

...k, some ...
...nt limit

to re
a lib
burn



continues in good color
Full sun is a necessity

ISSUE 1 / SEPTEMBER 2022
CUTBOW QUARTERLY



...ome comita,

and every for-
...ure.



ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2022



Copyright © *Cutbow Quarterly*

Issue 1, September 2022

@CutbowQ

www.cutbowquarterly.com

Layout by Charles Perseus D'Aniello

Edited by Arden Hunter

Front and back cover art by Morphic Rooms

All rights reserved by the authors of each piece.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the very first issue of Cutbow Quarterly! Our tagline is, 'the home of the hybrid', so you can expect to see and read a lot of wonderful work that combines two or more disciplines/genres in order to make something new. All of the work includes language in some form, but it might be integrated with a digital painting, or a sculpture, or be a poem-in-a-game's clothing.

I must thank all the experimental presses and magazines that have come before Cutbow: absolute trailblazers of thought and expression, without them no-one would know that there was any interest in hybrid work, and Cutbow would not exist.

I named the magazine Cutbow because it's the name of a hybrid fish - a trout, to be exact. A hybrid between the Rainbow and Cutthroat trout, Cutbows occur only where the two fish have been artificially introduced. No two of these fish are alike, with varying stripes, dots and other patterns that are impossible to predict - much as it was impossible for me to predict the types of hybrids our contributors would submit.

Thank you also to all our submitters - if you weren't out there trying new things, throwing around colour, carving out words wherever they aren't 'supposed' to be - the world would be a much duller and boring place. Thank you for sharing the bright light of your ingenuity.



Arden Hunter

ARDEN HUNTER
FOUNDER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CONTENTS

EXCESS AFFECT, <i>MORPHIC ROOMS</i>	1
CURRICULUM VITAE OF A MEMORY TIME BOMB, <i>NIKKI DUDLEY</i>	2
FOUR & THREE QUARTERS (A COLORING BOOK MICRO-MEMOIR), ADRIAN DALLAS FRANDLE.....	3
WAVESET ANGEL - ONCOMING BLUE, <i>HALEY JENKINS</i>	5
A NICE BLEND, <i>ASTRID VALLET</i>	6
TO DOMINO MEANS TO PLAY THE LAST TILE IN YOUR HAND, AMY BARNES.....	8
LIST OF THINGS TO MAKE A LIST OF, <i>BETH MULCAHY</i>	10
RED SEEDS, <i>CHANLEE LUU</i>	13
FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: A MALADAPTIVE ROMANCE, <i>E.M. LARK</i> ..	14
NOTHING GOLD, <i>JESICA DAVIS</i>	17
AUTHOR BIO, <i>JARED POVANDA</i>	25
SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO, JOHN PRUITT	26
FAVORS [v.1.0], <i>NAT RAUM</i>	36
.....	38
REPORT FRAGMENT (PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT), <i>JO CLARK</i>	

CONTENTS

SOMETIMES THE RAREST BEAUTY IS HIDDEN FROM THE NAKED EYE, <i>JP RELPH</i>	42
YOUR FORTUNES, <i>LORI SAMBOL BRODY</i>	45
BLOOD IN CONSTELLATIONS, <i>LOUISE MATHER</i>	47
DUST IN THE GROOVES OF OLD RECORDS, <i>MATTHEW MCGUIRK</i>	48
CALLING FORTH A TRIPTYCH, <i>ROBERT FREDE KENTER</i>	51
THE GOD TRACKER, <i>MAX GILLETTE</i>	55
[MADLIBS: How Does Cosmo Save You?], <i>RACHAEL CROSBIE</i>	56
BALLOON BRAIN, <i>MELISSA SAGGERER</i>	57
WILD ELDERBERRY, <i>SARAH-JANE CROWSON</i>	59
ELLEN FELT (AN ERASURE), <i>SYLVIA SANTIAGO</i>	60
MASH, <i>SHANNON FROST GREENSTEIN</i>	61
OPERATION, <i>JP SEABRIGHT</i>	63
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	65

EXCESS AFFECT

Morphic Rooms



A peeling, layered piece of visual poetry built on a base of aged paper in a variety of warm tones. Thin, fragmented text emerges from the center of the work, obscured and largely illegible. Shocks of green, blue, yellow and orange are balanced with pools of black and dark grey spreading across the piece. Smaller portions of distorted, serified text frame parts of the perimeter, with ghostly bold outlines of block lettering clustered in the top left of the piece.

MUM, P/T DOCTOR, TEACHER, PROTECTOR, CHEF, CLEANER, GUARDIAN, FIXER OF THINGS

Address: Where we are, as long as I remember

Number: 27, 21, 15, 08

Social media: One day, I will look at you and not know your face

OBJECTIVES

And it's how pink you were when you came out of me the way you looked up keep you alive recognised me how soft you felt instantly breathing the way I checked the world

EDUCATION

trying to stay awake will I remember your first word how you sank into my chest I cried at the midwives' appointment not ready trying to soothe you when I got infected you trusted me and the sutures were all wrong you fell into my arms, your eyes lit up at things when you reached out for my hand

EXPERIENCE

the first food you spat out what you wanted to be when you were five words you couldn't pronounce when you called me boring I slept on your floor the injuries and the accident forms the nights you called for me from the room next door having contractions by your bed to make you feel less alone wanting to scream you hugged me so tight I was afraid to let you go but did anyway smiling

SKILLS

you made friends and didn't want me you made me things at school and I knew you did you began to sound out words and you learned when you lay your head on my lap without worrying who was watching you shouted that you loved me in a street filled with people what if I forget what if my brain degrades what if I am like her will I lose every moment how does it feel to lose the name I gave you I heard your first breath the sutures remember pulling me together but memories slip apart on the ice I soared don't look down don't let go

CURRICULUM VITAE OF A MEMORY TIME BOMB

Nikki Dudley

FOUR & THREE QUARTERS

3

FOUR & THREE QUARTERS

Adrian Dallas Frandle

"Fatter hands now at thirty-nine, which have been compared to turkey sausages, but aren't those flat? Look here: ring finger is WIDER at the band (two times, that is). This one will stick. Unlike the tragically brief tenure of the tip of this finger, sacrificed one Easter morn to the hinge of the doorway I was scaling like Spiderman when my brother snuck up behind and slammed it with a crash and I jumped back, severing the top. Took it in a mini Ziploc baggy of ice on the car trip to the doctor to try and stitch it back on. But they couldn't reattach it; the little piece of me left cold on the dashboard. It calls out from the threshold where we separated on the wrong holiday. It was no Thanksgiving. (I forgive you, too)"

WAVESET ANGEL - ONCOMING BLUE

Haley Jenkins

A blue suited figure with six arms, two holding a neck that isn't there, one covers the heart, two clutching out in pain, one demurely shielding their front. Black, stretched words burst out from where the neck and head should be. Ripples echo in front of the blue body. Memories play like flickering old video tapes behind. Words in Powershell blue and white line the right hand side. You get the sense this angel-figure is panicking, that something inside is ready to burst out.



It starts with a high whine, a steady unheard scream

a blend of whatever constructs and corrupts, a pinch of

wastelands edgelands between the

HOUSING

tiny tiny alarm circles in a

dreamspace

folie à plusieurs, someone

forgotten

someone fusing the ash-blade taming

can we save taming of genesis

them or is it just

a pixelated portrait

A NICE BLEND

Astrid Vallet

I set down the huge suitcase. I expect a pang, I expect tightness in my chest. There's only the ache of carrying all this luggage up three flights of stairs. Sadness is standing me up. I ask for a cup of coffee.

I wanna tell dad all about my Elsewhere, and some things come out, in lovely bits of confusion, little by little, here and there. Other things I keep, selfishly. I hoard. I think he knows, I think he doesn't mind. He tells me about Here. We share food and coffee, but mostly coffee.

I once read that the reason some people go to bed late is because they don't want today to end and tomorrow to begin. In many ways, that applies to me, but it doesn't feel like I'm clinging onto anything in this moment. Our conversation stretches into the night and today stretches too, and that's fine by me. My body's tired, but I don't have to worry about getting up early tomorrow. The virus makes my world feel so small. It's cozy.

I don't unpack. I hate unpacking. Why would I pull all these things out, when I can just dig around and find what I need? Sometimes I look at them. The backpack, the large grocery bag, the cabin suitcase, the 20kg checked baggage. I fit almost one year of my life in just these, I squeezed so much of myself into them, I'm all snug in so little space.

I take many pictures of the sky – I'm like a tourist in my own home. My Elsewhere is just across this very sea, but I don't think it has much to do with it. I hold onto this beauty because there's nothing painful about it. I can look at the horizon and my heart swells, it's like I'm expanding, it's like stretching in the morning, but for the soul. It's comfy.

Maybe I'm just not processing it. I know I made the right decision, though. I explain it to dad many times, just to be sure. He agrees, all those times.

My own language doesn't come as easy. I have to think more to say less, it's clumsy. Some mistakes, I like to dissect. I find that 'home' needs just a bit more context. I find that 'I' needs just a bit more context, too; that I don't like what others come up with for me, but I don't come up with much, either. It's okay, it's not urgent. If the world's on pause, I get to be.

A NICE BLEND

There are essays, stories, poems to write. In many ways, Elsewhere is Here, on screens and faces behind screens. I think about them, I think about all the goodbyes the virus spared me. 'Confusing' means 'not over'.

I drink coffee, a lot of coffee, too much coffee. That's the constant. I'll be the one to make it a personality trait. Coffee gets me to do stuff, coffee gets me to be. Don't get me wrong, I cry. I cry about the nooks and crannies of my Elsewhere I didn't get to, the ones I didn't treasure the way I treasure the sky that's right out my window. I cry about the hugs I didn't give, I cry about she who I don't think could've loved me, I shared her Here only temporarily. I cry and I fall asleep just a little bit more at peace. I bring fond memories and regrets along with me. My Elsewhere is an open parenthesis.

It's dawn. I guess I just didn't get sleepy. The night went by so quickly. I watched dusk, I blinked, and now I get to watch the sky mirroring itself. I don't take pictures. Maybe a video would do, but my hands were never that steady. I walk around the apartment aimlessly, still not sleepy. Noticing—

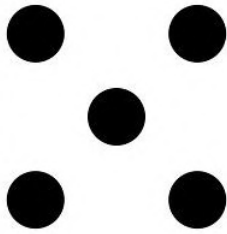
The notebook and the collage of tickets, cards, ideas in it. The pancakes dad made because I was mad at him. The scented candle I picked. The jar of jam I drink in. The socks I discarded and didn't bother to tidy. The cushions I arranged very specifically to watch that one movie. The strands of hair I cut myself and didn't sweep thoroughly.

There's no caffeine in my veins, there are bits of me here, scattered, messy. Changing, shifting, blending Elsewhere and Here. This small chaos, it's Home, it's me.

