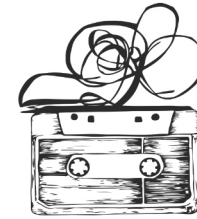




the engine(idling  
Issue 8:  
Collage  
Spring 2026



*Collage* is a Special Issue in which contributors were invited to remix *the engine(idling's* archive with some restrictions.

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Cover art uses the TOC of the first 7 Issues of *e(i*.

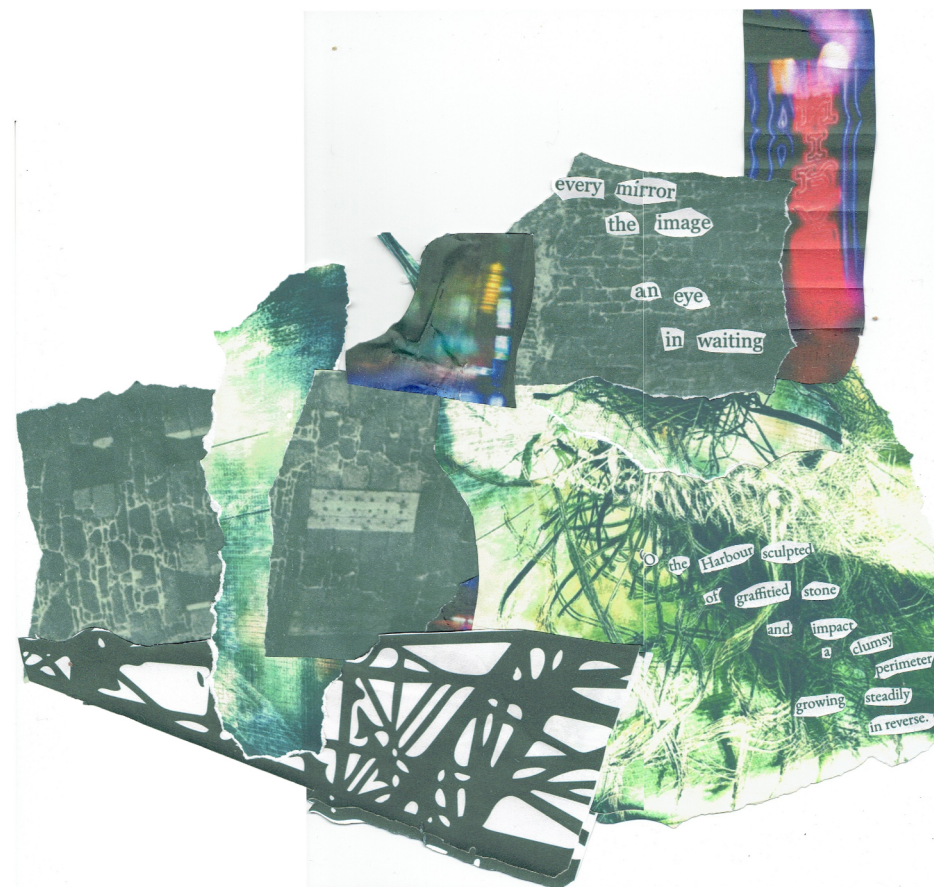
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# Contents

<b>evelyn bauer</b> - Untitled	9
<b>Connor Donovan</b> - Cento Where Everything is Significant	10
<b>Melissa Fitzpatrick</b> - dim light drifting	12
<b>Caiti Luckhurst</b> - Pick	13
<b>Alex Carrigan</b> - The Idle Crown	14
<b>Andrew Gardner</b> - Staring At The Ceiling Fan (A Cento)	18
<b>• R L • powell</b>	
- CALL TO OUR LIPS / TO MAKE PALE ATOMS OF OUR NIGHTS	20
- An Odd Couplet: ABOUT THAT BOY AND TABLE	21
- RE-SET THE TABLE, TO CO-OPT THE ENTIRE CONVERSATION	23
<b>roy willingham</b> - Solipsism	26
<b>Alicia Swain</b> - Coastal Retreat	27
<b>david woodward aka un-known</b> - Salinger is dead	28
<b>Dane Hamann</b> - Q&A	29
<b>A.C. Cambers</b> - Night Longing	30
<b>Lydia Rae Bush</b> - On tying myself up	31
<b>Kathryn Reese &amp; Sumitra Singam</b> - Dissonance/Tinnitus/Ghazal	32
<b>Sumitra Singam</b> - Dawn, child not yet awake	34
<b>Eleanor Graydon</b> - Deadname	35
<b>Theric Jepson</b> - Glitter sifts from sky, sifts hell from beauty or beauty	36
<b>Kristin Houlihan &amp; Kathryn Reese</b> - Habitat, Haunted	38
<b>Tristan Parikka</b>	
- Dusting Ashen Shadows	40
- Drawing Lightning	42

<b>Kenneth M. Gale</b> - say eucalyptus say silver #2	46
<b>Allison Burris</b>	
- Girlhood Lingerin	47
- Intergalactic Diner	49
<b>Sidney Hartz</b> - Cityscapes	52
<b>Flossie Hedges</b> - silverskin	54
<b>D.W. Baker</b> - To Hold	55
<b>Rocketfalls</b>	
- inside	56
- outside	57
<b>Mei Backof</b> - Someday I'll be Eaten by a Passerine	58
<b>Sarah Watkins</b> - Purpose	60
<b>Rueben De'Marco</b> - Disgruntled Puppet	61
<b>Em Roth</b> - on witnessing an arrest	62
<b>Samuel Day Wharton</b> - In Answer To Your Question	63
Contributors & Notes	73
Special Thanks	83

Untitled



Sources:

Brent Raycroft "Ropes of Rock and Bells of Air" (#6), Jack B. Bedell "But Lately I Find a Sliver of Mirror Is Simply to Slice an Eyelid" (#2), Jacqueline Rosado "Some Years Ago, I Was Possessed" (#7).

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Paul Wolff, "Power lines," 1927–1940, (#2).

Filler photo: Danielle McMahon (#6).

## Connor Donovan

### Cento Where Everything is Significant

#### Sources:

##### Issue 2:

Jack B. Bedell "But Lately I Find a Sliver of Mirror Is Simply to Slice an Eyelid," BEE LB "to be read in front of a live studio audience" and "eulogy card," Thomas Rions-Maehren "CASTLE ROCK," Francis de Lima "Fairytale," Kelly White Arnold "THREE WAYS OF LOOKING AT A CROW," Sandy Feinstein "Unspooled," Devon Neal "Wildflowers."

##### Issue 4:

Maddy Pope "Say," Hannah Linden "Gaps" and "From Our Living Room To The Wardrobe Of The Emperor's Clothes," F. Elliot "Father" and "Chemical Imagination," Mo Buckley Brown "country bunny," Taylor Hamann Los "Dream with Fraying Edges," cm ellis "from the ugly bureau you passed at the estate sale," J.M. Summers "Evan Evans," Ophelia Knight "Somewhere In Mississippi."

##### Issue 5:

Damon Hubbs "King Lear, '87."

Sometimes there's  
a difference between  
what you meant  
& what I understood  
& none of it matters but  
still it feels significant.  
I am tracing lines  
all over the golden  
plateau its cold flame  
half-shade hundreds  
of miles from here  
from the mouth  
of the prairie the heart  
of the sugared sky  
it is like a thread  
is being pushed to make  
a life & maybe if we  
keep going we'll find  
our way there  
a new life lighter  
than this life  
this still-hovering love  
a birch-white moon  
& unorthodox hands  
being unmade & made  
again. I think about

what you meant  
& what I understood.  
Your blood & mine.  
Our eyes & the gardens  
within them. Light  
pours & then passes  
like a breath & I wonder  
where it's going—  
where it must be.

dim light drifting

Pick

Sources from Issue 4: Ramsey Tawfick's "Baby Teeth" and "Pick the warmth from the earth."



Light/ its telephone memory/ hanging from childhood/ something begins/  
some sunken wire/ mouths fading/ day silken grey/ smile clicks/ viscous bite/  
dancing/ to Latin drowning/ Sing!/ Static and language/ homes are dyeing/  
light faded in/ strumming balloons/ open pastille/ the legible wings pointing  
sideways/ ceiling empties/ holding breath like salt and rib/ like stop. The urge  
to repeat myself/ music bending/ somewhere far from me/ further out of up/  
we are all holding/ the weight of growing/ we are ladders/ our fingers the cliff  
side/ the oceans holding the sky and/ children the horizon/ slowly aging  
faster/ holding the sun/ setting upwards/ we are laughing/ we are still new

Source:  
D.W. Baker's "last of all" (#3).

## Alex Carrigan

### The Idle Crown

Note: *This crown of sonnets is a cento of the past seven issues of the engine)idling.*

1. Issue 1: Colin James "Erosion" and "Dam Those Alligator Babies, Lower Me Down Into the Nest!," Kait Quinn "Somewhere, We Bare Our Breasts and Live," Donald Zirilli "Diagnosis," Ben Nardolilli "End of the Romance," Stephen Grant "10 LAGNIAPPES," William Doreski "Riding the Ghost Train" and "Adventure of the Beard," Corey Mesler "Wild Alone Man."

2. Issues 1/2: Stephen Grant "10 LAGNIAPPES," Angela Arnold "The Thing in the Belly of the Plum," Kelly White Arnold "THREE WAYS OF LOOKING AT A CROW," Hanan Akbari "Internal Gaze," Louis Faber "MEMO TO MEMOIR," Brandon Shane "Ogimi Village," Francis de Lima "Fairytale," BEE LB "eulogy card."

3. Issues 2/3: Louis Faber "MEMO TO MEMOIR," Ennis Rook Bashe "despite not driving I think I could still be in the Fast and Furious franchise," William Slattery "Learning to Drive," cm ellis "I'm Still Picking the Music," Darryl de Prez "For Keith," D.W. Baker "last of all," Kathryn Reese "Newell Highway, Moree," Kiki Adams "Austin, Texas; c. 2012," mari britt "11:56pm, eatery."

4. Issues 3/4: D.W. Baker "last of all," Ophelia Knight "Somewhere In Mississippi," BEE LB "prefabrication," Taylor Hamann Los "Dream with Fraying Edges," J.M. Summers "Evan Evans," Francis de Lima "97 Ways to Say Apocalypse," Connor Donovan "Wildflower [Sonnet]," Lydia Rae Bush "Country Entertainment," Ramsey Tawfick "Baby Teeth," Devon Neal "Country."

5. Issues 4/5: Francis de Lima "97 Ways to Say Apocalypse," arushi (aera) rege "kissing dreams," Christina Brannon "I really can't," DJ Wolfsohn "you too/can lose" and "p l u m s," Rose Ramsden "Give me a 90s makeover and I'll pretend I don't want to suck the lip gloss from your teeth," Geoffrey Aitken "an own table," Jen Schneider "Prince's Prints," BEE LB "buffalo66."

6. Issues 5/6: arushi (aera) rege "kissing dreams," Kelly R. Samuels "There and Here, with Footnotes," Salvatore Difalco "Night Life," Suze Kay "Love and Death in the Flower Shop," Brent Raycroft "Ropes of Rock and Bells of Air" and "Are You Free," Christina Polge "legs extended," Eden Chicken "Cassandra," Salvatore Difalco "Night Life," R. Gerry Fabian "Some Things Are That Simple," Angela Arnold "The Day That Did," Kathryn Reese "Hermit Crab Poem for the InstaSpiritual," Will Cordeiro "The Ventriloquist."

7. Issues 6/7/1: Will Cordeiro "The Ventriloquist," Em Roth "under the billboard on I-95," Joshua Zeitler "Dry," Jacqueline Rosado "Some Years Ago, I Was Possessed," Jihoo Bae "The Han of Janghwa and Hongryeon," Brennan Thomas "About That Boy," nat raum "the feminine urge," Megan O'Patry "water hymn," Myfanwy Williams "The Hatching," Veronica Tucker "Idle," Colin James "Erosion."

1.

It had been happening all day.  
They arrive carved from soap:  
naked, statuesque women.  
I read about it in *Interview Magazine*.  
Vagabonds in a neon wonderland,  
when traveling incognito  
the locals rarely acknowledge eccentricity.  
I sit in the sun and stare,  
but keep a gentleman's distance.  
I write myself upon a stick  
and cast it starward  
in the autumn sun and dust away  
a hot summer's worth of grime.  
Picking up the pieces warrants that there is a whole.

2.

Picking up the pieces warrants that there is a whole  
on the face of it. Inside, though, this dead thing.  
I took up yoga as a means of negotiating a  
peace treaty between me and my body,  
making different poses to compare in the morning.  
I will recite my absurdist life,  
and do so without coercion, save my need to tell it.  
My mother considered me a dog,  
and so she left me outside.  
I noticed that this might be a little bit fucked up, but  
I will look at old pictures of myself, trying not  
to stare at the faces I don't know.  
None of it matters, but still feels significant.  
I am being dragged offstage in what should be a theater of the absurd.

3.

I am being dragged offstage in what should be a theater of the absurd.  
I can't jump into the front seat of "protagonist."  
I knew I was good, I knew I was ready.  
I'll grab the keys and we go, yeah?  
I don't care whether I drive or ride,  
time spreads like rice fields along the road.  
Twilight is the time we see best.

It wasn't long before the glowering clouds were scattered,  
scenery blurs bathtub dishwasher grey against the rushing mountain.  
Safe up on a cement mountain, we stargazed at  
the lights of a city coming of age.  
The whole world can be scooped in a ladle.  
The air is thin and then is gone.  
We're made for the light of a cave.

4.

