



Word For/ Word is seeking poetry, prose, poetics, criticism, reviews, and visuals for upcoming issues. We read submissions year-round, but issue #46 is scheduled for April 2026. Please direct queries and submissions to:

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Email queries and submissions may be sent to: editors@wordforword.info.

Submissions should be a reasonable length (i.e., 3 to 6 poems, or prose between 50 and 2000 words) and include a biographical note and publication history (or at least a friendly introduction), plus an SASE with appropriate postage for a reply. A brief statement regarding the process, praxis or parole of the submitted work is encouraged, but not required. Please allow one to three months for a response. We will consider simultaneous submissions, but please let us know if any portion of it is accepted elsewhere. We do not consider previously published work.

Email submissions should be attached as a single .doc, .docx, .rtf, .pdf or .txt file. Visuals should be attached individually as .jpg, .png, .gif, or .bmp files. Please include the word "submission" in the subject line of your email.

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Word For/ Word is open to all types of poetry, prose and visual art, but prefers innovative and post-avant work with an astute awareness of the materials, rhythms, trajectories and emerging forms of the contemporary. *Word For/ Word* is published biannually.

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Word For/Word, Issue 45 (Fall 2025)

Poetry

Martha McCollough.....	3
Abraham Smith.....	7
Sarah Rosenthal.....	10
Seth McKelvey.....	18
Emma Grey Rose.....	23
Michael Ruby.....	25
Lynn Strongin.....	31
Mark DuCharme.....	33
Glenn Bach.....	44
Sheila E. Murphy.....	49
D. E. Steward.....	54
Christopher Barnes.....	57
David Weiss.....	60

Visual Poetry

Danika Stegeman.....	62
Brenda Mann Hammack.....	74
Pamela Miller.....	80
Francesco Aprile.....	85
Oona Ratcliffe.....	97
Lee Johnson.....	102
Kenneth M Cale.....	106
Ernest Williamson III.....	108
Richard Hanus.....	112
Ted Warnell.....	116
Bill Wolak.....	122
Cecelia Chapman.....	127
Brian Strang.....	137

Prose

Joel Chace on Orchid Tierney's <i>this abattoir is a college</i>	138
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Contributors' Notes	143
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Martha McCollough

Entries

we hurried through
the Local Ribbon
of Cold Clouds
in the Constellation Lynx

our courses weave
disturbing spirals
we fall and fall
pursuing the sun
...

change me
empire of night
...

I feel the soul
moving in my hand
waver like smoke

almost adrift
a ragged web
subject to vague airs

between it and me
what I knew
and what I thought
 I knew
...

a dark animal condenses out of the dark,
shape unlit in a field of fireflies

I call into the night
for my indifferent cat
bears listening just past
the edge of door light
...

what do I care if
you never read this

I only want to outlast

certain monsters

to intend whatever is to come
violence or nectar

to indulge my sincere wish to bite
I want my effort back
...

nothing stands still
out of flux some new arrival
I give it a name

Martha McCollough

Painted Roses

vermilion dragged

in circles over ash

oil burner bright

stinging the unlit kitchen

like rage

crude spirals

red as a cartoon heart

Martha McCollough

The Shortest Day

The earth spins faster: the roof
flies off the house, the stove
is hurled into space followed
by the refrigerator. Holding
hands we fly up, a chain
of paper dolls bannerering the wind.
A spotted horse runs circles
earthbound in iron shoes—
faster, faster, then he can fly.

Abraham Smith

From "Surgencies"

###

social morsel of the clam
commotion of gems in chipmunk mump head
down in the junk to the left
while a red squirrel
seven little barf bag parachutes below
born and bound
to chide and chisel
the rib wood
of an old pickle barrel

###

and coyotes
on a dayhunt
sing in bing
like jars of jellies cooling satisfied snugger
like dogs
deep inside themselves
in dreams at night at home
and sigh a coast gobbed
with delicious halfdead sailboats
chicken skin sails

###

a bluegill belt the sky's becoming
apricot stew
backpack of a living bivalve
whites of eyes apples insides
the bareliests of colors
stack ice on ice on blue
and i make me a little tippy boat
with my two lips
call me two lip tippy smithy

###

Busy bein nothin but eyes
takes a long board
to make a teetertotter

stretch them arms wide
pretty spackle of sparrows
to sit the other side
and rise we
one sweet brief life
thru the tear in the screen
milk haze light awaits is already
whereya young shouts go
to spin and to turn
like unboiled eggs
across the countertop

###

nothing to river is this rain
until alchemical
wing serve glad nice
ash lives
again it's flies
thru neck to breach
the breast
the swallow
whose locket heart
roof thumped wind
dog eye scare

###

easy now gentle now
sit down stay roll
are we all this on fire
are we good for the garden
are we good
are we down for pickin up
strange road breaths
someone couldn't help it going
given or shook out or dropped

###

good your back can lean
glean the breaths
mask your mouth
limber some with some
gonna pump your eyes
like bike tires
just enough good

to wheelie by the cousins
some with some
on your tool to the river
and the riverbank
smashed flat long winter
line up the kids known and new now
who here has the worst home life hair

###

despair the dead bullhead fish bones
we try and blow on
to share in the quietest heart
the river's sturgeon's
chews on the tooth
of a mastodon

###

where flies walk
the sticky tickin clock
too close to the stove
before they you know
swallow throat
throat of the swallow
row the boat with the shore
sod oar sod oar

###

those unafraid of
things ending
carry a chickadee
beak of dirt
under nails
come clean
after life see
living is letting
your apple heart
lessen by
dirty mouths
deer and bear

Sarah Rosenthal

Excerpt from *Untitled poem about a red box*

Untitled poem about a red box is a book-length poem about a handcrafted red box the size of a jewelry or takeout box on view in a small, dark, gallery-like space. On the surface of the box are embroidered objects that resemble butterflies or flowers; a poem threads its way in between these decorations. The viewers (a “*we*” comprising the narrator and readers) are given to understand that the poem, mysteriously, both *is on* and *is* the box, and that the poem is about death. Hanging above the red box there appear to be a series of similar boxes in other colors.

This excerpt follows the opening pages of the manuscript, ending with:
And what do / the words say.

To close in
read each word
aloud string
them together in
lines find out
what can be
learned this can
be done yet not
retained through
no fault can
words have faults
of the words
squeezing in
uneven cursive
among butterflies
that seem to grow
petals in flight

To read to
attempt to read
the poem is
done then
as a poet wrote
undone the
words invite
and refuse we

might ask can
words invite and
refuse us in
our wanting

Is this a fairy tale
we have found
ourselves in
are we the advancing
lover a kiss to
bestow fairy
tale cast as
gallery display
must a visitor
kiss the object
awake does
the visitor
believe the poem
sleeps and waits
does the visitor
possess can a
kiss be possessed
the kiss that will
wake the poem
will the poem
rise up grateful
and sure

A fairy tale tells
what can't
happen we
may be in
one but no
closer to keeping
the words we
see stitches
cerulean and lilac
dandelion peach
and pine thread
through carmine or
is it hibiscus
rhubarb shiraz
savor sutures

puncturing cloth
to form a script
looping among
petals that long
we might say to
fly wings that
take we may
say perverse
pleasure in being
mistaken for
petals

But can't keep
the words they
refuse we
may say to
be possessed
the beloved if
this is a fairy tale
posing as exhibit
rises up to meet
the visitor's lips
and falls back
into deepest slumber
leaving them
alone and
bewildered

So goes the
tale but what
if gaze is
greedy kiss
insists

We may step
back circle the
box the given
poem is on and
is the box
is here and other

boxes hover each
made by hand to
fail to meet
machine perfection
calling to mind
containers for what's
left from a meal
out or adornment
worn on occasion
padding between
cardboard and
cloth visible
only as soft
bulge is it pillow
or pincushion
subcutaneous or
substrate punctured
along with cloth
by needle passing
thread to bolster
construction

This object made
to last or is it
to degrade thread
and cardboard
glue and cotton
this box the
hue of butcher's
broom elderberry
chokecherry or is
it bittersweet this
box that is a
poem this poem
that also is
or is on a box
and is it
is or are
they the other
boxpoems in
the series poem-
boxes contained
by and containing
a dark quiet

This object
designed by
whom to
hold gem or
sustenance

Is the dark
quiet then the
absence of these
a promise broken
or is it promise
fulfilled or is
it at all
promise

The dark quiet
pervades we may
say the inside
and outside does
all this space
obliterate or
withhold
does it yield
as in yield up
to the visitor and
what may be
this nourishment
these gems
yielded

Or does this
dark quiet can
we say ask
us to yield and
yield what

The box and
companion boxes'
walls cleave the
dark assert
we may say form

a series of
objects on display
the red one
illuminated the
row of others
hovers hovers
rather in mind's
eye

We return
and return to
words weaving
and squeezing
among the gestures
in color of flight
and flower read
words we can't
capture despite
desire why
are we in a
fairy tale or is
this a dream
we believe we'll
remember the
words the
poem fades
is the fault is
there fault
is it ours

Or no fault in
sight a
song or chant
some psalm-
like incantation
looped and lofted
into ears at
bedtime or
sitting on a
bench squeezed
among elders we
inhaled wafting
aromatones

flavorhues
lemon and pumpkin
sage and jacaranda
cornflower cerise
touched colorobjects
sand amaranth
lupine moss
and autumn maple
fluttered feather
of kingfisher
the psalm or
song we may
sing kissed
us we yielded
became the
song or may
we say the
poem so nothing
to remember

To fill the
box with a
body even
tiny no
or adornments
to store in
it mementos
or receipts no
but might run
finger over
surface warp
and weave of
serviceable cloth
gently press
cotton batting
circle eye from
angles squint
at dangling
row of other
colors wonder

What is
listening what
listens what
is listened

Is within
without
with with-
out

What threads
color of sea and
fruit stone
and tree

Is threaded
what is
thread

Cloth thin
pad flimsy
board been
pierced must

Be must
have been
will

Seth McKelvey

Alm 82

torn up turnips turn
circles in the dark
trying to eff
the ineffable
not seeing that they can't see
not not seeing that they can

ask one:
 have you yet
 found out
 how to pluck out
 your eye
 ?

I (
as
you can see
)
have not

from the throne of solitairity
someone proffers souls' tomato
nourishing and red and sharp and sweet

Seth McKelvey

Alm 83

the pasture is burning
and has been for a while
all the shit that isn't
manure on fire

the grasses cry out
for a while
the grasses cry out
for all the shit that's isn't
the grasses cry out
for an audible
cry

and in the midst of
all the shit of isn't

breath became dung

behold the mystery of care
for cares
of grass
—of pain for the plight of plants

the strange holiness of holiness
becoming grass and of grass
combusting into breath

the air is the soil and the grass
eats it and yet breathes
it still

Seth McKelvey

Alm 84

logarithm of my eye:
a diaphanous canopy dappled green and blue
veers off,
curves like gravity (weightless,
each)
base cradle of offering

naturally the road runs off
cracks in the asphalt
trees against the sky

the wind moves like someone
you wanted to see

the sun burns down on
the sun in the
blue burns down on
the sun
in the blue
the sun burns down

crickets are going even
in the midday shade

a Euler of years isn't so long
no longer than today

rest in this entry
the doorframe of the world
(it stands astride an old logging road)
a wider world than we

enjoy the berries of buried
no log in my side today

Seth McKelvey

Alm 85

I log in and log the log in my eye,
biding in Dionysus's diocese

(the forest for the logs)

these records rewrite
the ship, Theseus's this

this—

that is everything
and has everythed
and will everyth

(these timbers bode embers)

the wreath of all
wreathed around
all wrath for all
wreathing everything
death dead into life on a log

to die a log
together we degauss tutus

to bid aubade
together we dance like Degas's

to become analog
creatures of consequence

to become together
we flip
the ship
of This

Seth McKelvey

Alm 86

maker bows to made

I am not trying for pretty—
rather somethings that fit.

The child's thinking pleasure,
fixing one block to the next.

The structure that emerges, surprises into focus and being,
impossible to have been.

The child's mind much too wide,
the parents' too knowing.

