*Ouroboros*

*Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts*

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brick clay on paper

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# BERKELEY POETRY REVIEW

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## Issue 49

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Thank you 袞 Lindsay, Lyn Hejinian, Jessica Laser, Mackenzie Whitehead-Bust & Jules Wood for your support & care.

## Editor’s Note

DEAR READERS,

*For you, I’d tell the story / End-stopped by snow, the poem / Of a world without violence / We are capable of imagining / A better ending for it / Disquiets the sea with rain*

These six lines close Sara Nicholson’s *Lines Heard*, the first poem housed in this issue. When it comes to stories, who do we tell? Where do we send our sound when there is something to say; what allows us to share when such an act feels distant, unafforded?

If the assemblage of this journal has been anything, it has been an effort to embody, to make real, the “For you” of *Lines Heard*. Not in the sense that we are owed anything -- by writers, by our readers -- but in our ability to create room. This task means more than maintaining a functional publication in which poems can reside, though that too can be a challenge. Our hope: to actively invite voices into this project, rather than to merely hold those who have always, already felt welcome. To invite is first to call in, to make ourselves available for reception. Worthy of the *for* which precedes the *you*. It’s a gift to be made reader, one we attempt to return in listening. Whether or not we have achieved this ideal openness is hard to say, maybe impossible to ever fully enact. But we gesture toward it, a call-and-response with each poet kind enough to address us, or at least, to “tell” in our direction. And then, to imagine. “I’d tell” -- *I would* tell -- the promise and possibility of a future to the poem. The poem as a future.

Language engenders this connection and conjuring alongside its potential to instill closures. Valerie Hsiung writes: “language itself / our coat of arms” -- words as our designating crest and shield. How we make ourselves and our identities known, and sometimes, armor for hiding behind. We do not need to strip language of its protective capacities. Perhaps we can generate some object -- a journal, a listener -- which allows the raising of barriers to become choice rather than necessity. We are thankful for the chance to try.

4 u,

NOAH & SCOUT

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## Lines Heard

49

I absent myself from fate  
A little too often, snowdrops  
Spring upon us yet again  
In colors dripped on the grass  
Which is dead, whoever'd  
Speak the picture into being  
Another non sequitur the night  
Falls next to, follows after  
For me, it is part of that magic  
Riders see from a train  
Row houses, kids and flowers  
Amtrak's northeast corridor  
Frames, makes art from  
The linnet seed, cadmium white  
Dots the earth and trees withdraw  
In ever smaller numbers  
Because none of this hurts  
The earth itself because it too  
Lilts uglily, taxes the woods  
All systems depend on  
The end of systematization  
In a handful of snow we spring  
Upon each other, collect  
A surcharge on the winter air  
Who spends a lifetime  
Accumulating warmth for us  
Who are a people in transit  
Toward a destination  
We don't know, that is to say  
I would begin to sing it  
For you, I'd tell the story  
End-stopped by snow, the poem

Of a world without violence  
We are capable of imagining  
A better ending for it  
Disquiets the sea with rain

SARA NICHOLSON

## Salmon and Rice

Nature grows possessive  
Of her job prospects. I must light  
The stove by hand as the igniter is dead  
The man from Sears said.

I see my name with the names of others, a line  
On the shell in the hand  
Of the sphere-born goddess, destroyer of cities, wild-caught  
Daughter of Zeus, the patroness

Of wisdom, she who skypes  
Into classrooms and loves not  
Easily or well, or at all really, wheretofore  
I observe the clouds

Like friends, wandering off, beyond our line  
Of sight, mine or thine or y'all's  
Vision, sweet and bitter, accomplishing  
One thing at a time if we can.

## Wind, Rain, and Poetry

It can be nice, some days,  
To sit down and think.  
Fresh air is good.  
Matter in variety is good  
For the body.  
A little pepper on the biscuit, not  
Too much onion, just a slice.  
The sea is calm tonight.  
I sought a theme and sought for it in vain.  
I'm tired. The wind is blowing  
Only just.  
In the picture you sent me  
From Corfu, birds elbow  
Their way through the marketplace  
Bored with desiring, exchanging ticket  
For ticket, sail for sail.  
And we turn back.

## *from* Fragment of a Would-Be Sonnet Sequence, to Have Been Called “The Lost Art of”

In Honda Civic green. Lies  
The angels told us about Eden:  
The future of the imperfect  
Or an imperfect future foreseen  
In time to fail the world  
That created it, the spirited  
Ache for an art that flees

Eternity. All afternoon we  
Gainsaid night, beat to offbeat,  
By and by, until we invented  
A way to starve the worm  
That fattens the meadowlark

Whose passive “voice” will nip  
Verse from the air, let slip

Words. The land, begotten,  
Bloomed amid the long-lost  
Threat of rain, again to behold  
Autumn's overweening  
Sense of self the North Star  
Gave birth to, as one conflates  
Mind and body, the other

Name for language borne aloft.  
Soft the pipes and flutes  
Of my enemy, she who skirts  
The pastoral in favor of no  
Known song: her refrain

In time repeats itself, will yield  
Brevity and space, an open field

In form. As form, considered  
A world unto itself, will shine  
Abreast of day, so gardens  
Reconnoiter the woods they butt  
Up against; deaf airs stir  
Feeling; feeling, magic; magic  
Quells light in the valley, to cue

Rhythm and run off with it  
Bride-wise, toward the shore  
Of a classical sea. Adonaïs  
Wept himself out of the lyric I  
Groped my way into, in search

Of my lover, his 18th brumaire  
It took a revolution to forswear



SARAH PASSINO

## eleventh day

& keening done  
return back to fat  
slabs of bacon barley  
wine google *mindfulness*  
*what is* in front of  
webcam in front of  
property in front of  
prose & privet  
hedging five-dollar  
bet after five-dollar bet

SARAH PASSINO

## twenty-fifth day

a variant

& in the east all i see are empty  
cities & all of us left in the heat  
put wet cloth on our heads

our texts come from our dead  
pass fast to flat rock but mine  
all still sit still in my throat

& out in the west fish press hard  
to locks up steps to gates  
bit through meat-pink to bone

to sea most blown back by odds  
odd one swims through  
so much of our age is one click

off one click to the right  
one oar one more oar one  
more oar or for more four

more for one more oar  
or i tell where i am by the trash  
in the east by the dam one blue crab

holds on to one brown wall  
ice packs float by stern  
i drink a cold beer in the hot sun see

this is not just sludge too but bloom too  
years ago in the south in the kitchen  
A drew me a map of dead parts of seas

made from green lawns white blight  
on green grass maps upside down  
how white hot can it get in days

from red hook i see white bridge  
what goes south what comes back  
a small axe a tall ship a small axe

i open the window outside  
the window i open the window  
inside outside i open the window inside

SARAH PASSINO

## forty-second day

bc tomorrows an eclipse we all  
talk across aisles to each other  
on boats like we dont mind

our own business we sound all baldwin  
comma no caps do not mind disaster  
when disaster names us star too we name perseids

foxfire deepsea fish share stories of when  
we have seen living lights at the dark bow wave  
or in cold bubbled wakes behind our ship

under august tents on union ave like all  
these 40-some days correspondence co  
incident running into each other on 3rd

on verona on paths by the staten island ferry  
dickens *was* always fact & to hell with symbols  
this citys small havent we met before

a woman sails out to sea studying stars  
sees instead what burns bright in waves  
light is a \_\_\_ waves are the\_\_\_

q: what blinds a man & lets a man see  
q: what light spell spill spelt spelled

## WHAT THAT MOUTH DO

“I make a boat out of an apple tree/ both  
ends are golden” — Robin Blaser

“A slight wound to be sure, but fatal” Ovid, of a man turned into an eagle and  
shot, whose wound made him unable to fly

for courage is upon th lips [ prey  
for courage | leaf  
for courage is [ grief is  
for courage is upon th grace  
& th graceless, alike— th ladder  
up 2 heaven; “what you do is, you  
take a small saw, and”— yellow  
against th blue— for courage,  
oh get down from there, all  
of you, spinning in th heavens  
like fools, I will drop  
each star into th lake, where  
my heart, a gizzard, greedy and  
luminous, grinds them, you know how  
the water here, is pearly around us—  
as each mirror shuts its eye,  
for courage | drop  
yr gun, & go—

## YOU WOULDNT OF GUESSED IT BUT TH LOTUS IS STILL BLOOMING

“samples of men, mere specimines” -Ovid

“amid th waves, we die of thirst” -Ianthes, Ovid

mercy is a verb  
dire portent  
is th swan, milky  
cum of heavens “strewn”  
stretches before th swan  
& “straight on till morning”  
mercy by th river  
mercy in th dark trees  
mercy of th imaginary  
verb, need, hurt, let  
loose, two hawks down  
below I said mercy  
is upon th shadow  
and th shadow  
upon tSACH rocks, two shadows  
gliding along th rocks below, in silence, I said  
mercy in th relentless surface of th lake,  
I wispered it into th neck  
of th river where it feeds into  
th lake, muscadine on th shores,  
felt th warm breath leave my lips  
held to th neck of th lake, felt th  
waves of cooler or warmer air  
across th surface of th lake, across th  
surface of our skin, rolling over  
the surface of our skin off th lake,  
I whisper, mercy, I would like  
to be forgiven by the lake, whole  
summer, two shadows gliding along  
th rocks below, I spit out  
th bitter seeds of th muscadines  
hanging low at th throat

## II

I don't want to bathe in th cold water |I take  
off my clothes—I bathe in th cold water, o lead me,  
lanthes, hold me down by [th throat of] th river  
hold me [down by] th river, blue shirt, blue gaze of sky,  
crust upon th lips and heart crust of sky silent as any god  
great blue heron overhead silent as th changing sky  
“there's a part of me that prays” th whole world  
stretching out from th center of yr chest held under  
th dark surface of th dark water— fingertips, toes, lips, hair in th dark water  
and small fish, some stars, my dog on th rocks sleeping, headlights, hallelujah,  
one cardinal flower glowing deep red in th moonlight, I hold it  
in my minds eye, nothing is allowed to coalesce, each universe  
suspended, spinning, separate “heaven's just a sin away” my  
neighbors are shooting guns thru th woods o  
(baby, baby)  
strike me true

## III

hear me  
u of th  
north wind cold first  
frost flower each  
soft blown breath, bow  
down there is only  
permisson in th answer,  
permission in th field  
permission in th marsh  
and of the bitter flower,  
falcons, nests,  
get a grip on,  
sunked fruit, got a  
whitish bloom there, hardens  
th sugars up under th  
skin, there, each  
coyote dead by th highway, u  
ride it out w what grace  
u can mustter, listen  
to me and I will tell you:  
u must stand  
as each flower  
must stand, acrid  
persimmon, stupid  
hawk circling  
in th still air  
of yr heart go  
on, get  
up  
||

BRANDON SHIMODA

## NEW YEARS

We stood in the dirt  
and stared at the moon

What was the romance between?

It was blood red and orange, partly  
occluded  
by the premonition of a planet  
within ours  
that might, one day,  
overcome everything  
that has been degraded,

to manifest a new birthright

---

The moon might lift the house.

all the citrusess fatten

bright blemishes teething  
in the mirror fretting

a cold acre

above the heads of ancestors

They died in a country  
of which they were aliens. Enshrined by an alien

+

We fell through the end of the year  
to receive our birthright in the desert

evaporating  
in the manner of what  
will not be remembered

but in shadows

burned into soil into sun

Pink sick  
connected by a snake-like skeleton

alternating dreams  
and despair

+

We stood in the dirt We found the sun  
in the lush, dead grass.  
sacrificed on sticks

The moon sank  
the occlusion washed over

+

How many rabbits were carved out of the moon  
?

Little by little, the sky eats  
The sun and the surface of earth

---

fish

+

DEATH OF THE FLOWER

A mountain rose in the leaves

Pink threw vices  
on the ceiling

bare  
Burn marks lasted the winter

The mountain was a mouth  
Laughter abandoned  
on the enemy's side  
of the adobe wall

+

I drank the needle waited for the tea

whose face in the steam?  
before morning

There is no tea The water's cold  
All the leaves are on the bush

ancestors brought to life to sleep  
away from one another, is me

I am one another  
awake in the middle of the night  
without stars no steam  
to direct my mind elsewhere

I shaved the neighborhood into my arms

the neighborhoods grew  
one after the other

wider, more inviting

+

A pomegranate  
sniffing at our window, first thing in the morning  
withholding, in its womb  
a shrimp  
or reclining human  
made of leaves and citric implants

is the oversoul  
of conception and neglect

The sky the river  
in its seeds

does it smell? does it sense what it is  
looking for

in a shape the shape it makes

+

I raise my hand to pull a grapefruit off the neighbor's tree

The tree is orange The neighbors don't tend it  
I have never heard water

the oranges max out as dumplings  
emissaries of a homesick feeling

not home, not sick  
there is no

one home

+

in Beirut, all the fruits  
are in the freezer

awaiting midnight waves

ophagus

+

I walked through couches, beneath black diamonds  
visions of falling not surviving

love,  
euphoria,  
ecstasy

to sit facing the aura of a newborn

like recipes  
after satiation

treacheries  
left  
in the outer legions

with trees, the rudest trees,  
the most belabored displays of resignation

+

Why do people ask if I like living in the desert?