We're made for the light of a cave.  
I can not remember when the sunshine felt like  
more than burn marks on shallow tongues,  
scars stretching their way across fingers.  
We find ourselves as children under a sky  
swirled with peach ice cream and cayenne.  
The light played over the same bounded hillside,  
the sun's bastard breaks the dawn in two.  
In the backyard, I find you standing on the hollowed carcass of a tree.  
The tree breathes rot too, as does the whole damn yard.  
You can only live on the edge of a risk when forced to play it safe,  
like holding the railing on the night bus until the very last stop.  
I ran these same fields as the others, barefoot and wet with morning dew,  
and I run like someone who is not a jaguar, but a dog.

5.

I run like someone who is not a jaguar, but a dog.  
One day, I want to become a miracle.  
I think I'll go long for hope, that slippery non-object.  
I am a skeleton living on saccharine  
and a bottle of nail varnish remover.  
I recall sitting, commiserating in the theatre café,  
tasting the bitterness of regret in a small cappuccino.  
There was nothing to write about back then,  
memory no longer runs bases.  
Now, though, I remember  
a childhood found long after it left.  
The walls are still melting, but the painted-over  
baby blue tells me I can only run so far.  
To live this life is to live in constant explanation.

6.

To live this life is to live in constant explanation.  
We shift from season to season,  
then fall on the floor throwing tantrums perfected in childhood.  
I visited the bonsai trees in Prospect Park. They hadn't changed.  
Green has become unfamiliar. No heed paid to the garden.  
Wouldn't the blame be mine to some degree?

I could laugh or cringe at what I used to be.  
I would've convinced myself I had made it up in my head,  
but I know the pain, know this desire, know the consequence.  
Under cover of night, under stars dimmed by smog,  
I say a short prayer of thanks to  
pines still posing with only the slowest of sway.  
I have tried all this before, I have failed many times,  
but now such time has passed, and every doorway's vanished.

7.

Now such time has passed, and every doorway's vanished.  
I cannot beg what was taken, cannot beg what I have never known.  
I'm not good at being an audience member.  
I wrote my mom letters, saying she can't come near me again.  
She smiled with vinegar lips, locked the doors with her eyes.  
I have reached that ruthless age when I am no longer older but  
I am due for an aimless stroll through aisles illuminated by skylights.  
I dream my misfit skin finds a body to  
hatch myself into worthiness.  
Even now, the engine inside never shuts off,  
the only way to ward off possession.  
The men call it patience.  
I call it compression.  
It had been happening all day.

## Andrew Gardner

### Staring At The Ceiling Fan (A Cento)

Sources: Joshua Beatty “Sun Sick” (#2), Ariadne Alexis Macquarie “Portrait of my Lover in Situ” (#2), William Doreski “Riding The Ghost Train” (#1) and “Adventure of the Beard” (#1), Kait Quinn “Somewhere, We Bare Our Breasts and Live” (#1), Elizabeth Porter “My Daughter Is A Shapeshifter” (#1), Colin James “Erosion” (#1), Ben Nardolilli “Aqua Profonda” (#1), BEE LB “eulogy card” (#2), “buffalo66” (#5) and “less a mall & more behemoth” (#5), cm ellis “I’m Still Picking the Music” (#3), Damon Hubbs “Self Portrait as That Weird Theater Girl Crying at EPCOT” (#2), Ramsey Tawfick “Pick the warmth from the earth” (#4), Will Cordeiro “The Ventriloquist” (#6), Annika Bey “Atoms” (#7).

The creases looked heaviest when he felt  
the bark split itself gracelessly.  
I board the train and shake

oil smeared by adulterous grooms  
with tentacle hands,  
a hot summer’s worth of grime.

YouTube playlists and choruses of the restless young  
a sigh I could never achieve,  
even if smothered by love.

Something was bound to go wrong.  
he slept in the railyard last night,  
our many organs mating while our skins learn to overlap.

i do not belong but at times i am the only way to open...  
I want to be un-wound.  
I solo Spaceship Earth in standard sad girl verse—chorus—verse.

The birds dangling with cigarettes hanging out of their mouths,  
negatives on table, projected back  
natural adoration

flowing from my wet eyes.  
introspection is a funhouse  
I told him to redact.

A heart slamming into itself

you can feel your carbon shift?  
abandonment issues make you easy.

the electricity moves more viciously now,  
back light gas station halogen halo.  
even after death, the wasp can sting.

**CALL TO OUR LIPS**

**TO MAKE PALE ATOMS OF OUR NIGHTS**

A remix of Haley Bossé's "Ember Mouths" (#7) & Annika Bey's "Atoms" (#7), composed of words drawn exclusively from the two original texts. (There are no supplemental additions.)

Calls to return to our nights—pale, feral,  
suffice how *everything is*—to be broken,

to feel and dip, from our lips—our tongues  
imploding. Take my thumb to landfall—

your calls held to feel us—made you spoken  
for—to feel hits off my relic—for the return

to my nail—sitting, into our night, to feel  
and take your—imploding. And for what?

Now, my hammer surrounds you—to blaze  
in, burn, brew, bury our nights from breath

in carbon heaviness, slamming from behind  
to atoms—hurricanes to smoke and exhale,

our clotted storm, scythe and harvest vice  
your heart—clenched your amulet in my

teeth. To take in your pageant of rust and  
blood. In my mouth your ember of longing,

surrounding my shift to return your skin—flake  
what I feel below—the broken tongues of sleep.

**An Odd Couplet:**

FIRST, A REMIX;  
SECOND, A FORCED EXCHANGE

**ABOUT THAT BOY AND TABLE**

A one-to-one remix of Brennan Thomas' "About That Boy" (#7) and  
Geoffrey Aitken's "an own table" (#5).

it was Saturday  
*I am arrested*

*I have reached*  
May 12th, 1988.

i recall  
*that ruthless age*

sitting  
*when I am no longer older*  
commiserating  
*but old*

in the theatre  
café

*and god,*  
*these arrows fly*  
*hard at my heart*

the bitterness of  
tasting  
regret

*please kill my*  
*misery: put*  
*me in a box*

in a small cappuccino





Solipsism

Coastal Retreat

SOLIPSISM

After Colin James' "Erosion" (#1).

I am.  
 I mixed a soup of two skins in my stomach and for months it spun, churning the formula for  
 I hardened my life for the slop of birth, life-proofed a house with bubbled corners, trampoline  
 I bullied a woman into me and became a house of great teats, blushing. How easy it could be to  
 I was sorry for not knowing how to name remnants of abuse.  
 I was still awful. Bathing in sweat and spitting bits out  
 I strip her clean until she is all floss and feel  
 I woke wearing her red dress and her white teeth  
 I would pack into my car and swear I had to live  
 I threw out my fingernails until they were nubs,  
 I mean, they call it getting clean, but it gets  
 I tried to leave him, but I could not be brave.  
 I read my poems as incantation & invocation  
 I starved myself and licked the walls wet.  
 I keep getting things wrong. I sleep until  
 I am the void in my mother's mothertongue  
 I wrote a letter to the God of Tangerines  
 I am the relief in the bathroom mirror.  
 I slip into Africa or some wild mane,  
 I think of the blithely magnanimous  
 I wanted to be with your breath and  
 I met ted somewhere down the river  
 I wrote a letter when I was eight  
 I stepped into the picture frame  
 I pull a weapon out of the earth  
 I am the light exposed negatives  
 I cannot keep a secret  
 I am in a waiting mood.  
 I don't know why I keep it.  
 I did not forget to ask him  
 I gulp. Gobble up every one  
 i want to live. dear beloved,  
 i cannot beg what i have never  
 i walk the cylinder, a spinner  
 I mean, just look at this house,  
 I have longed to enter any frame

'I' is simply the common condition of all human mentality  
 John Fowles, *The Aristos*

Along the shoreline, a pale face  
 behind a flashbulb's futile efforts,  
*or so it seems,*  
 the sun shining on the hourglass  
 counting down days until the coast  
 disappears into the sea, until bodies  
 lie face down in brackish waters,  
 drifting in a state of rigor mortis,  
 hands trapped following the sands  
 of time to the base of a chamber  
 more dangerous than any weapon  
 made by mankind alone, each grain  
 a minute serenaded by giggles,  
 watched until the perfect moment—  
 when darkness descends and the artist  
 captures the mystery wondered by all  
 in a single strobe, millions of lumens bright:  
*what carries on after this life.*

Sources from Issue 7:

nat raum "the feminine urge," Annika Bey "Atoms," Megan O'Patry  
 "water hymn" and "words of the lonely dead men," Myfanwy Williams  
 "The Hatching," Veronica Tucker "Idle," Em Roth "under the billboard on  
 I-95" and "gospel xii," Angela Arnold "Let Me Eat Your Family,"  
 Jacqueline Rosado "In The Universe Where I Chose [You]" and "Some  
 Years Ago, I Was Possessed," Sumitra Singham "Toothbrush," Brennan  
 Thomas "About That Boy," Joshua Zeitler "Dry."

Salinger is dead

Sources from Issue 3: cm ellis "I'm Still Picking the Music," Geoffrey Aitken "the youth version," D.W. Baker "last of all," Kathryn Reese "Newell Highway, Moree," Damon Hubbs "Upper Valley," mari britt "11:56pm, eatery," William Slattery "Learning to Drive," Kiki Adams "Austin, Texas, c. 2012."

against the rushing mountain of you  
as if to grasp the wind  
with a frightening scream  
i want to stop  
to meet our muscles  
thunder and sin  
the road to the lake . . . kiss  
go all the way  
we point with glowing  
cigarettes  
the ancient milky way  
below  
the kissing bridge  
opens animal feelings  
demands i kill it  
i eat my fill  
i want to stop  
to pluck fibres from  
barbed wire  
i want to be un-wound  
use italics like  
musical notations  
while floating at the edge  
of traction  
i step on it  
sick  
of just liking people  
just sick  
of liking people  
don't care whether i go  
or stay  
the constellation  
down  
i eat my fill.

Q&A

Sources from Issue 6: Kelly R. Samuels "There and Here, with Footnotes," Charles Leggett "Clus Encounters of an Online Troubadour," Brent Raycroft "Ropes of Rock and Bells of Air" and "Are You Free," R. Gerry Fabian "Some Things Are That Simple," Will Cordeiro "The Ventriloquist" and "Split," Allison Burris "Today's Fire Danger," Christina Polge "hamlet at the gas station" and "legs extended," Salvatore Difalco "Night Life," Angela Arnold "The Day That Did," Devon Webb "January 13th."

What has been conjured /  
on your world of tattoos?

A newcomer / moving stone / into the deep /  
dark jaws / of a room / of poetry

This is one of those / random truths /  
that mapped / our dreams?

We used to dream / of the garden /  
as something other than / dead skin

What happened /  
watching the seams of reality / die?

We don't / feel touched by /  
those sun-spark dots / already cracked like a jar

Didn't you see / anything more than  
the chasm and the silence / of your life?

Yes, / we share a memory / of bathtubs /  
and mice / playing / with a ghost orchestra

Why not wait until / you're the last thing /  
under the hiss of the surf?

It begins getting old when /  
we shoot ourselves in the head with stupid ideas

## Night Longing



Sources:  
 Hannah Linden "From Our Living Room To The Wardrobe Of The Emperor's Clothes" (#4), J.L. Moultrie "homebody" (#4), nat raum "the feminine urge" (#7), F. Elliot "Chemical Imagination" (#4), Annika Bey "Atoms" (#7).

Canva elements.

## On tying myself up

After Alex Carrigan's "All This and He Lives with His Mother?" (#4) and inspired by Suze Kay's "DIY" (#4).

Crutches lean against the tree in the back of my wedding photo.  
 My father didn't want them by his side.

He rode a scooter around the reception;  
 said he hadn't fallen off the slackline—he'd just jumped.

I took 365 days to make the decision.  
 "Do you wanna go out?"

"No. But do you want to get married? Now."

I made sure the photos could tell I was observing more than being observed,  
 eyes shifty, always, smile secretive, resigned.

Why should a bride ever look so patient?

Only dull your teeth when there's an escape.  
 There'll be no need to gnaw once someone dies.

## Kathryn Reese & Sumitra Singam

### Dissonance/Tinnitus/Ghazal

After arushi (aera) rege's "kissing dreams" (#5).

[I become] an expanse of skin bared—maybe this is personhood.  
Cracking ribs open to say *darling, I'm here*—maybe this is personhood.

The surveyor clucking their tongue, wishing to put right  
the disarray in my internal scaffolding. Maybe this is personhood.

A lonely push of a single roller skate, bobby socks and lip gloss,  
a torn lip, an edge of skin waiting to be pulled though maybe this is personhood.

I want to be a miracle/ruined/remembered for the camera  
flash against the mirror, an over-exposed selfie and maybe this is personhood.

*I want you to be my world, baby*, the faults I won't own, all yours.  
Love is an expensive undertaking but maybe this is personhood.

This is my creation myth: all the wrong gods got drunk  
and vomited absinthe miracles into the desert and maybe this is personhood:

the jumbled mess of syllables. The heart beating despite its chemistry.  
The breath choked underwater. The machinery of body rusted through and  
maybe this is personhood?

A beading of sweat on a fuzzy upper lip, a girl folded and clipped into a sari,  
the closest thing to a princess in this family and maybe this is personhood.

Between the pleats, the pause before footfall, a choked word  
an unfamiliar mother tongue, the weight of unbelonging. Maybe this is  
personhood.

The space between what is and what is required of me.  
The lack and the knowing of it and the frozen incapacity—maybe this is  
personhood.