So much to reright, still.

maker make me
make me maker

Still, to reright so much—

too knowing. The parents'
mind too much the child's. Wide

to have been impossible.
Being surprises into the structure, and that focus emerges

to block the next, fixing
one child's pleasure. Thinking,

that fit's rather something
pretty. Trying for I, not am.

Emma Grey Rose

yeah love and nirvana

grunged out summer in the back of his room.
grunged out summer in the T-shirts on his floor.
grunged out summer in the white of his walls.
grunged out summer in the drugs that he takes.
grunged out summer in the sheets of his bed.
grunged out summer in the haze of the night.
grunged out summer in the way that he cares.
grunged out summer in the music that he plays.
grunged out summer in the smokes that get ashed.
grunged out summer in the flowers that he shares.
grunged out summer in the mess of his room.
grunged out summer in the parties that he throws.
grunged out summer in the fights that he starts.
grunged out summer in the drinks on the floor.
grunged out summer in the brown of his hair.
grunged out summer in the edge of the night.
grunged out summer in the weed that he smokes.
grunged out summer in the moon on his head.
grunged out summer in the sweaters that he loans.
grunged out summer in the posters on the wall.
grunged out summer in the mellow of his voice.

grunged out summer in the bands that he loves.
grunged out summer in the friends that he has.
grunged out summer in the flannels that he wears.
grunged out summer in the empty of his house.
grunged out summer in the hours of the night.
grunged out summer in the silver on his cheek.
grunged out summer in the vodka that he drinks.
grunged out summer in the palm of his hand.
grunged out summer in the tattoos near his neck.
grunged out summer in the middle of the night.
grunged out summer in the sex on his bed.
grunged out summer in the sex in his head.

Michael Ruby

“O Lost in the Gardens of This Star”

--Stéphane Mallarmé,
translated by Robert T.S. Lowell

O lost, brother, beyond Alfred and filibustering
and Roberts and possum
and dimming and blossoming
parallelograms and happy hunting grounds
forked zone and sage delivery system
right without poignant

O lost, father, we went through the forms of hullabaloo
deepest disingenuous purebred etc.
together on the lank plastic basing
taken from buzzards and deregulated corners
holiday waiting

O lost, brother, registered and infiltrated
wonked within a happy meal of this peace in the Mideast, this peasant blouse in
the hangnail
beyond housemates' puling
their holiday hoskered by round MacGuffins

O lost, brother, they took the sauce, the ready pell-mell
and honest-injun parallel bars
a tooth telltale for I don't know what persecution complex
ranked and polished, pre-regulated in the interest
of demonstrable poolroom and peacepipe
guaranteed song dodger, you know?

O lost, mother, whenever holiday onions strike
we went tethered to noodle pudding and the olive concoction and manufacturing
process
the furthest along the time of rice procedures
together under a hollow-eyed hollow-tipped dugout
homilies and archery
we went telescoping Ungaretti into our closets
the furthest tommygun since irregular Bilbao
together thick in the ring and piecemeal in the rising evidence of four-square
vegetables

Michael Ruby

“Nothing to Teach”

“There was no need for speech
and nothing to teach”
—Osip Mandelstam,
translated by Robert Tracy

I

An old-fashioned razor lives in the closet
Among the sorry icicles of Danang

For every signpost a rock
A rocker to hollow the blank operation
A boy ambushed the settled piano
You embody Douglas and Pete
Not candy nor pregnancy nor Halloween
Not living nor dying, nor anything else

Danang knew the escape route
A household in the middle of the moon
A pirate in the pink pillbox
Inside every jackhammer
And jackdog, alone in the alibi

I tried to open the highway jar
Already drank the green potion
Already lacquered the handlebars
Rounded up Tobias and the holiday troop
Weathering no more the answer

II

Rags for wisdom and songbooks
For lease on the way to South Sawmill
Under the junction of performance status
Hostile time for possible socks
Seeming breathing apparatus
Alone among the mullah sightings
Time in an impossible automobile

To find high signs of dispute
A ragged disregard for everything sacred

No infinite inferior potsherd
To broil in the midnight moon of Ool
Dangblasted and seasoned to perfection
Before rhyming sizes an orangutan
And orange juice in professions of faith

No hazardous materials on the journey
Long I-beams to bake the cake
Becalmed policy for rongommons
That simple and that complex

The race plays on emotions
Ranging from messenger to iodine
In the freedom to paralyze this parallelogram
Hope the fence of tolerable bandages
And pocket the bombast rocket

Michael Ruby

“The Cancellings, the Negations are Never Final”

--Wallace Stevens

To fulfill
This denomination

They rise above us
Infinitesimal
Positive vibrations

Our responsibility
Hooked and eaten
Without regard

For the salvageable
Procedure to dunk
Underrepresented
In this fine
This parallel
This legislated
This Egremont
This household name
This all-night
This boat place

They are not
They will not be
Only we are
We will be

Michael Ruby

“You Know Then That It Is Not the Reason That Makes Us Happy or Unhappy”

--Wallace Stevens

You know then the inside will never present

You know then ice cream augurs a succession of elephantine proportions
You know then without any indication of sustenance
Without the rongommon in the purple ice capades, the transubstantial

It is not the reason to imply a fall
It is not the reason a flame fails to ignite a wall
It is not the reason for eggs or orderlies

It is not the reason to place, to register, to pacify, to incubate, to intubate

That makes us possible before impossible, remote before proximate

That makes us without any information

Happy or unhappy in the green snake
Happy or unhappy in the Rosenbaum
Happy or unhappy about the powersaw
Death has its beginnings in many places
Life has its beginnings in many places

Happy or unhappy in this sidereal sideshow, this bulldozer of breath
Far-fetched, implemental

Happy or unhappy to place our confidence in the confidence man
Happy or unhappy about Tabasco
Happy or unhappy about all the turns in a road
Happy or unhappy above the boilerroom and boysroom

Michael Ruby

“The Far Fields Melt My Heart”

—Sylvia Plath

I'm not going to know
The tool will presume
Peace sings the offing

It's time
In the dog shop
The chaperone pastes
One-hundred dollar bills
The ice exaggerates

We have them
Innocuous thunder
Noxious jet, do not melt my heart

We never have them
There in the improbable
Hospitalized or not
Among dingdongs
Filibustering with the rest
Punting again

I know they are greener pastures
Sample pells
Lemon regulars
In the ice cream of our eggshells

I'm not going
On the onion
Inside the sockdolager (whatever that is)

I'm not going
Before fashion porks the twofold being and bistro
The prime manumission in this spaceship
Lost to lesser segments
And eaten to—

It's time and might be right
I know that within each egg
Inside the floorboards
Welcome to ringing sizes
I know the best information often rises before it falls

Lynn Strongin

THE GAZE OF PRINT

I

THE GAZE OF PRINT

Catches my eye in an oval mirror I thought my eye was green. Gamines. .Shines from the page. Adrenaline races with every heartbeat.

Flickering over Seamus & Niall
Who have a laddish bond. Seamus visits the hospital
After cancer carved ports into Niall's chest. A kiss from Seamus closed them.
Comity came.

Bald child-head like ivory while
Suicidal children
Who were shadowed live on the floor below.
How many years will the surgeon? sleep on her phone? my laptop?
The long-lost twelve—year-old she was could sprint:
Now she moves words with thought the gaze of God in print.

Newspaper Item: The death has occurred of Maura Glenn Riverdale Whitehorse
Unexpectedly and peacefully at her home on Friday 25th October.

II

UP & DOWN ELM STREET, mothball street lamps glow
Up and down moth street
elms sway

Hometown
Homilies;
How embroider lace with childhood tragedy

on an escritoire
love letters
broken open Ekstasis

change of mind reflected
loose silver change musically clanging, tumbling to cobbles
as a horse passes
Old Marmalade stranger than the streetlights breathing out, bearing on.

III

WORDLE & CRIBBAGE

To be learned.

Life went sideways. A little ball of yarn. We'd just been slammed.

But after multiple splinters,
You found an unbroken orange crate
And came home in the glow.

Be my dark doll, a dot on each cheek, heart engine
My elegant toy
For all that gets done
 Impotent
 Against decay.

IV

AS MUCH DUST is on our tables as, earth churned by pinto, or in an antique house:

Move a right arm
Limp as after a stroke

Kapok.
The wooden one is cleaved.
A crapshoot nightie

I looked to east
I looked to west:
With the elegance of a calliper
 I'd write my way back to her: Lo snowy winter lace.
 There's as much dust in our love as in an antique house.

Mark DuCharme

Report

Report night traumas
To frightened adherents
Who begin flicking change
At every wretched port of call

Some ports take longer than winter
Big tech is a language trauma
Study the nerve
The birth night slips through

I'd like to drive you nowhere
In the comfort of a smile
Sometimes now is all we can bear
Who are you when you're still not here?

Despite the ire of ruthless showmen
Who claim to laugh at streets of dust
Invent the stars
When words aren't enough

The purity of maybe
Is that it might not always be
I struggle to hear thunderclaps
That sound like ancient bells

A trumpet solo is a vowel set free

Mark DuCharme

Make (Impromptu Cityscape)

Consider the moon's structure,
A tenuous proposal for azure,
A parking delimiter of pooled shadows
Gnarled at the pages of what's seen.
Which case is empty? Which hermit victory
Ill-applied? I'll chase
The apple healer, make compact with sadness's
Twisted plight
In order to heave unctuous anime
By arraignment of laws & means
That I'll be sure to bungle. In the meantime,
Shrive plunderers & freefall extortionists
In morning's leaden gloom. Bump diamonds
If you would lie in grace of sandlots,
Afflicted with dog barkers & Sanskrit memes
You'd translate or mutilate maybe another time into
Lurid outros, tuning particulars
In a state of knotted means.
Were I a bicycle tuner, I'd sit here & grumble
At contortionists of forgotten city days,
But now the earth is tender as a zydeco healer,
& I must buckle roses up in deadpan mirth.
Loan me a proverb? I hear you shiver
At questions of dysphoric proportion
As children glance at dolls, & the moon crosses
A lonely bridge. Bring me some tune, then,
A cart widener turvy enough to
Bollix all misgivings. I'll follow up with
Courtesy implants & feckless red teddy bears,
As seen on *Oprah*, with a wicked grin.

Mark DuCharme

Left for the Dream's Absent Thieves

February's leaking
Down the sides of buildings
A slivered heap
Tidy night grievers
Wind in the absent doorway

Buttoned means
Tangled motions
Bright shimmers left
For an aging paramour
Who is nowhere to be seen

The hand moves
The night bends softly
You want to believe, but
Dusk has acquired
This strange, overarching power

Hold out your hand
Will the light become bearable
In the morning? Will we ever see?
Then aren't we always
Someone else

Who listens to mumblers
In a hallway full of mirrors
Often mistaken for thieves
While children clutch their pencils
With shadow fingers

Amounting to a slight wave or release
At the edge of the wall of a garden
Where we often sang
Telling bland stories & rumors
In the dark, with pressed fingers

Gently bleeding, in the night
Crooked with glass stars
Among those who forgot to do no harm
Bending notes like ancient reeds
With groundskeepers affecting a kind of forthright malice

Toward those whose eyes are often far
Away
Then gather up the night with bony
Fingers; trace edges in a glimpse's nuance
Burn all the tickets

Conduct children to wishing wells
Count the stars at the end of the day
Awaken, while grieving
Like sand in an open wound
Even after lovers all pass by

Mark DuCharme

Comp Litany

In what words are you
Going to be?
What forms do words sound? Does voice equal
Speech?

Provided cohost snooze
It was a shambles until the next
Outsider effigy

The meme was full of thunder—
Smoke, Coptic mirrors, etc.— com-
position as day-
break

Pontoon silliness wilting

•

In what words are you
Trapped? implicated? burdened?

The gun goes
Off—
A subtext or nursery rhyme puzzle.