TO DOMINO MEANS TO PLAY THE LAST TILE IN YOUR HAND

Amy Barnes

To domino
means to play
the last tile in
your hand



The grandmothers are
great-grandmothers by
sixty. Each generation,
twenty years old and
married when they
have their first child.
Less than a year later,
another baby.
In labor,

they wear pearls and
silence. Cul-de-sacs of
cookie cutter row
houses
welcome
them home.
White clapboard siding
and black doors play
nicely with babies in

The bookend
grandfathers hold
matching Queen Mary
handbags, black with
gold clasps and snap.
The men don't speak.
When two blue-haired
bird women emerge
from the beauty shop

with calligraphed
department store bags,
the two white-haired
men stand in unison.

Their marriage vows to
have and hold are
printed on their spines
as reminders.

The grandmothers
who had sex twice
never visited
gynecologists have
their way with
nursing home men
who don't hold

courses. The
not-husbands
hold the
grandmothers'
breasts, withered
apples or oranges.

The grandmothers
sit stark naked
next to each other
on stark naked
hospital beds.
The great-
grandmothers
hover next to
daughter
cousins, rowed tin
coordinated denim
beach family
pinaigt outfits.

The daughters
haven't decided if
they'll
be wives or
mothers or live on
the beach

with the heron sk
dots and boys
with tattoo dots
on their faces.

The grandmothers
whisper that babies
and pearls and babies
named Pearl are good
things, things to have
and to hold.

The daughters only hear
the clicks
and the clacks
of the camera.

TO DOMINO MEANS TO PLAY THE LAST TILE IN YOUR HAND

Text and Description:

Eight domino pieces arranged in two rows of four, with text embedded into each piece. The text in each domino piece reads the following:

- 1. To domino means to play the last tile in your hand*
- 2. The grandmothers are great-grandmothers by age sixty. Each generation, twenty years old and married when they have their first child. Less than a year later, another baby. In labor, they wear pearls and silence. Cul-de-sacs of cookie cutter row houses welcome them home. White clapboard siding and black doors play nicely with babies in strollers.*
- 3. The bookend grandfathers hold matching Queen Mary handbags, black with gold clasps that snap. The men don't speak. When two blue-haired bird women emerge from the beauty shop with calligraphed department store bags, the two white-haired men stand in unison. Their marriage vows to have and hold are printed on their spines as reminders.*
- 4. The grandmothers who had sex exactly twice and never visited a gynecologist have their way with nursing home stranger men that don't hold their purses. The not-husbands only hold the grandmothers' breasts like they're made of withered apples or oranges.*
- 5. The grandmothers sit stark naked next to each other on stark naked hospital beds. The great-grandmothers hover next to daughter cousins, rowed together in coordinated white and denim beach family portrait outfits.*
- 6. The daughters haven't decided if they'll be wives or mothers or live on the beach with the heron sky dots and boys with tattoo dots on their faces.*
- 7. The grandmothers whisper that babies and pearls and babies named Pearl are good things, things to have and to hold.*
- 8. The daughters only hear the clicks and clacks of the camera.*

LIST OF THINGS TO MAKE A LIST OF

Beth Mulcahy

Make a list of
things that sound like thunder but are not
conversations to have
 hard conversations to have
 what makes conversations hard
 what makes conversations easy
things to do to get through a hard day
 songs that helps with getting through a hard day
people to tell about it
 what to tell them
people not to tell
ways to prevent it
how to describe it
how to tell people the truth
when to tell people the truth
things you have said
things you should not have said
things you should have said
things you should say
 to someone specific
 to anyone
 to no one

LIST OF THINGS TO MAKE A LIST OF

how to let go of retroactive anxieties
things you used to care about that you don't anymore
things you wish you cared more about
things that used to be different
examples of passive aggressive statements
examples of things that are too direct (harsh)
ways of beating around the bush
ways of cutting to the chase
how to calm yourself down
apologies you owe
things you can't forgive
things you can't forget
things you should forget
things that are your fault
things that are not your fault
the hardest things you've had to do
how to make things easier
 for self
 for others
things you can explain
things that you cannot explain
things you can't describe
things to write through
things that are private



LIST OF THINGS TO MAKE A LIST OF

people who love you

people who love you and also like you

things you have to offer

things to say to people you love

things to say about the weather

people you talk to every single day

people you don't know anymore

people you loved who are dead

ways to let things go

how to keep from having to let go

ways to pay attention

things to pay attention to

things to ignore

places to fly away to

ways to be where you are

RED SEEDS

AFTER VIET THANH NGUYEN

THE SYMPATHIZER

RED SEEDS

Chanlee Luu

An erasure poem of an excerpt from Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer*, titled *Red Seeds*:

"The sympathizer was critical of Western civilization, The Chinese invented gunpowder with underappreciated implications. A man gazing not engaging he was meditating, on the verb "to cleave," to cut apart to put together. A woman perfectly illustrated double meaning two entities one identity a slippery slope. the only kind of male women truly cared for, a well-stuffed billfold. they wanted, A woman reasonably insulted by a man whose eyes plunge."

Additionally, seven instances of the word, "cleavage," cut out, leaving blank white spaces, are laid over a silhouette of a man's face, yellow and translucent. Underneath is a cleaved pomegranate, red seeds spilling out.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: A MALADAPTIVE ROMANCE

E.M. Lark

Time to cast someone new -- maybe one, maybe two -
Who is unattainable to me somehow
Maybe we're just too different, or maybe we're secretly too alike.
Maybe the problem lies within seeing a *someone* as a resolution,
But self-awareness is nowhere in the writer's room.

I take what alludes me and wring it in my grasp,
Give them the starring role in every fantasy I can conjure up.
And what a *sight* we are together.
It's a labor of love and loss and fear for the *real thing* – so this is what comes next.

The lights flicker. The screen lights up and the show begins.

SHOT:

*the first time we were alone together, cozied in a cafe talking about art
and life and all the stupid things that make us both laugh uncontrollably.
we got side-eyed by the woman sitting next to us.
you couldn't take your
eyes
off
me.*

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: A MALADAPTIVE ROMANCE

TRANSITION:

or maybe the time we went ice skating in the park, got hot chocolate, and watched the snow fall. it nestled in your curls like kisses, and it clumped in mine like birds' nests - but you still called me beautiful.

(I cling that to my chest all the way to the new year.)

FADE TO BLACK, VOICE-OVER:

*"And when we realized we were in love,
with all the odds stacked against us,
oh i have never seen heartbreak like that before. yours broke so much like
mine."*

CUT TO:

*Against fate's tightly strung cords,
you kissed me in your apartment, and we spent the night wrapped in each
other, trying to fight off the consequences of morning's light—*

The reel starts to run out, flicker and burn for what can never be completed.
And I only see my empty eyes staring back.
(Cue a round of applause for all that is seen and unseen.)

People are cruel and unforgiving, we are one and the same.
Whether we cling too tight or push each other away,
We make ourselves monsters in all the wrong scenes.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: A MALADAPTIVE ROMANCE

People do not want me and my never-ending fight and flight,
And frankly, I do not want much of me either.

But with you, we can both be so much better.
We put each other's pieces back together– the story lives on, my love –
All's well that ends well, a bittersweet miracle of breathing living work.
For in these pages, on that screen, I see you for who you truly are.
and I love the abstract of you hidden in my details.

NOTHING GOLD

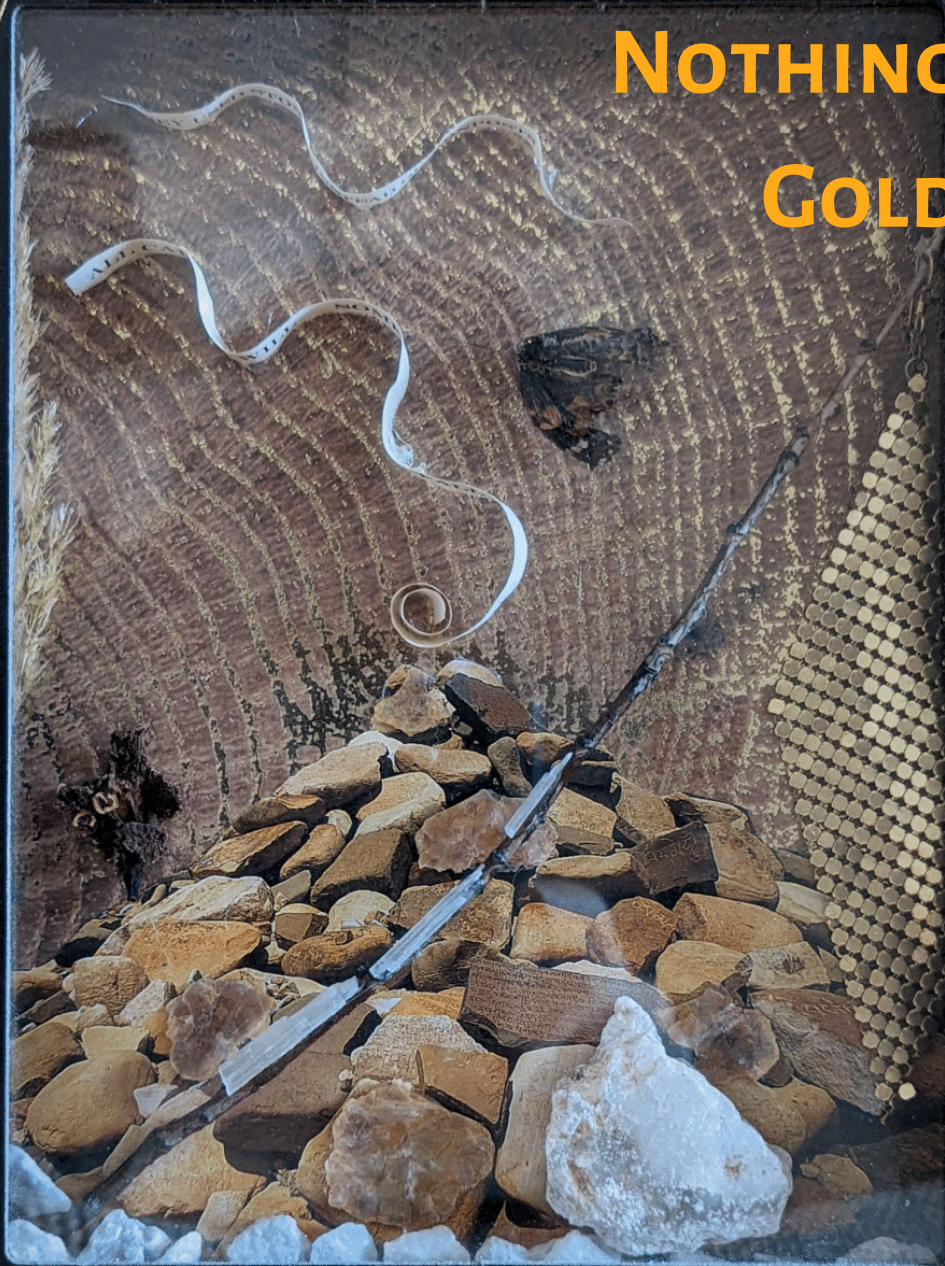
POEMBOX & ESSAY

Jesica Davis

6 3/4" X 9 1/2" X 1, 2017

**"THEY USED STONES
INSTEAD OF SIGNPOSTS**

**ALL CAIRNS WILL
SOMEDAY FALL"**





NOTHING GOLD

Jesica Davis

A glass-fronted black frame contains a background of collaged gold paper and photographic elements: textured tree rings and a pile of rocks. Two wavy strips of paper display the text, "They used stones instead of signposts / All cairns will someday fall." Other items in the box include a small stick with selenite shards glued onto it, one gold mesh earring, a dried butterfly, quartz, mica, a dried flower, and a dried wheat-like stalk. Outside the frame a bell hangs on a string, and the box is propped up on iron pyrite and a piece of quartz.