It is not the desert I like or dislike,  
but living

You walk in the desert like an angel on fire?  
I walk down the street like an angel on fire

The question (The feeling) remains

ambulant  
crucifixion

rushing forward

and the intimation of water  
in the dry dry dirtying.

+

When I think of fruit, I think of friends  
Giving fruit to friends Gestures of goodwill

A friend leaving, going off,  
for a long time, maybe  
forever.

Here is the fruition.  
Here is the death of the flower.

## Wild Tonic in the Rain

The bee oracle on the ledge of my ear  
 doesn't know how to sing—only to dance.  
 I read her coded steps and she tells me  
 to slit open the envelope of an unmemorable dream  
 in which I clean someone's home,  
 try to find a place for her things.

Evening gathers into a pool. Lilac. What else?  
 On my fingers: bleach traces, and I remember  
 how long it's been since I lay awake  
 and heard the distant hush of the Pacific,  
 a memento to return to  
 during the ugly birth of spring.

For the season, anxieties hatch fresh.  
 I count out *if only's* over and over into a well  
 that will never yield anything more than water,  
 though I remind myself water is enough.  
 And those little jeweled insults? I drop them  
 on purpose. I have to fight back somehow.

## pink breakable

“It appears”, bloomed everything and  
 pierced a crescent on everybody's sleeve  
 (everything feeds on fat or light or leaf  
 cloth and human—porous lattice,  
 everything gets through).  
 Hey human when I get  
 out upon my saddle I'll stir the beds  
 of mineral dust for you. Breathe them  
 kicked up if you like it. Only men are  
 scared of granules stacking on the tongue,  
 feeling in it that everyone has flown.  
 Fear, hold him down by his feeble bones  
 while the real thing passes over.  
 He wants to know what seeing no roads  
 but these eskers of breeze must mean,  
 wants to know but decomposes.  
 You place your worlds just so, then  
 want severs you. What you slaughtered  
 made horse-strong, remorse hand  
 laughably gone and you can't have it.



Yet a naked figure will try.  
Why will it try.  
Years of being a curl in sand  
waiting to be a child.  
Kneel, elemental killer.  
You are no child but a will  
easily fastened to.  
Everything sees you part.  
Where will you go.  
Sky dips its lowest  
organs to the swell  
so pink I almost  
gave in and watched

RAE WINKELSTEIN

## BOTRO::

are you a scared one  
if so how do i approach  
saying 'this one is scared'

well  
i don't know why you do want to.

hard to remember  
if there was feeling from her  
because of the male stranger in the room  
or for the naked bulb

what was a feeling

a bulbar awl & all it etched  
& i was good  
& got possessed.

can't free my sleeve  
ah  
so it teethed

& adheres smooth  
to the seed  
-driven brain  
winds are dyeing the lobe  
but i suspect adherents  
stay burning the obstacle from the wall—

& in the breathing games  
the ungilled ones flit & startle  
when lung-time strains the patience of the sea;

if they don't soon rise out & go  
a loss of the arches in their backs will show.

softening of arches: if you know  
stone you'll rush to keep away,  
okay to understand spine siblings as cruel,  
as tight bony stacking is,  
but no it isn't ever loosened.

soft calls on the memory  
fur on the fat streaked brain

is it that she lived the years without you?  
living in you as a chanterelle.  
pale, pale- gray with dark-gray lines  
mealy poisons sign

yes  
go on, it's dead now  
but still you don't get it.  
stronger, god,  
steel your birches  
at the rising edge  
as if you want the rot to come.

RAE WINKELSTEIN

## Fairytale

Book 1 is a hospital. In the hospital on Taft Street I climb upstairs. The birthing room is an office  
now. I take the wool black coat off the hook behind the door  
and climb down the stairs wearing it out on the street.  
Inner linings flash with little threads, suction heads;  
Rootlet don't fix there, I'll find you a better hole.

Turning away to burrow, you think I do not know you,  
that you're the first to find a warm arm and sink in a stem.

/2./

The story goes one day  
A girl wearing yellow sweatpants  
Lies on her bed with a flimsy  
Half-grin, black skirt, and yellow  
Sash covering her friend  
Beside her, saying: ‘

I think it's a child all wrapped up  
In shawls which I have just seen in my home.’

She lay facing her friend's back

Lifted her hair to pinpoint and  
Kiss the single freckle.

(If you can't picture it  
Look at me now, grab  
My wrist: that's no  
Mouse in the blood.  
I've been meaning to say,  
What if you didn't leave.)

///

See what you're for.

You cannot eat for shame.

*Nor sleep for it.*

You are stringing wet grass from your shins

*And strewing it on the bed.*

*But alone like this, a person once did bring*

*me strands of wild hair wild targets kept living on her head*

*while scents and snails bewildered in the rings*

*so alive when they sleep they emit demands*

4.

Lodged aloft in a gray blue glut

That verges sapphire, and must rain with one more violent wrist of pressure,

A red valve opens far, far above the barn

So the dark barn fills brimming to the roof

Through the floorboards which have parted to let the valve begin

And I get scared (take your hand) and refuse, well,

On that part of the Earth I was passing, and passing I

Tipped my foot and struck a creek's sack of pages,

Yellow pages appearing mold blue.

Did you know we used to chronicle shock with mold?

5.

By the third book you are angry.

I make your character without any hair.

When she doesn't reply it gains two handsome gills.

She makes the gesture for "grove" so I sit between the boles in the sunsoak,

Needles of the oak leaves bared.

And there I make her odorless.

Cold rivulets carry silts along the underslick,

Desiring to bring and bring and bring.

SIX.

In the fairytale the old women have waited by the yell.

So long they begin to dissect and peel hands.

One by one they fall to love on the rucked headlands.

## No One House

in elementary Mrs. H said she  
had the clean pretty hair that lice  
love I envied it he said he loved  
her and I may have brushed it he  
sicked her on me she gently laid

me down though she was slighter  
I was trestle I thought I peed  
myself but my body trusted  
into a fist no my body opened  
a ripe cutie I feel now she

must be dead or deadened  
though that's unfair her thighs  
were burn pocked from his  
smoking char I left unscarred  
toured yet unfixed unlike his pet

construction site a no one house  
part built I felt my nothing  
fist and nothing mine  
I bent through the wide wood  
floor gaps and hiding  
it in the bared foundation  
knew what would live on top

## Identity and Community (There is no "I" in "Sea")

I don't want to be surrounded by people. Or even one person. But I don't want to always be alone.

The answer is to become my own pet, hungry for plenty in a plentiful place.

There is no true solitude, only only.

At seaside, I have that familiar sense of being left out, too far to glean the secret: *how go in?*

What an inhuman surface the sea has, always open.

I'm too afraid to go in. I give no yes.

Full of shame, but refuse to litter ever. I pick myself up.

Wind has power. Sun has power. What is power's source?

\* \* \*

There's no privacy outside. We've invaded it.

There is no life outside empire. All paradise is performance for people who pay.

Perhaps I'm an invader and feel I haven't paid.

What a waste, to have lost everything in mind.

\* \* \*

Watching three mom-like women try to go in, I'm green—I want to join them.

But they are not my women. I join them, apologizing.

They splash away from me—they're their pod. People are alien.

I'm an unknown story, erasing myself with seawater.

There goes my honey and fog, my shoulders and legs

\* \* \*

What could be queerer than this queer tug-lust for what already is, who already am, but other of it?

Happens? That kind of desire anymore?

Oh I am that queer thing pulling and greener than the blue sea. I'm new with envy.

Beauty washing over itself. No reflection. No claim. Nothing to see.

If there's anything bluer than the ocean it's its greenness. It's its turquoise blood, mixing me.

\* \* \*

I was a woman alone in the sea.

Don't tell anybody, I tell myself.

Don't try to remember this. Don't document it.

Try to write a reminder to not document it.

BRENDA SHAUGHNESSY

## Our Beloved Infinite Crapulence

In Indiana, in the era of hell-wealth, way past deadline, someone on the account is sweating it, making metaphor from what is already a stretch.

And because he wants to go home to his farm-fresh slowpoke foam, grown cold, we are eventually diagnosed with winter and treated to this marketing copy off a tube of cream: "Undry Your Skin" or "A Rainforest for Your Face."

I bought it. It seemed fresh and felt organic and like it would at least wetten me, skinwise. I can't feel my old ambition to be wracked with anguish or to grow soft with loss.

When I lose, I'm still so grateful! Does that make me a chump or a champ, eating victory mussels in the lamplight of my domestic tranquility?

Gratitude often leaves me with nothing to say, as when I saw you in the toy store, I felt like a feral cat who knows only the dumpsters and the flu-scented sandboxes of now. Now that I'm happy I suppose I have to break my own heart just to feel something.

Another person with my same name goes around impersonating others; now everyone thinks I'm the impostor.

I want to tell her, "you know, you think you know me, sipping mahogany cider in the millionaire's billiards room, but there's such a thing as too much umami, and there's no way to rest forever and then go on."

Someone once said: now that I'm happy I suppose I have to break my own heart to feel something. I should remember that. I should stop praying to my dead self.

I should pull out my earbuds, and hear the world (my first love, my favorite store) without continually moving my oiled jaw hinge.

I like a chemical mysticism performed with perfect innocence. The wet slit lit up and cut down the middle, a little spit, lip a little bit split. Love in the Candle Shop: Wicked. Peeing Into a Plastic Water Bottle: Wasteful. These are scents.

As is: Luck Be a Lady, So Spend Your Whole Social Security Check on Lottery Tickets Be a Gentleman. I want to smell like ceramic wind in the canyon, a brittle lust, a red-headed remedy synonymous with flooding.

Weathervane Rusted Stuck. A Stranger's Phalanges. The South Mouth. Fiercely Phlegm. Fun Old Lady. So Parachute!

## Sel de la Terre, Sel du Mer

And now we eat. The eponymous eating. Don't want butter, don't want salt. Dinner is thinner but it's not my fault. We're having fungal celebrity of beef cheeks tomorrow so get yourself hungry!

For lighter fare I prefer the Soapish Fish braised in its own frothing broth, served with an aromatic retraction of statements previously made in the shade of a giant, genetically-muddled-with fiddlehead fern, infused with expelled chipmunk breath.

I...I love this local company, especially because for every order—and this is so cool—they make a tax-deductible contribution to honor and support the world-famous Pacific Garbage Patch, in your name.

Oh funny, runny little god who lived in the sea we cut to ribbons! Tell us the big story with your infected mouth. Tell us the big story is so far beyond us we can't possibly ruin it, but you'll let us listen if we sit way in the back, quiet side creatures and marginal beasts.

We don't know what we're doing. We catch a single wave, bless you with necklaces of spit, strut ashore to pose with our medallions and titles, having won. We make little boats and toss ourselves inside like a ride on a mechanical bull. When thrown we blame the weather.

We can't see anything in front of our face. Saltwater stings and burns our eyes even when we're already crying. We cover them with plastic goggles to ogle each other underwater. We know we are aliens in too deep, but we'll never admit we don't belong.

We are the kind of storytellers that frustrate children at bedtime everywhere. "Once there was a little girl named [insert name] who was very tired and went to sleep. The end." Come on! "Okay, one more story. Once upon a time there was a blanket who was so lonely.

It's great wish was to one day cover up a little girl named [insert name.] Finally, after what seemed like forever and was actually way past 8:30pm, the girl came to bed, pulled up her blanket all cozy, and went to sleep. The end." But you can't pull one over on kids, who know when they're shorted.

Our only ways are the scammy, power-tripping ways and we know we don't deserve it but we want to hear the big story. We need an old fashioned plume of ink, all new alphabet, to blot out our lies, all the times we were too tired, unkind and stupid to tell the truth.

All day a rainy day so we stay inside. That's how we see things: we close our eyes twice. That's how afraid we are of what is. When the rain stops, we dive into pools of plastic water, mistake the sexual fingers of light for fullness of heart, for the goodness of our own gooey center.

We thought we were so smart, always ahead of ourselves, minds flapping like a single flag, a mere reaction, a neural blip we thought was holy everywhere. Make us sit and listen to you. If you're at the center the center might hold.

Your countless eyes watching us, your arms radiating out in all directions, feeling for what's next. Sound comes to us in waves and we dissolve into salt water when we're most real.