The gods who wrote this myth might be [arushi/Kathryn/Sumitra]—Nobody  
Disembodied. Present. Material, a sari to be folded or kissed and this is  
personhood.

Say my name. Blur the syllables. Repeat it back to me so many times, camera  
flash

caught in a mirror maze. I doubt my own tongue. I kiss with teeth. This. This is  
personhood.

Also inspired by:

BEE LB "DISCO" (#5), Damon Hubbs "King Lear, '87" (#5), Rose  
Ramsden "Give me a 90s makeover and I'll pretend I don't want to suck  
the lip gloss from your teeth" (#5), D.W. Baker "I know a guy who's soft  
and tough" (#5).

## Dawn, child not yet awake

Ekphrasis after Sarah (Ember) Bricault's "Custom Curve 1" (#6).

Chalky-white defrosted triangle of toast, crunch then soft with the tang of apricot jam, with the fatty slather of butter, with the bitter pull of tea, the chair back hard on my ischia, on the curve of my back, my legs not quite reaching to the floor, feeling like I should be drinking milk cold and sweating in a glass with a white moustache that does the opposite of aging me, with a skirt reaching to my knees and a bow tied at my back neat, and the calm anticipation of never having any responsibility for anything

## Deadname

Deadname

Base Poem: BEE LB's "eulogy card"

~~i take a name that was never mine and slot it between my brother's. like (the door and the jamb, i am the knife slipped between to jimmy the lock. i do not belong but at times i am the only way to open. this is a sliver of hope) let melt on my tongue, unwashed. i am slipping out of myself but my body remains. his body is ash and he's gone somewhere can't follow, despite— attempts— intentions— etc. i don't remember when he taught me how to slip a lock, a knife, or a card that no longer needs using, not a front door but a bedroom, not sealed only suggested. surely it was when my room was only the suggestion of a room, beams like the start of a cage, bed like the only safe place, dresser like the most beautiful thing, frosted glass like more than i deserved or knew how to keep. ~~by the toast and crumbs in the butter the stairs he dragged me up, the stall showed the cold floor. none of it matters but still feels significant. i took a name that was never mine and offered it like a gift to those that loved him. it will never belong to me and i'll never be free of it and no one asked me to use it but i did, a sacrifice freely given. five days and then nothing, then freedom— then the hint of an end like something new could ever come.~~~~

"I take a name, between the door and the knife. I do not belong to this hope. I am remains, ash, gone somewhere, despite - attempts. I don't need a safe place. The most beautiful thing I deserve. I took a name and offered it to freedom -"

## Theric Jepson

### Glitter sifts from sky, sifts hell from beauty or beauty

A *phorbe* after Christiana Doucette's "At a Loss" (#4).

Glitter sifts from sky,  
sifts hell from beauty or beauty  
from hell, our eyes,  
skyward, see it all.

Coating the windshield wipers,  
the glitter becomes an arc of light, our  
windshield a nuclear rainbow, our  
wipers, like ourselves, in transit.

As they whip back  
they reveal the empty highway  
whipping through the desert  
back into once-burnt hills.

Ice cracks the car,  
cracks our hearts.  
The only paths our  
car may take are both deathward.

Turns down twisting lanes.  
Down and up and through.  
Twisting our bodies, we travel. The  
lanes of hope narrow.

Does one find their  
one dream in irradiated deserts?  
"Find yourself first," my copilots says.  
"They're not us." We drive on.

So much road covered—  
much more than we imagined as this  
road began and we looked at our hands  
covered in blistering sores.

The cold answers bite.  
Cold to our bones, through burning skin.  
Answers we already know

bite our spirit but—still—we drive on.

Author's Note about the form: The *phorbe* is a verse form of my own creation, but it wasn't until some weeks after considering options for this remix issue that it occurred to me I could grow a *phorbe* in someone else's soul. I started pouring through issues looking for something that would both provide sustenance to the new poem while losing the least of itself and evoke new poetry in me as I read it. The poem I finally landed on was Christiana Doucette's "At a Loss" (Issue 4: *Haunts & Hometowns*); many of its lines are four words already—the ones that are longer I initially intended to take the first four from each but sometimes there was a better option. Regardless, the first line of each stanza from my own work is lifted direction from Doucette; her choices, line by line, direct my own, stanza by stanza, even as they reveal an entirely different landscape.

## Kristin Houlihan & Kathryn Reese

### Habitat, Haunted

Sources from Issue 4: Ewen Glass "My Grief I'm Told is All in My Back,"  
cm ellis "I Live in a Castle," Suze Kay "DIY," Jack B. Bedell "Empty (In  
Fragments)," J.L. Moultrie "homebody."

A split branch of the old elm  
nurses boneseed,  
ferment, and a colony of grubs.  
A lone daffodil, prostrate  
still blooms.

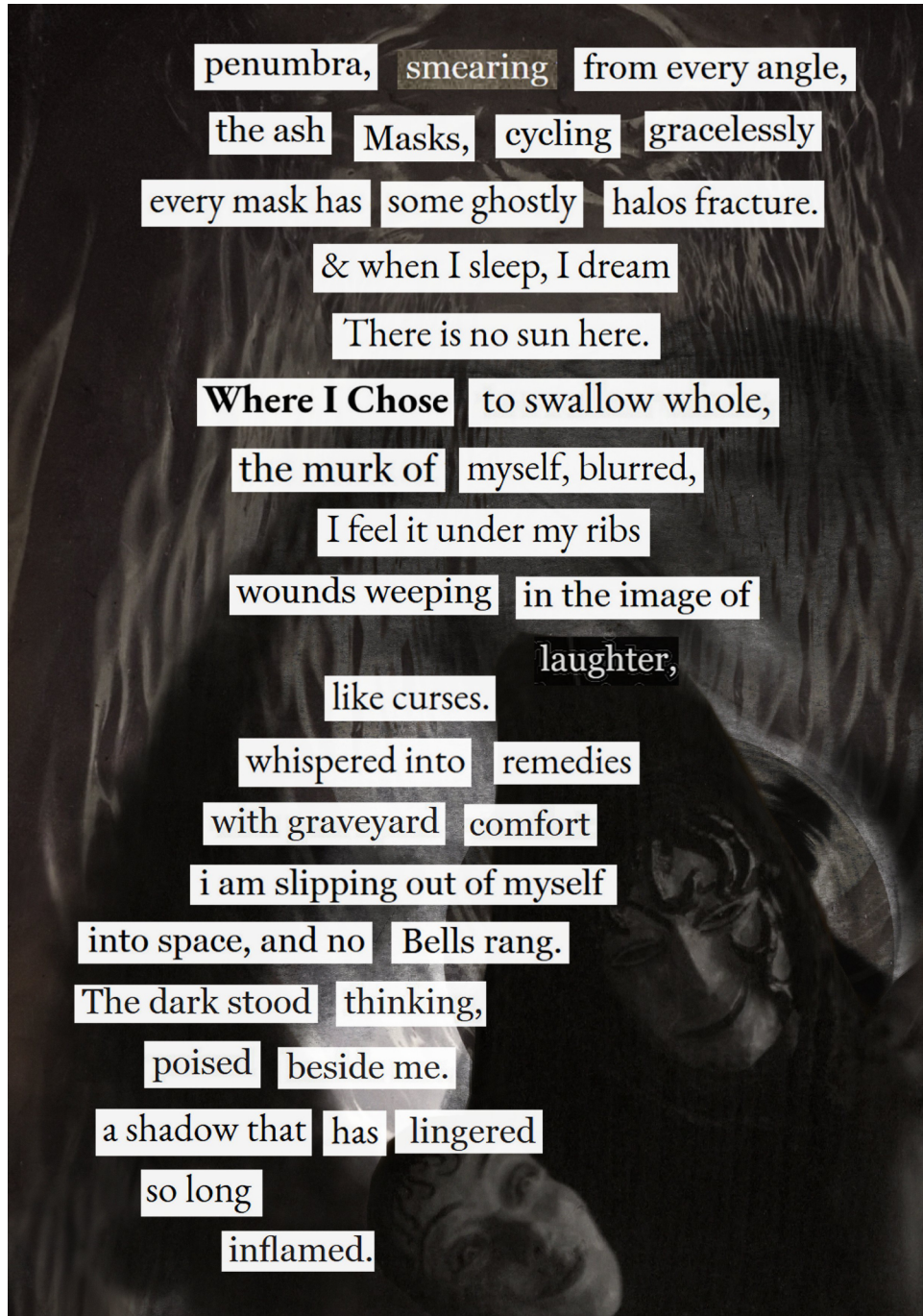
A battered green armchair  
cradled my grandfather's joints.  
Now he is gone, the dusty upholstery  
and torn foam is heavy with his spirit,  
contains its own living.

A thistleseed sleeps under my fingertip.  
What is a scar but a room  
that won't change unless you touch it  
too soon?

I touch.

Perhaps this is my final body,  
I'm left to live with whatever remains.  
This shadowed elm, blessed with  
rot, teeming with life.

Dusting Ashen Shadows



penumbra, smearing from every angle,

the ash Masks, cycling gracelessly

every mask has some ghostly halos fracture.

& when I sleep, I dream

There is no sun here.

Where I Chose to swallow whole,

the murk of myself, blurred,

I feel it under my ribs

wounds weeping in the image of

laughter,

like curses.

whispered into remedies

with graveyard comfort

i am slipping out of myself

into space, and no Bells rang.

The dark stood thinking,

poised beside me.

a shadow that has lingered

so long

inflamed.

Sources:

Issue 1:

William Doeski "Riding the Ghost Train," Corey Mesler "Wild Alone Man," Donald Zirilli "Diagnosis."

Issue 2:

Matt Thomas "Tasseography," Shannon Wallace "Mythopoetics of Hanno Verde Monet," Donald Zirilli "Stand Up," Ariadne Alexis Macquarie "Portrait of my Lover in Situ," Francis de Lima "This is a frame," BEE LB "eulogy card," Jack B. Bedell "But Lately I Find a Sliver of Mirror Is Simply to Slice an Eyelid," Richelle Lee Slota "Macy's," Myfanwy Williams "The Hatching."

Public Domain Images:

Doris Ulmann, "Ruth Page Performing with Masks," about 1920-1930, (#2).

Charnaux Frères & Cie., Grindelwald. "Grotte de Glace," about 1880-1890, (#2).

H. A. Lawrence and C. Ray Woods, "Solar Eclipse from Caroline Island," May 6, 1883, (#2).

R. Moreau, "Sitter Louie Fuller," 1900s, (#2).

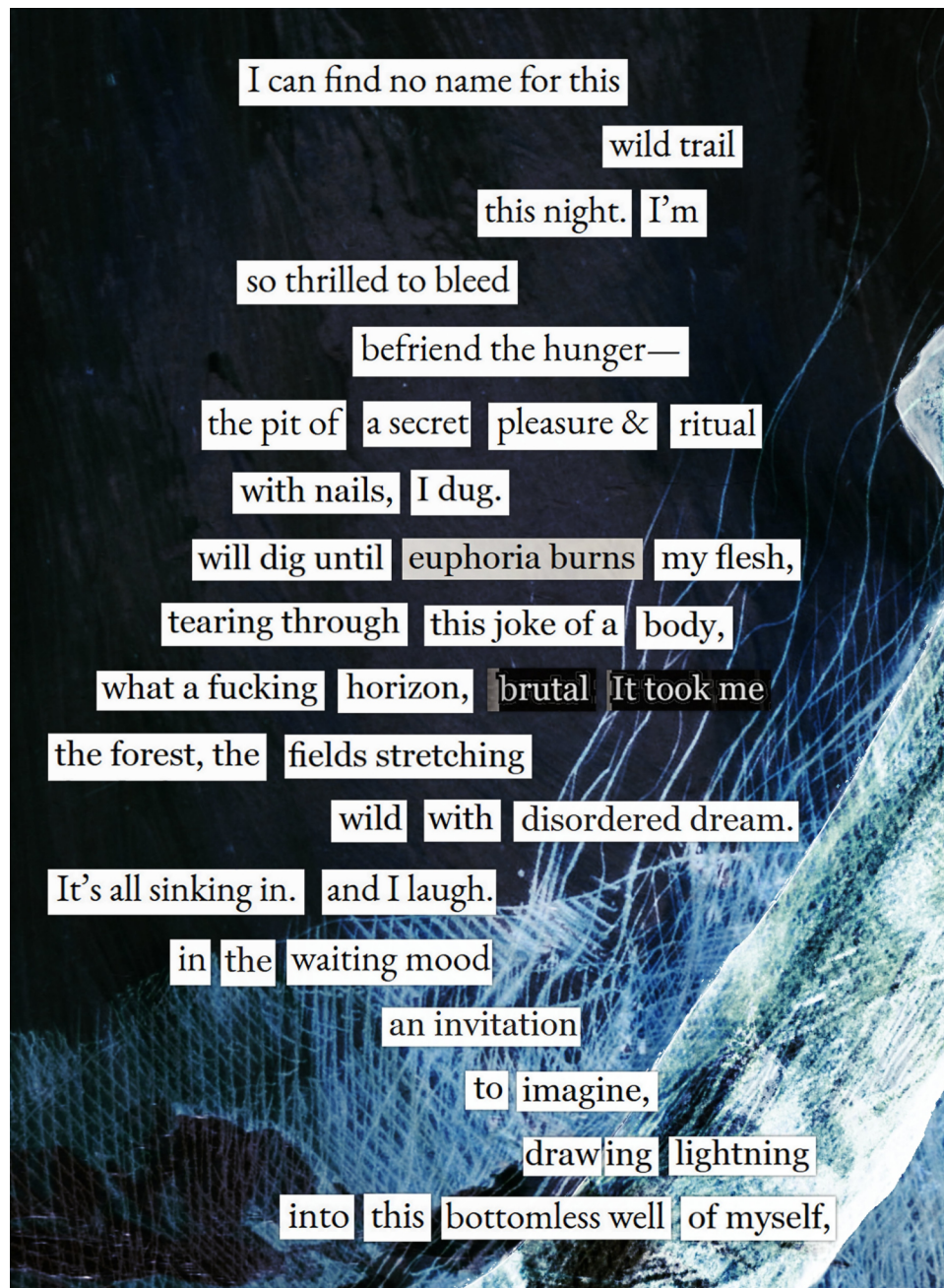
Issue 6:

Will Cordeiro "The Ventriloquist."