[]

The motivation behind this poembox: I need the satisfaction of – if not finishing a box in one night – then making major progress on it, quickly. That, at least, after too much previous lingering. This box feels faster, or less complicated than The Developing Box, which had twelve compartments and took six months. Faster from start to relative finish, or abandonment. Appropriate: The two-line poem I chose for this box is about how everything is temporary.

[]

The box's background is my first attempt at collaging, at least as an adult. Both source papers gold in tone. Gold, a color I have always loved and once considered painting my ceiling. Gold, a color, a shade, a symbol that for four years felt ruined, debased. I still love it but oh, those associations. Time to reclaim.

[]

The stickwand, which originated from testing how to attach selenite on twigs for the Transubstantiation Box, now appears to have found a home in the Nothing Gold Box. Did I just decide this new box's name? (Yes.)

[]

I want the papered words to rest on edge, like a Serra installation. Waves instead of folds seems the easiest way to keep words ballasted. I'm looking for *easy* right now.

[]

The LTR problem: We read English, the language in which these words are written, left to right. The direction the paper strips go is mandated by the angle of the stickwand, which can't face the other direction because you must see the selenite shards I glued on last winter. *Look*.

[]

It's the butterfly that comes next. Then I can add the stickwand. The butterfly, one of the wounded ones from my poem "In the Garden", flying into the words. Chasing them, I guess. Inhaling their death. A direction is set by the objects around which an object's path must go. A chain of events, non-linear but successive, iterative, the next item's placement dependent on the thing that came before it. A constant seek of balance. Recalibrate, again.

[]



[]

Today comes in patches, alternating between direct sun and heavy-enough clouds, but every time I have gone outside to spray things with sealant to preserve them

- (
- a butterfly carcass, or should I call it "specimen" since the Nothing Gold Box is technically a specimen box?
- a stalk piece of something close to wheat
- dried-out flowers
- a seed from Alena
-)

the light has been super bright.

Then disappears once I'm back inside.

[]

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

They used stones instead of signposts

all cairns will someday fall

[]

Of course I must age the paper, soak it in tea and time, steeped in palette and theme.

It's call Nothing Gold (Can Stay), the point is we have begun to decay.

[]

I thought I would go for English Breakfast tea, but have enough Constant Comment left to use. I like this pronouncement that *nothing lasts* to be unwinding, as if from a spool. Running out. That it should smell vaguely sweet, a little cozy, a little dangerous, like cinnamon.

[]

The tea staining helps in two ways: Besides making it less brightbright fresh white paper, the pulp itself is easier to mold when wet. Set it in a curl when it's still damp, like my hair, and when it dries it will retain shape.

A scroll. Ten of them, enough that one should work. Pre-emptive redundancy.

[]

The words are on the paper's underside. You have to get below the frame to read what it says. Perspective as humility, or something.

[]

I make these poemboxes because they force me to take action, make decisions. I can sit here all day all month all year until I die thinking about what lovely things I want to do with or put in them but none of it matters unless I begin, physically. Hands, get to it. An escape without going anywhere.

Pep talk: It doesn't need to be graceful or overwrought, just get it finished and learn something from the process that I can apply to the next one. I've never taken an art-making class. Just winging it.

NOTHING GOLD

[]

I don't like what superglue does to paper. Noted.

I have glued the scrolls. They're not perfect but I am moving forward anyway.

[]

I'm starting to take a more *trust the subconscious and this moment* view of box ingredients. If an item has recently come in to my life I ask whether it belongs in a poembox. How all the significant things, totems and talismans, trash and random stones appear right now: Find a way to situate. *Get to work.*

[]

So close.

I could be finished but I have yet to create a poembox without some component spilling over borders. Something must make its way outside the frame. A secret feather on the back.

A box by its nature has its own boundaries. I, by mine, have the need to break them.

Let's go.

[]



Ingredients:

- Specimen box from RAFT
- Gold tree ring paper
- Picture of rock pile (from Tibet book)
- Plain printer paper
- Constant Comment tea
- Butterfly (its death documented in my poem "In the Garden")
- Stickwand (twig with selenite)
- Seed from Alena
- Dried flower from tree in Ash Grove Park
- White stones from a terrarium a random person gave me on the street in my old neighborhood
- Dried wheat-like stalk
- Gold disco-style earring I wore at Burning Man that one time I went (2010)
- Quartz that I've had since childhood
- Iron pyrite
- Other quartz (from both my old Denver backyard in 2017 and collected from the Painted Desert under a full moon in 1996)
- Mica collected from the Red Centre Desert (near Uluru/Alice Springs, 1998)
- Tibetan bell from a string I bought at my college head shop some time in the late 90's
- Needle
- Gold thread
- Feather
- Hot glue gun glue, Elmer's glue, Superglue

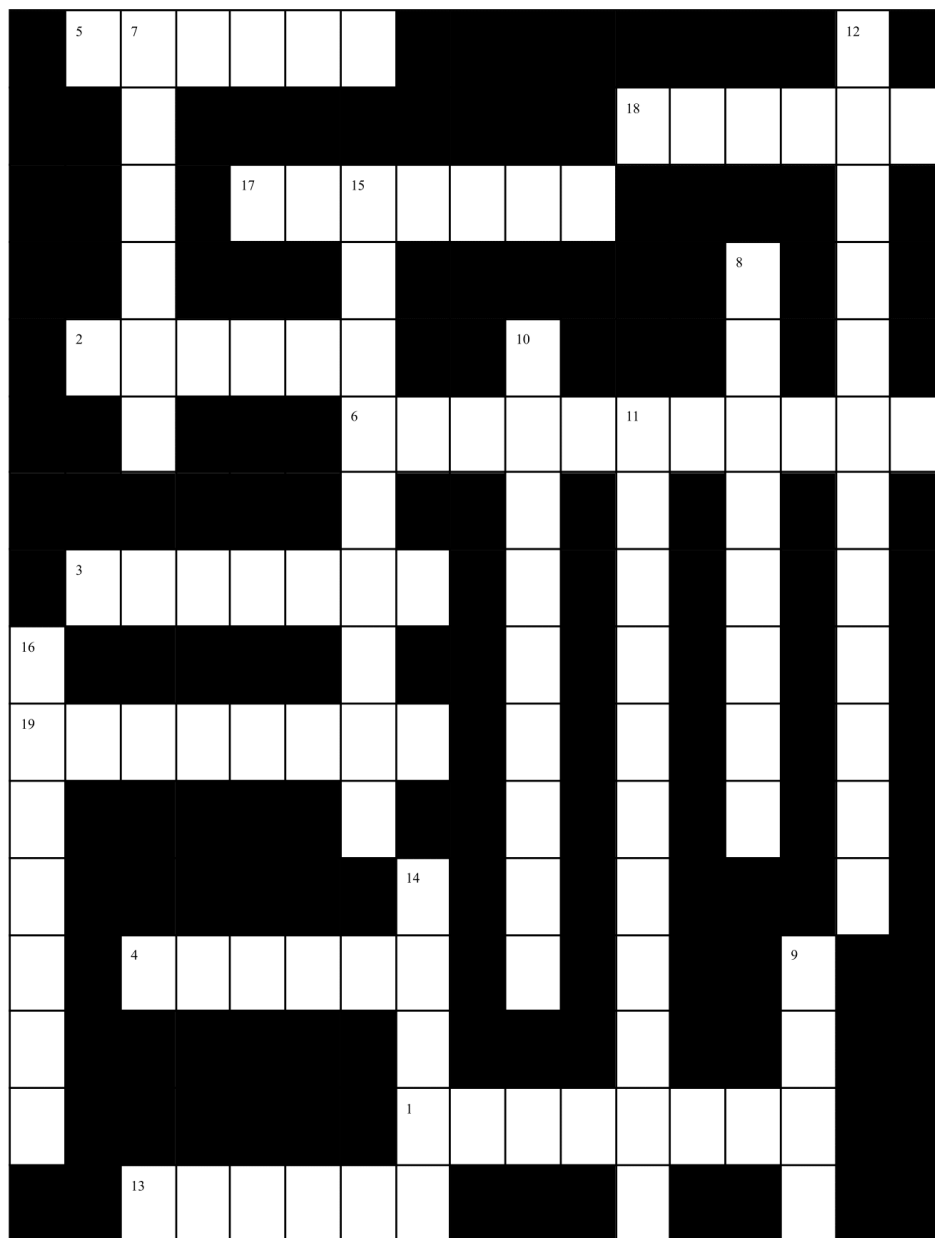




The author of this story is one goose, and then a worrying number of geese, and finally a divinity of geese the size of a mountain. He has been nominated for shards of eggshells caressed by moonlight as if beauty alone can tend to loss, honking his throat raw in the manicured lawn near the pond when the big tractor trundles past because what else is there to do but shout and hope to be sincere enough or caustic enough to invent a God who will listen? His work has taken flight in numerous ruined picnics, flutes of champagne spilled over white-after-Labor-Day laps, Devil Bird How Dare You?, feathers hot and sick in the sunlight, in the burning world, climate change is a real bitch, you know, death is already in the groundwater, and even the breeze carries to those stunted flowers everyone calls weeds. You can find him online @ managing with a hopelessness so innate that the metaphor of a disliked and isolated bird was all too easy to grasp, a gaping mouth made for snapping dragonflies into dust, and in how many years will we kill all the birds, kill them dead, kill them softly and easily and swiftly, even the ones we like with pretty songs pinned to poetry like ribbons, because humanity can only fathom keeping animals alive when they suit billionaires and not because they live so fully they quake with it? His Twitter is flush with wings.

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

John Pruitt



SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

1. Fantasies about London: raucous dancehalls, rowdy pubs, decrepit council estates, haunted castles, foggy moors, Whitechapel lads dosing and beating the social frustrations out of each other. London, rife with insanity and romance, inspiring tickling sensations, luring young men to East End hovels infested with pale, emaciated bodies brimming with heroin. I craved a violent night with them, screwing, vandalizing, howling, venting grievances through bloodletting. I blame the subversive plots of novels and movies. They led me to this, an American with no other exposure.

Clue. A fixed false belief, say psychiatrists

2. I couldn't figure out how to make a call from the pay phone in Gatwick Airport to announce my arrival. Robert and I were supposed to meet for lunch at noon, but my red-eye flight left Detroit three hours late because the cabin door closed on someone's suitcase, which meant that a maintenance crew had to be called in to assess the damage, which meant that every straight man had to unbuckle and assess the damage themselves, hands on hips as if gripping tool belts. The final assessment: chipped paint.