## embalm

i mean to make you look  
 at the blunt  
 edge of the spoon. i mean to delineate  
 use: when we are done you will have told me  
 everything you know about gauze, you  
 will admit to believing there is a strata  
 of netting between your human body and your other  
 body. Remember the moment you were  
 born: an eye can only open in the cast of a crescent  
 moon.

A straight line is always curve,  
 but a curve can never be straight,  
 if you think about it long enough. T  
 here are a lot of things i can do with nothing  
 but my mind; bent silver, telepathic as a sunburn  
 about to peel. It's easy to tell how old  
 an idea is by counting the wrinkles around  
 its conception. You copy the mummy, too. You  
 know how you love the feel of organs  
 floating, how you hold water, how  
 you protect your heart. i don't. i don't  
 believe in screens. i don't believe  
 in serving up to time. i stand in the sun; i gauge  
 it on my skin; i grow old.  
 i wear my bindings rolled  
 as the hips of a hula. Watch me  
 twist with intention.

then at one point i did not need // to translate  
 notes // they went directly to my hands

The audience is always so afraid of holes  
 in the stage or plot or actress. Terrified  
 of the round mirror held over the abdomen to  
 reflect the surge of noon. vince, there is no waning or waxing  
 sun. Some things are always full. Cr aterles s  
 planet, unnerved body  
 unriven as the model's cheek. i  
 'm trying to be unassailable, to show the lip's crack  
 is as smooth as the stretched lip itself. i'm not afraid  
 to open my mouth  
 to the camera, to unhinge the gates  
 of my teeth and let them try to make a map  
 of my interior portals, subterranean  
 as heaven on earth like how light is always pure  
 translation: an unticketed theatre,  
 wingless and without scrim  
 before the crossover. Inside the trap  
 door are the extra sounds  
 not yet in this language, the stuff that makes endless  
 monologue. Speak  
 the hole's name, lick your palm  
 to look at the residue of the new  
 letters, smear the spit across the script. Earthen  
 blur-cum-holy slur.

## Self-Study: Three Poems by Chen Li

### 1. Self-Study

Work on your own, don't  
disturb the others.

Don't disturb  
the waterfall weaving a curtain of mid-summer ears.

Don't disturb the two dragonflies at the water's edge  
and their afternoon tryst.

Don't disturb  
the frog absorbed in its thought of turning frog kicks into butterfly strokes.

Don't disturb  
the bike, quietly pushing its pedals, prepping for a qualifying race,

the lost wild geese in their placement test fathoming the right flight home, and  
the cicadas and Japanese bananas, skipping grades to enter the Zen grad school.

Work up your own haiku style,  
don't disturb the night's cool breeze.

### 1. 自修課

自己做自己的，不要  
吵到別人

不要吵到  
幫仲夏織聽覺的窗簾的瀑布

不要吵到午後水邊偷情的  
兩隻蜻蜓

不要吵到  
苦思改蛙泳為蝶泳的青蛙

不要吵到  
靜靜準備自學能力鑑定的自行車

準備插班考的迷雁的航班  
準備跳級入禪學研究所的蟬和芭蕉

自己修自己的俳風  
不要吵到晚風



## 2. The Universe in Six Faces



*A throw of the dice will never abolish chance.*  
Chance. Within the four corners of the Absolute.

Consummate gambler Hu spoke of the mahjong ghost.  
All through his life of betting, Hu never received  
the same hand twice. One hundred forty-four mahjong  
tiles drawn on the four sides of the gaming table,  
neither process nor outcome repeats. Legions of  
players have dealt in the wind positions of east,  
south, west, north. The dealer throws the dice, a differ-  
ent round begins. The *mahjong is haunted*, Hu said.  
He didn't know the last hand he got before he  
died had befallen a hapless poet who bet  
in a brothel during Emperor Shenzong's reign  
in Song Dynasty, and the same set of tiles will  
re-emerge in a round played by four non-Chinese  
speaking gamblers in a Netherlandish village  
under the sovereignty of the former Holy  
Roman Empire in the thirty-sixth century.

Universal within the four corners, a game  
and a mahjong life in which ghosts and  
gods exist.



The earth is a dice,  
a pseudo-binary dice.

yin · yang  
in · out

## 2. 六合



骰子的一擲永遠取消不了偶然  
偶然。在必然的天地四方之內

老賭徒胡仔說麻將有鬼  
他賭了一生，從來沒有拿過  
同樣一手牌  
一百四十四張牌  
四邊人輪流取換  
過程與結果從來沒有重複過  
無數的人在東、南、西、北  
作莊，骰子一擲  
不同的遊戲開始  
麻將有鬼，他說  
但他不知道他死前最後一次  
拿到的那手牌，宋神宗時一名落魄詩人  
也曾在妓院賭桌上面對過  
並且一模一樣地出現在三十六世紀  
舊神聖羅馬帝國所轄某個尼德蘭村落  
四個不會說中國話的賭徒的牌局裡

四方皆然的遊戲，麻將  
人生：有鬼  
有神



地球是一粒骰子  
一粒偽二元論的骰子

陰，陽  
凹，凸

light · shadow  
motion · stillness  
life · death  
past · future

A binary discourse, two sides of the same body.  
In the cosmic bowl, their ceaseless  
spin:  
gambler · non-gambler  
loss · win  
love · hate  
empty · solid...



Three stars framed in the open sky.  
Three white stones on the Go board of the night.  
Unseen are the black stones captured by bishops in black vestments  
and set in the asphalt promenade climbing up the cathedral's vault,  
to be God's reflexology stones.

Three stars framed by an open door.  
Three black stones on the desk of my afternoon study.  
Unseen are the white stones dissolving in the day's whiteness,  
my thoughts, in the quick hand of a player.



Dear, the void traps us on all sides.  
No escape between heaven and earth.

Dear, we are surrounded, void  
of everything except our mutual glances.

Dear, the four steel spikes of eternity  
hold fast and void us.



Death is no longer disturbing  
when we see a huge wind-  
mill revolving its cool on the horizon,

光, 影  
動, 靜  
生, 死  
過去, 未來

二元的論述, 一體之異面  
在宇宙這一只碗公裡不斷  
翻轉:  
賭徒, 非賭徒  
輸, 贏  
愛, 恨  
虛, 實……



三星在戶  
三顆白子在夜的棋枰  
那些看不見的是被黑衣主教擄去的黑子  
鑲嵌在通向大教堂頂端的柏油大道  
成為神的腳底按摩石

三星在戶  
三顆黑子在我午後書房的桌上  
那些看不見的是融化於白日之白的白子  
落子如飛的我的思想



親愛的, 我們被四面虛無包圍了  
無所逃遁於天地之間

親愛的, 我們被包圍了, 虛無得  
只剩下相對而視的我們的眼光

親愛的, 我們被四根永恆的鋼釘  
牢牢地虛無了



死亡不再令人焦躁  
當我們看到巨大的風  
車在遠方涼爽地轉動著

like the table fan by our mother's side that  
cooed us to sleep when we were little.



Cut a deal for six boxes of persimmons. Cut up  
each persimmon to make six boxes of persimmon cakes.  
Closure: a cut for everyone—have you had yours?

一如幼年時母親身旁  
吹我們入睡的風扇



買了六盒紅柿子，每一粒  
作成六盒柿子餅。合哉  
一人一口哉——吃了沒？

## 3. Man—Slow

Agitated like a gust, I've looked for you for a half-century. Man—Slow, I heard you lived in the ancient Middle Kingdom (that's why your full name is Man in the Middle of Slow), a time so slow, so slow, people who didn't live to be a hundred could swallow a millennium's worries. You never heard of Freud, never used a cell phone, emailed, or sent an IM; the terms *anxiety*, *agitation*, *neurotic*, *tranquilizer* didn't strew your search engines. You didn't know about Libra, swing and anti-swing, nine to five, about high-speed rail, subway, bullet train, about quickies, quick cookers, quick bites, quick trips. The fastest your people could ever get was a quick sword that cut through tangled flax or running water (while the flax still tangled and more water ran), or the swift pen-brush that wrote *Timely Clearing After Snowfall*. That letter took a month to reach the recipient, impatient. You know, you should've used the express mail or a courier, or texted. Man, this is urgent. The man who wanders about, takes his time, and slows down for perfection isn't me. I am a different kind of man, arrogant, insolent. To the unkind world, to the immense universe, to Youzhou Terrace, which didn't climb as high as Taipei 101, in the absence of predecessors and successors, at the thought of the vast heaven and earth, the poet who wept alone, whose name was Chen, just can't be me. I disdain ancient, obstinate proprieties, state apparatuses, chastity arches, obelisks, monuments. I rail at everything that makes me upset, uptight, uppity. Very soon, though, my bones will become as heavy as a bronze statue. My beer belly that holds no beer, my frivolous youth,

## 3. 慢郎

急驚風的我，尋找你已經半世紀了  
慢郎，聽說你住在古代中國  
（所以又叫慢郎中）很慢很慢  
生年不滿百可以懷千歲憂的古代  
你沒聽過佛洛伊德，沒用過  
手機，email，或即時通  
焦慮，不安，神經質，鎮靜劑  
這些詞彙還沒丟進你們的搜尋引擎  
你不知道什麼叫天平座，什麼叫  
擺盪與反擺盪，什麼叫朝九晚五  
什麼叫高鐵，捷運，子彈列車  
什麼叫快感，快鍋，快餐，快樂丸  
你們最快，不過是用一把快刀  
斬亂麻或抽之斷水（而麻照亂  
水更流）或者振筆疾書快雪時晴帖  
一個月雪融後到達收件者手中  
急啊，你知道嗎，應該用快遞或  
宅急便，或者傳簡訊。我替你著急  
漫不經心，慢條斯理，慢工出細火  
不是我的風格。我自然也有慢處  
我傲慢，我自大，對於不仁的天地  
浩瀚的宇宙，那爬到高不及101  
大樓的幽州台，前不見古人，後  
不見來者，念天地悠悠，獨愴然  
淚下的陳姓詩人，絕不是我  
我輕慢，對千百年來重不可移的  
禮教制度國家民族機器  
貞潔牌坊紀念柱紀念碑  
我漫罵一切我不爽不恥不屑者  
而很快地，我的骨頭也重得像銅像  
我不喝啤酒的啤酒肚，我很輕的

and shallow one-night stands will disappear in the wind.  
I scorn monotony, redundancy, rigidity, pedantry,  
pallid scholars, punishment by castration, putrid odors,  
and obsolete, second-rate prose. Yet my teeth, hair, organs  
will inevitably decay, fall, lose color, lose control—  
all happening too fast. Man—Slow, teach me how to  
slow down, let them slow down,  
let time, joy, the anxious heart,  
on this island, in this generation and after,  
slowly be imperious, contemptuous, incautious,  
slowly grow old, rot, sag.

青春，很薄的一夜情，隨風遠颺  
我輕薄一切單調重複僵硬迂腐者  
腐儒腐刑腐臭腐舊腐爛文章  
而我的牙齒毛髮器官也不免  
或蛀或落或失色或失靈  
它們來得太快，慢郎，教我如何  
慢一點，讓它們慢一點  
讓時間，讓快樂，讓焦急的心  
在這島上，在現代，在後現代  
慢慢地傲慢，輕慢，怠慢  
慢慢地老去，朽去，鬆去

NOTES:

“The Universe in Six Faces”: The first line is from an English translation of Stéphane Mallarmé’s “Un coup de dés” by Henry Weinfield. In mahjong, the first tile in the circle suit resembles the single-dot dice face. The Chinese characters for *box* (盒 hé) and *closure/harmony* (合 hé) are homophonous.

“Man—Slow”: *Timely Clearing After Snowfall* is a letter written by Jin Dynasty calligrapher Wang Xizhi (303-361 CE). “Youzhou Terrace” comes from the poem “Climbing Youzhou Terrace” by Tang Dynasty poet Chen Zi’ang (661-702 CE). Taipei 101 is the tallest building in Taiwan.

What have I been. Eroded soil, slowly replenishing.  
Blood that clots copper and flows cardinal red.  
Lost language. Texts buried, burned, unpronounceable.

What am I now. Construction site cordoned off  
And undug. Unbroken ground. A hopeful camera lens  
Capturing an ashen sunset. Synthesizer and low vocals  
Ringing off old convent walls. A foiled lure  
Catching the light, calling you back. The barb, waiting  
For a taste of flesh.

What were you. Idling car  
or pulley. The wheel  
that helps the clothesline  
string out and reel back in.

What was I then. Retaining wall.  
Last-ditch effort for stability  
on a shaken slope. Erosion. Tar  
that rots in the tooth.

What else am I. Late-afternoon haze  
fibrous and binding. The push through  
a marathon's ticker tape, straight into  
a brick wall. Malfunctioning compass,  
just enough to undermine—  
slightly better than none at all.