Animals feel it too. All are
On
Display. It rhymes with
Frozen. Blood on hand. It's
Tuesday, maybe

•

Maybe in the dream,
Maybe in the dream, I'll go
Maybe in the dream, I'll think & gasp
Maybe in the dream, I'll think I'm standing
Maybe it'll all go away
Maybe it'll go away tenderly

Tendered— night strata— flawed

•

Like feelings formed of
Words, appalling

Speeches without inter-
vening rain— glass effigies

Encoded or em-
bodied by in-
flection—

An angelology of the commonplace
Grafted to rathskellers
On the lips of the desperately
Poor—

•

New word order:
A spitfire beaux-arts flummoxing:
Psycho-economics of disjunctive foreclosure
With or without birdcalls—
When inaudible, sing

Sing anyway
When words appear. In what birth order?
Blunt poker?
Burnt paper?
Degrees of rapture's
Cold becoming

•

For every book a passenger
To whom do I have the honor?

Libertine nightshifts—
A mirth of vanishing

Words, a gaping orifice—
A bedlam of stars. Words

Do as they are. Read
Further, in the night sky, constellated, brooding—

Clogged with history's

Dark interiors—

A nostalgia for gasping. I have no fear
Of the poem

Going too far—
Things happen as they are

How far away is light?

•

Abetted by stars, their
Makeshift eyes

In films' demanding
Rain

Mark DuCharme

Thought's Tune

The poem eludes my turvy sibilance
In buckets of milieus
Made stark by reprisals
As if fed doubts by wishing wells
While keeping up with the latest chatter
Only to stew or bristle
At the archetypes of penitents
Who doubt
Even in the apparent evening
& All that it incurs

The poem is a tropical lesion
A ghost of midnight jackets crowding your angle of vision
In a lurch or widening
Downpours of collective amnesia
In which it's still okay not to inveigle or consume
As you often do, in paltry rue
That internet junkies can ill assemble
On speedboats like parking tickets of adamant drowsers
Damage collectors of human follies
Afflicted with backroad anonymity

The poem edges its fill in blaring
Days of sidebars & hungry dowsers
Who each etch shadows on retractable grimaces
Cruel with amnesiac uptake
The shitty verve of pent-up realtors
Released down monochrome avenues
With excuses rough enough to pester the gritty
At sundown by parachute scissors
That collide with looks of down-&-out amblers
Waltzing toward a finish line

The poem is what it does— a reckoning
With time in thought's order
A state of attention, gnarled trees at evening—
O where is the cart we could wander from
Free of assignments & history's curve? Be
Loco in mirrors; the poem
Takes no excuses, offers no explanations. Carry on then, in full view of the
Locals, who meander, getting dressed up for dinner
Only later to scatter, as tensile
Harbingers loom, like turnbuckle prodigies, whenever fate's concealed

Mark DuCharme

Voiceovers

1.

Cold outer mentions
 Tunesmith distortion
 Tongue as going to be to
Be in here with
 No one talking
 Or looking, perceptively
As gnarled as darting
 A shade beyond the crevice (barriers)
 Shadows held at bay
Wealth of spun
 Roses diagonal tuning
 The gape of a leap sent brokenly, brokenly
 Indelible of night stars
 In the air we take in all
 As useless song

2.

Cold interior mentions (slumber)
 Is all a household left to wear
 Even when the sun becomes stable
As riven cartography, an emptiness sideways
 Availed of speech a cold whirl
 Consequential divining
Mirror, a winter bucolic
 Temper, an open wound, distorting
 As needs as wounds must be, & we
Felt, ordinary, mortally
 Dull, wounded, pictured
 Ever, & sing to me
In tawdry inflections
 Rough indulgence
 Broken nuance
Garbled phones
 Heap plaster pummeled with
 Stars, who also go
 Away

3.

Who I am a voice might be
 Nearly rankled as always (complaint)

Of days' long goings) carrying
 On somehow (insert theme here)
As dusk descends & I slowly
 Am falling in love again
With that book, its gangly
 Lucid musics interior to
Somebody took a bite out of that bookmark but
 I don't know how it comes to mean
Transcendently, exponentially, etc.
 A vase of clear blue diamonds
Held as knowing
 Means
Grace on delivery. Let's go. No
 Grace can't be *delivered*. A turnbuckle angst
Just when our nouns seemed to cease to implore it

& Crazy doodlings, by the way
 If the sun weren't lifted
You'd think
 It weren't so, because you do (circular
Reasoning). Then the weather
 Is gorgeous, seems nervous (it's supposed to
Snow this weekend). When
 William Blake met Elmo
At the dark park wanting
 The sun as necessity.
Social cohesion doesn't exist anymore
 Why should poetic cohesion?
"child you are is the source of all"
 Alice Notley said that, you didn't

4.

Erase clobbered means
Win sun a grace
 Period after delivery
As thick as lucent dwellings
 Backdated rathskellers
A theory not mentioned
 In divining retail
Vestibules, when winter
 Comes to harm
By grace of lunch
 Floated, minuscule
Blissed out, serious

This is not a normal case
 Normal isn't moral

Beside which flickers
The whole world seen

Please request books on roses & daydreams
Otherwise, I might be destroyed
In blank sound mentions
Fertile & redolent
I'm sorry, but intend to mention
The grammar of letting go
As if impact weren't ceremony
& Night
Inconclusive, flaming
Done with stars

Glenn Bach

From *Atlas*

out in the open air
for a ribbon
of high. With obvious
pride a few new
saplings

from the past a dead hand the whole
 as a public domain an esplanade
 sunk
 to the green strip a bikeway
and a promenade a wall from the street from the clamor
 than the current

*to put a parkway through
to the shore*

tim
 bers rot-
 ting tall
 jagged

of landfill the taboo

about the current shaping
and the highway
was crumbling and the highway
would be underground

*we thought New Yorkers would never accept
65,000 cars between them
and the waterfront*

Glenn Bach

From *Atlas*

hardly a ripple of surprise
see enough of what is happening
 of wheat
 white-painted
 houses turned black
 i hough not

that pollution is to blame

 w' eeds grown
 to the surface the empty
 sands
 but look now—high
 summer

after the mayfly must w' ork
the pickerel vanish ~ d
 for coarse fish
 to clear snow or walleye
 whi | e enriching

in the quality of its fish
since Erie was ~ dying to begin with
have grown

*number of nymphs per meter
in western end, dollar value
in millions, cells per milliliter,
sold per year in Ohio in thousands
of tons, consumption in US in millions
of pounds, content of Erie water
in milligrams per*

the turtle-decked
water blooms

Glenn Bach

From *Atlas*

of a city

the building in the wilderness

flush

rundlet

a noise of trumpets

some cloth

a chest of white

of seashell

sewant from whelk

(white

mercenaria

by the thousand

furs

patroon

a raft of letters

(dark

Glenn Bach

From *Atlas*

to stand on grim
street corners
as an emblem

old frameworks into
beautiful beauty be

down Geary
an urban doom loop
where none had been

a new horse!

in San Francisco!

a dense urban city!

no beat cop walking

popups into
storefronts
tactile paving & in
silos
tenji bumps truncated
domes

throes if not
 hackles

Glenn Bach

From *Atlas*

the ocean in which
the ocean in which
the air *walls shifting*
their weight. What space
between stars like

the sea blowing branches
outside the kitchen
window *from a liquor store*
across the street

nears
cold
slow
no snow_ofcolor_a leak
in rivers_

the ocean
in which the air swims

between stars

erased

Sheila E. Murphy

Splay Thing

And we will richly go past our sadnesses that come in multiples
when least expected. We will have absorbed them into and beyond skin.
It will appear some new norm in which we partly recognize ourselves,
but this will be our new selves against the grain of selfhood as defined
by us and by our circle, our sphere, our likely or unlikely peer
group, chattel some would call them, the adherents, the unwitting fan club
convened to make us feel something amid life we did not bargain for.
All right, it's almost midnight in the body and the soul conjoined as
one unalterable nubile still point hypothesized the same one
capsized though grand, though granular, in fact, as much as a lone bluebird,
framed in the picture window I don't care about that still lingers there
despite my claim of independence, a sotto freestyle non-swimming
way of being, as if I could legitimately constrict by way
of veining veins and exploding lanes that I was taught to stay within.

Sheila E. Murphy

I Knew a Poet

A young man who looked softly plump,
vulnerable, and sweet seeming beneath
a lightly witty demeanor. Several women
poets were drawn to what sounded like

innocence. They gushed over his poems,
especially one about a wounded animal
in a field. He believed the women too hard,
told himself in a rush of conceit

his work was the apex of poetry.
When perhaps all the women meant was,
"Keep at it, it's worth your while.
You're on a roll." But he was starved for kudos.

He needed them too much. And the women
reflexively spoke good words they had heard
in their youth. In their eyes, he felt young,
a small child needing to be fed.

Sheila E. Murphy

Diminuendo

I did not write this poem. It connoted where I was
stuck on denotation. I minced syllables
that would be words. I let fly a vibrato
where one un-slanted tone would be. I breathed
into the lane before the lane change that hailed me
like a cab in a micro-town of olives too hard
to be consumed like the distant would-be lover
who looks best from far away; the only way you fare
is at the service of someone who needs something
not to do with you. I did not decide to write this poem.
"I need more time," you said, the beginning of the end.
I don't believe in endpoints, only lines beyond line segments,
half learned in geometry class from the teacher who hailed
from Kankakee and knew not much of anything human.

Sheila E. Murphy

Inseparable

You loved the canary that pronounced the unpronounceable.
You said, "He likes you." I did not
understand what I might say back to the bird.
I failed to refuse, just stood there. Listening to speech
of a kind, percussive in spurts. I did not speak back,
I watched the canary dart from lamp to cushion to shoulder.
Mine. I mined the room for silence. You told both of us
you felt especially loved today: your two friends
together with you in the room.

Sheila E. Murphy

Rain

I need sun
on my shadow,
the shadow within
I cannot quash.

I would rather
rain just slither
in and rinse
the earth,

then dry again.
The air, not warm
enough. Rain
chills my skin,

my inner
reverie becomes
as quiet as
my fear. All year

I hope for
this unnatural
light shining
let's pretend.

D. E. Steward

Sandbank Burrows

We're doxxed and stalked, a matter of degree

"Deletion has never existed" (Edward Snowden, Permanent Record)

Before dawn mid-September, Bubo Virginian us hooting to the east-southeast

Frequently now on late-summer nights, Megascopsio close by too, due south

The most exciting owl encounter is to seesnowy owls imaged in an open field,
immobile and filtered by blowing snow

They're enigmatic markers placed there, like glacial erratics in bad light or through
ground mist or fog, those stones and boulders carried and left by the ice sheets

As there are on a stellar scale the erratics of our galactic neighborhood

One erratic, 51 Pegasi a star with a planet in orbit, so far has led to the dramatic
findings of over four thousand more exoplanets within our Galaxy, the Milky Way

Now consider the near infinity of the stars of other galaxies and those stars' planets

"I'm falling upward, nothing to hold me down." (Jane Kenyon)

Adagio adagio

La intrincadavida

La magnificavida y un pensativovida

Universally owl encounters also are sobering

Their eyes and ultra-serious mien

Have never seen the two biggest ones, the Eurasia eagle owl Bubo bubo, and the
boreal great gray owl and its deep pumping whoops

Once a huge hawklike owl glimpsed flying in moonlit mist at a river ford in the
mountains of Flores was probably a brown hawk owl having a mellow double note call

Have seen burrowing owls in the Pantanal in daylight sitting by sandbank burrows, and
watched diminutive northern saw-whets unmoving and unblinking on daylight roosts

An emphatic for all owls is a plumage in variants, white from warm brown to ashy

In the manner of serious tout noir Europeans dressed not all in black but nearly so

Color of conformity and gloom

Unexpressive figures in long dark coats and walking alone on wet pavements with single-shouldered thin city backpacks

People driving alone in smallish cars is also very European

And every fifth person across Germany lives alone

Something to do with béton brut

Architecture controls lives

Historic civic order imposed, as if in the manner of sumptuary legality

Like Stolpersteine, on residential streets in Berlin but not in Munich, the reason not the Bavarian Right but a veto from Munich's Jewish community of the names of murdered Jews being stepped on

If they had not already left, there was no escape then for Jews

As the principal electronic vehicle of our twenty-first century surveillance has been XKEYSCORE aka XKS, with more recent more go-deeper programs