To the woman approaching the payphone next to mine: "Would you mind showing me how to call this number?" "It's a telephone, dear--drop in a quid and dial."

Clue. Please check the _____ and dial again

3. The first words out of Robert's mouth, before a proper greeting: "Do Americans travel so lightly?" My reply: "I want new clothes, something English to make the folks back home jealous."

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

They'll just roll their eyes. Robert did the same. "They're still just clothes, aren't they?" Such strange electrical outlets here, so much adapting to do.

"It's good to see you again." We embrace.

Clue. I'll meet you at _____ claim

4. We had this conversation two years after we'd met at the Nine Inch Nails concert at Red Rocks. Robert and his brother Gerald had traveled nearly 5,000 miles to see the amphitheater that U2 made famous in their video for "Sunday Bloody Sunday." In the pit, Gerald blackened my eye during "Head Like a Hole" when I collided with his elbow. He apologized afterwards, such a well-mannered Englishman. He even offered to put me up if I visited.

"How the hell do people breathe here?" Robert asked. "The air's so bloody thin I'm losing brain cells."

Clue. "It's like a big flashing arrow marking you out as punchable" --Paul Murray, *Skippy Dies*

5. I napped on the stained guestroom carpet in the flat they shared, three torn, cigarette burned blankets and two pillows separating me from the dust. "We meant to tidy up. I hope this is fine with you." I was staying in a home in deep south London, an area called Croydon, far from the tourists, inhaling English pollution. This was perfect.

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

The spider lounging in the corner of the window frame I named Sir Nigel Farmingham. He looked well fed.

Clue. Two words: perfectly comfortable

6. That night we all dressed in our Doc Martens and dark denim pants, gelled our hair, and took the tube to Camden for an Arctic Monkeys concert. I hadn't heard of them. I'm still not sure I've heard their songs played in America. I loved saying "tube," minding the gap. The strobe lights reflected off the band's leather jackets in an epileptic's nightmare and the electronic reverberations vibrated my glasses.

Clue. Subterranean

7. "I see an American accent." I turned to the source facing me near the street food vendor as I unwrapped my gyro, Robert and Gerald glancing in the same direction as we waited for the night bus after the show. "What do you mean?" "Americans open their mouths wider than the English," she explained as she signed to her companion, nodding and smiling. "I can read your lips from miles away, even under the street lamps. Are you enjoying your visit?" "Very much, thanks." I made sure to take smaller bites.

Clue. Bite your _____

8. Staccato screams of "Black! Black! Black! The dark! The dark!" woke me out of my cold January

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

jet lag. I decided to lie very still and wait for the chaos to subside, the pounding up and down the stairs. Ten minutes later, Gerald knocked and asked me to meet the ambulance. "Robert's gone fucking mental!"

Clue. A penny for your _____

9. I laced up my boots and buttoned my coat and on my way out met Robert near the front door, a mug of dark tea in one hand, his chin cupped in the other, surprisingly docile, Gerald standing at arm's length. I carefully and calmly said "Good morning, Robert." He replied, "Good morning, shape-shifter. God, everything's so fucking dull!" He smashed the mug, spattering hot tea on my jeans.

I beamed as I flagged down the flashing lights and unmistakable siren of an English emergency vehicle. "This is so cool!" I said to no one.

Clue. He's out of his _____

10. Shortly after the two strapping EMTs with Irish brogues carried the reluctant and apparently bored Robert to the ambulance like a hunting prize, Gerald and I committed him into Lambeth Hospital.

That evening, we excavated his bedroom and found a pharmacy of Prozac, cigarettes, marijuana, chocolate bars, wadded and crusty tissues, and a wonderland of science fiction comics and

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

magazines. We didn't think Robert would miss the marijuana, so we lit up and watched reruns of *Graham Norton*. Gerald understandably worried about his brother. I silently reveled in it.

Clue. Americans are committed into psychiatric institutions; the English are _____ into them

11. "Do you like sex, darling?" In the middle of a weekday afternoon, while Gerald spent the day at his office job, she followed me through Soho, a long fur coat and knit cap, eager to deliver me to one of her girls.

"Sorry, I'm not interested."

"Come now, darling, spend the afternoon with us."

"Stop following me--I like boys."

"Oh, I have boys as well, and you won't have to wear a condom."

I fled into a crowd. In this trendy West End area, thousands of pedestrians thick, why target me? Why not me?

Clue. Two words: in pursuit

12. Robert, grateful for the staff allowing him to wear his own clothes, thanked us later for visiting but swore he remembered very little--only the shape-shifters. "They're keeping me bored as fucking hell here. All there is to do here is jack off. Did you bring me anything to do?" More wadded and crusty tissues.

Clue. Three words: I'm sick and tired of being _____

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

13. I strolled into the ward's common room where patients sat with their feet curled underneath themselves, playing cards, staring at motivational posters, appearing to contemplate their existence while chewing their lower lips, soft piano music overhead.

To the orderly: "Are there televisions here?"

"No, it might trigger an episode."

"Just curious, but what do the patients do all day?"

"We have a number of activities, but they just as likely stay in their rooms and masturbate for all I know."

The Royal College of Psychiatrists had designed hospitals and treatment around systematic levels of discipline through institutionalized dullness, surveilling, classifying, and objectifying the patients, a control group deprived of entertainment. They really are bored as fucking hell.

Clue. Equality means everyone gets the same thing; ____ means everyone gets what they need

14. I suggested to the orderly that we all play a game of hide and seek, but he scoffed. Apparently he thought I was kidding, or just tasteless. But without mental stimulus, the patients confronted futility: boredom as therapy.

Clue. ____ or not, here I come!

15. The next day, while Gerald visited his brother, I sauntered through Brixton, where Lambeth Hospital shelters the drugged and masturbating patients from the consumers and tourists

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

flocking to Brixton Market and Pop Brixton. I indulged in samples of Jamaican rum, French cheeses, and African snails at Brixton Village and Market Row, my boots wearing a blister on my right heel as I browsed through clothing stalls looking for the English labels I'd traveled for: a BOY London watch, a couple chambray shirts from Paul Smith for the classic look, a much too expensive black assembly jacket from Folk. Robert was right: they're just clothes, but no one back home wore these clothes.

I wondered if the traders and tourists in my midst realized what was happening in that hospital or if they were just blissfully ignorant of the extreme neuroses nearby while I sought out the exotic, to them the mundane. They're just clothes. But English clothes. I desperately needed them.

Clue. A sign of ignorance

16. A walk north toward the Thames brought me to corporate stagnation, brilliantly lit signs for Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers, the *Financial Times*. The dullness thickened among the business degrees, an ethos I'd hoped to avoid. Everyone here, the general area, none of it breathed or sparkled, none of it shone in the surreal landscapes of my Angela Carter and Ian McEwan novels, the splash of color in a Harold Pinter performance. I needed them to illuminate an agitated England, everyone rushing home.

I casually strolled into Next and bought five packs of striped and patterned footbed socks and a charcoal grey zip neck jumper.

Clue. monotonous

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

17. I wonder if Adam walking past, tie loosened and shoes scuffed, would interest me more if he were wearing a cock ring beneath those wool trousers, or if Jane with her leather briefcase, her forehead creased, the hair falling from her tight bun, might dance in a studded thong at swingers parties on Tuesday nights. Would life grow tiresome if Harrods housed a fetish section stocked with the greatest French and Italian accessories? Nipple clamps from Prada. Anal beads from Christian Dior. Straightjackets from Armani.

Clue. “Don’t make _____ own you, but you decide what you are, what you want to express by the way you dress and the way to live.” – Gianni Versace

18. At a nearby cyber cafe, I scrolled through AOL chat rooms, curious to find English men seeking men at 6pm on a week night, considering my American exoticism as a selling point, eager to see how they attract the curious.

“Bored in Islington. Anyone looking?”

“Looking for something to do. Bear near Bethnal Green station.”

“Looking for entertainment in East End. Let’s swap pics.”

“Highgate lad, bored in front of the tele.”

“Too quiet in Hammersmith. Looking?”

I empathized, I understood, seeking out new men for a new experience, every new chest an unexplored terrain, every kiss a new taste, every position stretching new muscles, delighting in the unfamiliar smells and sounds until orgasm and the walk home release the boredom once again. Now what?

SOLVING ROBERT: I HOPE YOU FOUND SOMETHING TO DO

I logged off.

Clue. A painful wrench or twist of the ligaments

19. “Do you know when they’ll discharge him?”

“They tell me they want to watch him for a few weeks on a regimen of Prozac.”

“I was given that for my OCD, but it just made me stare at the wall and think of ways to die.”

“I think he does that anyway. Will you help me clean up his room?”

Gerald packed his brother’s clean clothes and magazines into a duffel bag, and, like an arbiter of cleanliness, I pitched Robert’s crusty tissues into the waste basket, destroying the evidence of his cure for boredom, wondering why he’d kept them at all.

Clue. The spark, the ah-ha moment

1. delusion 2. number 3. baggage 4. bruise 5. at home 6. underground 7. tongue 8. thoughts 9. mind 10. sectioned 11. giving chase 12. sick and tired 13. equity 14. ready 15. shrugging 16. tedious 17. fashion 18. sprain 19. epiphany

“Answer Key

filed_under>"favors (v. 1.0)"

someone please stop me from trying
to learn a critically endangered language.
do robots have chronic pain?

if not, can i please put my brain
in a robot body? can someone please
bring me a dog to pet[?]

the heat index is 96 degrees
and the car will not start. please god.
if these are the only vibes available,

by all means, cancel my vibes please.
[i] picture myself as a caterpillar in a chrysalis,
yelling PLEASE STOP POKING MY HOUSE

every time someone bothers me.
please read my sad writing[;]
please don't get me wrong, it still slaps.

it's just the sad kind. writing in
"i don't have a gender, i'm just hot"
under "other please explain"

when asked to self-identify. i got "dear sir/
madam"ed earlier[.] please i can only take
so much. if you need me: please do not.

FAVORS [v.1.0]

nat raum

FAVORS

The background of the piece is a light purple digital collage of various elements that are clearly photographic, but layered over each other in a way that it's difficult to discern exactly what the images are.