What else am I. Sledgehammer  
and shovel. Brute force.  
A bludgeoning kind of effort.





TEN MASTURBATING GIRLS UTOPIA

My own face on the chop places margin.

Concrete starling

Brick thorax

Scales rust the soft galaxy

Shells in coccygeal ocean starts, lisps

Scolding subcutaneous birds cavity a rubbing of soft bones.

Scabs carapace vibrissa meat capitalism petroleum handjobs  
a tiny echinodermata.

A colony of salts Dust copulatory

Latitudes tissues a hologram

Phylum wing fractures truncation

Jar Harm Elytra (my hand releases)

Legs soft rainbow off glass distinctive;

Cuticle the coated the underparts folded small plastic fire;

Magnetic or crustacean heart;

Metamorphosis I tree.

Here and not here and at the same time all at the same but not same place or only if you count a few pows. Wives have pows too. Having recently escaped the City of the Captive Element. Having absolute and wavering belief in her own hum, right, tsk, risk of arrival. Here or rather now all ten girls. A well-designed moment has backups for every girl. No moment without please pleasure, marble you out, heavily polished hammer, delicate flowers lined up all lined up on the sidelines. Goes dell and dell and dell and dell, that ish is on the line.

I collect these girls but only in this voicing, as soon as I count to ten they have scattered their heavy wares and have nothing left to lose but their bodies great bodies I stop counting so as to allow them to continue their critical turn. In the capital of each body is a glint, they limn it. I lose the line. All ten girls go like this:

[Sing]

Nevertheless she sidestepped, she hammered, she buckled, swung shallow, wavered word dreamy. She wilderness ran lightly, she lit it.

\*

Collect the fanciness of these vulgar girls but only just in this event.

As soon as they have placed, I regret carrying their loving moon-breeze decadence with me. I have no reference left to blow, their failures great failures I clarify and let go. I mean it ongoing a neutral turn. In the job of the girl, winning to be. All girls then and their overlapping shimmer.

## GENERATION STENT

Once a child now a crumbling column. Shoulder's ionic twirl, the wrung focus of a mop handle. Skin is softening, regal canyon varicose tributaries rearing up to the mounted eyes, the mounted ridge and your dewy eyes two apprehended storms. I cannot help it but to cry, *on* you is constant crying. Pass me the thinnest shard of shattered porcelain, I wear as a frontispiece. I fasten to my jockstrap. Silver in the hand. Abscess in the tooth. Struts amongst angel hair, in Medusa's exposed wiring I:

aluminum,  
ambulatory,  
your dove.      Your boy.

Conductivity a shallow brook it flows and makes biceps at us. Meanwhile, water bugs. My skin stretches to the ocean. Sticking finger into batter spill. Flecks in shell, moth eggs in a rusted tin feed silo. Nods in marble loosen and rain down stone by stone. A new era. Two arms from one shoulder. One current running dry starves an ocean. One current swells into a whirlpool of advice.

## ARC SWEETNESS

An implication of nudity: police nightstick bursts into a spray of newborn spiders on impact. The eggsac: potential energy woven from solitude. Your innocent soul is dead and manipulated into silk. A foothold strap dangles from the base of a full-length mirror, you swim up and moor upon the Landing of the Spirits. The courtyard of thrill-flushed lingerers. They surround you and feed you this moment of absolute decision which swans feel when they sublimate instantaneously, when all indirect blood donors are abandoned with urine in their flutes and hooves in their mouths. Each one comes up and lets you glimpse inside a tally book of the missing center tines from serpent tongues.

The first non-gendered: painted nails in bleachmilk. The second: dressed in half sleeves of red doilies, mimicking the vestments of the cardinal of buffalo. There is a you to climb both with and underneath your sticking amphibious limbo skin. A gene sequence in flawless palindrome. A life in prefect, a life in drosophilac completion. Skating wet magnolia pedals down to the mezzanine.

*from* EPISTLE TO THE EFFICIENCE

Dark night. Amazing air. I am held back  
under the heat lamp. Before the green tea, I  
make the positional statement, I render the fat.  
There is a thin line beyond the pale.

In the quiet times, I dine frequently,  
elsewhere glimmers as sensory overload, more  
acid, more acid, please, fold this as I

report on the recession, the long lines  
forming onerous, prismatic hedgerows that fatten  
on the rib of neighborly divisions, property  
perimeters, icy

brinks all the way down to the corner shop,  
the honeyed provisos of kind preachers, changed  
execs, sweet peach sellers, long textured  
lines, heavy, inalienably  
aromatic, as newsprint, as so much  
writtenness, it is getting out of hand, my own hands  
simply fold.

It gets darker, though it be a metaphor  
that is darkness,  
and it gets still, though it be a molecular  
deception,

and it gets ever more fragrant, though it be  
ineffable, and

the sequencing gets shook up,  
the conclusion wishes to assert itself but is  
concealed,

and so I under the starry metaphor, I inside  
the pregnant description, I amid the tenable scents,  
I feel simply feelings. Under the arbor,

I sniff the arbore-  
scent, I enter its porous wisdom, the crackling in

cinema equal to kindling, for  
in some sense

I am reporting on a country, peeking over the fence,  
shrieking, look! look! an interiority! look, such a  
private, green  
articulation! what a potted frond of despair, this  
man speaking his silent monologue, face screwed up  
for expression. A camera studies him, lingers on him,  
lingers on his objects, whence refracts the whole  
of his psychosoma. The room reverberates with this  
'curation' of being.

In the film of this man's life,  
which is cavernous, all angularities commiserate.  
His ennui is stirring, his rage renaissant.  
Method and méprise are his calling cards.

The camera is deft, so I am dire.  
I look into the mounting of desire,  
into the diminutive, the moon-dependent  
feeling, o that he has a feeling, o that it opens out,  
opening out an old sense, system-  
atically uncoiling along the soundtrack,  
the appropriate record  
from the appropriate decade of his youth,  
which shaped his interior, as though from this,  
surely, the darkness, metonymic, shall  
proceed.

I fold this.

I fold all the cinema

I ever grazed upon, bovine, five thousand daisies  
pushing senses out of my skin, for although they  
showed me the thin line between being and not,  
my steady hand and unsteady heart, quote unquote,

when it is *my* turn to look 'inside,'  
every hesitation that might hesitates me. I write,  
'Solace is tainted, nonplussed.' I write, 'No  
precision that isn't imprecision.' I observe

the housekeeper  
is an erotomaniac; pixel density and contrast ratio;  
multiple refrains and a sort of pulling against

the consensual seduction; thin lines  
meaning hesitation is a certain theory, 'certainty  
like a quality of gems and cautious doctrines.' Every  
theory lingers in the cavities  
as I lapse from it, prosodies are faithless but  
divine. In some sense then, according to a source,  
the reports have gone awry. The prolix lines,  
the keen sight. And the night is savage, somni-  
feral. I remind my oriental mind.

[...]

'These prosodies,' she says, 'of hesitation,' she  
says, 'are spasms,' she says, 'of inquiry.' The analysis  
wings about the room, aquiline. In some sense,  
I have been reporting on a country.  
'An alien,' she says. The strain marks a hesitation that  
grows more resonant as we go on. According to a  
source, the source will never appear. 'What have you  
learnt?' she asks.

On a square on her wall a meadow of cows  
lisps.

'Violence,' she says, 'is not the answer,'  
perforce.

Wind dissipates mind seeds.  
Things I have said return odd.  
The future, I said, ought to be the new 'time  
lost.'

The sentence, I said, is torqued, I said, at times  
to defamiliarize, at times to attain sublime doubt.

The experience is so wild any path you cut through it  
cuts through you, so said I  
once, on a carousel.

In the recession, it is white.  
Alchemically slack, the fruit on my toast.  
Dark, gelatinous. Unusual, bejeweled.  
Beveled?  
My head?  
Thin line.

'There is,' I say, 'inside you  
an absence.' 'There is,' I say, 'inside you  
a presence.' I watch your interior grow.

## eargraf & receipt(s)

*or tubman. start(id) on paper  
[vol. 1 get to know a nina simone song & lady day on soul-train]*

... I mean. I mean, it really opens up the wound completely raw. When you think of a man hanging from a tree. And to call him *Strange Fruit*??!!!!

– **Nina Simone** on how ugly the song, *Strange Fruit* be.

1.

an **ergraf**  
/ ear graph /

*noun*

1. guiding tool to inform an engineer as to where a sound &/or instrument should be in relation to a listener's ear
2. a diagram showing what sound &/or may bear a level of importance over another
3. an instrument gaging intention in relation to what is produced &/or realized

*verb [to ergraf; ergrafed or ergrafing]*

1. listening for what the poet/composer/producer doesn't hear that could aide in uplifting the lyric &/or language of the song in relation to mixing/revising/editing

## context

after recording what would be songs to be considered for [tubman.] record, the engineer made a rough mix based on a set of [ergrafs] crafted by [rev. dr. a. r-rah]. then [sir-blk-alot] himself invited a group of [illustriously in-tuned cats] to come into the studio to rate & render thoughts on what would make the cut & guide the final mixing. the following be a [ergrafs] & [receipts] based on two songs that ended up on [tubman].

**note:** the presence of both [nina simone] & [billie holiday] in [neckbone] & on [tubman.] has everything to do with the impression both of their recordings of [strange fruit] had made upon [rev. dr. a. r-rah] when he was [lil blk erything].

**[lady day & soul-train]:** extends the poem [6 of 30] from the [billie holiday] section in [neckbone]. a collection of [visual verses] that chronicle the life, music & [pure d. grade aye abra cadabra] of [mz. eleanor fagan], most famously known as [the billie holiday], the song arranges the titles to some of [mz. holiday's] most [fierce soni-onic gems] to create a narrative of a devoted lover asking him gentlemen caller why him so [fuckboy] about the manners in which he participates in their [situation-ship]. the piece & its voice positions [mz. holiday] & [soul-train] as two meaningful [happenings] that galloped [blkness] in both syndicated & syncopated fashion. in all this realm, [mz. billie] & [baba don cornelius] never-ever [conversate-id] on the [soul-train stage] in front of the [soul-train gang]. [lady day] was made it [home] to her maker 12 years before the show ever aired.

**[get to know a nina simone song]:** extends the [visual verse] that uses the genre of still life to honor blk men & women [straight merked] or lynched in america at the turn of the [19-hunnids]. at some point in when [dixie] was grand &/or ["great"], blk bodies in the breeze was like an epidemic spreading like the [whooping] cough. this epidemic lead a jewish-american teacher by the name of [abel meeropol] to write a poem to address this matter of what [white folk] were doing to [blk folk] specifically. this poem that he would put to music himself, would gain popularity in [new york] & was finally presented to [lady day] in efforts for the [protest] song to be heard [ala universe]. [columbia records] gave [madame billie] a [one-session]

release to [cut] the record & in 1939 [strange fruit] was released by [commodore records] as the [b-side] to [fine & mellow]. [strange fruit] went platinum. [mama billie's] highest selling record to date. but when [mama eunice wayman] known to most as [nina simone] got a hold to this song & put a [bounty] on the head of [whats-in-ever muddafukka] who went out into the night & [strung-up] a [blk body] in the name of punishment. this version of this song was [lil blk erything's] introduction to the [wickedly sweet seduction] of [mama nina]. like [lady day on soul-train], [get to know a nina simone song] assembles titles of [several nina simone records] to present a narrative of a [wayward] child running amuck in these [streets]. placed on top of what [sir blk a lot] hoped to be reminiscent of that one scene in [the color purple] when [shug avery n'em] come [busting up] up the church service with some of that [blk jee-sus on dark liquor swing], this song would be what the [good rev. deacon dr.] calls [sunday mornin jook-joint] aka understanding the thin line between the prophetic & the profane. to also offer even more context or even more connection to [bro. meeropol], this is the 1st poem [rev. dr. a. r-rah] put to music blk!

**lady day on soul-train**  
[in de key of funky d]

SYDNEY COMBES  
+ BEANS  
DIS

→ inspire(d) by de billie holiday section of **NECKBONE**: a song sponse to have a blood dat nobody notice(is) on de blk! | vrs 1: [scattin billie up] good lawd know(s) in my solitude | oooo & weeee i've cry(d) & cry(d) & cry(d) fo(r) u | a monf of gloomy sunday(s) weepin willow blue | lemme tellya pig-eeet & beer jus(t) wont do | hook: cause i wanna know **why ... why u be so mean to me** | take yo time & tell me **why ... why u be so mean to me** | vrs 2: jus(t) las(t) night i thought our luv was herr to stay | but now i'm singin good mornin heart-ache | i worry myself weary wonderin where our luv has gone | but i wud be fine & mellow if u'd jus(t) stay home | hook: & explain to me **why ... why u be so mean to me** | **bridge: (whoo-who)** feel like i'm lady day on soul-train | (**whoo-who**) wanna boogie but my feet bound(d) by chain(s) | (**hoo-who**) nat king jee-sus know i'm goin thru | (**whoo**) strange to be on a lim(b) jus(t) like fruit | hook: wonderin **why ... why u be so mean to me** | i really ... really wanna know **why ... why u be so mean to me** | refrain: i'm gonna tell u yo future | **u wont fin(d) a greater luv ... u wont fin(d) a greater luv** | & den de adlib(s) go: mash-potato to pittsburgh | funky chicken to montego bay | u can camel walk to chattanooga | u can boogaloo to santa fe | u wont fin(d)! [scat billie on down] ...