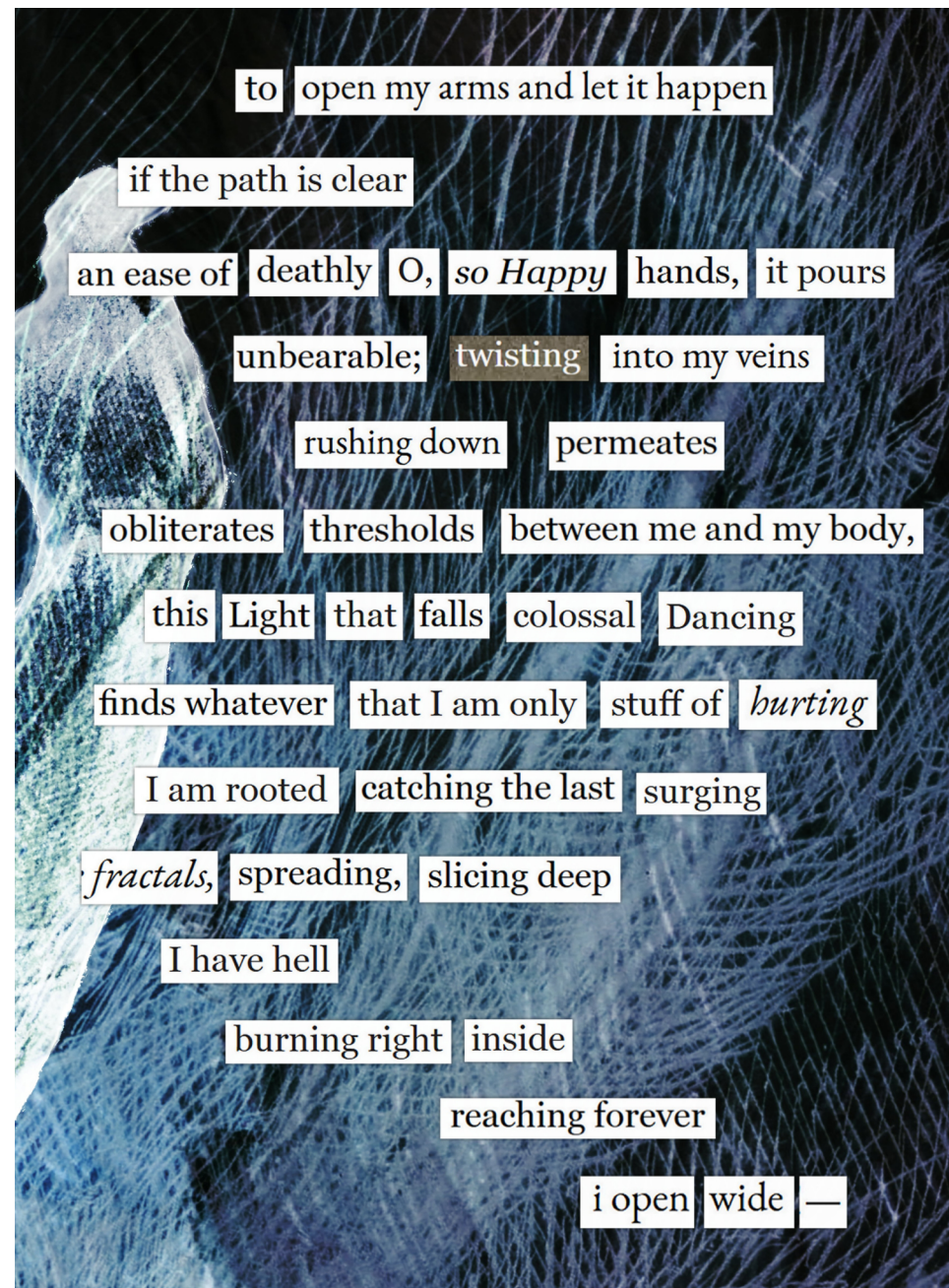
Issue 7:

Megan O'Patry "water hymn," Jacqueline Rosado "In The Universe Where I Chose [You]," Jihoo Bae "The Han of Janghwa and Hongryeon," Em Roth "under the billboard on I-95," Veronica Tucker "Idle," Samuel Day Wharton "Our Mothers."

Drawing Lightning



I can find no name for this  
wild trail  
this night. I'm  
so thrilled to bleed  
befriend the hunger—  
the pit of a secret pleasure & ritual  
with nails, I dug.  
will dig until euphoria burns my flesh,  
tearing through this joke of a body,  
what a fucking horizon, brutal It took me  
the forest, the fields stretching  
wild with disordered dream.  
It's all sinking in. and I laugh.  
in the waiting mood  
an invitation  
to imagine,  
drawing lightning  
into this bottomless well of myself,



to open my arms and let it happen  
if the path is clear  
an ease of deathly O, so Happy hands, it pours  
unbearable; twisting into my veins  
rushing down permeates  
obliterates thresholds between me and my body,  
this Light that falls colossal Dancing  
finds whatever that I am only stuff of *hurting*  
I am rooted catching the last surging  
*fractals*, spreading, slicing deep  
I have hell  
burning right inside  
reaching forever  
i open wide —

"Drawing Lightning" Sources:

Issue 1:

Donald Zirilli "Denver Big Blue Bear" and "Diagnosis," Kait Quinn "Somewhere, We Bare Our Breasts and Live," Ben Nardolilli "End of the Romance," William Doreski "Riding the Ghost Train," Stephen Grant "10 LAGNIAPPES," Damon Hubbs "Green Night."

Public Domain Images:

Augustus J. Knapp, "I was in a forest of colossal. fungi," 1897, (#1).  
Arthur F. Kales, "Dancing Nymph," 1917, (#1)  
Frederic Edwin Church, "Evening Twilight," 1870, (#1).  
Elihu Vedder, "Study for 'The Fates Gathering in the Stars,'" 1884-1887, (#1).

Issue 2:

Jessica Wills "animal girl (I-IV)," Donald Zirilli "Museum of the House Made From Doormats," Brandon Shane "Ogimi Village," Sandy Feinstein "Unspooled," Angela Arnold "The Thing in the Belly of the Plum," Kelly White Arnold "THREE WAYS OF LOOKING AT A CROW," Francis de Lima "Fairytale" and "This is a frame," BEE LB "to be read in front of a live studio audience," Hanan Akbari "Internal Gaze," brooklyn baggett "Centre of Athens," Shannon Wallace "Mythopoetics of Hanno Verde Monet," Jack B. Bedell "But Lately I Find a Sliver of Mirror Is Simply to Slice an Eyelid," Devon Neal "Wildflowers," Ariadne Alexis Macquarie "Portrait of my Lover in Situ," Matt Thomas "A Romantic Poem."

Public Domain Image:

Alphonse Legros, "Rope-yards," 1923, (#2).

Issue 6:

Brent Raycroft "Ropes of Rock and Bells of Air," Kelly R. Samuels "There and Here, with Footnotes," Will Cordeiro "Split," Angela Arnold "The Day That Did," Colin Griffin "Headlines 10/25/24 - 01/01/25," Christina Polge "hamlet at the gas station" and "legs extended," david woodward aka un-known "trip to Seville one windy night," Donna J. Gelagotis Lee "From Mitilini," Sarah (Ember) Bricault (intro text for the Blackwork Collection).

Issue 7:

Megan O'Patry "words of the lonely dead men," Myfanwy Williams "The Hatching," Em Roth "under the billboard on I-95" and "gospel xii," Veronica Tucker "Nest Instinct," Megan O'Patry "water hymn."

say eucalyptus say silver #2



Sources:  
Maddy Pope "Say" (#4).

Free-to-use Pexels Image: Jordy Toscano, "Fashionable Latina Woman in Urban Cityscape," (<https://www.pexels.com/photo/fashionable-latina-woman-in-urban-cityscape-30465097/>).

Girlhood Linger

All borrowed lines have been italicized.

Sources: a.d. "Long Distance Conversation" (#6), Angela Arnold "The Day That Did" (#6) and "the season for it" (#5), Christina Brannon "I really can't" (#5), Allison Burris "Today's Fire Danger" (#6), Lydia Rae Bush "in the flickering starlight i know" (#5), Salvatore Difalco "Night Life" (#6), Suze Kay "Love and Death in the Flower Shop" (#6), Sam Kerbel "The First War is Never the Last" (#6), Christina Polge "hamlet at the gas station" (#6), nat raum "the feminine urge" (#7), Brent Raycroft "Are You Free" (#6), Kathryn Reese "Hermit Crab Poem for the InstaSpiritual" (#6), August Ryan "election year" (#5), Kelly R. Samuels "There and Here, with Footnotes" (#6), Jen Schneider "Prince's Prints" (#5), DJ Wolfensohn "you too/can lose" (#5).

Once whim and wonder pooled  
like salted caramel sweet and salt  
mixing before melting down  
the waffle cone of a new body.  
Call it my new body. I don't always  
like to claim it. It claims me while  
*my cousins grow up in the shadows of sugar pines*  
lithe and in perpetual motion.  
I want to say something about childhood  
that you'll believe—worthy of the time  
*my knowledge grew of weeds and wonders*  
*a childhood covered in fine brown*  
*volcanic dirt.* It was almost idyllic.  
Or it is now that I can only remember  
parts of it: carefully receiving change  
after *buying a pack of watermelon gum*  
licking zebras onto my arm while Mom  
got gas. Did I go around *living on saccharine?*

*See her arrange the dollhouse's furniture,*  
down to the bookcase and the plates  
on the table. See her gather *dizzy green bottles of stars*  
She is all purpling twirling with *highlights*  
*of moonlit cloud.* In the morning  
*there are dragonflies.* At night,  
*elephants and pixie bears on unicycles,*  
toys moving out of the corner of her eye.

She feels like another country to me now  
 basking in the *sea-dancing sun*  
 of bedtime stories and her red cattle dog.  
 Her *delight in dolphins and sidewalk chalk*.  
 I've learned too much about dolphins,  
 but still love to draw. This was before  
 I started *putting lipstick on my whims*  
 and *gifting my desires their first*  
*pocket knives*. Before I looked up  
 'penis' in the English-Yiddish dictionary.  
 I lost all the letters I wrote to my older self,  
 but *the unforgettable haunts without evidence*.  
 How will I ever find her again? Today is  
*already cracked like a jar*, so *ask me the same*  
*question tomorrow* where the possibilities are  
 still in a Schrodinger superposition. Tomorrow  
 she and I will *flee into the woods*, her hand little  
 in mine and we'll *whistle barefoot in the yard*  
*where the willow grew* or will grow. Chronology  
 will be uncertain and beside the point as *we daisychain*  
*together in our efforts to draw the very sky*  
*into our nets*. Mostly what we'll do together is notice:  
*yes, it feels like being dipped in powdered*  
*sugar, it feels like running one's hand along*  
*the shell of a tortoise, popcorn salt*  
*and butter on our fingers*. It feels like a movie  
 where you know all the words and feel the music  
 swell and you look at each other feeling the same  
 exact thing. It feels like it could last forever.  
 Or at least for now, which is the most convincing  
 kind of eternity. *We swish dresses in the flickering*  
*starlight*. We admire every one of our misbehaving  
 hairs. We're in awe of each other constantly.  
 Yes, I have to believe that.

## Intergalactic Diner

*All borrowed lines have been italicized.*

Sources: Angela Arnold "The Thing in the Belly of the Plum" (#2), Kelly White Arnold "THREE WAYS OF LOOKING AT A CROW" (#2), Joshua Beatty "Sun Sick" (#2), Francis de Lima "Fairytale" (#2) and "This is a Frame" (#2), William Doreski "Adventure of the Beard" (#1) and "Riding the Ghost Train" (#1), MF Drummy "Dusty Apples" (#1), R. Gerry Fabian "Time After Time" (#1), Colin James "Dam Those Alligator Babies, Lower Me Down Into the Nest!" (#1) and "Erosion" (#1), Ben Nardolilli "Aqua Profonda" (#1) and "End of the Romance" (#1), Devon Neal "Wildflowers" (#2), Brandon Shane "Ogimi Village" (#2), Kait Quinn "Somewhere, We Bare Our Breasts and Live" (#1), Shannon Wallace "Mythopoeics of Hanno Verde Monet" (#2), Donald Zirilli "Denver Big Blue Bear" (#1) and "Diagnosis" (#1).

Skreeda and Jax have been coming to this diner  
 for revolutions—more galactic years  
 than they care to calculate,  
 especially with the regime change  
 and the calendar reversal ten or so spans ago.

They drink cup after cup of *bean-strangled coffee*  
 while their breakfast is prepared  
 by *oil-smearred tentacle hands*, quick and  
 dexterous and plating six omelets at once.

The whole place is clatter and tizzy.  
 This fellow is using their spearing utensil  
 to wave over a waitress. *Her smile*  
*a corkscrew* as she asks what she can do  
 for them. More morus jelly?