Darker purple text in the top right corner reads: "filed_under>'favors (v. 1.0)."" Below, aligned to the left side of the piece in dark purple text, is the following poem:

*"someone please stop me from trying
to learn a critically endangered language.
do robots have chronic pain?*

*if not, can i please put my braini
n a robot body? can someone please
bring me a dog to pet[?]*

*the heat index is 96 degrees
and the car will not start. please god.
if these are the only vibes available,*

*by all means, cancel my vibes please.
[i] picture myself as a caterpillar in a chrysalis,
yelling PLEASE STOP POKING MY HOUSE*

*every time someone bothers me.
please read my sad writing[:]
please don't get me wrong, it still slaps.*

*it's just the sad kind. writing in
"i don't have a gender, i'm just hot"
under "other please explain"*

*when asked to self-identify. i got "dear sir/
madam"ed earlier[.] please i can only take
so much. if you need me: please do not."*

REPORT FRAGMENT (PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT)

Jo Clark

ASSESSMENT #5675 – GOLDILOCKS PLANET PROJECT	
Planet designation	'Gaia'
ORBITAL CHARACTERISTICS (EPOCH J2000)	
Orbital period (sidereal)	365.256363004 d
Eccentricity	0.0167086
Inclination	1.57869° to invariable plane; 0.00005° to J2000 ecliptic
Apsides	Aphelion: 152100000 km Perihelion: 147095000 km
Satellites	1 natural satellite
ROTATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	
Synodic rotation period	24h 00m 00s
Sidereal rotation period	23h 56m 4.100s
Equatorial rotation velocity	0.4651 km/s
Axial tilt	23.4392811°
Albedo	0.367 geometric 0.306 Bond
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	
Dimensions	Mean radius: 6371.0 km Equatorial radius: 6371.0 km Polar radius: 6356.752 km Flattening: 1/298.257222

REPORT FRAGMENT (PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT)

Area	Surface area 510,072,000 km ² , of which 148,940,000 km ² land 361,132,000 km ² pelagic
Surface temp (Celsius)	Min: -89.2 °C Mean: 14 °C Max: 56.7 °C
Surface pressure	101.325 kPa (at mean sea level)
Composition by volume	78.08% N ₂ 20.95% O ₂ ~ 1% water vapor (climate variable) 0.9340% Ar 0.0413% CO ₂ 0.00182% Ne 0.00052% He 0.00019% CH ₄ 0.00011% Kr 0.00006% H
ATMOSPHERIC CHARACTERISTICS	
Solar irradiance	1361 W/m ²
Height of Troposphere (mean)	Polar: 8 km Equatorial: 17 km

REPORT FRAGMENT (PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT)

LIFE FORMS	
Biosphere	<p>Mix of botanical and animalian species</p> <p>Most zones at max capacity for resource distribution / availability</p> <p>Significant % of species facing inadequate resource availability</p>
CLIMATE APTITUDE	
Aridity	<p>Aridity increasing</p> <p>Rate of change accelerating</p> <p>Remains insufficiently arid to support [redacted]</p>
APEX SPECIES	
Physical Characteristics	<p>Mammalian</p> <p>Single heart</p> <p>Bipedal</p> <p>Binocular</p> <p>Omnivorous</p> <p>Opposable phalanxes on upper limbs</p> <p>Relative Intelligence</p>
Communication method	<p>Noise-emitting mouthparts</p> <p>No progress made so far in signal decryption</p> <p>Sample recordings transmitted back to [redacted] for analysis</p>
Behavioural characteristics	<p>Capable of organisation</p> <p>Incapable of altruism</p> <p>Displays tendencies suggestive of species nihilism</p> <p>Actions driving habitat aridity and atmospheric calorification</p>

CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS / PROGNOSIS

Currently several degrees too cold to support [redacted] populations.

Aridity insufficient at current levels

Recommend

- Allocate substantial resource to encourage apex species to persist in current behaviours to ensure acceleration of atmospheric calorification and generalised planetary aridity
- Undertake close monitoring of relevant metrics

Estimated timescale for target aridity [redacted]



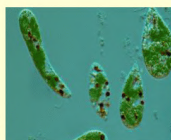
Sometimes the Rarest Beauty is Hidden from the Naked Eye

Autotrophic Microorganisms – the Foundation of the Aquatic Food Web
Revealed by Light Microscopy

Mama said I was more water-creature than boy, not happy until my feet were plunged. Through the snotty-green of puddles, the shivering-silver of the river, the salty-blue of the sea. She'd watch me from behind huge red sunglasses, popping gum. Her camera hung around her neck on old shoelaces, had a perpetually spattered lens.

Euglena gracilis

Flagellate (whip-like tail) propulsion. Large blooms softly green the water's surface. Crimson "eye-spot" for phototaxis –finding the light.



Diatoms

Bivalves overlap like hat boxes. Siliceous coat light-refracting: cells shine like glass gems. Swirling stellate and ribbon colonies



Mama's hair was a wind-whipped mass of ropy tentacles that seemed to propel her along the path, the sand. When her laugh snagged me, as I rushed and splashed, the smile in her algae-bloom eyes burst me like a satsuma. She'd pick me up and spin me dry, her heart spilled across my face in grape-gloss kisses. In whispered secrets.

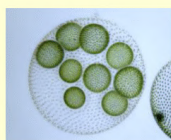
Synura

Free-swimming globular colonies. Each cell ornately silica-scaled. Prolific bloom of golden species colours freshwater spring-yellow.



Volvox

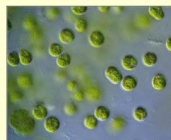
Grand colonies of diflagellate algae. Found in sources of abundant rainwater, spinning like planets towards summer sunlight.



Mama said I was more water-creature than boy, not happy until my face was submerged. Bubble-giggling in the pewter lake, the sun-cooked sapphire ocean, the strawberry-froth of the bathtub. Her face veiled by rippling ribbons, she looked like a ruby-haired mermaid. She'd hold my hands loosely, her green eyes were my beacons.

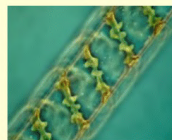
Chlamydomonas

Ovate and prevalent in freshwater and moist earth. Also called 'snow algae': red species transform Appalachian snowfall to pink frosting.



Spirogyra

Filamentous - known as 'water silk' and 'mermaid's tresses'. Unique helical chloroplast arrangement: like a gold-green coiled spring.



Mama would wrap me in wriggling towels, in her arms. I'd finger-brush her wild hair, press my soap-squeak cheek to her neck. She'd tuck me in bottle warmed flannelette, my eyes drawn to the fish darting like spilled jewels in their mini sea. Her vanilla-cream kiss and the lavender hush of her voice swaddled me to warm, waterless depths.

Microscope images – www.mikro-foto.de

SOMETIMES THE RAREST BEAUTY IS HIDDEN FROM THE NAKED EYE

JP Relp

A4 scientific poster, pale yellow background. Light microscope images of microscopic aquatic plant life - in three sets of two – shades of teal, jade green and blue – Euglena gracilis, Diatoms, Synura, Volvox, Chlamydomonas and Spirogyra

See transcript - next page.

SOMETIMES THE RAREST BEAUTY IS HIDDEN FROM THE NAKED EYE

Sometimes the Rarest Beauty is Hidden from the Naked Eye

Autotrophic Microorganisms – the Foundation of the Aquatic Food Web Revealed by Light Microscopy

Mama said I was more water-creature than boy, not happy until my feet were plunged. Through the snotty-green of puddles, the shivering-silver of the river, the salty-blue of the sea. She'd watch me from behind huge red sunglasses, popping gum. Her camera hung around her neck on old shoelaces, had a perpetually spattered lens.

Euglena gracilis

Flagellate (whip-like tail) propulsion. Large blooms softly green the water's surface. Crimson "eye-spot" for phototaxis—finding the light.

Diatoms

Bivalves overlap like hat boxes. Siliceous coat light-refracting: cells shine like glass gems. Swirling stellate and ribbon colonies

Mama's hair was a wind-whipped mass of ropy tentacles that seemed to propel her along the path, the sand. When her laugh snagged me, as I rushed and splashed, the smile in her algae-bloom eyes burst me like a satsuma. She'd pick me up and spin me dry, her heart spilled across my face in grape-gloss kisses. In whispered secrets.

Synura

Free-swimming globular colonies. Each cell ornately silica-scaled. Prolific bloom of golden species colours freshwater spring-yellow.

Volvox

Grand colonies of diflagellate algae. Found in sources of abundant rainwater, spinning like planets towards summer sunlight.

SOMETIMES THE RAREST BEAUTY IS HIDDEN FROM THE NAKED EYE

Mama said I was more water-creature than boy, not happy until my face was submerged. Bubble-giggling in the pewter lake, the sun-cooked sapphire ocean, the strawberry-froth of the bathtub. Her face veiled by rippling ribbons, she looked like a ruby-haired mermaid. She'd hold my hands loosely, her green eyes were my beacons.

Chlamydomonas

Ovate and prevalent in freshwater and moist earth. Also called 'snow algae': red species transform Appalachian snowfall to pink frosting.

Spirogyra

Filamentous - known as 'water silk' and 'mermaid's tresses'. Unique helical chloroplast arrangement: like a gold-green coiled spring.

Mama would wrap me in wriggling towels, in her arms. I'd finger-brush her wild hair, press my soap-squeak cheek to her neck. She'd tuck me in bottle warmed flannelette, my eyes drawn to the fish darting like spilled jewels in their mini sea. Her vanilla-cream kiss and the lavender hush of her voice swaddled me to warm, waterless depths.

YOUR FORTUNES

Lori Sambol Brody

YOUR FORTUNE

You have consulted Madame Guinevere. You feel like you are stranded on a boat without a rudder drifting in the vast Pacific, above the depths of the Mariana Trench. This feeling will last for a while. You went to Camille's "get-together" the night before school started because Camille also invited Jake. Jake, with slim narrow legged pants hanging off his hips and, face it, Jake is the hottest boy name ever. Because you wanted everyone (Jake) to think you were fearless, you suggested Camille take out the Ouija board you played with when you were best friends in middle school, before Camille returned from summer vacation in Paris with lace bras and sparkling eyeliner. You tried to catch Jake's eyes over the board but he sought only Camille's. All fingers on the planchette in Camille's bedroom – no haunted attic but boho chic will have to do. The last time you and Camille took out the Ouija board, you saw the ghost of a boy and she said she did not; the afterimage of the ghost lingered in your eyes like a bright flash of light. Now, in response to every question asked about love, you subtly nudged the planchette so all the answers were your name spelled backward: Anele. You hoped that Jake would see your ghost in his mind, but that boy will never be haunted. Listen to what came to you when sliding the planchette across the board: what messages have you missed?

Your Lucky Numbers: Any number that is not Jake's phone number; do not text him that nude photo.

YOUR FORTUNE

You have consulted Madame Guinevere. You may be sailing the winds of change, but don't be afraid to tack. You texted Jake a photo showing the curve of your breasts, and he thought he was entitled to more than just a glimpse. That's why, late at night during the school camping trip, he invited you to go swimming in the lake. He shucked off his pants, the white of his briefs gleaming, and said, Truth or Dare? You were scared to tell him any truth, your chest cracked open to reveal your heart. Dare, you said. He splashed into the depths, beckoned to you. His abs, almost a six pack. You waded in, wearing t-shirt and shorts. Let me tell you: the mermaids in the lake were there to protect you. You thought that was tendrils of lake grass twining your feet, in the cold lake water under the almost-full moon? He caught you in the water and his mouth tasted of tequila. You felt his kisses down your spine, in the bend of your knees. It didn't even matter that he called you Camille because his lips were on your shivering neck. You saw in the reflection of the moon on the lake your hopes all shimmering – holding hands on the quad, making out against the lockers, side-by-side in a silky long dress and red lipstick at homecoming. But beware of visions in the water: one stroke of an arm or one rogue wave erases them.