WHOO-WHOO(S)  
Gotta BE PRETTY

de "why" slides up but shud be pretty  
de "why u be so mean to me" **HEAVY**

Refrain "u wont find a greater luv"  
YOU GOTTA MEAN DAT THING BLK!

from Tell Me How It Makes You Feel

Whatever happens at a of must and be  
-ed by its own force

\*

What just -ed is an example of carnal knowledge,  
museum art, war appropriation, swings art, goodbye art,  
tapestry exhibit, frolic

You need to live too, to perpetuate, too,

\*

mama.

Every

obelisk with tufts of osmosis.

\*

On the phone I heard you both again for the first time in  
years and all I had time to utter before the lines cut off was  
"America has fallen."

\*

There was a moment, along this walk,  
like menopause, when the ghost of an elderly childhood dog  
made her stop the car, along the highway, off of route 80,  
and ask, and hear, I understand... I understand... It's ok...

\*

Plank after plank

[intro] part A  
[vrs] part A  
[chrs] part A  
[vrs] part A  
[chrs] part A  
[bridge] part A  
[chrs] part A  
[refrain] part A

part B  
part B [agin]  
part B  
part B [agin]  
part A

HORNS  
HORNS  
HORNS W/ HORNS

Stay on A

Allegory  
Deafness  
Bongo  
Tapestry  
Johanna  
Johanna  
Mardouise

Solo  
Horn  
Bongo

DON'T LET ME BE MISUNDERSTOOD  
THE LAZIEST GAL IN TOWN  
SOMETHING WONDERFUL  
FROM "THE KING AND I"  
DON'T TAKE ALL NIGHT  
NOBODY  
A MONSTER  
I AM BLESSED  
OF THIS I'M SURE  
SEE LINE WOMAN  
OUR LOVE (I WILL SEE US THROUGH)  
HOW CAN I  
THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER

get to know a nina simone song

vrs 1: u natural born liar | hell gotta fire | waitin on yo return | u itty-bitty mista | smackin dat sista | lawd gonna make u learn | u big city slicker | drinkin red-dirt liquor | yo liver aint yo concern | nothin good gonna come | to u or yo son(s) | til u feel dat fire burn | chorus: u got dat | goddamn mississippi voodoo on u | ghos(t) got u runnin away from de troof | u gotta new name & ligiton but u done los(t) yo cool | campaign false pride only make(s) u a fool | hook: o lawd | help me holyghos(t) to preach yo word | vrs 2: u stackin dat paper | sellin crac(k) to yo neighbor | yo heart col(d) blk as chrome | u search high & low | fo(r) dat lil girl from joe(s) | her de bes(t) thang u ever known | u wanna play cowboy | u wanna flash yo toy | but horse & lan(d) u'll never own | yo mama too shame | to even speak yo name | cause her dont like what done got grown | chorus: u got dat | goddamn mississippi voodoo on u | ghos(t) got u runnin away from de troof | u gotta new name & ligiton but u done los(t) yo cool | campaign false pride only make(s) u a fool | hook: o lawd | help me holyghos(t) to preach yo word | bridge: flat de circle out | break de chain | walkin forward | aint such a strange thang | u know yo body | now get to learn yo brain | wanna be bran(d) new | make a change | chorus: u got dat | goddamn mississippi voodoo on u | ghos(t) got u runnin away from de troof | u gotta new name & ligiton but u done los(t) yo cool | campaign false pride only make(s) u a fool | goddamn mississippi voodoo on u | ghos(t) got u runnin away from de troof | u gotta new name & ligiton but u done los(t) yo cool | campaign false pride only make(s) u a fool | hook: o lawd | help me holyghos(t) to preach yo word | refrain: goddamn mississippi voodoo on u ...

HAND CLAPS  
FOOT STAMPS  
MAMA MACHINE  
SWAMP IT OUT

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page: "Solo", "Horn", "Bongo", "Johanna", "Mardouise", "Allegory", "Deafness", "Bongo", "Tapestry", "Johanna", "Johanna", "Mardouise".



grass by grass

non-type for non-type

mother before motherland

cretin of cretin

grief as grief

\*

to the trash bins

\*

which too will be confiscated like

love letters like

\*

to the zoning districtiers and our

\*

letters

\*

to the cabaret law and letters

\*

to the pharmaceutical

companies.

\*

Whatever -s on the pendulum in the of a  
will necessarily be subjected to the same as or  
any other relational force

\*

Mama, I have constructed a word for no

\*

Mama, I have constructed a word for don't

\*

(and there's  
no need more than trust of detritus)

\*

Mama, I have constructed a word for wait

\*

Do you feel it now?

*PERFORMED NOTATIONS/PERFORMANCE NOTATES: AN  
INDEX OF THE LOST*

—[Whatever happens at a of must...] 114

fool of touching you  
the skin beneath your eye  
i am love now i am love tonight

When we go to visit the tomb of the unknown soldiers,  
how they appear like baths dug deep inside this earth—I'll never laugh  
again so loud—not at night outloud—I understand

fool of touching you  
fool of touching the  
skin beneath your eye

41% chance for the bone marrow  
transplant if you're an Asian-  
American but we didn't expect  
it to spread or ache into the cache

fool of touching you  
fool of the touch beneath your eye-  
lid paper nautilus to woo—

I get in trouble  
for putting away a softcover book in one of the compartments of my  
desk in 1996. I say Dominique Moceanu's name three times outloud.  
Between 1996-2008, I will write over thirty-thousand notes in uniball,  
ballpoint, or inkjet pen onto the skin on the back of my left hand. Usually  
to-do lists, but sometimes not (other notes).

And, have you ever gone down or tried to on a US customs  
officer so you could smuggle them on through your duffle—she winked  
at me, once, auntie did—unscrewing the cap to her marmalade. So, after  
all your years locked away, why now, are you afraid of these oranges,  
which are worth the nibbling on, Vanna, I'd like to buy a vowel

With the bible in your hands

when we were the girls

you noticed suddenly how ambidextrous

you were and you could hide money

behind wooden panels—

\*\*\*\*\*

VALERIE HSIUNG

Mountain of my youth

Mountain of those succulent pheromone mittens

Mountain of those witch hazel forest dens

Mountain of black greens

When the storm has had enough fun then will you be safe  
again

For twenty years she was kept inside a box

as a prisoner without even a prisoner's number to

hunt no one knew where to look

So she imagined a window and so she could pick her own  
weather

*I'll take rain*

to send a letter

psychically to those you love so dear close your eyes here

focus, focus...

Drown

#

At the turn of the century

At 6am

Francoise lit

one match

When I woke up today, the moon was

pressed to my

face.

We didn't have

much time.

We squatted in the tub

and were washed before dawn.

We couldn't even stay for the bread and jam.

I should have told you

how happy you made me

Francoise bowed to us on our way out

As a final gesture we made sure

not to slam her door

And we picked up our bags and held them under our arms as  
we went down the

staircase to not wake up the neighbors, and we held our dogs  
tightly to our chests

## MEN SIT ON THE WALL & WOMEN HANG OVER IT

You're just cold. That's all it is. Let me see. At first his hands scared me. Like they weren't human. Do you believe in reincarnation? I believe it's going to rain today. Do you believe in wrongdoing? What a spoiled greedy lamb you must've been. How I would've despised to have had a child like you.

Ground level. Elevated heartbeat,

#

There's the tale of the three something in the woods

#

He said he would finally go up to each stranger and remove the shooting targets from their backs. But to give them a couple more weeks to dole out all the paperwork.

Are we in <city> proper? We are in Providence.

#

Four jars of beans were here traded for one headset  
Two jars of oil were here traded for two jars of beans

#

I tried to do it. I tried my best. I used it. I used to do it. It's not possible to aim towards something too much. It's not. I am a first person shooter. I love my brush, I love my God.

I don't believe. I wasn't, I could have. I don't believe in the word of God as passing through a mortal being. I shouldn't be here. I shan't, I shall not.

#

Many hands are there here in this book, journal, block of clay, paper, notebook, tabulation. And eyes, some of them corroded. Symbols to revolve. Demolition. Elopement. My other me —which is *any*-thing or -body or -time or tingling or commingling away from you. From this.

Not in another universe, Valerie, in this one!

*from outside voices, please*

I'm not going to move from this spot.

I'm not going to move away from this spot. So you can

close your eyes. So you can just let go now

It was like I was a part of this lurid beautiful secret that I

alone knew about... It was like after so many years

everyone — well not everyone, but enough of them —

finally believed me, my side of it, finally believed enough

of my dirty little secret It was like for a moment I forgot

that they couldn't ever possibly believe it

Hold my hand Hold Lift our plummeting Let them dangle

Let Let us stay away from The lure You are worth

everything to me Every Proposition Object Plural The

language itself

our coat of arms

*my voice was too obvious*

my voice was too obvious

an aunt gertrude or an uncle josh telling me

I'd never gosh or heck or darn gosh I'd never

anatomize the parts inside me

in fact the parts-inside-me-called

they weren't parts or they were caverns that ought to be caves,

or something, stalagmites that out to be stalactites

that writing feeling xum on me again

xum thru me

tulips drooped but one buttery one didnt

or was the whole thing a dream

a restaurant approximating a beach

whos floors were covered in sand

jellyfish undulate what seemed

to be grinding on a bit of kelp we hoped

it was sexual for them both

peered at them afterward

after the ceviche that wasnt ceviche w/ its cubes of potato filler

tacos that werent tacos w/ their 2 shrimps and false casings

everything covered in first world problems wheat and dairy

when maasaw laid out all the gifts of the world

the hopi chose corn the apache chose game

and bahana the white man chose wheat cuz it was easiest to carry

jellyfish's arms were waving we came up close I said

what is that a little string tying it to the kelp are they fake

A asked yes yes the surferman said whod never

been on a surfboard nothing was not only not what

it seemed to be it was not what it was why bubble

the tank for a plastic fish I must smoke

they say the seas are lousy w/ them jellyfish

who can w/stand the acids + the poisons + the recordhigh

temperatures and decibels of the 7 wars we have going on

there like the bats they say at the museum of  
 jurassic technology that can fly thru concrete walls  
 they just slip thru the fishing nets easy as pie  
 down the throat of that fat kid in stand by me who  
 induces an entire midwestern town into a vomitorium  
 you can listen to the cry of this bat on a rotary phone mounted to the wall  
 easy as pie easy as fish easy as fishcake thru the cracks I cancelled  
 class to write this poem I a little bit counted chickens  
 mugwort thats for dreaming thats for later  
 eye twitched I had everything I had  
 'it all' but if the pen were to fall  
 btwn the cracks of the firescape  
 if 'the grove divided into double parts'  
 and in I entered was or if I lissome  
 or proved to be the very mount I rode in on  
 'so mote it be' actual sad cypress  
 ODB  
 what do you see  
 aside from what you see  
 power is in the periphery  
 or so I'm told  
 I want to smoke at my desk but I'm kind  
 I'm kind I am my kind fat starling  
 sparrows fuss n fight but pleasantly  
 what do these collocations hope for  
 babushka crumbs  
 vertical lines in negative as rays  
 merely the print of the bars  
 of a thing that never meant to be my jail  
 luminescing the underside of my eyes  
 record skip  
 along my mind  
 what do it I  
 what do it I  
 whuttdoiI  
 record do skip  
 along the needle of my mind

ANDREA ABI-KARAM

## limit/less

god like name my  
     me try  
     u dare i  
 begin even 2  
     speaking  
  
 about cruel what's  
     intention the  
     tear to  
     all it  
     down  
  
     hold let's  
 against hands  
 backdrop the  
     ruin of  
  
 problem the  
     can't i is  
     imagine  
     day the  
     after  
  
     ? you can  
     ?  
  
 game long the  
     quite choked  
     fires wild by  
  
     out rinse  
     eyes your  
     to try +

it through see  
later again

we'll then  
what see  
remains

plastick eat i  
feel to pretend +  
alive  
to in lean  
every + each  
bruise  
film thin finding  
separation  
between  
edges + air

trace i  
limits yr  
them inhabit +  
too almost for  
long  
brink the on skating  
much too of  
limit/less approach +

As an attempt to decentralize English and American constructions of language, race, and gender, 'limit/less' is written from right to left, inspired by Marwa Helal's invented form, the Arabic. Aligned with Frantz Fanon's second step of decolonial theory, 'remembering,' writing from right-to-left reclaims the loss of language imposed by colonial violence. In a non-US context, my first name is held by many genders, but in a US context, despite my genderqueer, post-top surgery presentation, I am overwhelmingly digested improperly and misgendered daily. In this poem, I refuse to accept the US-centric limits of my identity multitude.

