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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SARA NICHOLSON</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lines Heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Salmon and Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Wind, Rain, and Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>from</strong> Fragment of a Would-Be Sonnet Sequence, to Have Been Called “The Lost Art of”</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SARAH PASSINO</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>eleventh day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>twenty-fifth day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>forty-second day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CODY-ROSE CLEVIDENCE</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>WHAT THAT MOUTH DO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>YOU WOULDN'T OF GUESSED IT BUT TH LOTUS IS STILL BLOOMING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRANDON SHIMODA</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>NEW YEARS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>DEATH OF THE FLOWER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATALIE HOMER</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Wild Tonic in the Rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAE WINKELSTEIN</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>pink breakable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>BOTRO::</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Fairytale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JULES WOOD</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>No One House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **BRENDA SHAUGHNESSY**      | 41   | Identity & Community  
(There is no “I” in “Sea”)                                      |
|                             | 43   | Our Beloved Infinite Crapulence                                       |
|                             | 45   | Sel de la Terre, Sel du Mer                                           |
| **CANDICE WUEHLE**          | 46   | embalm                                                                |
|                             | 47   | then at one point i did not need // to translate the notes // they went directly to my hands |
| **ELAINE WONG**             | 48   | Three Poems by Chen Li                                               |
| **EMILY PINKERTON**         | 61   | [eroded soil]                                                         |
| **SARAH PASSINO**           | 62   | [construction site]                                                   |
|                             | 63   | [idling car]                                                          |
|                             | 64   | [late-afternoon haze]                                                 |
| **MELISSA ELEFTHERION**     | 66   | Hydra in Her Own Dust                                                 |
| **SAWAKO NAKAYASU**         | 69   | TEN MASTURBATING GIRLS UTOPIA                                         |
| **JOHN BARRINGTON**         | 70   | GENERATION STENT                                                      |
|                             | 71   | ARC SWEETNESS                                                         |
| **ADITI MACHADO**           | 72   | from EPISODE TO THE EFFICIANCE                                        |
| **NATALIE HOMER**           | 76   | eargraf & receipt(s)                                                 |
| **AVERY R. YOUNG**          | 77   | context                                                              |
|                             | 79   | blkground(d) singer’s lyric sheet | lady day on soul-train |
| **JOHN BARRINGTON**         | 80   | blkground(d) lyric-sheet &/or chutch fan base | get to know a nina simone song |
| **VALERIE HSIUNG**          | 81   | from Tell Me How It Makes You Feel                                   |
|                             | 82   | [Whatever happens at a | must and be ] |
|                             | 85   | [Mountain of my youth...]                                             |
| **RAE WINKELSTEIN**         | 88   | MEN SIT ON THE WALL & WOMEN HANG OVER IT                             |
| **-Julian Talamantez Broklaski** | 91   | my voice was too obvious                                              |
| **ANDREA ABI-KARAM**        | 93   | limit/less                                                            |


| 96  | STACY KIDD                  | (b) ——•••                                      |
| 97  |                           | (c) ——•                                        |
| 98  | SOPHIA DAHLIN              | 99 Poem A Day                                |
| 100 |                           | I’ll Reciprocate Ur                           |
|     |                           | Alterity If U Reciprocate                     |
|     |                           | My Alterity                                  |
| 101 |                           | Poem About Seedless                          |
|     |                           | tomatoes Aren’t Fruit                        |
| 102 | JESSICA LASER              | 103 Reporter                                 |
| 103 |                           | Identification                               |
| 104 |                           | Uniform                                     |
| 105 |                           | Plumber                                     |
| 106 | S. YARBERRY                | 107 Letter                                   |
| 108 |                           | Anteroom                                    |
| 110 |                           | Graphic                                     |
| 111 | NOAH ROSS                  | 112 from THE MAGIC CHAMBER                   |
| 113 | CHIWAN CHOI                | 114 from My Name is Wolf                     |
| 115 | MEREDITH CLARK             | 116 constellation seen over the shoulder      |
| 116 | KARTHIK SETHURAMAN         | 117 Scavanger, carry me home                 |
| 117 |                           | Sand                                        |
| 118 | BERNARD FERGUSON           | 119 death is a currency                      |
| 119 | STEPHANIE CHANG            | 120 Air Quality May Vary                     |
| 120 | ANGEL DOMINGUE             | 121 hands.                                  |
| 121 |                           | 122 4 the Fam (my Siblings)                   |
| 122 |                           | 123 #145                                    |
| 123 | NATHALIE KHANKAN           | 124 from | quiet orient riot | the bread is flat |
| 124 |                           |                                             |
| 125 |                           | quiet orient riot                            |
| 126 |                           | the surface i’m gripping                     |
| 127 |                           | that summer wasn’t a pleasant person         |
| 128 |                           | they said it was morning                     |
| 129 | AURA MARU                  | from your marx/ my marx                      |
| 130 |                           | my grandfather/ my grandfather               |
| 131 |                           | facts                                       |
| 132 | A.D. LAUREN-ABUNASSAR      | 133 post-soviet pastoral                     |
| 133 |                           | Harvest Wreckage                            |
| 134 |                           | Instructions for Breaking Wreckage           |
| 135 | NICK HOFF                  | 136 [grasses on dry land]                    |
| 136 |                           | In memoriam                                 |
| 137 |                           |                                             |
| 138 |                           |                                             |
| 139 |                           |                                             |
|     |                           |                                             |
|     |                           |                                             |
|     |                           |                                             |
|     |                           |                                             |
|     |                           |                                             |
|     |                           |                                             |
|     | CONTRIBUTORS              |                                             |
| 139 |                           |                                             |
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

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. Adonais
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
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

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

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
I don’t want to bathe in th cold water—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

hear me u of th north wind cold first frost flower each soft blown breath, bow down there is only permission 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 muster, 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 ||
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 citruses 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

+
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
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 waveses

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

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 & startled  
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.