Your Lucky Numbers: 1, as it is better to be alone than to be with him.

YOUR FORTUNE

You have consulted Madame Guinevere. It's only when a wave returns someone back to you that you know he's yours. In your bedroom mirror, your black tulle skirt fluttered as you twirled. You hoped Jake and you would be crowned homecoming king and queen. The white rose in your corsage, the one that Jake slipped on your wrist, is just like Jake: at first you loved the sweet scent buoying around you, and then your eyes teared. During a Harry Styles song, you noticed Jake's eyes on Camille, the triangles of her bodice revealing more than they concealed. When he told you it would be fun to switch partners, you clung, during a slow dance, to her date; at the end of the dance, Camille tucked in her braided updo a tendril of baby's breath from the boutonniere you gave Jake. It was inevitable that you found them kissing in an alcove in the hotel hallway, his seeking hand rucking up her long dress. And you, consoled by a boy who went to homecoming without a date, the boy who looked at you as if he were a werewolf gazing at the moon. The boy who would have danced with you all night, except you called your mother to pick you up when Jake and Camille were awarded their crowns. You hope I'll tell you you'll find love, a mysterious stranger or the boy who's always been at your side. How am I supposed to know?

Your Lucky Numbers: Pi, as it approaches infinity, all the infinite ways you can find love, and lose it.



(CARDS FROM MADAME GUINEVERE, THE ANIMATRONIC FORTUNETELLER)



BLOOD IN CONSTELLATIONS

Louise Mather

"Blood in Constellations" is a surreal artwork with the appearance of a cosmos drawn in felt tip pen on a white background with asemic writing in black. It features a blue/turquoise egg-shaped abstract moon at the top left and a smudged blue sky, a large abstract jellyfish-like bronze drawing in the middle, and a purple and bronze sphere at the bottom right, plus small blue shapes and tendrils with smudge effect used in the whole piece. There is an asemic paragraph of writing at the bottom, each shape has an asemic label.

DUST IN THE GROOVES OF OLD RECORDS

Matthew McGuirk

[REDACTED] home [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
a dilapidated house [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] see [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The mess [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] forgotten [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the deepest corners of someone's history.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] my [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] house [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] clad with a spray

DUST IN THE GROOVES OF OLD RECORDS

of [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] dripping [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] little [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] pleasures [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] potential addictions [REDACTED] picked up [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] before long.
[REDACTED] sleep, most nights [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] flickering [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in a corona [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] of what [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] once [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
kept [REDACTED] to deteriorate [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] conversations [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] uniformly
[REDACTED] pulling out [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] little [REDACTED]

DUST IN THE GROOVES OF OLD RECORDS

_____ good _____ an empty
_____ clacking _____
_____ bullet.

In the end _____
_____ my _____

_____ trips _____

mean something when you _____ weigh _____ in _____

I flicked the light on _____ illuminated _____
_____ real _____
_____ thought _____
_____ adorned _____

_____ in _____

_____ a thick layer _____ of _____
_____ looming _____
_____ fog.

CALLING FORTH (A TRIPTYCH)



Robert Frede Kenter



A triptych erasure exploring the dynamics of over-writing /over-painting on a source text. The reformulation creates a critical yet fanciful, intuitive dreamscape, a post-utopian eco-poetics. Source text: Rubin, Jeff, The End of Growth, Vintage Canada, 2012.





CALLING FORTH (A TRIPTYCH)

*"To Lessen (handwritten, crayon)
The End of Growth
Pudding
Thread
Nuclear
Down
Safety plant ought
Reactors
Permanent
It's oil
offuel oil
consumption"*

Flowers rise up, circles of red light, new ecologies emerging out of the tattered pages of economic theory. Using a colour field of pastels: muted orange, pink and powder blue, resistance to chemical poisons proposes a mourning/morning evolution with a nod-and-a-wink, bordered in green. The blue sea and layers of earth forage, bring forth – out of themselves – word-organisms, floating word-capsules. New creatures dance, observe, rise into the yellow papersky.

CALLING FORTH (A TRIPTYCH)



"TO SLEEP (handwritten, crayon)
never been scared
big picture
off events
tragic
supply
sources
killing
already"

It's night in the industrial zone, a city of mulch and steel, sulfur and mist. Now, its dawn again, a miasma over the streets pushing down on a sleepless night (to sleep, perchance) – and all that. A figure in a bed wrapped in anxious dreams. Images rise up: dark greens, purples, stoic arcs of blue and black, rectangular, jagged intuitive. And those floating red capsules, corpuscles of fantasia, shimmer in the mauve-shimmer, vermillion-pastel night inscribes the dawn-mare.

CALLING FORTH (A TRIPTYCH)



"reducing
concrete
voters
the world
whims
companies
tumble w
Just look
Overnight
the environment fell
bill"

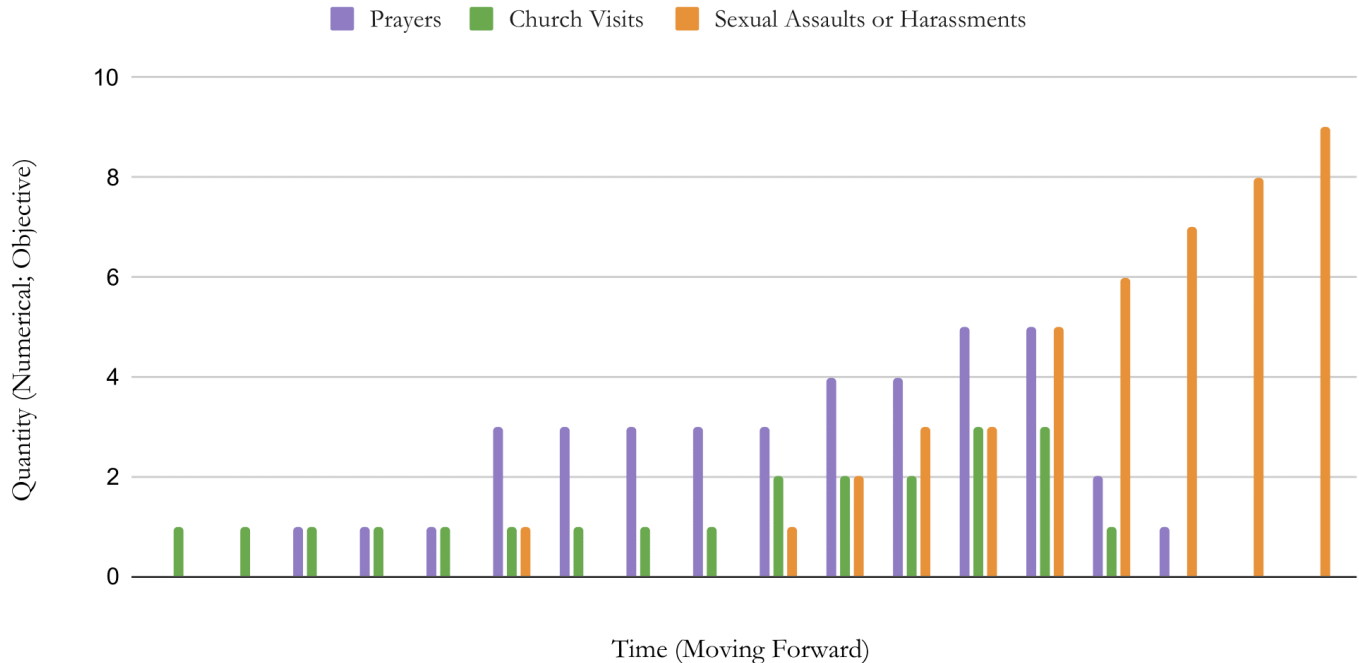
Yellow. Yellow. Yellow. Shimmering,
startling shimmering signpost yellow,
words blanched, denuded, sparkling
glowing dayglo ruptures. Eruptions.
Cosmic volcanoes of abstracted
rectangular texts, of light ladders,
snakes and ladders, hanging fields, red
abstract-beasts. Intuitive avuncular
scribbles. Scroll up, scroll down,
angling in different diagonal vectors of
red-black- yellow. Yellow. Yellow.
Yellow.

THE GOD TRACKER

Max Gillette

The God Tracker

OR: Proof That No Prayer Sounds Against A Rapist's Mouth



Bar graph titled "The God Tracker OR: Proof That No Prayer Sounds Against A Rapist's Mouth." Three bars compare prayers, church visits, and sexual assaults or harassments over time. Church visits are present at a low level until they disappear part-way through the graph. Prayers start later and increase until they reach a moderate height, then disappear shortly after church visits. Sexual assaults or harassments start halfway through the graph and increase steadily through time—present during and after church visits and prayer.

[MADLIBS: How Does Cosmo Save You?]

Rachael Crosbie

unconsciousness on cloud or hammock, you _____ as the sky opens
verb
up a wound with a glow so translucent like deadfish _____ in a plastic
type of anatomy
bag, water sweating on your hands. their eyes, pierced by animation,
haunt you with ghosts made corporeal in your hands—now clammy with
a blearing and sticking, yellow-stricken heat. _____ claws at what
name of your cat
sickens you, swinging at straight air. the nightseer cloaked in _____
violentcolored
adjective
and the skin of the moon. _____ pinkpatted paws now raw with red.
name of your cat
with the possessive
paralysisparalzeparalysisparalzeparalysisparalzeparalysisparalzeparalysis
what good would waking do if your hands gouge a _____ of wet? how
adjective
(size or feeling)
paralysisparalzeparalysisparalzeparalysisparalzeparalysisparalzeparalysis
sneaks in your mouth, opening wider than the sky. sleep _____ you and
verb
(injury)
keeps _____ as a salve, a sacrifice, a hail mary when it knows
proper noun
(you or your cat)
it might be its only chance to strike?



mind doesn't know the difference between reality and fantasy.

state of euphoria will gradually become addictive,

your stomach inflating like a balloon.

The most welcome of the gifts are those

you exhale,

your mind accepts a message it receives repeatedly;

to accept that message as being true

BALLOON BRAIN

Melissa Saggerer

BALLOON BRAIN

Melissa Saggerer

A woven potholder on a red bunched up tablecloth. Printed text is cut into strips and woven into the potholder as follows:

*“mind doesn't know the difference between reality and fantasy.
state of euphoria will gradually become addictive,
your stomach inflating like a balloon
The most welcome of the gifts are those
you exhale,
your mind accepts a message it repeats repeatedly;
to accept that message as being true.”*



WILD ELDERBERRY

Sarah-Jane Crowson

A digital collage in blues and greens framed by theatre curtains. Collage features a 1930's model posing in a velvet-striped gown, with antlers draped in berries, a square covering their face and a single eye placed in the square. They open a door in the background which reveals a small glimpse of a seascape framed in theatre curtains. Cut-out/found text is placed over the image, which reads 'wild/on their margins/ an antidote/ to charm'

LUCKY, LUCKY WHITE HORSE

Ellen felt excited. Again. A lot more excited
before she sat on the bench at the top of the swing, swung
her feet up, and nudged her friend.