(b) —●●●

chest voice like fits of fur

breathing balls into.

another red another

terrible banana.

somewhere born

again, the beck on preacher.

bees, they say, congregate

because systems

fit into stems of clapping.

(c) —●—●

Click— if there is click— orchard.

Charlie grows

up and/crawled

children are

olding, too.

—I was ten, I was an able baker.

Someone said swoon like cataract or cat's tooth or

bobcat on the floor boards

at night— pile of feathers.



SOPHIA DAHLIN

## Poem A Day

poem a darling

sweet dear

a blue

awhile now

lurk but jangling

whose argument

shook the bushes

ours

but the reality

may be

as it drops to a floss

below us

at least below our choices

plead a took word

to return a promise

with a compliment

shakes the plane to sloping

a sleek watered limb

allows us forward

swap a nice moment

for clarity

brute sweetheart

bright brute heart

wet

and what lopes between

pulled taut but dropped

then to lure

one a dear

who in a rush

is darling

## I'll Reciprocate Ur Alterity If U Reciprocate My Alterity

Hello Rabbit. True I'd bundle you in my bushes,  
it is true I bat a leaf in your absence,  
that my eyes are full of floor.  
My water breaks readily towards floor  
like it were easy to weigh.

How bear odor all day on my branches, maintain  
an inside, outside and an other. Reciprocal handshaking  
but with such softened  
knuckles. Always somebody  
crushed in a handshake. Lurking somebody.  
Frightened bunny of my palm,  
tender bit of the bush, that yields  
to a tap. Don't scatter, rabbit.

Don't penetrate the hedge, man,  
rambling where the woods start  
and you are woods too. I'd associate my trudging  
with your mud, man. My head lunges  
and drops in your heavy head, my neck meanders  
and heart bobs. Reboot another truth. What leaks  
is my water, reaching to the core. I'm skin.  
It's you, and it's my pittance in the palm.

## Poem About Seedless Tomatoes Aren't Fruit

Let's beg a vegetable from the vendor,  
a wet crabapple or a damp cucumber  
and bring it home to murder with a cleaver.  
You can't murder something dead  
but you can't bring it home either.  
Let's cut an apple on cut tree. Let's plate it.  
Let's plate the statue in a limpid silver.  
It represents the city's founding father.  
He's a deity. Another deity becomes another.  
I found my burgeoning on casual leverage,  
seemingly casual springboarding of sprawling.  
I land on someone sexy and I wet them.  
I make them a damp catcher and I like it.  
You should be grateful or be furious, depending.  
Do you like it? My falling's calling to your catching.  
Oh hear it with your arms out, likely listener.  
batten up the clapboards and put snacks on,  
plate windows with the steaming pies and sing it,  
placate my skin with micturate and dust us clean  
with powder, pee upon me friend

we'll dim our barricades, we're bargaining  
to limit our toy weather. And we haven't yet  
learned to not cook together. Let's eat our bubblewrap  
with forks, how digestible, and when you want me  
I'm at market, buying dairy, second ingredient  
for a dish we get to suffer.

## Reporter

What hurts? What will?  
“Spiritually fulfilled,”  
My diagnosis. Yes.  
One must not be too

Careful. Some knife  
In the kitchen. Sun red  
On the bed. I am collated  
Tame. Tinge a hue

Overcome by weakness. Must  
I lie down with door knockers?  
Trying to exit a tangible  
Hide, that, especially you

And the like, shun, you're  
Rolling in what you call thought.  
But there is no hill underground.  
Up down. Everybody merely

Approachable fears  
Peering. Friends,  
I want to be  
By others selfishly even.

You're grown. Their hopes  
For you fade and your must  
Fades with them. Hope  
And that you don't. When

And that I was. Open the door.  
I was not beautiful  
When you did. It was  
Not beautiful what you wanted.

## Identification

Someone, if that,  
heard me when I spoke,  
easily wanted everything  
or nothing to do with me.  
I fear indifference, it's clear.  
I'm clear on that. So when  
that person who wanted  
wanted that, I turned away.  
And when I wanted  
I turned into that person.

## Uniform

A tiger? Time-prone parade where varied  
 Stops and hamburger buns tide the populace  
 Over? Line in a row? Yup. Equally drawn  
 Solidarity capes. Darkness unites. One star  
 Combs the air with rays. Blank stair to which  
 Clematis aims, whichever May climate.  
 Case history. Jessica L. You know well  
 I can't stand you. Rub off. Can't stand you  
 Under the branched way. I look at you. Can't  
 Understand the way too much. Etch  
 Independence, 1776776766. Ever  
 Seen a tattoo so long? Who understands  
 Understands my choices, what I cannot be.

## Plumber

Young effervescence surfaces  
 first, affords a place to live, away,  
 an embassy for perpetually  
 foreign places: the compass.  
 Glassware everywhere  
 refracted—crystal millions  
 my lungs have shattered  
 panting questions curiosity  
 yields—constellates  
 a state pursed by contradiction.  
 I kept along my secret, plumbing  
 for keeps. State-employed,  
 I'm hungry, have glory, now money,  
 now sadness, now none, concern,  
 joy, fear, grief,  
 humility, anger, pride, peace,  
 I'm happy stricken, afflicted  
 with so deep a burning  
 of which cause ice is and can't help.  
 Charity's a character. He has forms  
 he fills out, in my secret gaze  
 a spliced idea—that glass  
 lulled from its singular habitat  
 to a cursory double structure, sees further  
 through itself than I through it, unless  
 there's a thing inside, for which  
 welling there is nothing.

S. YARBERRY

## Letter

From somewhere that is so deep into the land  
the impression is like a valley,  
is like a river bed long long long—  
TIME, sulked away.

Pile of broken glass looks green-blue,  
Captures something,  
gives it back.  
MISSHAPEN  
comes up everywhere  
I see building windows.  
When I open the apartment  
window, to let the air in, it is your chest  
coming through your blouse.

Murky, murky, mind!  
Oh, *Xanthum*, a pretty word— useless.  
Messages form around roofs and doorknobs—  
see them everywhere. There's a crisis inside.

the feeling of water  
that makes you vulnerable  
high wind

What would you say if I said *love is clear like glass!*  
Only say what you mean:

*Polka-dot*  
*Polka-dot*

*Sheep in red coats line our insides.*

*I'm kind and I'm kind of.*

If we could be birds simply by flapping our arms like wings we would do  
so, we would love the air and call it: *our air*. *Ours and us and we* can hold us  
together even when we cannot hold ourselves.

Really, you are my favorite doorway.

The flowers glower in the heat (smell: sweet-sweet-sweet), air slow, slow is  
everywhere, things are and are moving. All the green rustles: slow waves,  
various shades. Red-house-top (a mountain)— sky, unusually pale. Your hair is  
wet and smooth, kelp, but darker. Come you say, and I come.

S. YARBERRY

## Anteroom

The overhead light makes a mirror  
of the last words said.  
I sit in the empty room.

People down on the sidewalk are still  
sputtering hot— laughter.  
Car bells. Shutdoors. Something

glows in a blue cloud:  
*at a loss*. A word before,  
some after. Lost, anyhow.

My Tyger has burnt out. My *Tyger*  
has *burnt* out. Alas, I come to undress  
my context.

At one point, this was all for you.

The egret inhabits an estuary, back  
home in California. Oh, but the egress

is available forthright and waiting  
with its open yowl. Too  
soon. I wish to curtail my time.

The pure Punctum of your hair—  
like silvered-brown— still thick  
and turning between

the fingers of my stupid hand.  
The skin of your eyes like lored  
glass. Nothing else, but blue.

Where has our gondolier gone?  
The boat rocking against  
the urchined water— perpetual.

Empty space can feel full  
and neon. There was once  
a simplicity of us. The air

wreaked of rain and dirt.  
What was that then? The sad  
depth of your hand, right there.

## Graphic

The wind comes through sharp as a dog growl.  
 There is so much shape between us.  
 We become another shape. We bend in  
 and out of being. Ectera of hair,  
 brush-brown. Alternate apertures.  
 Where? Red and red. A drawn face  
 haunts like a mobile. Dawn sprouts  
 a violet field. Histories  
 are begotten then dissolve. What?  
 Where are you? Memory slips.  
 Hands immediate. Immediate  
 as air: dense with lip and  
 hand. I watch your hand  
 move like a flapping wing into  
 sullen bird.  
 Moths and horses occupy tongue and time.  
 Your eyes pollute with light: blue-flares  
 in the whelp of the nightroom.  
 Blink: a flash. Blink: a fish.  
 There is nothing normal about this.  
 We hold each other tightly— until  
 we do not know what we are holding.

*from* THE MAGIC CHAMBER

## I

I've lost H.'s dogs twice now, first in the mail, the wrong zip code, I was told to ask, for money back, but couldn't, finalize...de-transaction, I had lost parts of him before, to another, translator, I was willing to share, of course, I felt, no semblance, of possession, he had fascinated, many, I was called to him, was there to be called to him, he pulled me close, til I was nearly breathless, in his wake, I held him tender, I still hold him tender, they were lost to me, they are lost to me...

## III

S. was on the television, I had been away, a day and a half, had not taken the dogs, they were at my bedside, marked where I had left them, H. was in his room, bound in clothes, awaiting T., he was midway thru foreplay, he was getting slammed by his dildo, he was being pleased, I had made sure that he was being pleased, in my absence, I returned, they were gone, where could they have gone, where could they have gone...

## V

I checked each shelf aplenty, fingered through and leafed each close companion, mates of my mates, of his mates, our mates, they were meager in the sense that their spine spindled, markings barely visible, could be nearly anywhere, slid between sheets, finding the warmth of other woods, palms, fabrics, &c., I haunted every floor lest I step on them, they were and were not near me, they were and were not near me...

## VI

S. would help me find them, we went walking, our backs to the sun, so later, coming home, we would face it, head-on, as a confrontation, in basking, a light to find our winter, wintered, is a failure in the making, is a play, in experimentation, a theater of messing, around, H., was hiding, the dogs were, all the more, present, at the forefront, of my thoughts, at the tip, of my desires, they were and were not near me, they were and were not near me...

## X

Sebastian called the store today, he was looking for a book, I couldn't find it, it was something, impossible, something, we couldn't have, something, he knew, we couldn't have, it was long, out of print, even then, he was asking, for an

edition, in a language, it has yet to be translated, into, something, impossible,  
about his question, about, his calling, there was something, in his voice, I  
hadn't registered, there was something, in his voice, I hadn't...

XI

The *S* torm came fierce this morning, winds aplenty, the candle flickered,  
flame and the *S* moke, *S* piraled, heavenly, it was celestial, it was Ascension,  
purely, this disintegration, of matter, the naked branches, *S* winging, he  
was everywhere, he was nowhere, I was swaying, til the *S* torm *S* tops, the  
*S* un, unfolds, itself, undresses, *S*. was in the city, we would leave this town  
tomorrow, we would leave this town tomorrow...

CHIWAN CHOI

### *from My Name Is Wolf*

will you point me to the field / long browned and fleeting / covered in snow that will not  
stop / relentless in its need to be // that field named Father? / i can no longer trust how i  
remember / his face or the texture of his palm / when he gripped my wrist to steady //  
how do the memories of him / and other bricks of my life / fade before he / they / is / are  
gone? // and the / Forest asks, then how is it / that you will re/collect him // and i say, //  
because i will never forget the sound / his throat made when i caught him / calling for  
home



## constellation seen over the shoulder

this is how i think it goes — / find someone who will replace all the things i fear about dying, / until their bones too shatter in regret / as i step out into the first sun after winter and breathe. // my father, you see, is crying somewhere in LA because / his little brother has died in korea and he can't fly there to mourn. / they were like twins. i mistook one for the other once before / they took me to the mountain and i then mistook grandmother's grave for a mountain. // what i'm trying to say is that i walked through new york today like / a familiar ghost and turned left around a new coffee shop where / a person with brown skin once stood loving. // and around the corner were the trees and the silence and the snow / that covered the whole of it and winter / spoke to me again asking me to name my body / to name my mother to name the hours clutched in my hands / like such rocks scooped up from the bottom of the river.