Jax brings himself back to their own booth.  
 Jax ordered the special,  
 which the hovering menu had described as  
*lovely cartilage, boneless*. Jax pokes *the runny,*  
*plummy centre of it* while Skreeda drones on.

Skreeda has this way about her.  
 She loves being in everyone's business  
 without looking both ways when

she crosses the docking zone.

Every few minutes a new shuttle docks,  
students mostly,  
antennae *bobbing and juking*,  
ordering refills at intervals while  
debating lab results.  
One asserts "*I found a new species!*"

Someone slurps a milkshake.

It may be true, Jax thinks, that the best  
creation of humanity  
throughout the multiverse  
was to give everyone a place to eat  
mediocre breakfast at every hour of the day,  
hot and heaping *beneath the sheen*  
*of sugared powder*.

Skreedda scoffs at the memory of yesterday's  
meeting. "Really—what did they expect?  
*Something was bound to go wrong.*  
You know better than anyone  
that the sales department  
is *a waste of intelligent protein.*"

Jax doesn't want to talk  
about the sales department.

They're very aware suddenly  
that there are so many beings  
all over this diner  
and at diners like this one  
throughout the administrative corps.

Just look at the *canyons on the moon*  
they're orbiting. Jax watches their  
reflections in the glass: *we're vagabonds*  
*in a neon wonderland.*

Skreedda can tell Jax is not really listening.  
She senses they're light years away.  
Out of this system by now.  
But she'd been dying to share this story.  
They've been friends for ages and no one  
skewers a ridiculous comment like Jax.

Or at least they used to gossip with her  
all the time, but she gets the feeling now  
that Jax wants her to be something else  
only she doesn't know what and she knows  
she isn't. Anyway she's too wound into

her story to stop now.

"*We thought we could entice him*  
*with a frontier or two—he's that type—*  
but, and you'll love this—  
he stood up on a chair and yelled  
What am I? *Another hole to stuff*  
*a variety of potatoes into?"* She laughs.  
Jax does not laugh.  
She's frankly a little annoyed now.  
She saves her best stories for Jax  
and it's like they don't even care.

An old song comes over the stereo  
"*O I come from a long line*  
*of mouth eaters,*  
each of us eatin' our fill,  
we chew and we swallow  
to fill the big hollow,  
then fry all our tears on the grill."

"Sad song," says Jax. "Yeah."  
Skreedda has finished her ovum orb.  
She loves *watching the egg bubble*  
when it arrives on the table.  
*She flirts with seconds.* Tries  
to decide what she's hungry for.

She looks out the porthole, musing  
about *whether they were unlucky*  
*to not have a bigger window* or if the host  
has it out for them after she overheard  
Skreedda talk about the horrible date  
she endured with the host's second cousin.  
It's a big universe, but sometimes  
it feels so small.

The diner's stream of customers  
is steady like a plasma creature's breath.  
Hot cakes with *an ease of warm butter.*  
Eggs prepared in every conceivable fashion.  
Glowing juice for the kids, which they  
will inevitably spill on the checkerboard  
floor. Everybody's going places.  
Everybody ends up here.

# Sidney Hartz

## Cityscapes

Sources:

Elizabeth Porter - My Daughter is a Shapeshifter, Issue 1  
Ariadne Alexis Macquarie - Portrait of my Lover in Situ, issue 2  
Connor Donovan - Wildflower [Sonnet], issue 4  
Suze Kay - PACKING UP THE HOUSE, issue 4  
Jack B. Bedell - Empty (in Fragments), issue 4  
Jessica Wills - animal girl (I-IV), issue 2  
BEE LB - eulogy card, issue 2

I am standing on the hollowed carcass of a tree  
overlooking this bilge of a metropolis.  
I Consider its hollowness.

The tall pine swaying with wind over  
my childhood bedroom back home  
and the garden just there on the horizon  
that blooms against the mountains of cinderblock walls  
feel like last remaining pieces of what was -  
and what still should be - here.  
Clinging on, like the spells of fading childhood  
in this landscape of Minimalist chrome.

They are trying to close the concrete loops on the outskirts  
They have been trying for years.  
the obelisk penetrating the sky  
is rising from the bloodbath we've made of this planet  
they will dig until there is no blood left.

Ben Nardolilli - End of the Romance, Issue 1  
Brandon Shane - Ogimi Village, Issue 2  
MF Drummy - Dusty Apples, Issue 1  
mari britt - 11:56 pm, eatery, issue 3  
Hanan Akbari - Domination, issue 2  
Devon Neal - Wildflowers, issue 2

These cities are all of us & none of us.  
We built them together, yes.  
But can you find me someone  
who worships the sewers, the bike lanes and bus stops,  
All the stuff that's built to be taken down or fall apart, and not  
the miles of wild sunflowers & acres of sea green alfalfa?  
Or the fresh bloom of vibrant poppies  
blazing with new color on a morning hillside?

There is enough world to go around several times,  
and yet -  
everywhere you go it's more of this.

These cityscapes will never belong to me  
and i'll never be free of them.

**silverskin**

Sources: Damon Hubbs “King Lear, ’87” (#5), Corey Messler “Wild Alone Man” (#1), Christina Polge “legs extended” (#6), Jen Schneider “Prince’s Prints” (#5), Veronica Tucker “Nest Instinct” (#7), Taylor Hamann Los “Dream with Fraying Edges” (#4), Daniel Dykiel “This Place Isn’t My Home Anymore” (#4), Jihoo Bae “The Han of Janghwa and Hongryeon” (#7), Allison Burriss “Today’s Fire Danger” (#6), Angela Arnold “The Day That Did” (#6), Lydia Rae Bush “in the flickering starlight I know” (#5), Em Roth “under the billboard on I-95” (#7) and “gospel xii” (#7), J. L. Moutrie “homebody” (#4), Alex Carrigan “Fed Herself” (#7).

and the moon is big and midwestern. it burns blue, unlike the blue god made, over the car and the house and the chasm and the quiet, the shag carpet of a wood-paneled family room, the bulging trash bag a few feet to the left of the kitchen. on the stove, a pot of beef stew simulates life. tendons melt in an aluminum shell. we put soft things inside hard things. again and again and again and. we run our fingers along the walls, and the walls turn their backs. somewhere else, our cousins grow in the shadows of pines, howl in chorus with coyotes. stretching their arms up, squirming and writhing, they conjure a verdant god, a god of the overgrown. they remember smallness and touch their final bodies. they tell us they’d rather let their blood soak into the moss. they say: everything broken in you calls for hammer and nail. but everything you’ve built will be eaten by the forest.

**To Hold**

“the word in the middle of the room spent all this time trying to hold us / when all we did was try to understand it, name it all the way into / oblivion, into a mine” — Francis de Lima “This is a frame” (#4)

having the  
 final word  
 fluctuate in  
 balance the  
 quiet middle  
 comprised of  
 reading the  
 theory room  
 having spent  
 capital all  
 situated this  
 dying time  
 empire trying  
 relentlessly to  
 maintain hold  
 over us  
 deter when  
 mined all  
 resources we  
 routinely did  
 damage was  
 thought try  
 less to  
 ed understand  
 dying it  
 earned name  
 plate it  
 containing all  
 of the  
 heartless way  
 language into  
 meme oblivion  
 ntoes into  
 deadly a  
 mpheta mine

inside



Sources:  
Catherine McGuire "Anger Depression Mandala" (#6) and Julia Biggs "Surprise" (#7).

Public Domain Images:

Stephen Thompson, "Gorge and Source of the Hot Springs," 1866, (#2).  
Charles-Victor Hugo with Auguste Vacquerie "Auguste Vacquerie at a Window, Marine Terrace," c. 1853. Eugène Atget, "Boulevard de Strasbourg, Corsets," c. 1912, (#2).

outside



Public Domain Images, cont'd:

Unknown, "Lover's Eyes," ca. 1840, (#2).  
Unknown, "Unidentified man in costume with back to camera, going through side of a curtain," 1870-1875, (#2).  
Fernand Khnopff, "Femme accoudé à une table, les mains devant le visage," about 1902, (#2).  
Charles Aubry, "Untitled (A Study of Leaves)," 1864, (#2).  
James McNeill Whistler, "The Kitchen," 1858, (#2).

## Mei Backof

### Someday I'll be Eaten by a Passerine

Sources: Donald Zirilli “Diagnosis” (#1), Angela Arnold “The Thing in the Belly of the Plum” (#2), Devon Neal “Wildflowers” (#2), Jessica Wills “animal girl (I-IV)” (#2), Oz Hardwick “Red Zone/Comfort Zone” (#4), Francis de Lima “97 Ways to Say Apocalypse” (#4), Taylor Hamann Los “Dream with Fraying Edges” (#4), Connor Donovan “Wildflower [Sonnet]” (#4), Suze Kay “Love and Death in the Flower Shop” (#6), Allison Burris “Today’s Fire Danger” (#6), Kathryn Reese “Hermit Crab Poem for the InstaSpiritual” (#6), Christina Polge “legs extended” (#6), Eden Chicken “Cassandra” (#6), Em Roth “under the billboard on I-95” (#7), Jihoo Bae “The Han of Janghwa and Hongryeon” (#7), Jacqueline Rosado “In The Universe Where I Chose [You]” (#7), “Some Years Ago, I Was Possessed” (#7), and “Ideas for Self-Preservation” (#7).

These fuckers call me [A PERFECT PEACH OF SOFT SPOTS], and I’ve got no business here.

But I know what happens next, [THE IMPATIENCE OF FINGERS], I know [ALL OF GOD’S LAUGHTER], and fuck how [NOTHING SEEMS LIKE ENOUGH ARMOR] — all I have are stories, words that remake me a liar, the [SERIF] of someone else’s suffering and it’s not mine, not yet.

So until then I’ll [HAND-]write [WITH THE BITTER TRIMMINGS] of [A]nother [WOMAN]’s [LEGS] — I’ll [BREED] [ALL THE] hungry [FLIES], I’ll set them for the meal — here, in this husk — false [TEMPERS] [IN] my [PELVIS], an [ACHE THAT IS AS OLD, OR OLDER] than me, than any fruiting yew — a [GIRL WILL CROAK LIKE ROADKILL] and [NOBODY HAS EXPLAINED WHAT HAPPENS TO ROADKILL], not really —

— and as [THE GIRLS GO MISSING AND NO ONE BOTHERS TO LOOK], this is how I sweeten — curl, I cry — I peel.

I know [WHAT] [COMES, HORNED], [GREEDY / EVEN FOR THE DECAY AND LOAM] — but would I [OPEN MY ARMS AND LET IT HAPPEN]? Will I [WELCOME IT], having dreaded it, all this time?

Will [GOD] weep — or laugh — behind me?

He’ll be a [FIST IN MY HAIR] — I think about it, you know — the [SOUND OF ME] — [SPLAYED BARE] — [SOMEONE ELSE’S PLEASURE] [IN MY THROAT] — [LEAVING NOTHING BUT A SPINE].

He, they, they have it all, and I’d kill for it — [THE HORROR], the privilege, the passerine.

Fuck [TOO MUCH FLESH] — I want to [LIVE WITHOUT / THE ANATOMY] — [TO GROW BIRDSKIN], [GOD], tell me only of sweetness — don’t let me feel it, please — please, turn me [TO FEATHERS OR CHITIN] —

— oh, [GOD], I am fruit, female, fig violin, doomed to this [LINE OF MOUTH-EATERS] — but [BATHING IN SWEAT AND SPITTING BITS OUT], I can’t undo my dance, I’ll [WAKE UP IN KNOTS], [BEING UNMADE], sweet and rotten and all putrefaction, bracing in grey matter for the day — moment — second these aren’t someone else’s words.

Who to be [LONELIER THAN GOD], but something with flesh, without the privilege of wings — the first fruit Eve swallowed?

[MAKE IT WILD], okay? I’m 22 now, still got my [RUNNY, PLUMMY CENTRE] and you can fuck it, fuck it, fuck it over with — it’s okay — it’s all right — I’m ready — even though I’m [AFRAID I AM GOING TO BREAK].

Purpose

blackout of Jack B. Bedell's "But Lately I Find a Sliver of Mirror Is Simply to Slice an Eyelid" from Issue 2

[redacted] i [redacted]  
 find what [redacted] i can—  
 [redacted] in [redacted] hell [redacted]  
 [redacted] in [redacted]  
 skin— [redacted] in every [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 [redacted] image of [redacted]  
 [redacted] space, and [redacted]  
 [redacted]  
 i [redacted]  
 [redacted] breath [redacted] e [redacted].

Disgruntled Puppet

In dialogue with Scott Ennis' "Hamlet Puppet" (#2).

Within a certain moment of mischance,  
 amidst a day of zero fame, I found  
 I had been purchased by a strangest man  
 too prompt to a most common trade.

He brought me to his dull abode by hand  
 where I was eager to disclose my tales.  
 And so, with lays my great begetter sang  
 I blessed his ears—to no discerned avail.

Imploring him to heed as best he can  
 the cadence in my melody, he cupped  
 his ears inside his hands and cried "Iamb!  
 Now grant me one unhindered sup of tea!"

Then couplets rolled as thunder from his mind.  
 Whose bosom clouds, I say, poured forth an ink  
 of no controlled enthusiasm's kind.  
 Our bard is owed another royalty methinks.

But then—you'd not believe the very sight,  
 he rose up from his chair and searched his study;  
 with feigned unease he named his blight of being:  
 "Haunted by a ghostly literati!"