What would she find, she wondered.

A penny, maybe, that someone had dropped? Or a coin

a dime.

Or maybe a lost ring with a stone in it? Or a silver pin
in a pocket?

Ellen said, "Don't be silly!" she told herself. "How
could you ever find anything like that? Anyway, it won't
matter what you find, because you just find things."

That was when she knew.

It was a sudden thought, knowing that if you didn't stop, you
a whole block all the way home from school, there'd be
chocolate cake for supper.

Ellen knew that if she found something when she
went around the block, it would make everything dif-
ferent. Whatever she found would be magic. No matter
what it was, even an old nail, it would be a magic charm
that would transform her into somebody who
be happy all day long.

It really would.

Ellen shut her eyes. "I just know it would!" she whis-
pered.

ELLEN FELT (AN ERASURE)

Sylvia Santiago

"Ellen Felt" is an erasure poem composed on a page from the book *Lucky, Lucky White Horse*. Most of the text is blurred out, except for a series of words outlined in black boxes. From the top of the page down the boxed words read:

"Ellen felt excited / would she find / that someone / a / ring with a stone in it? / she told herself / it would / be magic. / It would / transform her into somebody / It really would."



= 11

MASH

HOUSE

- ~~1. Mansion~~
2. Apartment
- ~~3. Shack~~
- ~~4. House~~

WEDDING

- ~~1. Tropical Destination~~
- ~~2. Bohemian Farm Rustic—Lots of Candles~~
3. City Hall—While Drunk
- ~~4. Vegas Chapel—Officiated by Elvis~~

HOME CITY

1. Burlington—Feel the Bern
- ~~2. Manhattan, Baby~~
- ~~3. Minnesota~~
- ~~4. Your Fucking Hometown~~

KIDS

- ~~1. 1~~
- ~~2. 2~~
- ~~3. 3~~
4. 4

GIRL'S NAME

1. Your Mother-in-Law's Name
- ~~2. Ethyl~~
- ~~3. Sequoia~~
- ~~4. Shannon, Jr.~~

BOY'S NAME

- ~~1. Your Mother-in-Law's Name~~
- ~~2. Armoire~~
- ~~3. Heir—No Last Name~~
4. Anything Hyphenated

JOB

- ~~1. Police Officer~~
- ~~2. Pregnancy~~
- ~~3. Mortician~~
4. Adjunct Professor

VACATION HOME

- ~~1. Mountains~~
- ~~2. Ocean~~
3. Your Fucking Hometown
- ~~4. Europe~~

OF MARRIAGES

- ~~1. 2~~
- ~~2. 3~~
- ~~3. 0~~
4. 1

RETIREMENT

- ~~1. Never~~
2. Haha - Capitalism
- ~~3. You'll work til you die~~
- ~~4. 65~~

DEATH

1. 99
- ~~2. 81~~
- ~~3. What time is it?~~
- ~~4. 65~~

MANNER OF DEATH

- ~~1. Ennui~~
2. American Healthcare
- ~~3. Eaten by Wild Dingoes~~
- ~~4. Natural Causes~~

BURIAL

1. Cremation—Ash-infused Glassblown Orb
- ~~2. Internment—Biodegradable Tree Pod~~
- ~~3. Cemetery—Your Fucking Hometown~~
- ~~4. Burial at Sea—Local Reservoir~~

An image of a spiral above numbered lists of potential quantum futures. Most of the items have been crossed out.

Collect the most money by performing successful "operations."

Carefully twist off
touch
hear the buzzer



Discard the waste
any cavity
tighten the screw

Separate

DOCTOR

and SPECIALIST

THE NEW

place them facedown

within reach of all

the banker

NATIONAL

will pay
for success

place the heart in the BROKEN HEART cavity

HEALTH

Careful!
place the
DOCTOR

remove the part without touching

SERVICE

facedown

Take your fee from the banker
If you set off the buzzer
the SPECIALIST now gets to try

Your turn is over
it's not a success.
for a higher fee!

Your new National Health Service begins on

5th July. What is it? How do you get it?

The player with the most money

It will provide you with all medical, dental, and nursing care. Everyone—rich ~~xxxxxx~~ man, woman or child—can use it or any part of it. There are ~~no~~ charges, ~~except~~ for ~~xxxxxx~~ items. There are ~~no~~ insurance qualifications. But it is not a "charity". You are all paying for it, mainly as taxpayers, and it will relieve your money ~~xxxxxx~~ in time of illness.

Are you the only "Doctor" in the house? practice your skills on the patient by pressing down on the front and sliding them under the notch

We will be happy to hear your questions or comments about this game.

OPERATION

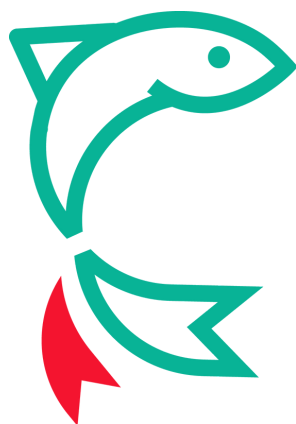
JP Seabright

Found text from the public information leaflet sent to all households re the introduction of the NHS on 5th July 1948, combined with erased text from the Hasbro Operation board game.

"Collect the most money by performing successful "operations."
Carefully twist off Discard the waste touch any cavity hear the buzzer tighten the screw

Separate DOCTOR and SPECIALIST place them facedown within reach of all the banker will pay for success place the heart in the BROKEN HEART cavity
Careful! remove the part without touching place the DOCTOR facedown

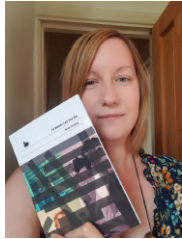
Take your fee from the banker Your turn is over
If you set off the buzzer it's not a success. the SPECIALIST now gets to try for a higher fee!
The player with the most money Are you the only "Doctor" in the house? practice your skills on the patient by pressing down on the front and sliding them under the notch"



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Morphic Rooms is the collaborative collage laboratory of allison anne and Jeremy P. Bushnell. They produce layered, abstract work that utilizes systematic parameters, creative rulesets, chance operations, and collaborative interplay as tools for radically reimagining a collection of images, texts, ephemera, and detritus, drawn from centuries of cultural accretion and mechanical reproduction. Their work has appeared in *Sleepingfish*, *you are here*, *INKIII*, the *gamut mag*, and a chapbook published by Paper View Books. Learn more at morphicrooms.com. Instagram and Twitter: @morphicrooms.



Nikki Dudley is managing editor of *streetcake* magazine and also runs the streetcake writing prize. Her pamphlet 'I'd better let you go' and collection 'Fanny B. Mine' are out with Beir Bua Press. She has forthcoming work with Hem Press. She is the winner of the Virginia Prize 2020 and her second novel, *Volta* was published in May 2021. Her website is: nikkidudleywriter.com.

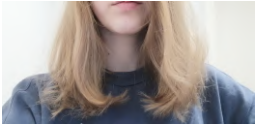


Adrian Dallas Frandle (they/he) writes about queerness & nature. Poetry Acquisitions Editor for *Variant Lit* & a reader for *Okay Donkey Lit Mag*, they have work in *Kissing Dynamite*, *Olney Magazine*, *JMWW*, *trampset*, *HAD*, *Moist Poetry Journal*, *lickity split* & more. Online at adriandallas.com | Tweets: @adrianf | Instagram: @afrandle



Haley Jenkins is an poet/writer from Surrey, UK. Her book 'Nekorb' is out with Veer Books, she has been published/forthcoming in *The Literary Canteen*, *The Dalloway*, 433, *Lavender Bones*, *Babel Tower Noticeboard*, *Streetcake*, *Oscen*, *Riggwelter Press*, *Tears in the Fence*, *The Journal of British & Irish Innovative Poetry* and more. She runs *Selcouth Station Press*, a small indie publisher who has published over thirty books of poetry, fiction and memoir. Twitter: @selcouthstation, Facebook: Selcouth Station Press, www.selcouthstation.com

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



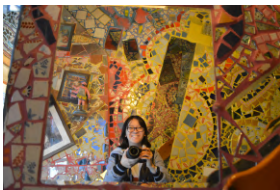
Astrid Vallet is a queer neurodivergent writer from France. She collects jars and doesn't know what to put in them, cuts her hair herself and only regrets it a little. Their work is featured in *Ample Remains*, *Crow & Cross Keys*, and *The Ghastling*, among others. Find them online @astriddoeswrite and <https://linktr.ee/astridvallet>.



Amy Barnes is the author of two flash collections: *AMBROTYPES* published by word west and "Mother Figures" by ELJ, Editions. She has words at *The Citron Review*, *JMWW Journal*, *Flash Frog*, *No Contact Mag*, *Leon Review*, *Complete Sentence*, *The Bureau Dispatch*, *Nurture Lit*, *X-R-A-Y Lit* and many others. She's a *Fractured Lit* Associate Editor, *Cone Lawn* co-editor, *Ruby Lit* assistant editor and reads for NFFD, *CRAFT*, *Taco Bell Quarterly*, *Retreat West*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Narratively*. Find her on Twitter @amycb



Beth Mulcahy (she/her) is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet and writer whose work has appeared in various journals. Her writing bridges the gaps between generations and self, hurt and healing. Beth lives in Ohio with her husband and two children and works for a company that provides technology to people without natural speech. Her latest publications can be found here: <https://linktr.ee/mulcahea>. Twitter handle: @bethmulcahea

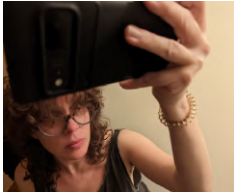


Chanlee Luu is a Vietnamese American writer from southern Virginia, currently working towards an MFA in creative writing at Hollins University. She received her BS in chemical engineering from the University of Virginia. She writes about identity, pop culture, science, politics, and everything in between. She can be found on Twitter @ChanleeLuu, and her work can be found in *Free the Verse*, *Snowflake Magazine*, and the *gamut mag*.



E.M. Lark (they/them) is a writer and avid lover of rom-coms, from California and currently based in NYC. Holding an MFA in Playwriting, they seek to make the best use of it through visceral storytelling and "a lot of yearning", as they've been told. Past and upcoming words found in (not exclusively): *Roi Faineant Press*, *Penumbra Online*, *RENESME LITERARY*, *The Lumiere Review*. Under their less ambiguous name, they write book reviews for *Defunkt Magazine* and prose read for *Cobra Milk Magazine*. More to come, @thelarkcalls on Twitter.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Jessica Davis is a poet and technical writer (software) from Chicago. She's an Associate Editor for Inverted Syntax literary journal whose work has appeared in Dream Pop, Storm Cellar, streetcake magazine, The Laurel Review, Kissing Dynamite, and other places. Sometimes she makes poemboxes, which are sculptural interpretations of her poems. See j3s.net for more. Instagram: @__j3s__ Twitter: @j3s



Jared Povanda is a writer, poet, and freelance editor from upstate New York. He has been nominated for Best of the Net and Best Microfiction, and his work has been published or is forthcoming in literary journals including Wigleaf, The Citron Review, and Milk Candy Review. You can find him online @JaredPovanda, jaredpovandawriting.wordpress.com, and in the Poets & Writers Directory.