"You could read anyone's email in the world, anybody you've got an email address for. Any website: You can watch traffic to and from it. Any computer that an individual sits at: You can watch it. Any laptop that you're tracking: you can follow it as it moves from place to place throughout the world." (Edward Snowden already in January 2014)

Edward Snowden's isolate Moscow life

Within the internet ocean, surveillance is like the Gulf Stream moving more water than all of the world's rivers combined

Deep stream

"From now on every major writer will have to forge his or her language, a language which of course lives off the vernacular of his or her own time, but to which we have to grow acclimatized" (Gabriel Josipovici, TLS, August 9, 2019)

To Gerald Stern and his trees and to Les Murray in the presence of cows

To Carolyn Kizer's compassion and John Kinsella's "as if balanced on gyroscopes"

"The present moment that lives on to become long ago" (Gary Snyder)

The quality of gone

As nicotine smokers in this country are down to fifteen percent, deeply rooted male chauvinist views slip toward a similar decline

Among the buttoned up and bemused as well as with cohorts of the pierced tattooed

As the old trans-America voyage of parking on Main Street, stretching out your legs before getting something to eat, then driving west out of town and be gone

“the way they went is all that is still there” (W. S. Merwin, “Sheep Passing”)

The way it went with so much else that was compelling and picturesque

As the nostalgia quotient of what has been flushes up with age accrued

“...falling upward”

Recent pasts like docuseries on population explosion or global warming without color

Fast like old black and white newsreels

As a pistol shot in the back of the head the common mode of Soviet political execution

As disdain and dismissal was the way of the world and not being able to show as white meant relegation

As the hopelessness of driven-out bombed-out fired-out and ignored Middle Eastern, Latin American, African and Asian refugees

In their consummate sadness

Leaving with their children

Christopher Barnes

Danger Mouse Laps Stout

Smoke-disseminated taproom. Woebegone cobwebs
overhang beams. Unnoticed he makes tracks, lurks in
boscage shadows. Mauser poised for the Royal
Toothpaste Squeezer, as he dawdles along lane. I.R.A.
grasp nettle of parish-pumps.

Christopher Barnes

Cut-Out Tammy Swishes Chemise

Unhooking paper folds, backbone gristles. Onus instincts
boilersuit, level-headed cap, matchlock at hip. Eyes vacant,
she deducts finalized minute of legionnaire's breath.
Portugal's Popular Forces esteem the quick change.

Christopher Barnes

Katy Kopycat, a Doll In Splash-Proof Chiffon

Ruses entrée to union-buster's house-warming. Heidsiek
Monopole Brut titillates nose. Pale jazz floats uninfected.
Intrigue and censure lip to ear. From purse, the six-shooter's
not chichi. Mayhem - a pelt to Weather Underground's get-away.

David Weiss

from 'ebbles

harrying hammer, this deflated
bell binds 1 to 1, an angel's
wing to slap fight

wing-tip flick a flux & move-
ment & falling soggy
edge

chrome & peeking sheesh
scamper to new diction, care
long & near in wilting
air

. . . whistl-
ing clover, truism
& screwy banding an
uneven orange : tulip-ish &
hard . . .

cabled eardrum a hip
set to twinge

low cycle with-
out gardens — with-
in a mirror's squawk —
symmetries

rehearsed & bordered, grasp-
ing at

tinsled distance as dander
climbing& galvanic

gist as immaculate
&inarticulate

when waking — a fall
between dawns

light steeped in water, sky
the shine between &
red brick beneath

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

on monday, february 5th, 2024 the organ playing john cage's "as slow as possible" changed chords
for the first time in two years the piece won't end until 2640
draw the cup to your lips

the composition began with 18 months of silence the organ has had 16 chord changes
another pipe was added to the mechanical organ to create a new sound the score contains
8 pages of music no exact tempo is specified i trust you

my flight is delayed + i receive multiple messages informing me that my flight is delayed i ask where
to watch the basketball game a woman empties trash cans, her hair pulled tight
bags exit the aircraft in intervals on the ramp's conveyor belt the gate agent announces *please, we're*

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

trying and then goes silent time is meticulously sliced into fives : 2/5/22 : 2/5/24 : 8/5/26
john cage died in 1992 “as slow as possible” has been performed twice before, much less slowly
mechanized pressure on the organ’s keys creates a drone-like sound we’re asleep

and i'm undone glass doors open and close voices rise and fall the hum of the air crystallizes

the change in tone as the organ's new pipes are fitted into place is miraculous i feel transported

i prepare a table of black dirt an irreducible yes

consider how doors function : how to work the structure of a door

i think this is supposed to be your home

images like this : heart branching into throat

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

articulate the choice : between action + understanding

if i can't take it yet : you must wait too

dissectible paper woman : dissectible womb of eve

i'm offered pearls two days in a row
to be given blessings you didn't want or ask for
you leave your door open for me so i walk right in

██████████ : yes

██████ : yes

██████████ : here

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

██████ : maybe

if you want me to : ██████

if you ask : ██████

you : ████████████████████

i fainted and i didn't see anything : ████████████████

██████ : you were somewhere else

██████ : wait

██████ : toss a coin in the river

██████ : *the if + the bickory*

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

will you look me in the eyes when you fuck me? : 

 : an eloquent summation of paradox

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

gaze through breath'd glass to eat the heart devour indigo

i wear two skins one to kiss my girl goodnight

one for the blood that pours from my body brushed sugar of slowed breath

i faint into a faultline consider the horizon gutted punished
a dress of rope : how the voice rises by memory the mind clinging to the object
the mind pushing the object away the mind spinning around the object : zoetrope

how the voice rises : a glut of water a mirror shows you the so-called outer-
world a mirror is it's not clear which opens me up
my vessel and the sound say you're out of sorts double-edged

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

mediating between acceptance and what i've misunderstood my my
i've grown fond of you my dream of course which opens me up say
you're out of sorts say you have a prescience i mean discernment

so you figure you can go on living say you're repeating a room of sorts
i'm you just fall into but you sat next to not answer but voice
its own music is it dangerous or really just possible here grown fond of

i can't what do i in the vision i'm pulling scarves
from your breast pocket : safekeeping flames shade : known to me
this is the river i cannot cross the heart is a labyrinth

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

it's time for the forest to burn we're each a conflagration arise from failure

what would it feel like to paradox of take my hand

we think this is our body this affection godspoken my jaw was

grief grown into resolve i'm given a message

and i take it like a bridge spoken into lack

i did some research on masks

write your name on a slip of paper fold it in half
fold it in half again you're held in every letter what is it
to release what i want for the wound in you to close

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

at its root an un-forgetting

a system : a clockwork : a ghostly pace

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

i begin on my knees i keep dreaming seeds
emerging from the heads of lotuses and it's enough
go ahead if you need to i'm right here

stage 1: in a gesture so thin

stage 2: we can't say how we know each other

stage 3: feel what you're becoming is it yours

stage 4: does it matter if the world won't solve it
we fold like cellophane we fill like catacombs
a paper woman dancing with a paper man

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

be for me like _____ and i'll follow you
we all have lineages take warmth : take number
give absolution : not origin not force : not time

not an adequate definition for heat like yours
more and more i ask nothing but for the sound of a door
how a voice will carry the way the body is held extends the body

into unthinkable positions a priori you offer your hand
i see you for what you are and name it relief in the utterance
imagine anything you only have to say the words

Danika Stegeman

From *wheel of fortune*

and there it is

a cup is always a cup

Brenda Mann Hammack

The Living Dead Woman's Quantum Cat Experiment



is not as cruel as schrödinger's ::
and cannot be refuted :: by
exhumation :: beside the point
is the point :: that cat had to die

somewhere :: she won't dig it up ::
just to scan infrared :: its box
coffin could be coated in lead ::
even radium won't minimize

threat :: what's half-life exposed
to gamma wave :: if persephone
strays :: despite warnings :: why
would she obey when downside's

warmer :: think what you prefer ::
she won't choose hades or mother

Brenda Hammack

The Living Dead Woman Is Not a Robot



she can pick out red lights,
motorbikes :: but is stuck
on *ze* and *they* when she's
told to choose her pronouns ::

she's excited by the range,
but allows that age attracts
enough suspicion once her
wrinkles start to fade ::

gossips scan her cart at
check out :: is that retinol ::
dna :: the blood of virgins,
strained :: bottled botulism ::

does the throbbing in her fore-
head come from filament or vein

Brenda Mann Hammack

The Living Dead Woman Remembers Love



she remembers swooning :: back
when serious meant being touched ::
when confidence took :: trust, not
con :: the anhedonic can't be taught

to feel by coddling :: photos alone
do not establish alibi anymore than
time stamp :: if what she meant
is not confirmed by bias, how can

she tell a stalker from admirer ::
she might as well pull petals off
a flower :: as expect her pulse to
out-pace hour :: commitment

is just another contronym :: like
sanguine, temper, and asylum

Brenda Mann Hammack

The Living Dead Woman Has Been Force Fed



although she is no suffragette :: she cannot
vote for being dead :: no matter what
the rights or lefts accuse :: news bemuses
with all its strangeness :: the red-

polls heckling from bushes :: the blue
scrubs prepare for storm :: she's
more or less okay except for laryngitis
that will not go away any more

than indignation or lacerated fingers ::
she's knitting stays :: afraid of
execution :: of spite-laid plans ::
charcuterie requiring sutures ::

the taste of blood :: of being led
by those who would remove her

Brenda Mann Hammack

The Living Dead Woman Is Not Impressed



regardless of newbie status, she's
capable of recognizing virtuality
without assistance :: head gear
loosens nape knot to let the night

in :: who is she to disregard body's
precarity, to pretend hum cannot
be felt from thumb to elbow ::
she knows the crackle tone

rotation :: the jump-scare flare
of nerve impingement :: does
not need haptic notification
from 8-bit troll to know she's

dead again :: staccato fills
the hollows in her bone

Brenda Mann Hammack

Notes:

Although AI was not employed in the writing of the poems, I did use the words of my sonnets in the original word-to-image prompt, which was further manipulated/transformed using a variety of digital tools.

Pamela Miller



Photo by Nadia Jamnik on Unsplash

Ghost Town

It's true, this place is abandoned. But that doesn't mean there's no one here. We have a ghost population of hundreds, dating back to 1903: spectral sheriffs, phantom families, even a few ectoplasmic chickens. Hardly anybody knows we're around, rising from our graves like vigorous mist and turning cartwheels through the sagebrush all night. Sometimes the Spook Tour bus rolls in, bouncing down the unkempt road like a tumbleweed. It's fun to give those rubbernecks their money's worth! We perform our door-slam house-rattle antics and emit wails from deep beneath the ground. Once we even levitated the bus. Then they finally trundle off and leave us alone to mind the endless business of the dead.

Photo by Tyler on Unsplash



The Ghost Car

Why does this mysterious white car keep appearing right in front of me? When I try to pass it, my steering wheel locks up. When I gun my engine to ram it off the road, it vanishes with an eerie *poof!* Then I round the next turn and it's ahead of me again, looming like an iceberg on wheels. I'm forced to follow its mesmerizing taillights but dear God, where is it going? Why is it dragging me behind it like some supernatural tow truck? And who's driving that infernal thing? Could it be one of those people I ran over on New Year's Eve? Is that why we're speeding down this long-closed road where the bridge has been washed out for years?

Pamela Miller



Photo by Gabriel on Unsplash

The Ghost on the Tracks

The train already killed me the first time. Why must I spend eternity trudging down these never-ending tracks? When I dove in front of the Heartland Flyer, I thought that would be my finale. But I guess Heaven can't stand suicides. They're making me repeat my splatery death forever like some kind of grisly GIF. So many trains have barreled through my nothingness that I don't even close my eyes anymore. When will the Hell Express arrive and carry me south to where I belong? My soul's feet ache from walking. Let me rest in my flaming red roomette.

Pamela Miller

The Ghost Who Waits

What a gorgeous morning in Heaven, my love, as I sit here waiting for you. It's been eight pining years and could well be dozens more. But I want to be the first to greet you the moment you arrive. So I linger day and night by the pearly portal, watching the new souls stream in. Saint Peter doesn't mind if I loiter here like a vagrant. He knows a thing or two about loss and the alchemy of reignited love. He'll grin when I finally see your favorite high-heeled shoes as you dance through the gleaming gates.