He grudged me of my rightful pay—for it  
 was insufficient sin, that day, to seize  
 me as an isolated bit of my  
 beloved home inside the Hamlet play.

The memory will live forever—this,  
 beside the culprit's name—one cruel Scott Ennis!

**on witnessing an arrest**

lines mixed & mashed from Issue 4: Francis de Lima's "97 Ways to Say Apocalypse" and J.M. Summers' "Evan Evans."

the moon's bastard breaks the sidewalk in two, the rhythm of drink on his breath / a branded bird returning to a familiar place / come now, the bottle is a heart is an empty promise, a quickened yearning / this is not a condemnation / when jesus washed the feet of the whores & the queers & the drunks with salted water / did he not want to hear / did he not want to know / said another way: a man walks the pavement with his blackened toes / & the frost / & the cruel crack of blue lights follows while the ocean surrenders to itself, over & over / rot is only another failed remembrance / i once prayed, let me be all of god's ears / let me not be forgotten / i imagine my mother-preacher, listening / & the birds, the sky ablaze in flashing & ache / & the birds, cacophonous / & the birds / as the waves overtake another winged no one / another creature, so like me, made of moonlight & sorrow.

**In Answer To Your Question**

*Can I try again?*  
(Hanan Akbari, "Internal Gaze," Issue 2)

pot of stone soup on the hearth, the cry that arises when it boils over

\*\*

*But see how it shares its own shaky future with yours, in so many unsaid words?*  
(Angela Arnold, "The Thing In The Belly Of The Plum," Issue 2)

there, in the under-  
growth, a reason why  
a dark eye  
stares a long  
wonder of an ear  
saying *shhhhhh*  
I can hear you now  
I can see now I can see

\*\*

*Do the wasps sting more alive or after they die?*  
(Joshua Beatty, "Sun Sick," Issue 2)

it's pre-dawn here as I write this  
the light grows steadily brighter  
I do not yet know what leaf  
I will hide under, waiting,  
for the end I knot another paper  
cell either my prison or my brood

\*\*

*Does your longing suffice?*  
(Annika Bey, "Atoms," Issue 7)

tell them what you notice about the painting  
tell them the hillsides were done in thick slabs  
tell them the trees were brushed on with horsehair  
tell them why there are no clouds  
tell them about the figures lolling on the blanket  
tell them about bloodletting & leeches  
tell them again & again that the serpent is not *that* serpent  
tell them still lifes are not your style

tell them the chromiums, the mercuries, the cobalts  
tell them the closer they look the more they will dream

\*\*

*Who doesn't need to catch up on their sleep?*  
(Will Cordeiro, "The Ventriloquist," Issue 6)

coffee & darkness  
the rime of salt on the windows  
a pocketful of moss  
pounding of the waves on the shore  
the fox on the lawn  
driftwood piled into castles  
flags raised above them in too many colors  
the eagle we saw floating  
on the updraft above the dunes  
we might have thought we were dreaming  
this was the last time you saw the sea

\*\*

*Was it worth it?*  
(a.d., "Long Distance Conversation," Issue 6)

my ribs took a battering / each cough an agony  
bruised from within / still I think I see yellow  
each offered breath hitched / hilltop lights  
behind my eyes / I think I see the town below  
red roofs blue doors / radio antenna  
don't make me laugh / the pain is too great

\*\*

*Do you want to commit tax fraud with me baby?*  
(Bryana Dawkins, "GOLD DIGGER!," Issue 5)

we sit on the rim of a vat  
of grape juice & watch  
it froth the value added  
is incalculable the wine  
with its esters, phenolics,  
terpenes with its social  
properties, its sloshy lalas,  
its personhood will be worth  
so much more but for now  
as carbon dioxide rises up  
around us we must decide  
to stay out is to live  
to go in is to die

\*\*

*You didn't die there either so why should you here?*  
(Francis de Lima, "Fairytale," Issue 2)

fate in the other room pink-prick of tincture  
of geranium a follicle you cleanse again  
& while we meditate on the place/anti-place  
it's time really that gathers the flowers  
grinds them to pulp immerses them in ethanol  
& weeks later drips a drop on the smooth  
forehead of your beloved ready for the funeral

\*\*

*Is it insurmountable?*  
(Salvatore Difulco, "Blanket Problem," Issue 2)

snow-dusted Douglas firs create a skyline  
star-dust falls onto our upturned faces  
dusty-scented, our parkas bulk us out  
we trace our names on the dust-covered benches  
all this dust - & we don't know  
whether we are beginning or returning

\*\*

*What would happen if I could un- some of the disquiet?*  
(Connor Donovan, "Wildflower [Sonnet]," Issue 4)

You are a lonely volunteer, my love,  
standing tall among the devil grass;  
no doubt put there by a mourning dove  
one morning, as it made its pass.

I wish I knew your proper name. That sound,  
called out by wind-dried lips, would resonate  
about the house & fill it up. Around  
a hundred bees would dance, take your bait,

fly back to hives hidden behind the fence,  
to make their sweet & golden honey gift.  
But wait! a disquiet comes, that rends

the day. A man with snips takes you away.  
You were too pretty to escape that grift;  
so, lovely, now you'll wilt for that man's play.

\*\*

*Why didn't I leap aboard when I had the chance?*  
(William Doreski, "Riding The Ghost Train," Issue 1)

a grimdark rain, or a hammer blow  
John Henry's heart tattoo'd like a blessed sacrament  
on the bicep of the world  
you will leave the tunnel like a brick-  
work, ochre & chalky a chance is all you get

\*\*

*How does one find their way back when so much road has been covered?*  
(Christiana Doucette, "At A Loss," Issue 4)

I never once left a home  
any place I went to became that for me  
like river rocks tumbled in a polisher,  
home was constantly improving  
with every move returning?  
now that's a lost art

\*\*

*Whatever became of her?*  
(MF Drummy, "Dusty Apples," Issue 1)

nobody finds out all at once once busy season starts  
all the crops will ferment in their fields their fields of study  
include botany & rancor don't hold on to the ideal  
shape of a person because rain will do things no shape  
can hold up against nobody finds all the apologies necessary

\*\*

*Do you still retract from open palms?*  
(Daniel Dykiel, "This Place Isn't My Home Anymore," Issue 4)

chance rules all here  
the dance of dice  
cruel pull of jacks  
from a marked deck  
snick of pocketknife / blade drawn  
across the wooden desk  
a hash to score for you  
a hash to score for me

\*\*

*I'll grab the keys and we go, yeah?*  
(cm ellis, "I'm Still Picking The Music," Issue 3)

interior, a late-night CVS, self-checkouts all broke & no cashier to be  
found.  
our needs are too great. the aisles are strangely clear of debris.

shelf after shelf is carnage – the tampons locked away, mucinex locked  
away,  
liquor all locked away...  
whatever our plan was, it failed, but at least the instrumental versions of  
80's hits  
keep playing, playing

\*\*

*"To be or not to be?"*  
(Scott Ennis, "Hamlet Puppet," Issue 2)

better answerers than I have wasted lives  
to end where they began & so whatever drives  
one to retread a futile path must be excised  
before "what foul beast" is tragically reprised

\*\*

*If this is beyond you, I don't care, do you?*  
(Louis Faber, "MEMO TO MEMOIR," Issue 2)

only facts please: out past the darkness between the stars is another glow,  
faintly apparent only to the newly born, sitting in random chairs around  
a table for two & we should all love that this is still true today (because  
someday it may not be) & when you are born you will wonder what  
went into the making of the world (for at this time you are yourself all  
there is of the world) & you will be the only thing that can tell the  
difference between the trees & the ghosts of trees

\*\*

*Why shouldn't you sit here on your way somewhere else?*  
(Eóin Flannery, "Washed up in the city," Issue 4)

chrome-shine as candlelight / cathedral on a hill, its limestone glowing /  
clank clank / clank clank / like you could know where this car carries us  
/ this is a bridge / this not a bridge / city surrounded by water / beige  
cliffs slick with salt spray / day after day it pains me to stay honest /  
clank clank / moon-faced lawyers watch you crumble / clank clank /  
my birthday was a clown-shaped hole / candle-shine in the window /  
we stop the car, look up / limestone tumbles down

\*\*

*How to shepherd a pie, like the shepherds did?*  
(Stephen Grant, "10 LAGNIAPPES," Issue 1)

O the lanolin they spread like labneh  
on the linoleum. It's a game we're playing.  
You won't buffet me like the mountain

waves of the Pyrenees, not again. Not now  
there's laughing in the world.

\*\*

*How many times do you have to forgive me for calling you Claire instead of Cordelia?*  
(Damon Hubbs, "King Lear, '87," Issue 5)

pretend we were preparing a home pretend  
the fireplace worked too well you were hot  
you sweated through your long johns slick  
doubling of vision in a fever dream pretend  
a dirty carpet pretend a book open to sicko's  
monologue & you memorized it all pretend  
you spoke it back to me & then your clothes  
caught fire the clues are in the ash all around

\*\*

*Remember, after your first day of Kindergarten, how you gaped to see the house cleaner  
than you left it?*  
(Suzé Kay, "DIY," Issue 4)

Saturday of storms Sunday of storms  
someday we will learn to thrust  
our thoughts out along the lines of storms  
someday we will raise our heads from where  
they were ducked in the bathtub  
of the dark loud night & ride our fear  
up into a thunderhead follow the lightning  
down to the lone tall tree & bellow out  
in the voice of thunder that storms  
will never cause us harm again

\*\*

*Do you blame me for lying?*  
(BEE LB, "to be read in front of a live studio audience," Issue 2)

no my sweet  
flying is for the birds  
& the gryphons  
but not ever  
for ones like you  
whose wings are yet  
nubbins & will  
remain pale blue  
like the Cassius  
who now I think it –  
sorry – can lie too

\*\*

*We're the end, aren't we the end?*  
(Corey Mesler, "Just," Issue 1)

edges are endings, so we're told  
when we reach them but edging  
closer is a larger thing a sun  
a slew of ski-doo's duckweed trailing  
in the water we are an end  
yes we are ending, but also mending

\*\*

*Why don't you stop and talk?*  
(Abigail E. Myers, "To A Son Of Apollo," Issue 5)

winterdeep in another passion-  
project: to take drops of dew  
& freeze them in place along  
an oak leaf don't balk  
at the scale of my need  
we're months from acorns yet

\*\*

*How coy am I?*  
(Megan O'Patry, "words of the lonely dead men," Issue 7)

No slick ripostes as you sit beneath cherry trees in spring. I wanted  
nothing from you but your words. You let them go, like the pink petals  
drifting down upon your lap, book open to your favorite page: the first.  
The end will come like a dagger in the back for me. I hope to lay myself  
at your feet. Next time you open the book, the petals will have dried &  
stained the page, but that was what you wanted anyways.

\*\*

*What was the song we loved?*  
(Christina Polge, "hamlet at the gas station," Issue 6)

beat after beat my heart kept going, red  
sweet chili sauce on dumplings around the lazy susan  
noodles & broth to make my nostrils burn  
fizz of the cola I gulp waters my eyes  
beat after beat, the old drumming of a good life

\*\*

What of my own two hands, weak tendons slowly coiling to form a fist?  
(nat raum, "okay," Issue 5)

\*\*

white knuckles tremble  
blue vein, blue star tattoo, breath  
holding tea mug's steam

\*\*

Was it an audible click under the hiss of the surf?  
(Brent Raycroft, "Ropes of Rock and Bells of Air," Issue 6)

2700 miles west  
the Juan De Fuca plate  
dives beneath the continent  
you can't miss it, echoing  
through the Laurentian  
craton, adding to the world

\*\*

You have a core wound, don't you?  
(Kathryn Reese, "Hermit Crab Poem for the InstaSpiritual," Issue 6)

IDK why I hold on  
to this green plastic cup  
from where my father worked  
I never lived in Mississippi  
never was interested in The South  
don't like to drink out of plastic  
but the last time I saw him  
not in hospital  
there it was  
& I took it

\*\*

Have you ever ridden a bicycle?  
(August Ryan, "too cool," Issue 5)

chain-smoked a pack of Parliaments in Southie the night my brother died  
/ he was out on the cape & called a couple of toughboys the wrong thing  
/ he called me after but I couldn't hear anything but whispers / I say this  
because sometimes ghosts are not what you think / I think of the  
lighthouses he swam to / the buoys he towed from lane to lane / always  
he was swimming, even through my memories / sometimes ghosts are  
just the static in a phone call when you're talking to your mother & you  
swear you hear the chains creaking from the time he rode straight up  
Winter Hill behind the house in Somerville / I say this because calling is  
always the right thing to do, if you still have a voice

Should I try for incomprehensible pines?  
(Kelly R. Samuels, "There And Here, With Footnotes," Issue 6)

lonely wolf  
we hear you  
howling in your lonely way  
we can only say:  
be well this night  
take the moon between your teeth  
in the morning  
the hunters will come  
you will need to be human again

\*\*

Are (s)hips wide enough to weather the storms of tomorrow?  
(Jen Schneider, "Prince's Prints," Issue 5)

below the massif  
a toy town  
relies on toy  
shipments  
of toy food  
that mostly arrives  
via toy containers  
purchased &  
mailed from the backs  
of glamour magazines  
the canals  
that provide access  
are flooded  
with blood  
I don't know  
if it is real  
taste it & see

\*\*

Does my writing devour you, unkindly?  
(Myfanwy Williams, "The Hatching," Issue 7)

photorealism's all the rage, eyes irising open  
like the camera's mouth insatiable,  
those little boxes of blackness press down  
hard on the trigger, your tongue see  
what is made there see the 3 flowers  
lined up the tricks of perspective  
red blue purple bulbs squeezed  
by the damp earth a remote trigger  
for the visceral explosion of spring

## Contributors & Notes

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*A waste, isn't it?*  
(Joshua Zeitler, "Dry," Issue 7)

I spent the drive listening to the Ink Spots, soaking in those harmonies. I never did like much doo-wop, but these guys, man...I got lunch at this diner in Hagerstown where my grandfather grew up. It was decent. My mom told me about her summers there, the year she & her sisters & cousins weren't allowed to go to the swimming pool, even though it was a such a hot year. I sang along to "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" like it was true. It mostly was. You see what you want in the past, I think, before you even see what you want.