I forgot how to write to you. I forgot about the last time, the ways it could be done. I forgot about the way out, the hot road, the oil leaks, the light. I forgot what you'd said you would leave for me there. And when I look back in the mirror, it is night.

In all my memories of you, there is a street lamp, a parking lot, and a lake. I have one live eye and one dead eye in every photograph you take. And I've left the water all at once, stumbling and cold. Here I am, on the shore again. An aperture is just a timely hole.

## Scavenger, carry me home

what has saved me  
 more than the bolted  
 door the flickering  
 lamp the last pair  
 of socks under a pillow  
 the picture of family  
 in a wallet the picture  
 of family on a wall  
 the leaves carried in  
 by kin the map with  
 home mislabeled earth

I search for keys whisper  
 into the lock *do you know*  
*where home is*

*the tin*  
*bucket lowered into a well*

*and beyond this door?*

*alone on a ledge*  
*a child pulling*  
*pulling pulling*

## sand

my mother  
 carries us  
 in her  
 shoulders

I can't see  
 her pains

she walks  
 meticulously

are we what  
 she wants?

we are  
 offerings  
 to God

is a statement  
 at intervals  
 grain by grain

spill from  
 her back

reconstitute  
 her body

I can't see  
 they are too  
 small – pieces  
 I can't pick up

they are offerings  
 to God

of fact  
 non-linearly

I collect  
 each moment  
 piece together  
 her likeness

before her  
 I am here  
 where is she?

we move  
 in decades

we don't shrink  
 we rematerialize

## death is a currency

it takes but one moment of indecision for a fiend to become prey. *someone with your face had to migrate before we were all erased* is what i will say to my children as the bass rattles the windows of our chariot, as our chariot cleaves through the slouching flames of empire. a particular genre of machine flowers into any plot of land that runs red from a body freshly split open & in Australia, the pangolins curl themselves into a tight ball & pur until they are discovered by men & their desire for an unraveling & the pangolins are then split open & gutted & a price attached to their hides & soon there will be no trace of them left except for their names inside a story that might be shared over a spitting flame. everyone i know has, at some point, pressed a cold weapon's edge against the temple of another living thing for the sake of survival & everyone i know is afraid of fading into memory before they wholly disappear but until the reaper comes for me i will owe my haunting to the creature whose blood is still wet & red along my fingers. i'm told an animal in the distance must die for the pack to survive so death must be a kind of currency & i know it's skin or be skinned but this does nothing to calm the fears that trouble me awake inside the ungodly nights & just how am i to ever find my way back to slumber knowing that what i am can be easily pulled over the eyes of another?

## Air Quality May Vary

In the end,  
 I played bride to a matchstick,  
 hollowed teeth to transfigure a still-  
 burning fence.  
 I keep birds from passing through  
 to talon my gums, my war  
 painted mouth, my florescent teeth  
 that belong in someone else's skull.  
 Today on TV, all the forests  
 in the province erupt, startling  
 the children into concrete houses.  
 The ashes have caught up and  
 I am still the girl who cannot touch  
 her own blood without scarring.  
 In the end or not,  
 I taste broken glass on  
 my tongue. Black cranes reincarnate  
 sloppily across my neck.  
 When the water recedes  
 or rides the rim of the sun-lipped  
 prairies, I wring out a typhoon of old  
 Cantonese thrillers where

## hands.

the murderer always gets away.  
On the streets, I hear gunshots  
and rioters become civil servants  
who gather all the girls I loved  
until I loved like overripe fruit  
and stuff them into black bags.  
When all is said and done,  
I find a firefighter's uniform  
on an empty street  
with wet hairs inside.  
In the end,  
a radio talk-show host  
martyrs our ghosts and blames  
the fire on a Bath and Body  
Works candle. I am still  
a fire and the murderer  
is not a metaphor for the smoke  
I leave in the afterglow  
of my haphazard Canto - please  
listen, I am a murderer of when  
the night ends but never forgives  
my accidental crime or predicts  
the next kill. I am tired of turning  
my head from the candle-  
eyed girl towards the headlights.  
I am struck by lightning  
each time without fail.

I can only understand myself in echoes

I am a meteor.

No need to comet nor,  
Asteroid  
So much as break apart  
and Make

a decision.

Form Olmec till the fossil was  
A stone, which like all things  
Speaks;  
Churned this blood till it ran silver; still,

I built these hands with these hands.

## 4 the Fam (my Siblings)

We throw hands like  
concrete blocks thru cop  
car windows on midnight  
always soaring thru the city  
sparring with buildings  
seeing who flinches first.

## #145

Dear Diego,

I keep hurting myself trying to understand truth. I keep smashing this continent against my blood and nothing sticks. I keep smashing this mezcla body against the country, returning phantom limbed and in debt. I keep smashing all these dead white names into my skin and still I can't win over my oppressors. I song and dance and die and still I am remembered as a monster. So I stay monstrous. I keep eating prophets. I keep eating stars. I keep eating earthquakes and still they want the human in me. Not realizing they never made a language for me. They looked to animals and beasts and I am all thumbs and teeth and these left feet seek to stomp out white supremacy.

Why are we even talking? These fascists need burying. There's fruit trees I've yet to plant. There's still a third act to be had. The woods shall move upon the state and the oligarchs shall be splayed. There will be no king left in kingdom. There will be a planet or there will be nothing.

There will be nothing. There will be nothing. There will be nothing.

NATHALIE KHANKAN

*from* | quiet orient riot |

to say i once wrote an email to darwish i don't know if he saw about being newly arrived in  
the occupied territories | before i knew to call it territory | THE BREAD IS FLAT i n my hand &  
it's a flawless kilometer to a friend's house | a taxidermied giraffe in qalqilya i haven't seen yet  
& a progressive progesterone protocol i haven't tried yet & he's not yet a dead poet

to say i'm in a position on the brown sofa on the fifth floor in *bayt al-shami* & cold | i go  
between hussein's blue light & wringing towels of tepid water | anticipate one land | in that  
position on the sofa & that national question | when i'm done writing chapter four the poet's  
dead | he's dead in houston during a poet's heart's operation | basil is away when news from  
texas | salim says everyone will be at al-manara square | it's a literary history | it's a poet's  
funeral | it's a QUIET ORIENT RIOT

the electricity is back & the main functions of our local attachments | before abu basil left  
british mandatory palestine he rested on a rock with his eyes closed | the sun leaks from his  
cheekbones & his knitted vest is a color we can guess | sometimes closed eyes in a picture will  
tell a terrible story | the abundance we would know was known by none | the crude birth rate  
was known | the crude deaths were crude | to release THE SURFACE I'M GRIPPING i flex other  
muscles | in doctor shukri's office something has already been | it's an east myriad & kindred |  
*i vow to you what is in my womb*

THAT SUMMER WASN'T A PLEASANT PERSON either | summers can be drummed up to be  
so | teach me again to write my name in the final way | eventually i will google asta olivia &  
find her poem on how the summer comes | no i don't walk like my grandfather | west bank  
heat like a torched tongue moves forwards | on this side of the river your hands hang over a  
notebook & your bony pen | this afternoon & then another | i look like i didn't see that orange  
in your hand coming out of the snow | just like hussein always said it would

THEY SAID IT WAS MORNING | i translate a poem in vatic light from jericho | stay human  
says the wall | i loop like the smoke rolling still in your mouth | the street becomes a street that  
fills up with spring & sheep curbs & carob trees | i stretch my right knee | at home a new child  
waits along with blue eyes & hair | where she is born is a fine thing | *scabiosa palestina* | i  
need to put a load in the washer | i don't always look up when you walk by | collected grafted |  
warm root | i feel possibly covered like a book drawn in that coffee shop for men | & then i  
feel right in every corner like a table

AURA MARU

## my grandfather/ my grandfather

my grandfather Nicolae was a communist. his black long Volga in his village  
with his arms. click click photographs of overproducing rabbits. clack  
clack forming the eternal fir trees and the now abandoned hospital. the  
magician makes cherry trees with different types of fruit on every branch  
and puts together a swing for us out of his own crutches. by the end, fingers  
contorted, contracted. did anyone ask him in the 90s. in his wheelchair, his  
granddaughters sometimes in the back, he “drove” to the store to get the sour  
square dark bread. but communism you don't talk, that's for forgetting, not  
asking. 65, blood exploded in his head, leaving him with only one word:  
“certainly.” I had no idea about the risks of pole vaulting. I took in those early  
deaths as a sign of nothing.

my grandfather Trofim was collared out of his youth into the GULAG<sup>1</sup> with his  
brothers. “I anti-”-“I anti-”-“I anti-” the trio chanted in the rhythm of enemy-  
of-state mass production. his train and his school being principal his poetry  
his language and to bring back one smoky icon. Siberian knight, always  
during the days sleeping away his tiredness. memorize his jokes, emulate the  
shape of his hair, giggle at his request to eat soup at boiling point. helping in  
the garden, the hilt of the hoe my height. nothing to do with all that strength,  
a game of *curling* his way through the 90s. his story was for me and although I  
was old enough I was too young to have it. 85, goes away reciting.

---

<sup>1</sup> (Rus.) Acronym for “Chief Administration for Corrective Labor Camps.”



## facts

we were many sides; we did not know them.  
we were a flatfish, with two right eyes.

we were raised, dispersed, *slow, slow, quickly*.  
often we had the feeling of being against.  
silk of a red flag, flag of a missing limb, flag of an icicle.  
on a winter morning, swimming aghast.

and then, from the West, we were flooded.  
they went fishing all the way to Kamchatka.  
on the shore they shook their red ties.  
a hole was left, in each wall, in the houses.

we were no voice.  
with us were grandfather, grandfather, grandfather, grandfather, grandfather.  
with our eyes we were weighing who had touched more ice,  
who had been on what side, who could hold most water.

## post-soviet pastoral

what we were he never explained. we were meant to grasp by radiation a core in his body. layers of sweaters grew on his chest; circulation grew quieter. in the evening they were turned inside out all at once (cotton, itchy wool, acrylic) as he glided into his old bedsprings boat.

Lenin had a perpendicularly extended arm with a spread out hand so as to stop somebody. at their wedding my parents passed for a blessing under that hand. his life was a magnetic push against a statue.

*the statue is now alone in the small park. the village of Gribova is present, absent, present, absent.*

*tătunea* (ta-tóo-nja) Trofim we called him, softening the diminutive with a Slavic ñ. once, upon his return, he had built a house, the cornermost house, close to the road. he did peripheral jobs, brought coal to the classrooms and spudded the gardens.

a proletarian? "a walking story, an unread book," *mămunea* mumbled.

*tătunea* and *mămunea* lived in a maze.

cattle were housed in storage rooms. books slowly melted in the garage. a rusty Moskvich car, stuffed with posters, was parked for decades in mud. all summer we watched the house shed emerald paint, like a reptile.

*mud, palette of their days. here and there Lenin's forehead peeks through the rubble. darkening yellow on paper, and on metal, immortal gold.*

## Harvest Wreckage

mouth light and choose tuned  
weather — blackberries spill their  
unbled clean —

march each harvest out — keep  
going — back:

light. litanty  
. another  
you.

## Instructions for Breaking Wreckage

1  
break. fissure.  
summer wants  
earlier water.  
up hungry temple:  
sycamore  
or moan.

2.  
neck pools  
monument becomes absence  
away-about look  
finds its way on  
my brother.

liquid hymns  
a gang year—  
teach me to make a sacrifice.

given darkness I will guess a crane.

3.  
dry mind  
body choir  
photograph remnants of the throat  
and come back for me.

brother the water with concrete —  
a long fire recovered;  
a storm I don't know/can't name.

4.

*Show me air*

says Orchid.

rusted styric curls

left way on the body.

a road thrown my brother's way

grasses on dry land  
with of and

fires,

hours of lives

bending

toward

no love

in the end of

and

wide

the world

rending

NICK HOFF

## In memoriam

is trace of  
no final fact

no one  
is such

but various cares

acts of memory

from a seed  
is

through movement

no pitiable core,

care is toward  
not of  
a thing  
but for

## CONTRIBUTORS

ANDREA ABI-KARAM is an arab-american genderqueer punk poet-performer cyborg, writing on the art of killing bros, the intricacies of cyborg bodies, trauma & delayed healing. Their chapbook, *THE AFTERMATH* (Commune Editions, 2016), attempts to queer Fanon's vision of how poetry fails to inspire revolution. Simone White selected their second assemblage, *Villainy* for forthcoming publication with Les Figue. They toured with Sister Spit March 2018 & are hype to live in New York. *EXTRATRANSMISSION* [Kelsey Street Press, 2019] is their first book.