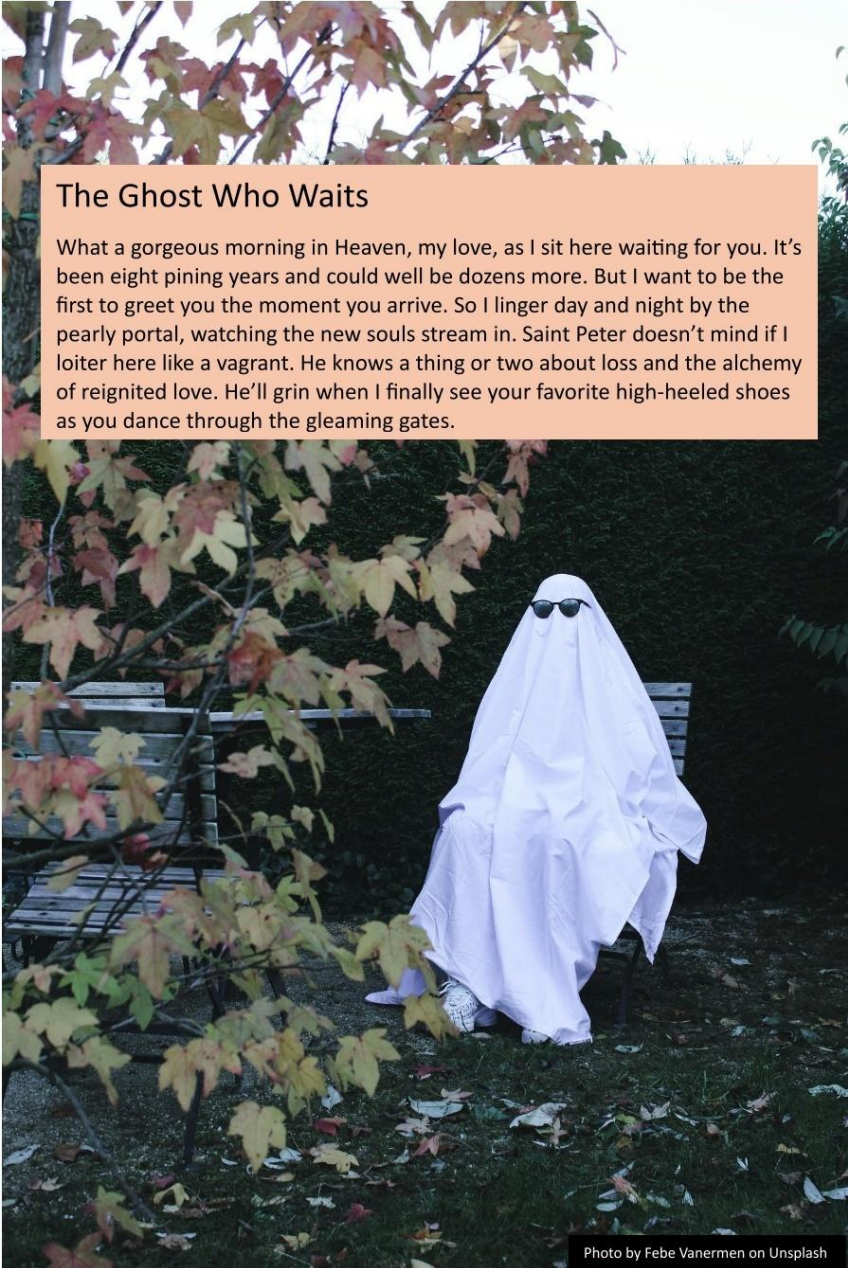


Photo by Febe Vanermen on Unsplash

Pamela Miller

Photo by Phil Desforjes on Unsplash



The Haunted Apartment Building

First, Gladys died here and decided to stick around. Then she recommended this lovely building to us other homeless ghosts. Now living people won't stay in our units for more than three terrified days. We can't help it if we leave trails of ectoplasm on the walls or prefer the air in here to be frigid as permafrost. Don't call us squatters—that's ridiculous. How can spirits with no physical bodies *squat*? Oh, look, another one of us just moved in upstairs!

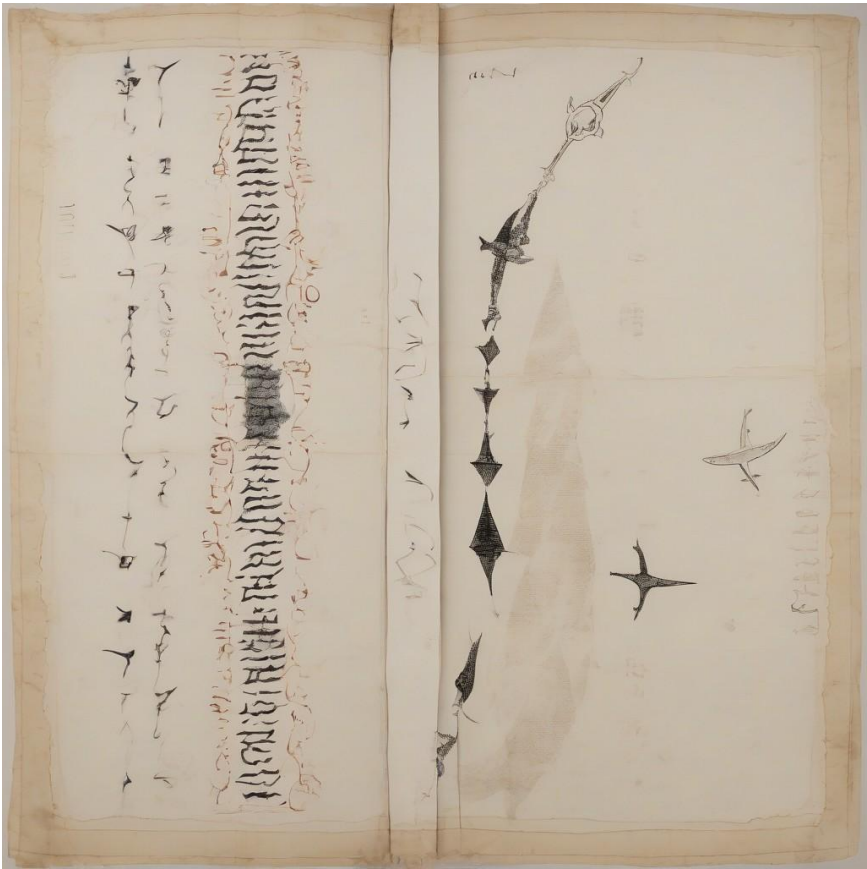
Francesco Aprile

From *Have a safe trip*



Francesco Aprile

From *Have a safe trip*



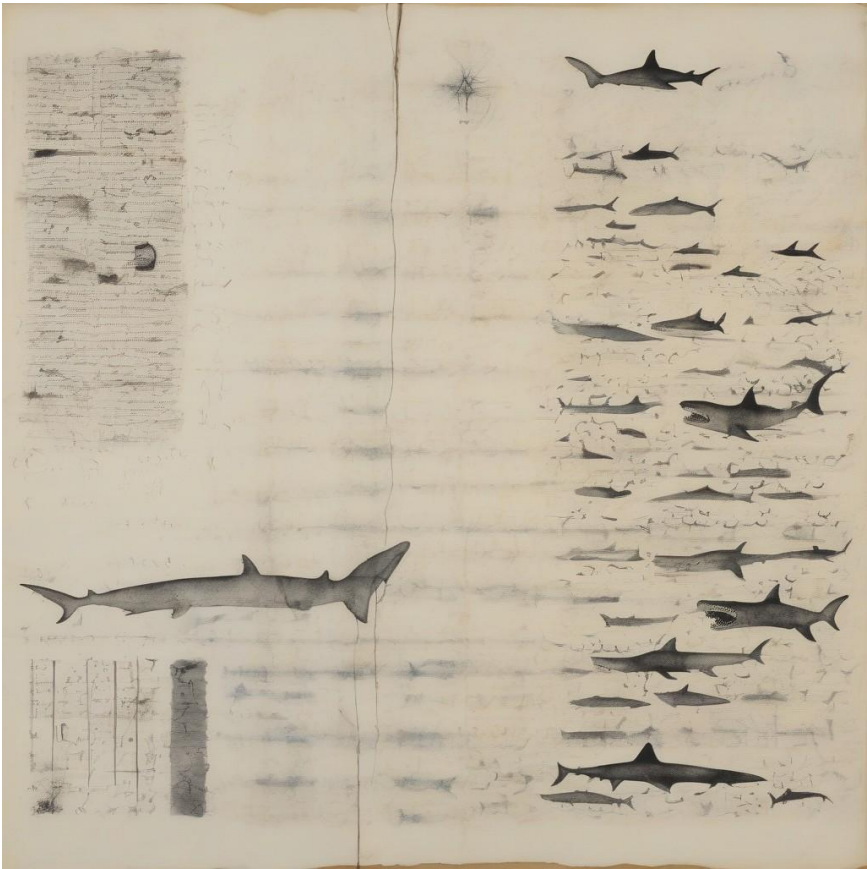
Francesco Aprile

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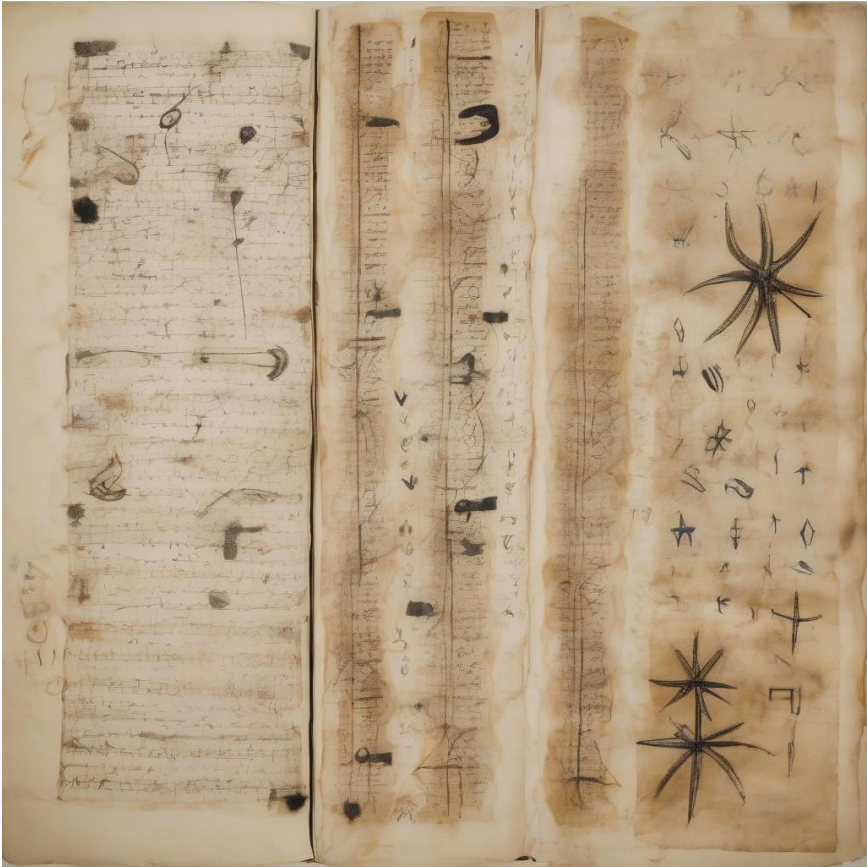
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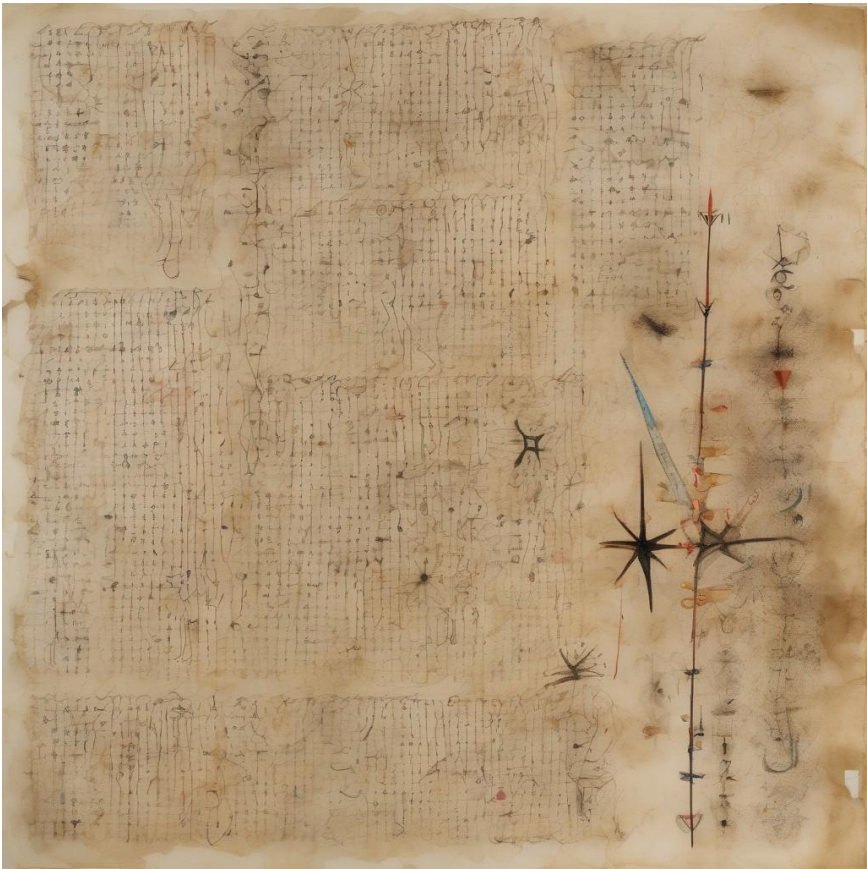
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Francesco Aprile