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 sicced 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.

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.” “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. Craterles s
planet, unnerved body
unriven as the model's cheek. i
'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.
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 Netherlandsish 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
```
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 windmill revolving its cool on the horizon,
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?
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 stir 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,
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.
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 Zizang (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.

Hydra in Her Own Dust

Tectonic the winds to tuck neatly fur is field;
Hind feathered females hide the sun, yield muscle,
measure larvae the subatomic;

Weather determines aperture
The volatile; Deciduous nacreous.

Rubbing chrysalis wiped intersections
predaceous bug oops spines milk.

Why now sea dragons under porphyry and bees a skinned grey gravity

Skins pull, the field a radiolaria.
Integument

Fluorescent wounds a scab against the pseudopath.

Flammable mouth echolocates the rasp
Fur species in lust gaps

The crystals were wet skeleton music
Heliopause a magnet for larvae.
The lack.

Pull the lever, diatoms
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.

SAWAKO NAKAYASU

TEN MASTURBATING GIRLS UTOPIA

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, 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 swallow, 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.
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.

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 EFFICIENCY

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 renascent. 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, systematically 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.
context

after recording what would be songs to be considered for [tubman.] record, the engineer made a rough mix based on a set of [eargrafs] 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 [eargrafs] & [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 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. 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!
VALERIE HSIUNG

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
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 districters and our

* 

letters

* 

to the cabaret law and letters

* 


to the pharmaceutical companies.

* 

Whatever -s on the pendulum in the
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 out loud.
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—

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
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 didn’t
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 wasn’t ceviche wits cubes of potato filler
tacos that weren’t 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
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 plesantly
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
whutdooit
record do skip
along the needle of my mind
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.
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
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.

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.
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.

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.
Letter

From somewhere that is so deep into the land the impression is like a valley,
is like a river bed 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.
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.

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.

The skin of your eyes like lored glass. Nothing else, but blue.

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.
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.
There is nothing normal about this.
We hold each other tightly—until we do not know what we are holding.

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...

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...

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...

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...

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, till 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
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.
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

my mother
  carries us
  at intervals
  grain by grain
  is a statement
  of fact

in her
  shoulders
  I can’t see
  spill from
  grain by grain

her pains
  her back
  reconstitute
  each moment
  piece together

she walks
  her body
  I can’t see
  her likeness

meticulously
  are we what
  small — pieces
  I am here

I collect
  she wants?
  we are
  we move

I rematerialize
  offerings
  to God
  in decades

I can’t pick up
  they are offerings
  we don’t shrink

I can’t see
  they are offerings
  we rematerialize

sand

my mother
  carries us
  at intervals
  grain by grain
  is a statement
  of fact

in her
  shoulders
  I can’t see
  spill from
  grain by grain

her pains
  her back
  reconstitute
  each moment
  piece together

she walks
  her body
  I can’t see
  her likeness

meticulously
  are we what
  small — pieces
  I am here

I collect
  she wants?
  we are
  we move

I rematerialize
  offerings
  to God
  in decades

I can’t pick up
  they are offerings
  we don’t shrink

sand
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?

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

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.
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 |

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, I 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.

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 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.

1 (Rus.) Acronym for “Chief Administration for Corrective Labor Camps.”
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.

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 Gríbova is present, absent, present, absent.

tătunea (ta-tóo-ńja) 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.


mămunea and tătunea 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. litany
. 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
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
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 Figues. They toured with Sister Spit March 2018 & are hype to live in New York. EXTRATRANSMISSION [Kelsey Street Press, 2010] 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.

JULIAN TALAMANTEZ BROLSKII is a poet and country singer. He is the author of Of Mongrelitude (Wave Books, 2017), Advice for Lovers (City Lights 2012), Gowanus Atropolis (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011), and coeditor of NO GENDER: Reflections on the Life & Work of Kari Edwards, as well as lead singer and rhythm guitarist for the Brooklyn-based Juan & the Pines and Oakland-based The Western Skyline. Julian maintains a blog of handwritten poems here: https://julianspoems.tumblr.com/

STEPHANIE CHANG is a sixteen year-old poet from Canada. Her work appears or is forthcoming in The Adroit Journal, Kenyon Review, Glass: A Journal of Poetry, and Cosmonauts Avenue. She has been recognized by the Jessamy Sturberg Poetry Prize, National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, and was a runner-up for the Patricia Grodd Poetry Prize. Currently, she writes for Her Culture's digital magazine.

CHI Wan CHOI is the author of 3 collections of poetry, The Flood (Tia Chuchua Press, 2010), Abductions (Wit 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 Wit 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 unategorizable. 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 Mob’s, 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 Eftftheriou 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 is available at www.apoetlibrarian.wordpress.com.

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 Názim Hikmet Poetry Prize, a 2019 Adroit Journal Gregory Djianikian 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:
teaches Arabic and is an East Bay bookseller, the author of nine books, 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, Spikes, 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 Feng-ling, the works of Carol Ann Duffy, Robert Hass, Seamus Heaney, Brenda Hillman, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Sylvia Plath, Wislawa 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 Prologe/ Emporium is the most recent. She has translated Farid Tali’s Prosopopoia into English. Her writing appears in journals like Lana Turner, The Kumpus, Western Humanities Review, and Jacketz. She works as the Visiting Poet-in-Residence at Washington University in Saint Louis. She has published several chapbooks, among which Prologe/ 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 Arts (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 Wetzstein 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 {Periodical}, 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 thisismyinkert.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.


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.