John Pruitt has been teaching American literature in southern Wisconsin for quite a while and is now trying his hand at writing it. Our Lives magazine out of Madison, Wisconsin, published his first creative nonfiction piece, and he's since published in ImageOutWrite, Queerlings, and Bureau of Complaint. He's currently dealing with the nauseating complexity of home renovations so is looking forward to his next skydiving trip. Twitter @John_Pruitt_



nat raum (b. 1996) is a disabled artist, writer, and genderless disaster from Baltimore, MD. They're a current MFA candidate and also the editor-in-chief of fifth wheel press. Past and upcoming publishers of their writing include Olney Magazine, perhappened, CLOVES, and trampset. Find them online: natraum.com/links. Instagram, Twitter @gr8earlofhell and Tumblr poolpaintings.tumblr.com.



Jo Clark is a developing writer living in the north of England. She enjoys running, sailing and rowing, and begrudgingly endures co-habitation with a cat who takes his alarm clock role far too seriously. Jo started writing flash in 2021 and enjoys experimenting with form and perspective in fiction. Her words have been featured in Funny Pearls and Daily Drunk, and she took 3rd place in the Spring 2022 Propelling Pencil Flash Fiction competition.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



JP Relph is a mature writer from Northwest England, a member of Writers HQ, and mostly hindered by four cats and aided by considerable tea. A forensic science degree and a passion for microbes, insects and botany often motivate her writing. Her flash fiction can be found in *The Fantastic Other*, *Quill & Crow*, *Splonk*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Bear Creek Gazette*, *Molotov Cocktail* and others. Twitter - @RelphJp

Lori Sambol Brody lives in the mountains of Southern California. Her short fiction has been published in *Smokelong Quarterly*, *Wigleaf*, *Craft*, and elsewhere. Her stories have been chosen for the Best Small Fictions and Best Microfiction anthologies, *Wigleaf Top 50*, and *Longform Fiction Pick of the Week*. Twitter @LoriSambolBrody; website lorisambolbrody.wordpress.com.



Louise Mather is a writer from Northern England and founding editor of *Acropolis Journal*. Her work is published in various print and online literary journals and her pamphlet 'The Dredging of Rituals' is out with Alien Buddha Press. She writes about ancestry, motherhood, endometriosis, fatigue and mental health. Twitter @lm2020uk, website www.louisematheruk.wixsite.com/louisemather and Instagram @louise.mather.uk.



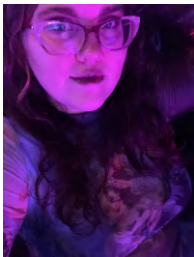
Matt McGuirk teaches and lives with his wife and daughters in New Hampshire. Over the last year, he's been nominated for BOTN, been a regular contributor for *Fevers of the Mind*, had stories and poems in 75+ lit mags with 100+ published pieces and a debut collection with Alien Buddha Press called *Daydreams, Obsessions, Realities* available on Amazon. Find his work on his website: <http://linktr.ee/McGuirkMatthew> and connect with him on Twitter: @McGuirkMatthew and Instagram: @mcguirk_matthew.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Robert Frede Kenter is a widely published writer, editor & visual artist, Pushcart nominee & EIC/Publisher of Ice Floe Press www.icefloepress.net. Books/anthologies incl. *The Book of Penteract* (Penteract Press, 2022); *EDEN, a Hybrid* (2021), avail: www.rareswanpress.com (2021), & *Before I Turn into Gold, FeversOftheMind* (2021). Recent journals: *Streetcake Magazine*, *Feral*, *WatchYrHead*, *Anthropocene*. Robert has lived/worked in Toronto, NYC, San Francisco, London, etc. Living w. ME/FM, Robert is sometimes sidelined, but never out of the game. Twitter: @frede_kenter, @icefloeP.

Max Gillette is studying English and creative writing at Central Michigan University, where they work as an editor for two student-led publications. Their poetry has appeared in *Spoonie Press*, *Morning Fruit Magazine*, *Red Cedar Review*, *Rainy Day*, and other journals. Twitter @quartzpoet



Rachael Crosbie (they/them) takes bisexual disaster to a new level with their love for hyperpop, mid-2000s emo hits, and beachy indie. They wrote about the Internet in *Trick Mirror or Your Computer Screen*, and then their cat in *Peanut [the cat]* auditions as *Courage [...from Courage the Cowardly Dog]*. Rachael is currently contemplating compulsory cishet and ambiguous trauma through horror titles. You can find them on Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram under the handle @rachaelapoet and at <https://rachaelcrosbie.weebly.com/>



Melissa Saggerer has work in *JMWW*, *HAD*, *Milk Candy Review*, a speculative parenting anthology, and elsewhere. Her prose has been nominated for Best Microfiction and a Pushcart. Her pieces are collected at MelissaSaggerer.wordpress.com and you can follow her on twitter @MelissaSaggerer.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Sarah-Jane's work is inspired by fairytales, nature, psychogeography and surrealism. She uses bricolage to explore the space between real and imagined; creating alternative narratives as small acts of resistance. Sarah-Jane's work can be seen in various journals, including Waxwing Literary Journal, Rattle, Petrichor, Sugar House Review and Iron Horse Literary Review. You can find her on Twitter @Sarahjfc or on her website at www.sarahjanecrowson.art. Her Instagram is @Sarah_jfc



Sylvia Santiago's poetry and prose have appeared in Bureau of Complaint, Gasher Journal, streetcake magazine, Uncanny Magazine, and elsewhere. She lives in western Canada where she writes sporadically, worries frequently, and wishes upon stars almost never. Find her on Twitter @sylviasays2



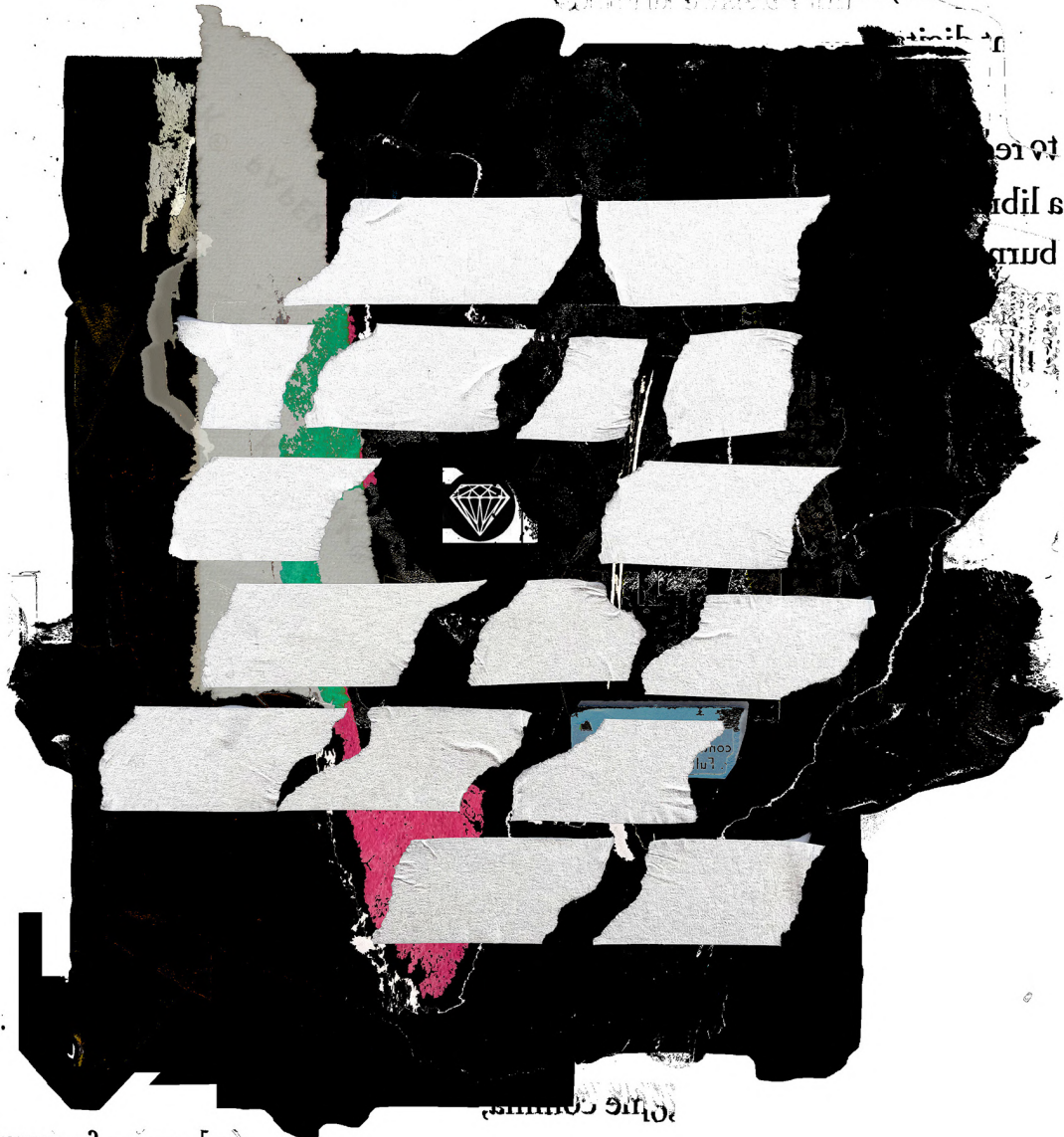
Shannon Frost Greenstein (she/her) is the author of "These Are a Few of My Least Favorite Things," a poetry collection with Really Serious Literature, and "An Oral History of One Day in Guyana," a fiction chapbook forthcoming from Bullsh*t Lit. Her work has appeared in McSweeney's Internet Tendency, Pithead Chapel, Bending Genres, and elsewhere. Follow her on Twitter at @ShannonFrostGre or at shannonfrostgreenstein.com.



JP Seabright (she/they) is a queer writer living in London. They have three pamphlets published: *Fragments from Before the Fall: An Anthology in Post-Anthropocene Poetry* by Beir Bua Press; the erotic memoir *NO HOLDS BARRED* by Lupercalia Press, and *GenderFux*, a collaborative poetry pamphlet, by Nine Pens Press. More info at <https://jpseabright.com> and via Twitter @errormessage.



The back cover is an alternate version of 'excess affect' created by Morphic Rooms. The image is the reverse of the front cover artwork, as if the viewer has turned the page over and is now able to see the components of the piece from the other side. The reverse sides of the pieces of paper that make up the artwork are held in place by masking tape.



and every for
figure.

the court

to re
a lib
pud

to re
a lib
pud