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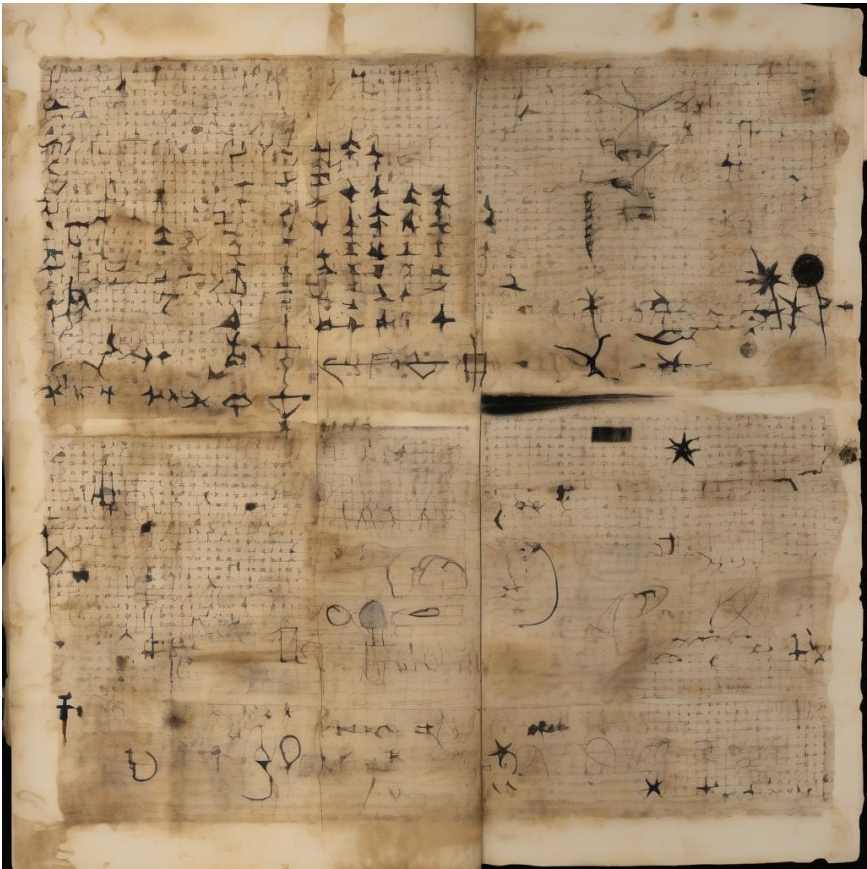
Francesco Aprile