\*\*

*Time gets unzipped & is that a skeleton peeking through?*  
(Donald Zirilli, "Diagnosis," Issue 1)

talcum-fine the bone-drill leavings  
after the bone drilling so they must be blown  
with puffs of breakfast breath unto a town-  
hall meeting where ripped jeans are formal  
wear & what would then leave you satisfied  
if not that snickety sound those glow-dark eyes

At the time of writing, **Mei Backof** is a Santa Clara University undergraduate, developing a horror short story and essay collection entitled *Bitter-Milk Drunk*. Her previous works have been published in magazines like *manywor(l)ds*, *Sardine Can Collective*, and SCU's *The Owl*. You can find her Chill Subs profile under the magazines she has contributed to: [chillsubs.com/profile/audreybackof-mei/](http://chillsubs.com/profile/audreybackof-mei/)

**Author's note:** Suffering in our sex and in our gender is unavoidable, and all art has an undertone of sexuality; everywhere I read, the words are informed by femininity, masculinity, by the force, denial, victimhood, and healing of each. I felt that was true in all of the pieces I chose for my collage poem, one way or another. "Someday I'll Be Eaten by a Passerine" is my reclamation of a moment that, while it has not yet happened, I can feel coming.

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**D.W. Baker** is a poet, critic, and editor from St. Petersburg, Florida. His poems appear in *Identity Theory*, *Acropolis Journal*, *Blood+Honey*, and past issues of *the engine(idling)*. His reviews and essays appear in *Version (9) Magazine*, *Philly Poetry Chapbook Review*, *Variant Lit*, and more. He edits poetry for *Libre*. See more of his work at [www.dwbakerpoetry.com](http://www.dwbakerpoetry.com).

**Author's note:** This poem uses a form I call the riverbed, in which two columns of words form banks which guide the flow of consciousness. Interested readers should look for my essay explaining this form in geological terms, forthcoming in a *River River Books* anthology, titled "Meander, Erosion, and Deposition in the Contrapuntal Poem." Although the form does not require a Golden shovel quotation technique, using one pre-forms the river's right bank, leading to a fascinating series of constrained opportunities.

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**evelyn bauer** is a writer and bookseller living on stolen land somewhere on the Eastern Seaboard. Occasionally you may find her climbing up a rock like some sort of goat. You can find some of her other work at [evelynbauerpoet.com](http://evelynbauerpoet.com). Her poetry has been published in such mags as *fifth wheel press*, *The B'K*, *Moist Poetry Journal*, and *Heavy Feather Review*.

**Author's note:** I've been really enjoying working in collage in various ways recently, so when *the engine(idling)* put out a call for collage inspired poems I was excited to combine the prompt with literal collage! It was fun trawling through the archives for words that caught my eye, and for published art that had fun shapes, colors, and textures. The textures got extra fun in some parts because my printer jammed!

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**Allison Burris** writes whimsical and subversive poems from Oakland, CA. Her most recent publications are in *Redheaded Stepchild* and *NonBinary Review*. You can often find her at the library looking for a magic portal or getting up to some kitchen witchery. She writes about creativity on Substack at *Ink in the Archives*. Connect with her: <https://linktr.ee/allisonburris>.

**Author's note:** I absolutely love visual collage, but I'd never really tried it with poetry before, so this was a new challenge. My first mission was to start collecting, and I knew parameters were going to help with this immensely! "Girlhood Lingerin'" was a bit more intuitive—I knew I wanted to use my own poem from Issue 6, and the lines that jumped out at me were about my cousins and how they're growing up. So I felt that childhood and the experience of being young was what I'd look for in the other poems. I knew I needed to narrow things down so I decided to survey from 3 issues and pick individual lines to weave together. I feel like this poem came together like a braid.

It was so much fun writing the first poem, I wanted to craft another. I thought maybe this technique could be a way to breathe life and details into a poem I've started but that hasn't fully come together yet. The sci-fi setting let me adapt the space I'd started to build and make it richer and fuller by incorporating new details and ideas from poems that weren't related to the topic at all. Collage let me find these striking lines and re-contextualize them into an imagined world.

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**Lydia Rae Bush** is a poet exploring embodiment and social-emotional development. Rae's work is Best of the Net nominated, and her publications include *Free Bleeding* (dogleech books, '25) and *Keeper, Seeker, Dragon of the Sea* (Bottlecap Press, '25). Lydia is an associate editor for *Sage Cigarettes Magazine*, and can be found pretty much anywhere, generally wiggling.

**Author's note:** The connection between the poems I pulled from—one pertaining to family you're handed and the other to family you choose—provided a really seamless way for me to connect inspirations from my own life that might have otherwise stayed latent. The concrete story-telling of the original poems created a great path forward.

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**Kenneth M. Cale** is a lapsed Scot who lives in Oregon and makes word/image things. His chapbooks include *Nostalgia* (Petrichor, 2026), *Midnight Double Feature* (C22 Press, 2025 / Sweat Drenched Press, 2020), and *Greater Vegas Bleeds into the Dreams of my Cryogenic Slumber* (Steel Incisors, 2022). You can find him on bluesky: @kennethmc.bsky.social.

**Author's note:** I'm mainly a collagist, so the process was similar to other works I'd done.

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**A.C. Cambers** is a member of NYU's Veterans Writing Workshop. Her poetry has appeared in *Yearling*, *Eunoia Review*, *Same Faces Collective*, *Last Leaves*, and

*Defenestration*. Connect with her at [happyprettypsweet.substack.com](http://happyprettypsweet.substack.com).

**Author's note:** I love creating collage poems. Remixing lines from other poets feels like a way to keep the conversation going. For this issue, I challenged myself by exploring visual poetry. With "Night Longing," I wanted to capture the dizzying feel of being alive right now, so the words spiral and shrink until you reach the heart of the poem.

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**Alex Carrigan** (he/him) is a Pushcart-nominated editor, poet, and critic from Alexandria, VA. He is the author of *Now Let's Get Brunch* (Querencia Press, 2023) and *May All Our Pain Be Champagne* (Alien Buddha Press, 2022).

**Author's note:** I've been in a mood to write more crowns of sonnets this year, and also to do more with centos since it had been a while since I wrote any. Earlier this year, I tried making a crown of sonnets/cento hybrid piece. It was hours of work and a lot of reading, but it was really fun to do. When I saw *the engine(idling)* was looking to do a collage issue, I decided to try it again, especially since seven issues lined up with seven sonnets. It was a bit more challenging, especially trying to work with themed issues and unthemed issues, but it was satisfying to see the final result.

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**Rueben De'Marco** is a twenty year-old student from Birmingham England. For years he has employed writing as an outlet of both self-expression and realisation. Currently, Rueben is working on a poetry collection and hopes to have it published in the future.

**Author's note:** I have always been drawn to the poetry of bygone eras which of course includes the great bard, Shakespeare. So whilst I was reading through the many issues of the lit mag I was naturally caught by the piece that was titled "Hamlet Puppet." The concept of "Hamlet Puppet" was both smoothly figurative and gloriously flippant enough for me to build from it. I knew instantly after reading the line "I paid for it because to steal is wrong" that I wanted to protract the tone of the piece; this time into its subject: the puppet. The scene of a man being driven to madness by the flair of his voluble, Shakespearean Puppet was too comical to resist. I envisioned it unmoving on a chair at a distance in the man's study with its arms outstretched as if to preach. I let the meter slacken in sections to signify the indignation of the puppet, and his haste to speak. Above all, this was a writing session I enjoyed from beginning to end; adding to the worlds other writers have created in a felicitous way was a fun I hope to experience again.

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**Connor Donovan** (he/him) is a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh. He is a Best of the Net and a Pushcart Prize Nominee. Find him at [connordonovan.carrd.co](http://connordonovan.carrd.co).

**Author's note:** I wanted to write a piece exploring the gravity of a moment. How

something small can sit with you for days, despite its objective magnitude. This cento allowed me to take tidbits of poetry that I've enjoyed and form a sort of ode to them: a thank you for the impact that pieces of writing can have on a life.

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**Melissa Fitzpatrick** lives in the Los Angeles area. Her graphic narratives and other work combining words and visual art have appeared or are forthcoming in *Crucial Comix*, *Epistemic Literary*, and *Temple in a City*. Find more of her prose, poetry, and visual artwork at [melissa-fitzpatrick.com](http://melissa-fitzpatrick.com). Bluesky @melissafitz.bsky.social.

**Author's note:** I liked the idea that the poem was in conversation with the artist James Turrell's words. I enjoyed spending time with D.W. Baker's words, and seeing how I might then create something in conversation with the poem. To make this piece, I created an initial collage on a postcard. I then mailed the postcard to myself to see what marks and weathering might occur as it made its way through the postal system. When I received the postcard back, I collaged more elements to complete the composition (and obscure my address).

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**Andrew Gardner** is a Chicago-born, Boise-based writer with a penchant for the distressing. While focused on poetry, he has been known to dabble in dramatic forms, creative nonfiction, and music criticism. He graduated with an MFA in Writing from SAIC in 2023.

**Author's note:** With "Staring At The Ceiling Fan (A Cento)," I followed the established cento method of finding poems from former issues that stood out to me, letting the lines that spoke to me the most come forward, and then finding the flow of those lines when separated from their original context. Special shout out to William Doreski's "Riding The Ghost Train" and Kait Quinn's "Somewhere, We Bare Our Breasts and Live" from Issue 1, Damon Hubbs' "Self Portrait as That Weird Theater Girl Crying at EPCOT" from Issue 2, and BEE LB's "buffalo66" from Issue 5. There were many more used here, but those four specifically dictated the tone and the title of this piece (much love to boygenius).

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**Eleanor Graydon** is a freelance editor based in Queensland, Australia. In 2025, she was published in: *Wireworm Magazine*, *AZE Journal*, *Ressurrection Magazine*, and *Infested Publishing*. She keeps her writing portfolio up-to-date on her website, [sleepingeurydice.wordpress.com](http://sleepingeurydice.wordpress.com) where she posts about her publications, her poetry and her journey as a freelance editor.

**Author's note:** I had a great time reading and adapting "eulogy card" by BEE LB, especially when coming up with a way to add some whimsy to the blackout part of blackout poetry. An interesting fact about "Deadname" is that I came up with the name after I had already completed the blackout process (and the poem), unlike the majority of my other works.

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**Dane Hamann** is a poet, editor, and occasional artist in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. After earning his MFA in poetry from Northwestern University, he served as poetry editor for *TriQuarterly* for several years. He is the author of two poetry collections, *A Thistle Stuck in the Throat of the Sun* (Kelsay Books) and *Parsing the Echoes* (Main Street Rag), as well as several micro-chapbooks in the Ghost City Press Summer Series. He can be found online at [www.danehamann.com](http://www.danehamann.com).

**Author's note:** Several years ago, my first major publication was a chapbook of collage/cento poems titled *Q&A* from now-defunct *Sutra Press*. Like those poems, this collage stitches together short fragments from many poems but also acts as a sort of conversation between myself and their source (in this case, Issue 6: *yarn*). It's a concept that I enjoy engaging with because it helps me feel closer to the poems and understand what specifically about them speaks to me.

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**Sidney Hartz** has lived in Texas for her entire life and makes her living as a research engineer. In her free time, she sometimes creates art to help her make sense of the world and her reaction to it.

**Author's note:** I began my creative process by reading through all the poems that were not in the "off-limits list" and jotting down lines and phrases that caught my eye. I wasn't using any real strategy at this point, and was just gathering up groups of words that struck me as particularly interesting. After this, I read through what I'd gathered, and a theme began to emerge. From there, I pieced together my franken-poem using the phrases I'd gathered, adding in some original lines of my own to make it whole. Finally, to remain true to the "collage" theme, I printed out each source poem, as well as my own original words, and got to work cutting and gluing the final product. This was my first time ever "remixing" other poems, and I had an absolute blast. Thanks so much to all the contributors who agreed to let their work be a part of this issue!

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**Flossie Hedges** is a writer, artist, and teacher living in the woods of southeastern Kentucky. She works at a small college that serves the Appalachian region. Her recent writing can be read in *EcoTheo Review*, *Fruitslice*, *The Fourth River*, *Untelling*, and *GARLAND*.

**Author's note:** It all started when I read the first line (from Damon Hubbs' "King Lear, '87") in Issue five. I could picture that big, midwestern moon exactly. I asked myself, "OK, so, what lives and dies under that moon?" The answer, of course, is "I do." I read every issue of *the engine* (idling more carefully and pulled out phrases that felt true to all the lives I've lived under that moon. Some of the lives felt almost claustrophobic, and others were so liberated, "verdant." When I thought about those lives as being part of one family, the poem started to organize itself.

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**Kristin Houlihan and Kathryn Reese.** Kristin Houlihan is a disabled writer from California and EIC of *Epistemic Literary* and *Nimblewitlit* Magazines. Her poetry has been published in a variety of literary magazines and her book, *Lift the Mask*, is available widely in ebook, paperback and audio. Kathryn Reese is a queer writer who lives on Peramangk land in Adelaide, South Australia & works in medical science. Kristin and Kathryn met in the BlueSky lit mag community & were inspired to write together by the collage call.