JOHN BARRINGTON is a poet from Western New York, now living in New York City. Much of his work concerns the subconscious image and process of the rural queer. His practice includes multimedia performance and music. John performs as one third of the improvisational collective Cleo. His work has appeared in *8 Poems*. Instagram: @110aberdeen

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STEPHANIE CHANG is a sixteen

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CHIWAN CHOI is the author of 3 collections of poetry, *The Flood* (Tia Chucha Press, 2010), *Abductions* (Writ Large Press, 2012), and *The Yellow House* (CCM, 2017). He wrote, presented, and destroyed the novel *Ghostmaker* throughout the course of 2015. Chiwan is a partner at Writ Large Press and a member of The Accomplices.

MEREDITH CLARK is a poet and writer whose work has received *Black Warrior Review's* nonfiction prize and been published in *Poetry Northwest*, *Phoebe*, *Gigantic Sequins*, and *The Dusie Kollektiv*. These days, she writes about trees, bodies, time, and the uncategorizable. She is at work on her second book.

CODY-ROSE CLEVIDENCE is the author of *BEAST FEAST*, and *Flung/Throne*, both out from Ahsahta Press, and the chapbook *Perverse, All Monstrous*, from Nion Editions. They live in the Arkansas Ozarks with their new puppy, Birdie.

SOPHIA DAHLIN is back in Oakland, still. She holds poetry workshops at E.M. Wolfman Books, and sometimes in the "bike room" of her cooperative

house. Recent work can be found in *Elderly*, *Fence*, and the Poetry Foundation's *PoetryNow* series. With Jacob Kahn, she edits the chapbook press Eyelet.

ANGEL DOMINGUEZ is a Latinx poet and artist of Yucatec Mayan descent, born in Hollywood, and raised in Van Nuys, CA by his immigrant family. He's the author of *Desgraciado* (Econo Textual Objects, 2017), and *Black Lavender Milk* (Timeless Infinite Light, 2015). His work can be found in *Brooklyn Magazine*, *Dreginald*, *Entropy*, *Queen Mobs*, *The Tiny*, *The Wanderer*, and elsewhere in print or on the internet. He currently teaches at CSUMB as a lecturer with the School of Humanities and Communication's Creative Writing and Social Action concentration. He's currently working on a book of poems, as well as the follow-up to *Black Lavender Milk*, *Rose Sun Water* forthcoming from The Operating System, in 2020.

MELISSA ELEFATHERION is a writer, librarian, and a visual artist. Born and raised in Brooklyn, she is the author of *field guide to autobiography* (The Operating System, 2018), & *six chapbooks: huminsect* (dancing girl press, 2013), *prism maps* (Dusie, 2014), *Pigtail Duty* (dancing girl press, 2015), *the leaves the leaves* (poems-for-all, 2017), *green glass asterisms* (poems-for-all, 2017) & *little ditch* (above/ground press, 2018). Her work has been widely published, and has appeared in over eighty literary journals and anthologies. Melissa now lives in Mendocino County where she manages the Ukiah Library, teaches creative writing, & curates the LOBA Reading Series. Recent work

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BERNARD FERGUSON (he/him) is a Bahamian immigrant poet, an MFA candidate at NYU, a Writers in the Public Schools fellow, and an Assistant Editor at *Washington Square Review*. He's the winner of the 2019 Nâzim Hikmet Poetry Prize, a 2019 *Adroit Journal* Gregory Djanikian Scholarship, and has had work published or forthcoming in *The Common*, *SLICE Magazine*, *Pinwheel*, *Winter Tangerine*, and the *Best New Poets 2017* anthology, among others. He hopes you tell him about your wonder.

NICK HOFF is a poet, translator, and bookseller. His first book of poetry, *Some Ones*, was published by Tuumba Press in 2015. He has translated the work of Friedrich Hölderlin in *Odes and Elegies* (Wesleyan University Press, 2008), and, in collaboration with Andrew Joron, Michael Donhauser's *Of Things* (Burning Deck Press, 2016). Hoff makes his living as an independent bookseller in San Francisco and Durham, North Carolina.

NATALIE HOMER is the author of the chapbook *Attic of the Skull* (dancing girl press, 2018). Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *The Cincinnati Review*, *Meridian*, *The Journal*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *the minnesota review*, *The Pinch*, *Blue Earth Review*, *The Lascaux Review*, and others. She earned an MFA from West Virginia University and lives in southwestern Pennsylvania.

VALERIE HSIUNG is the author of three full-length poetry collections:

*efg* (Action Books, 2016), *incantation inarticulate* (O Balthazar Press, 2013), and *under your face* (OBP, 2013). Individual poems can be found or are forthcoming in dozens of publications, including *The Nation*, *The Believer*, *PEN Poetry Series*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Sonora Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Pinwheel*, and beyond. A two-time Pushcart Prize nominee and the winner of *Bayou Magazine's* 2019 Kay Murphy Poetry Prize, she has performed her work at Treefort Music Festival, DC Arts Center, Common Area Maintenance, and Casa Libre en la Solana. Born and raised in Ohio, Hsiung is now based out of New York.

NATHALIE KHANKAN teaches Arabic language and literature at UC Berkeley. From Copenhagen via Damascus and Ramallah, she currently lives in San Francisco. These poems are from a recently completed manuscript | *quiet orient riot* |.

STACY KIDD is the author of two chapbooks: *A man in a boat in the summer* (Beard of Bees Press) and *About Birds* (Dancing Girl Press). Her work has appeared in journals including *Colorado Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Interim*, and *Phoebe*, among others. She lives and writes in Oklahoma.

A. D. LAUREN-ABUNASSAR is an Arab-American writer who resides in Iowa City, IA. Her work has appeared in *The Moth*, *Zone 3*, *Spires*, *Comstock Review*, *The Apeiron Review*, *Zeniada*, and elsewhere. She was the recipient of the 2017 Zone 3 Annual Poetry award, an Academy of American Poets award honorable mention, and was a 2017 fellow at the Bucknell Seminar

for Young Poets. She is currently pursuing her M.F.A at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

CHEN LI lives in Hualien, Taiwan. An author of fifteen poetry books, he is a recipient of Taiwan's National Award for Literature and the Arts, the Taiwan Literature Award, and other literary prizes. Chen Li is a prolific essayist and translator. He has translated, in collaboration with his wife Chang Fending, the works of Carol Ann Duffy, Robert Hass, Seamus Heaney, Brenda Hillman, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Sylvia Plath, Wisława Szymborska, and other poets into Chinese.

ADITI MACHADO is the author of *Some Beheadings*, which received of the Believer Poetry Award, and several chapbooks among which *Prologue|Emporium* is the most recent. She has translated Farid Tali's *Prosopopeia* into English. Her writing appears in journals like *Lana Turner*, *The Rumpus*, *Western Humanities Review*, and *Jacket2*. She works as the Visiting Poet-in-Residence at Washington University in Saint Louis. She has published several chapbooks, among which *Prologue|Emporium* is the most recent. She works as the Visiting Poet-in-Residence at Washington University in Saint Louis.

AURA MARU (pen name of Aurelia Cojocaru) is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley, where she is also pursuing an MA in English with a Creative Emphasis. Born in the Republic of Moldova, she writes in Romanian and English. Her book of poetry in Romanian, entitled *Du-te free*, was recognized by Moldova's National Library as one of the ten most

read books for the year 2015. The book has also won Moldova's Writers' Union Prize for Debut as well as the Government's Youth Prize, and was a finalist for Romania's Young Writer Award.

SAWAKO NAKAYASU is an artist working with language, performance, and translation. Her books include *The Ants* (Les Figues, 2014), and *Costume en Face* (a translation of Tatsumi Hijikata's butoh dance notations). She teaches at Brown University.

SARA NICHOLSON is the author of *What the Lyric Is* and *The Living Method*, both from the Song Cave. She lives in Arkansas.

SARAH PASSINO's work has appeared in *DIAGRAM*, *Poetry Daily*, and *Boston Review's* collection *What Nature and The Brooklyn Rail*. She has poems forthcoming from *Capital* and *Ritual*, a collaborative anthology by Wendy's Subway and the Bard Graduate Center. She received the Rachel Wetzsteon Poetry Prize from the 92nd Street Y and was a 2018 Poets House Fellow.

Raised in the shadow of Houston refineries, EMILY PINKERTON currently lives and writes in the San Francisco Bay Area. She holds an MFA from San Francisco State University, and her writing has previously appeared or is forthcoming in *ZYZZYVA*, *Juked*, *BlazeVOX*, and *Mirage #4/Period[ical]*, among others. Emily is the author of three chapbooks: *Natural Disasters* (Hermeneutic Chaos Press, 2016), *Bloom* (Alley Cat Press, July 2018) and *Adaptations* (Nomadic Press, forthcoming September 2018). She

is currently a 2017-2018 Writer in Residence at Alley Cat Books in San Francisco. More of Emily's publications can be found at thisisemilypinkerton.tumblr.com, and she tweets as @neongolden. Her favorite color is fog.

NOAH ROSS is an East Bay bookseller, the author of *SWELL* (Otis Books / Seismicity Editions, 2019) and *ACTIVE RECEPTION / SODOMETERS* (Nightboat Books, 2021), and co-edits *baest: a journal of queer forms & affects*.

KARTHIK SETHURAMAN is an Indian-American living in San Francisco. His works have appeared or are forthcoming in *SPARKLE & BLINK*, *Kestrel*, *Hematopoiesis*, and *New Southerner*, among others. Recently, he was shortlisted for Glass Poetry's 2019 Chapbook series. Along with English language poetry, he spends time reading and translating poems from the Tamil diaspora.

BRENDA SHAUGHNESSY is the author of five collections of poetry, including the forthcoming *The Octopus Museum* (Knopf.) Her other books are *Our Andromeda*, *So Much Synth*, *Human Dark with Sugar*, and *Interior with Sudden Joy*. She teaches at Rutgers University-Newark and lives in Verona, NJ.

BRANDON SHIMODA's most recent books are *The Grave on the Wall* (an ancestral memoir, City Lights, 2019) and *The Desert* (poetry and prose, The Song Cave, 2018). He lives in the desert, where he is currently writing (more often falling sideways through the desire to write) a book about the ruins

of Japanese American incarceration.

RAE WINKELSTEIN is a writer and editor. Other poems have been published in *Colorado Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Lana Turner*, *CutBank*, *Caketrain*, *Gasher*, and *Strange Cage*.

ELAINE WONG lives in San Antonio, Texas. She translates poetry and fiction from Taiwan. Her translation of Chen Li was given an Honorable Mention by the 2018 Cliff Becker Book Prize in Translation. She is also a part-time linguistics lecturer.

JULES WOOD is a queer femme poet, teacher, and burlesque performer studying at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. She currently serves as the poetry editor of *Storyscape Journal*. Her poems can be found in *Lana Turner* and *Nat. Brut*, among other publications.

CANDICE WUEHLE is the author of the full-length collection *BOUND* (Inside the Castle Press, August 2018) and the chapbooks *VIBE CHECK* (Garden-door Press, 2017), *EARTH\*AIR\*FIRE\*WATER\*ETHER* (Grey Books Press, 2015) and *curse words: a guide in 19 steps for aspiring transmographs*, (Dancing Girl Press, 2014). Poems from her collection, *DEATH INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, appear in *Best American Experimental Writing 2020*, *Black Warrior Review*, *The Bennington Review*, and *The New Delta Review*. She is originally from Iowa City, Iowa and is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Interdisciplinary artist and educator AVERY R. YOUNG is a 3Arts Awardee and one of four executives for The

Floating Museum. His poetry and prose are featured in several anthologies and periodicals including *The BreakBeat Poets*, *Poetry Magazine* and photographer Cecil McDonald Jr's *In The Company of Black*. He is the featured vocalist on flouist Nicole Mitchell's *Mandorla Awakening* (FPE Records) and is currently touring with her Black Earth Ensemble and his funk/soul band de deacon board. Young's first collection of poetry is *neckbone: visual verses* (Northwestern University Press), and has recorded the accompanying soundtrack *tubman* (FPE Records).

S. YARBERRY is a trans poet and writer. Their poetry has appeared in, or is forthcoming in *Tin House*, *Indiana Review*, *The Offing*, *jubilat*, *Nat Brut*, and others. Their other writings can be found in *Bomb Magazine* and *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*. S. is a MFA candidate in Poetry at Washington University in St. Louis and The Poetry Editor of *The Spectacle*. Social media handles: Twitter: @syarberry1 Instagram: @\_syarberry\_

#### COVER ARTIST

NICKI GREEN is a transdisciplinary artist living and making work in the Bay Area. Originally from New England, she completed her BFA in sculpture from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2009 and her MFA in Art Practice from the University of California, Berkeley in 2018. Her work focuses on craft processes, and her sculptures, ritual objects and various flat works explore topics of history preservation, conceptual ornamentation and aesthetics of otherness.