From *Have a safe trip*



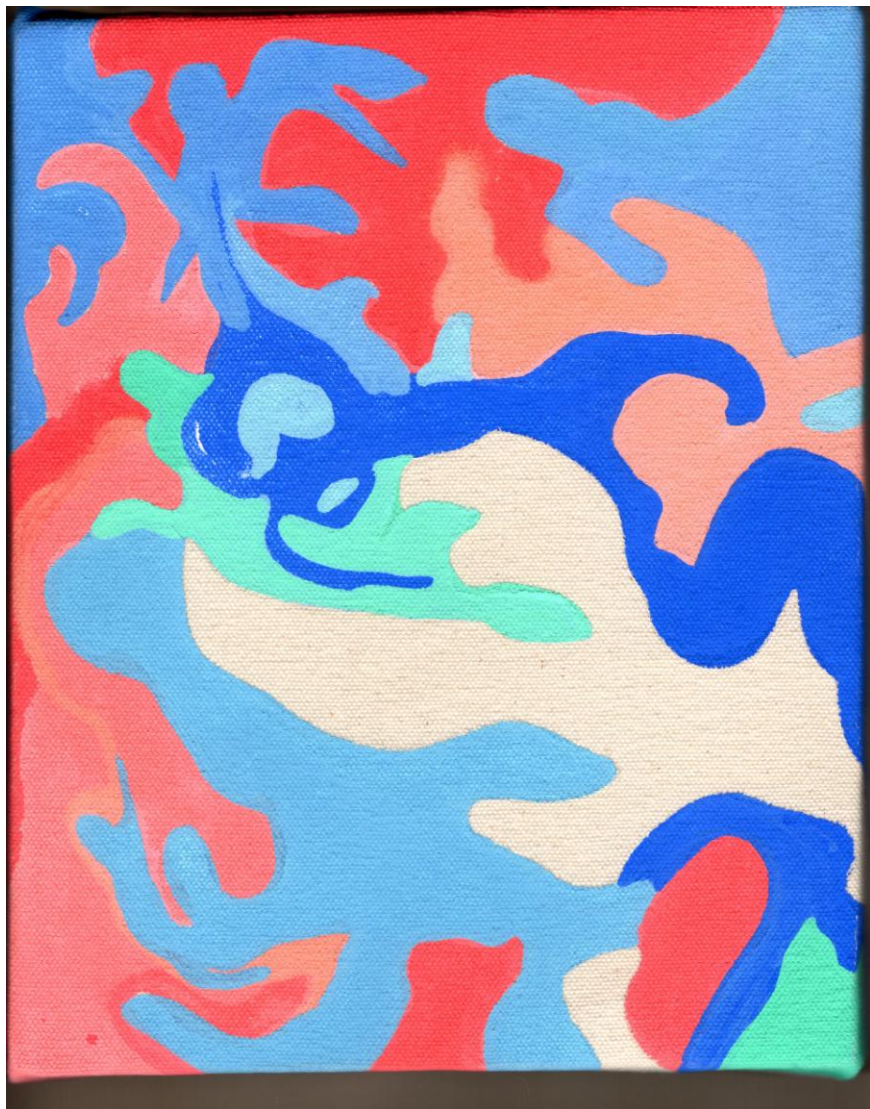
Francesco Aprile

From *Have a safe trip*



Oona Ratcliffe

Untitled



Oona Ratcliffe

Untitled



Oona Ratcliffe

Untitled



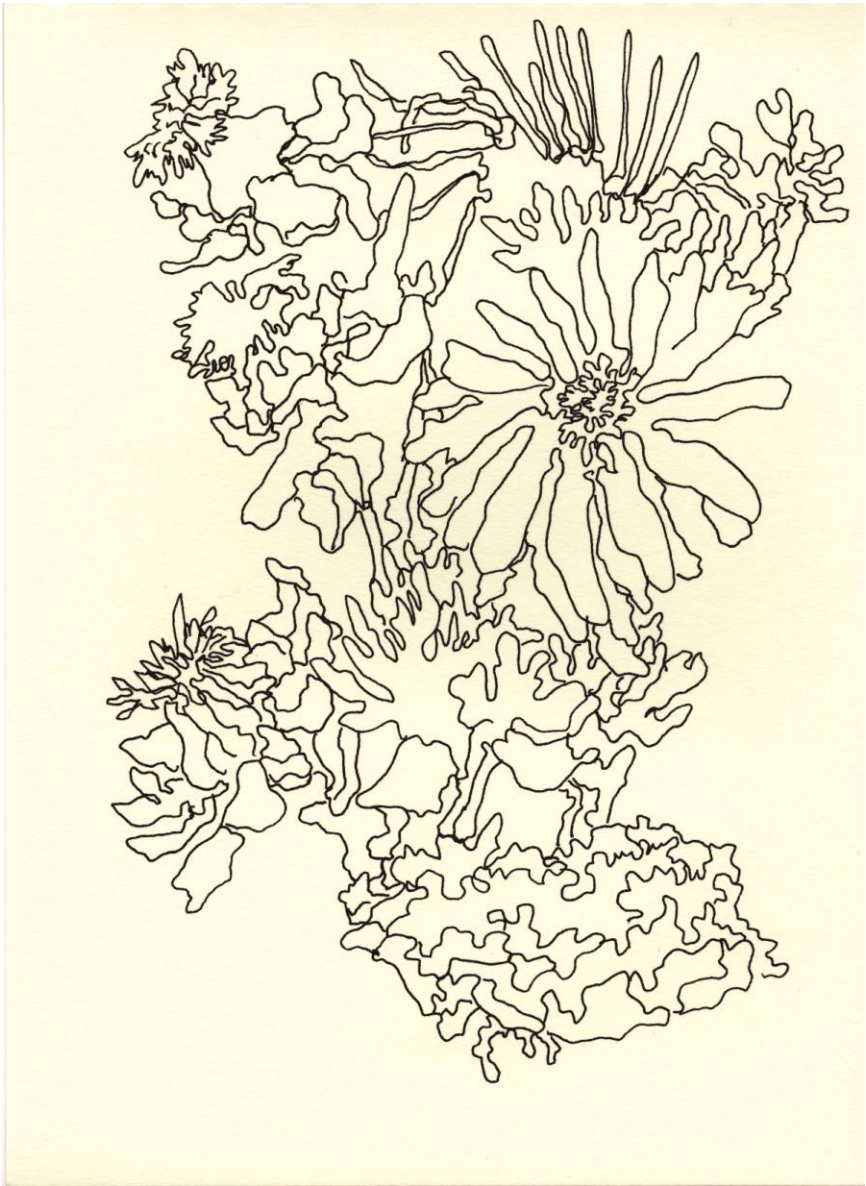
Oona Ratcliffe

Untitled



Oona Ratcliffe

Untitled



Lee Johnson

Jealousy changes my breathing



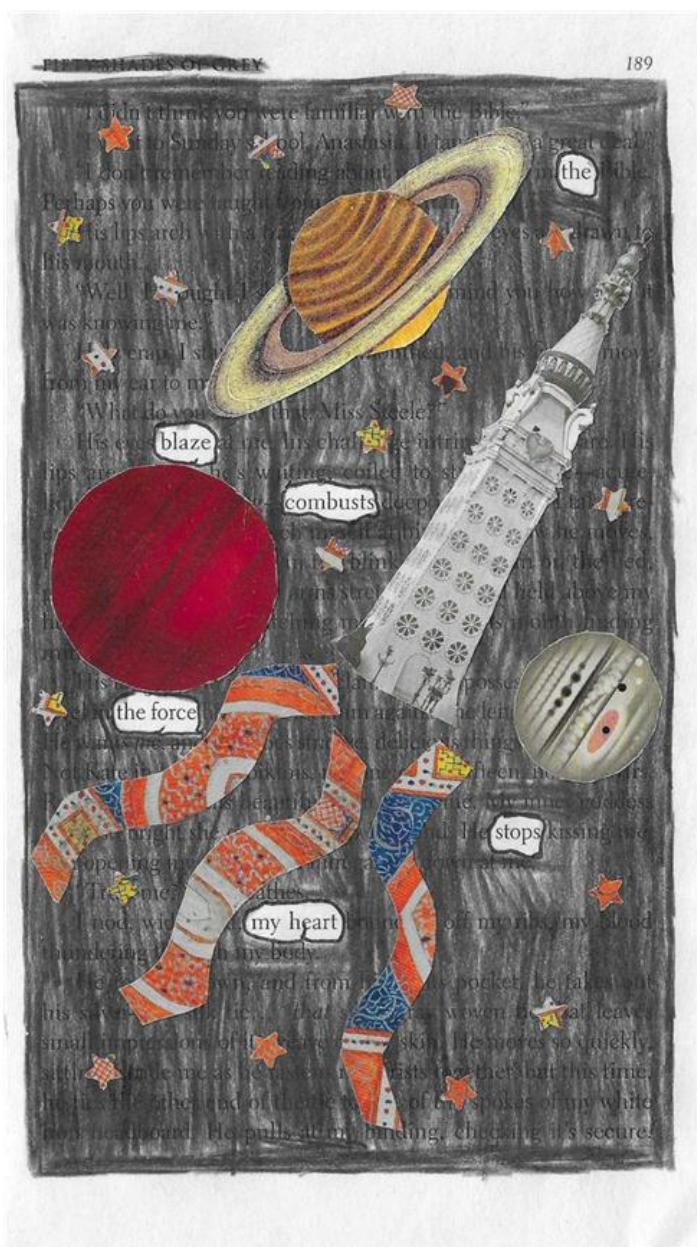
Lee Johnson

Plants on the back of your head



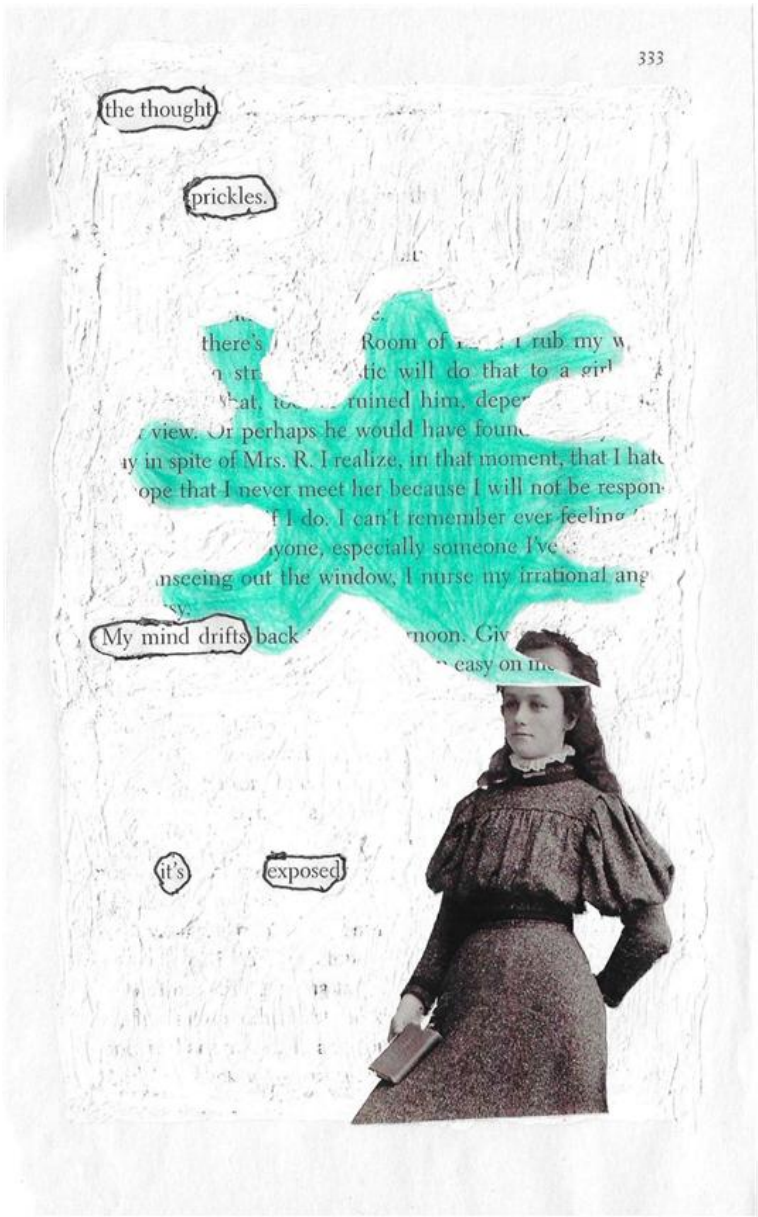
Lee Johnson

The blaze combusts



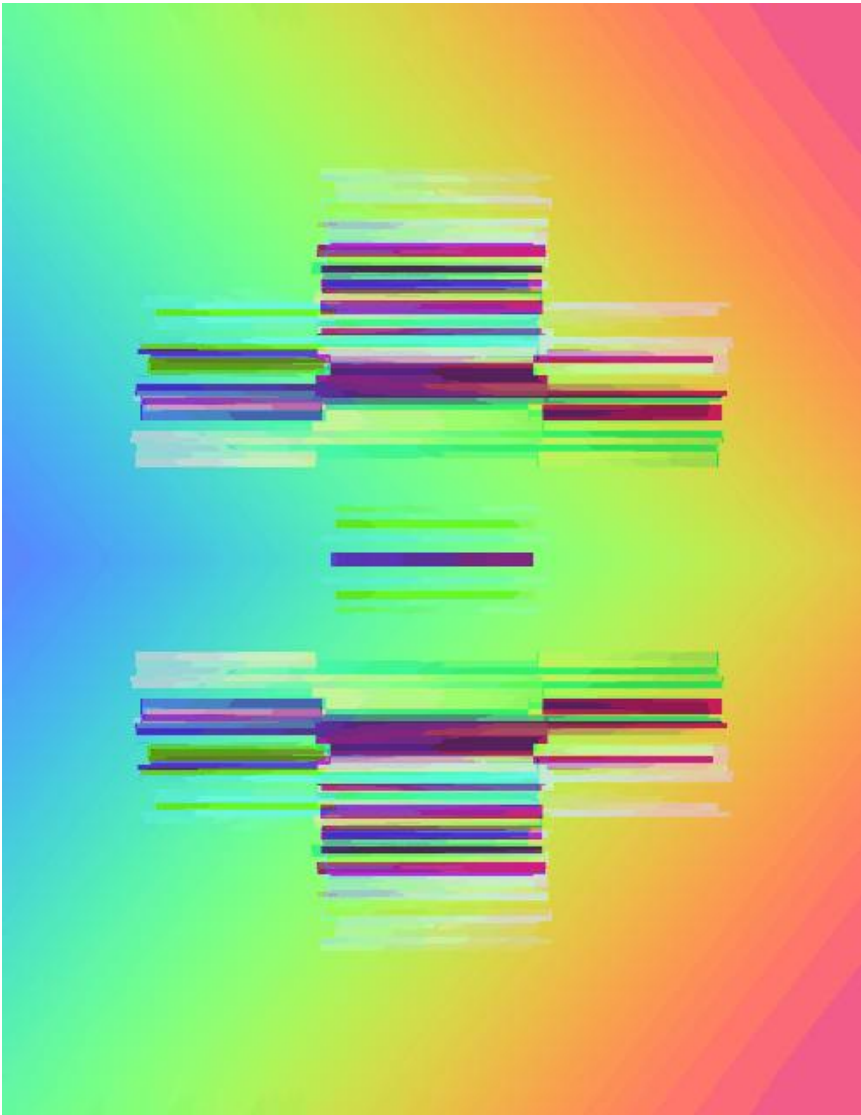
Lee Johnson

The thought prickles



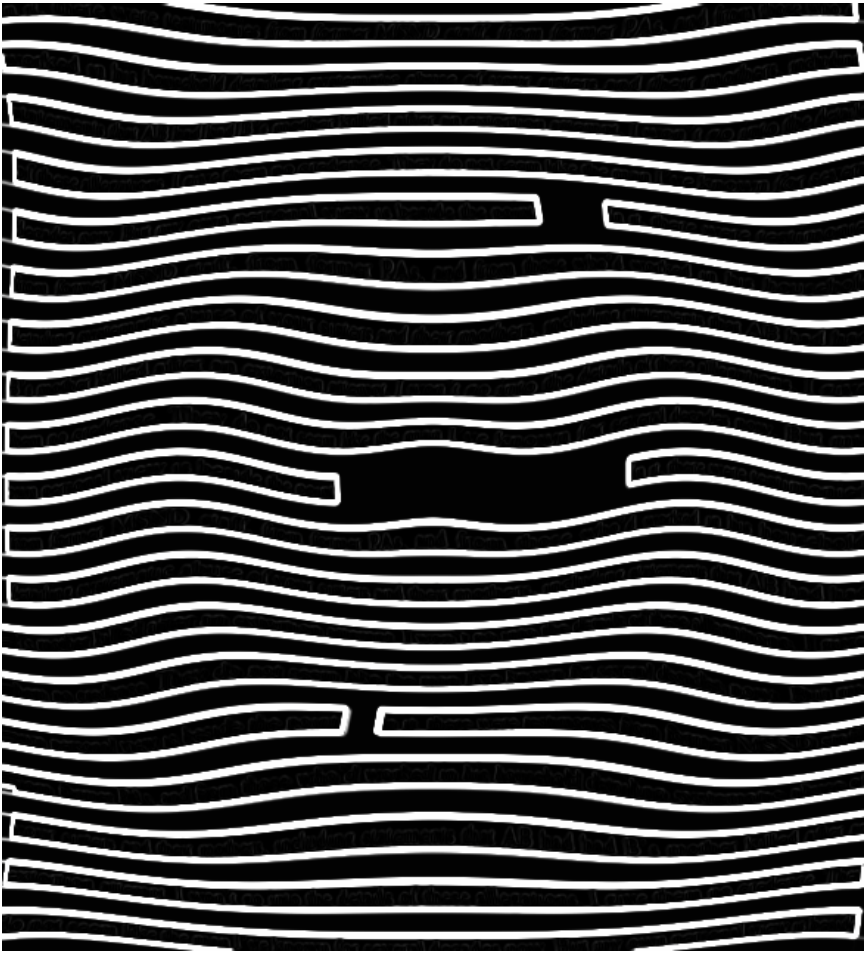
Kenneth M Cale