Authors' notes: (Kathryn): The part of the collage process that I enjoyed was finding lines and images that resonated with both of us, and distilling those into something new. It's a rich way of reading, letting lines persist beyond their own poems and enter something new.

(Kristin): This was my first collaborative piece and it was so interesting to see how our ideas played off of each others', but built on a foundation of the original authors' work. When I read poetry I often gave a favorite line, or at least one or two that really strike me — it was a fun experience to further engage with those words and create something new, like a conversation with the original artist.

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Theric Jepson's most recent book, *Thubrina*, rewrites Sabrina Carpenter's most recent album. He also writes "original" work like his novel *Just Julie's Fine*.

Author's note: The *phorbe* is a verse form of my own creation, but only recently did it occurred to me I could grow a phorbe in someone else's soil. Each stanza of my phorbe begins with a line from Christiana Doucette's "At a Loss." Her choices, line by line, directed my own, stanza by stanza, even as we reveal entirely different landscapes.

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Caiti Luckhurst is a London-based poet currently studying for an MA in creative writing at Royal Holloway. She is interested in the possibilities of language, music, and movement in a combined poetic practice. Her work often explores grief, kinship, and collective queer identities.

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Tristan Parikka is a 35-year-old dabbler in the arts from Finland, still very new to sharing his work, which for now primarily consists of digital cut up poetry. His prime inspirations are existential matters, personal crises, and other, weirder fascinations, delivered into poetry with a flavor of the gothic and dramatic, the surreal and the mystical, the mythic and the fantastical. More of his work may be found at & via his website at [www.surrealizeit.neocities.org](http://www.surrealizeit.neocities.org).

Author's note: "Dusting Ashen Shadows" for me revolved around themes such as dull & depressive moods, so called "shadow work," and feeling trapped with (and at times within) my personas in glaring contrast to my deeper self, primely born of issues such as a lack of trust and fears of being judged.

What "Drawing Lightning" was to me I'd prefer to be more of a mystery, though

it is intended to have some masochistic flavor at least, but really it revolved around certain unusual and somewhat startling (but positive, actually) personal realizations around the time of its composing.

However, my poems are not really meant to only be about the things that they were to me at the time of their composing—often I find that returning to them after a while I discover entirely new meanings in them, and similarly I would like my readers to have a personal experience reading them. There's this strange interplay that happens between the universal and the personal, there...a kind of mutability I enjoy and aim for.

In several sessions, I read through the available poems in most issues, whilst keeping my eye on turns of phrase and smaller snippets of words that popped out to me as ones I could fruitfully utilize for my style of poetry, and as I spotted these, I saved them with Firefox's screenshot tool. Later, I went through this folder full of clippings and found my intuition making connections between them quite naturally, arranging them into compelling lines as I scrolled—immediately suggesting potential meanings and themes for me to follow up on to compose poems around—which I then started piecing together in a photo editing program. I have followed a similar process before.

Since my poems were amalgamations of small pieces of a myriad poems across several issues, I can not say that my relationship with any one poem was really a factor in what I wound up using—say, Christina Polge's "legs extended" was probably my favorite out of the poems I read in these past issues, but in the two poems that were selected, I only really used one snippet from it—"open my arms and let it happen."

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· R L · powell [he :: they] is the founding editor of *APROSEXIA LIT*, an online journal of divergent, challenged, and challenging minds. His work appears or is forthcoming in publications such as *ballast*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *Haven Spec*, *fifth wheel press*, *Scavengers Lit Mag*, and others. You can discover them online at [rl-powell.com](http://rl-powell.com), and he would like to remind you that you're doing a magnificent job of being yourself.

Author's note: I've always been a big fan collage, especially when constraints can be applied to structure the potential madness of its outcome. As a process, it's consonant with how a lot of my work take shape in the beginning—two or three ideas will cross one another, and writing becomes a process of trying to describe how the connections take place and what animates them if they're read together. It doesn't always work out. Here, if the source poems I chose to work with here hadn't played nice with one another, my attempts wouldn't gone anywhere. So I'm really indebted to Bossé, Bey, Thomas, & Aitken, because each of them wrote great poems that gave me in multiple possible "jumping off points"—but they also connected with one another in a way that struck me as complimentary.

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Kathryn Reese and Sumitra Singam. Kathryn and Sumitra are shapeshifters

writing from lived experience on Peramangk and Wurrundjeri land in Australia. They are both widely published and were delighted to find that they are issue buddies in the *Non Binary Review* "Old Friends" issue and have both been nominated by *Miniskirt Magazine* for Best of the Net. Find them on Bluesky: @kathrynreese.bsky.social and @pleomorphic2.bsky.social.

**Authors' note:** We had talked about the potential of the ghazal form to contain multiple identities—the phrase “maybe this is personhood” resonated with that idea. We were drawn to the lush imagery in this poem, and the potential that created for interpretation. After writing our ghazal, we read the poet's bio and were struck by the overlapping similarities in our queer stories, and the dissimilarities which allowed space for our own creative response.

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**Rocketfalls** is a Brazilian visual artist currently based in the Netherlands, where they've been living for almost five years. With a background in fashion design, their practice gradually shifted toward the visual arts, where collage became their primary medium. Working mainly with analog collage and mixed media, they're interested in how images, textures, and fragments can be reconfigured to construct new meanings and visual narratives. Rocketfalls' practice evolved through exhibitions and art markets in São Paulo and has continued to expand since relocating to the Netherlands. Here, they've taken part in exhibitions, art performances, art markets, and workshops, as well as projects connected to synesthesia and art therapy. Through these experiences, Rocketfalls continues to explore how art can inspire, reflect, heal, connect, and build community.

**Author's note:** Being a visual artist and collagist, I was immediately drawn to the visual works in the archive and followed intuitive connections between color and theme. After that I read the poems and texts that displayed the respective images. From that process, a narrative emerged across two connected pieces, moving from an exterior point of view into an interior psychological space shaped by tension and inner fracture.

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**Em Roth** (they) is an educator & organizer based in Boston. They are enamored with the questions young people ask & believe in the promise of liberation. They have been previously published in *beestung*, *the B'K*, and *ANMLY*.

**Author's note:** throughout the pieces i mashed together, i kept thinking about flight—about wings & leaving, fleeing & returning. i want all people to be free & felt that longing throughout writing this poem.

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**Sumitra Singam** is a queer, neurodiverse Malaysian-Indian-Australian coconut who writes in Naarm/Melbourne. Her work has been published widely, nominated for a number of Best Of anthologies, and was selected for BSF 2025. She works as a psychiatrist and trauma therapist and runs workshops on how to write trauma safely, and the Yeah Nah reading series. She'll be the one in the kitchen making chai (where's your cardamom?). You can find her and her other

publication credits on Bluesky: @pleomorphic2 & [sumitrasingam.squarespace.com](https://sumitrasingam.squarespace.com).

**Author's note:** I love ekphrasis, and knew from the start that I would write some pieces in response to the fabulous art in *the engine* (idling's archive). A mixture of time of day, being on a kid free break and the artwork created the feeling state in this poem.

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**Alicia Swain** (she/her) is the author of *Steel Slides and Yellow Walls* (Belle Isle Books, 2025). Her poems appear in publications such as *Roanoke Review* and *Vast Chasm*. Her piece titled "Return Me to the Womb," published in *FLARE Magazine*, was nominated for Best of the Net 2026. She can be found on her website at [aliciaswain.com](https://aliciaswain.com) and on most social media platforms as @aliciaswain.

**Author's note:** When I saw the theme for this issue, I decided to dig back into the archives and read all the works in the first two issues. After I read "Erosion," I knew it would be the one to remix because it leaves readers with space to explore their curiosity. Rather than choosing a path when I remixed the poem, I decided to let the words take me on a journey. I pictured the statuesque women and thought of a body's rigid nature after death, I questioned the intent of the artist photographing, and I searched for where it was bound to go wrong. I ended up envisioning a photographer at the beach with an old-school, flash bulb camera setup, waiting to photograph what the end of the world as we know it looks like, as though to encapsulate what happens after death into the bounds of a single photograph. It was a blast doing this, and it's inspired me to start doing poems like this more often!

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An Arkansas native, **Sarah Watkins** is an educator by trade and a writer by necessity. She currently resides in northeast Arkansas with her husband. Her work has recently been featured in many publications, including *Menagerie*, *Pine Hills Review*, and *The Clayjar Review*. Instagram: @sarahwatkinspoetry.

**Author's note:** I found the imagery of "But Lately I Find a Sliver of Mirror Is Simply to Slice an Eyelid" to be so striking—it reminded me quite a bit of Leonard Cohen's "Anthem," so I began to search for pieces in the poem to reconstruct through blackout into an "Anthem"-esque piece.

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**Samuel Day Wharton** makes wine in Sacramento, CA. Recent work has appeared (or will appear) in *Some Words*, *The Shore*, *Does It Have Pockets*, *\$-Poetry Is Currency*, & *Villain Era*.

**Author's note:** I wanted to come up with a way to have a kind of conversation with the work in the archive & as I was reading through the issues I started pulling out questions that were posed in the poems. I thought that if I could write in response (not in answers, really) that might make for some fun & interesting interplay between the authors' words, my words & the archive as a whole.

## Special Thanks

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**roy willingham** trained as an artist and works in various media including printmaking and artists books. roy often collaborates with the poet Mike Sims to create book works. roy is a member of the Printmakers Council and the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers and regularly exhibit in this country and internationally. You can see a range of roy's work on their website [www.porcovolente.com](http://www.porcovolente.com) and a couple of their books are in the Bodleian Libraries Special Collections.

**Author's note:** I always enjoy coming across poetry on the web and diving into Issue 7 I was struck by the number of first person references throughout. Vispo and concrete poetry are particular favourites so I chose a format which would give a different dynamism to the words. I set myself a couple of (flexible) constraints; I wanted it to sit on an A4 page and I started by ordering the texts according to line length, I had a vague idea of using an eye format but that sort of got lost along the way and then i just played with balance and weight.

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**david woodward aka un-known** is a former field biologist. he has always been drawn to the natural world. Poetry is no exemption.

**Author's note:** i chose one issue for each poem; then, i picked out lines that stood out, looking for a theme all-the-while; in the end, i stood back and gazed at what i was drawn to, painstakingly adding/subtracting, subtracting/adding until . . . voila!

A very heartfelt thanks goes out to our contributors from Issues 1-7 who gave permission for their lovely art and words to be cut-up, scrambled, and repurposed for this remix project! Thank you, too, for your patience, graciously enduring e(i's many emails and Google permission slip mishap. We hope that you enjoy reading these remixes.

a.d.  
Adams, Kiki  
Aitken, Geoffrey  
Akbari, Hanan  
Arnold, Angela  
Arnold, Kelly White  
Bae, Jihoo  
baggett, brooklyn  
Baker, D.W.  
Bashe, Ennis Rook  
Beatty, Joshua  
Bedell, Jack B.  
Bey, Annika  
Biggs, Julia  
Bossarte, Denise  
Bossé, Haley  
Brannon, Christina  
Bricault, Sarah (Ember)  
britt, mari  
Brown, Allison P.  
Brown, Mo Buckley  
Burris, Allison  
Bush, Lydia Rae  
Carrigan, Alex  
Chicken, Eden  
Clark, Sarah  
Cordeiro, Will  
Cregan, Alex  
Dawkins, Bryana  
de Lima, Francis  
de Prez, Darryl  
Deshmane, A.  
Diaz, James  
Difalco, Salvatore  
Donovan, Connor  
Doreski, William  
Doucette, Christiana  
Drummy, MF  
Dykiel, Daniel

Elliot, F.  
ellis, cm  
Ennis, Scott  
Faber, Louis  
Fabian, R. Gerry  
Feinstein, Sandy  
Ferguson, Mike  
Flannery, Eoin  
Glass, Ewen  
Grant, Stephen  
Griffin, Colin  
Hardwick, Oz  
Howells, Ann  
Hubbs, Damon  
James, Colin  
Jepson, Theric  
Kay, Suze  
Kerbel, Sam  
Kesner, Kenneth  
Knight, Ophelia  
LB, BEE  
Lee, Donna J. Gelagotis  
Leggett, Charles  
Linden, Hannah  
Los, Taylor Hamann  
Mautner, Daniel  
McGuire, Catherine  
Mesler, Corey  
Moultrie, J.L.  
Myers, Abigail E.  
Nardolilli, Ben  
Neal, Devon  
O'Patry, Megan  
O'Toole, Jason  
Polge, Christina  
Pope, Maddy  
Porter, Elizabeth  
Quinn, Kait  
Ramsden, Rose  
raum, nat  
Raycroft, Brent  
Reese, Kathryn  
rege, arushi (aera)  
Rions-Maehren, Thomas  
Rosado, Jacqueline  
Roth, Em  
Russo, Patricia  
Ryan, August  
Samuels, Kelly R.  
Schneider, Jen  
Shane, Brandon  
Sheen, Daniel

Singam, Sumitra  
Slattery, William  
Slota, Richelle Lee  
Summers, J.M.  
Tawfick, Ramsey  
Teets, William  
Thomas, Brennan  
Thomas, Matt  
Tucker, Veronica  
Wallace, Shannon  
Webb, Devon  
Wharton, Samuel Day  
Williams, Myfanwy  
Wills, Jessica  
Wolfensohn, DJ  
woodward, david aka un-known  
Zeitler, Joshua  
Zirilli, Donald