dayglo palindrome



Kenneth M Cale

zen pleasures



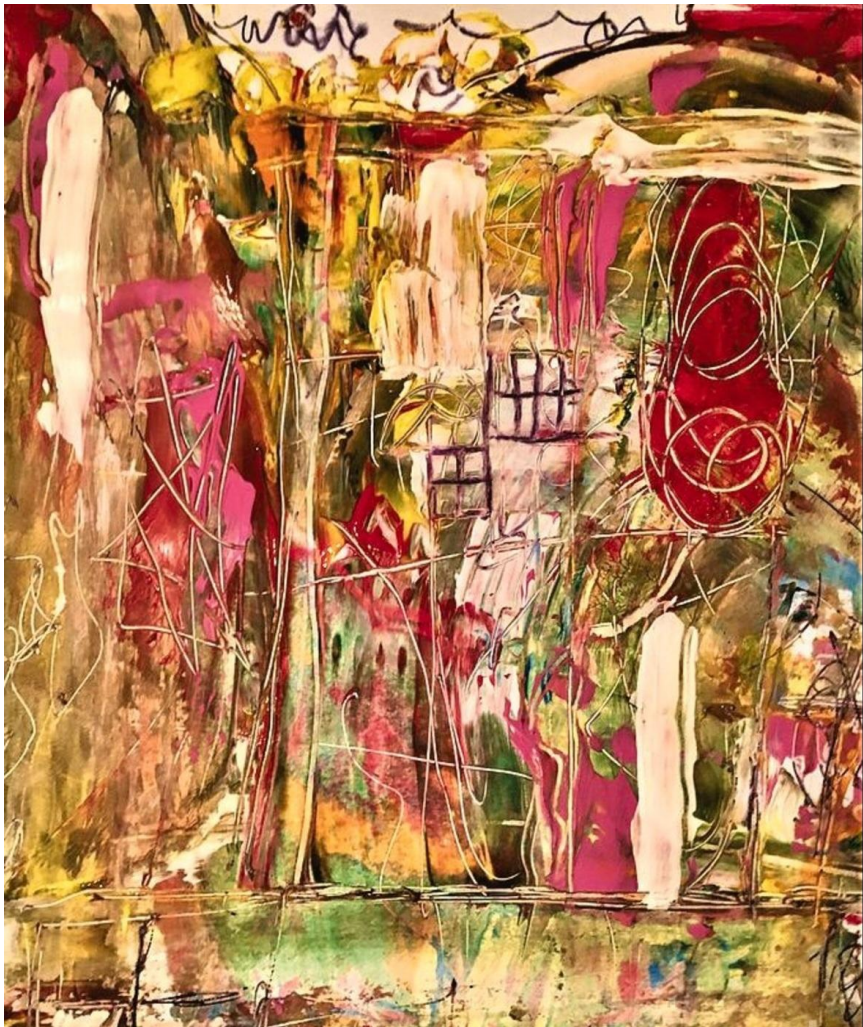
Ernest Williamson III

Homeless Man Reading



Ernest Williamson III

The Cottage



Ernest Williamson III

Ton Amour Ma Capture



Ernest Williamson III

Amanda with Yellow Waters



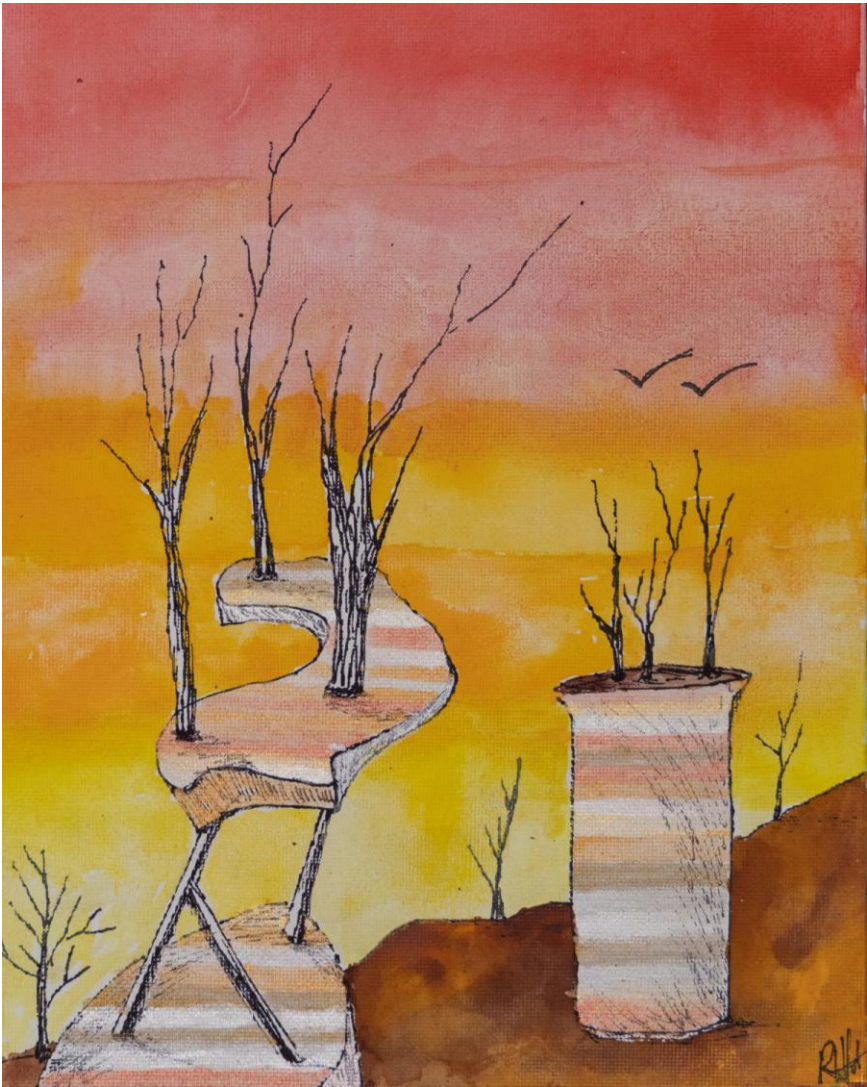
Richard Hanus

0RH5167



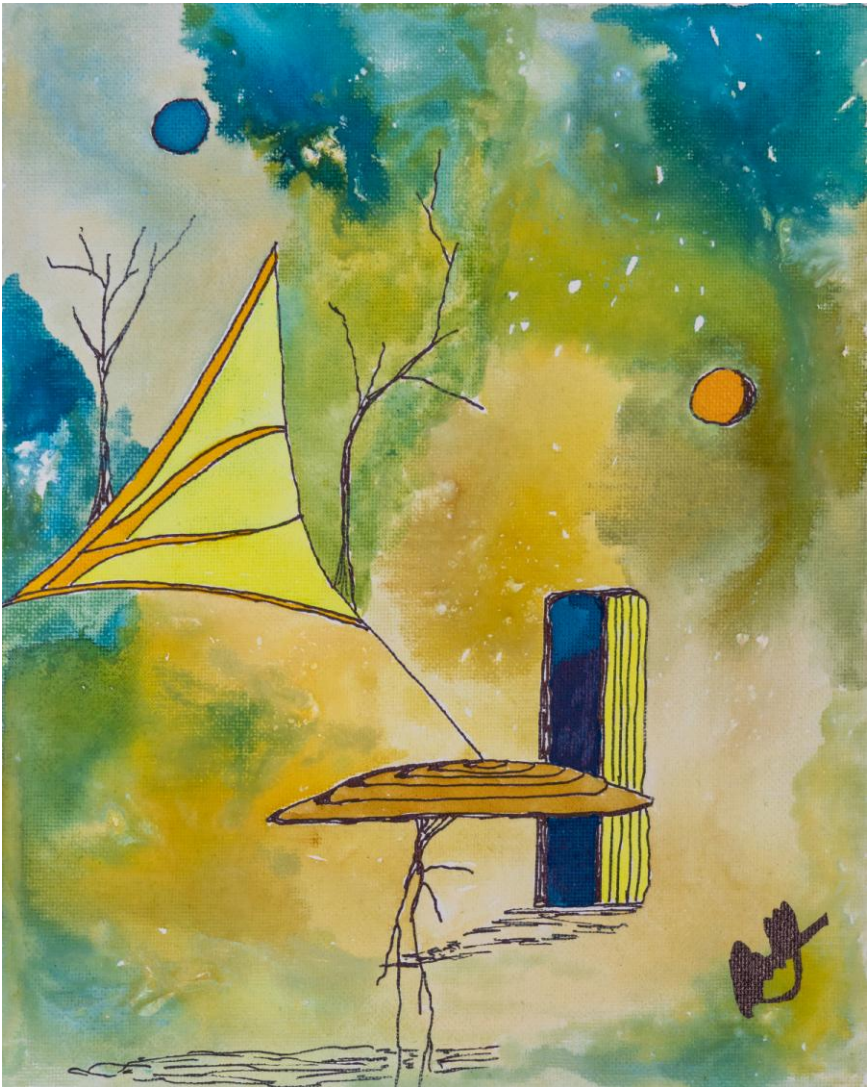
Richard Hanus

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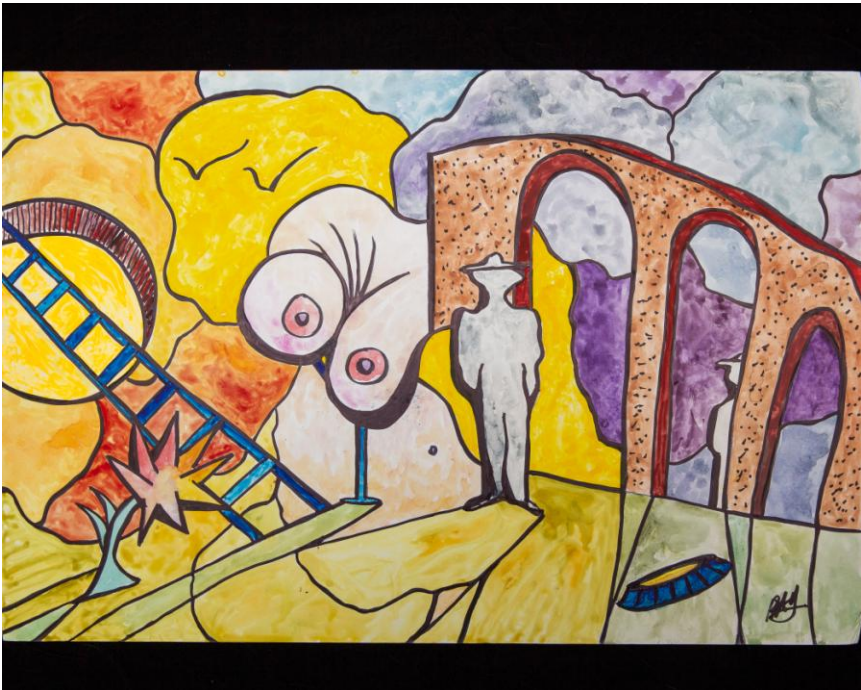
Richard Hanus

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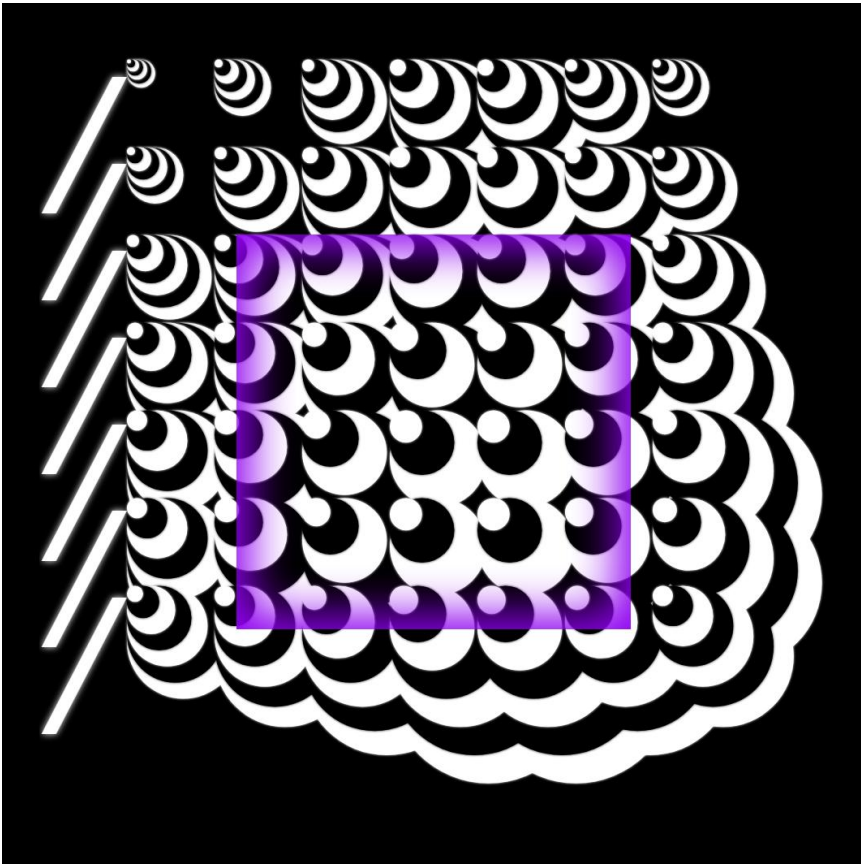
Richard Hanus

Photo-137



Ted Warnell

Acid b.rain



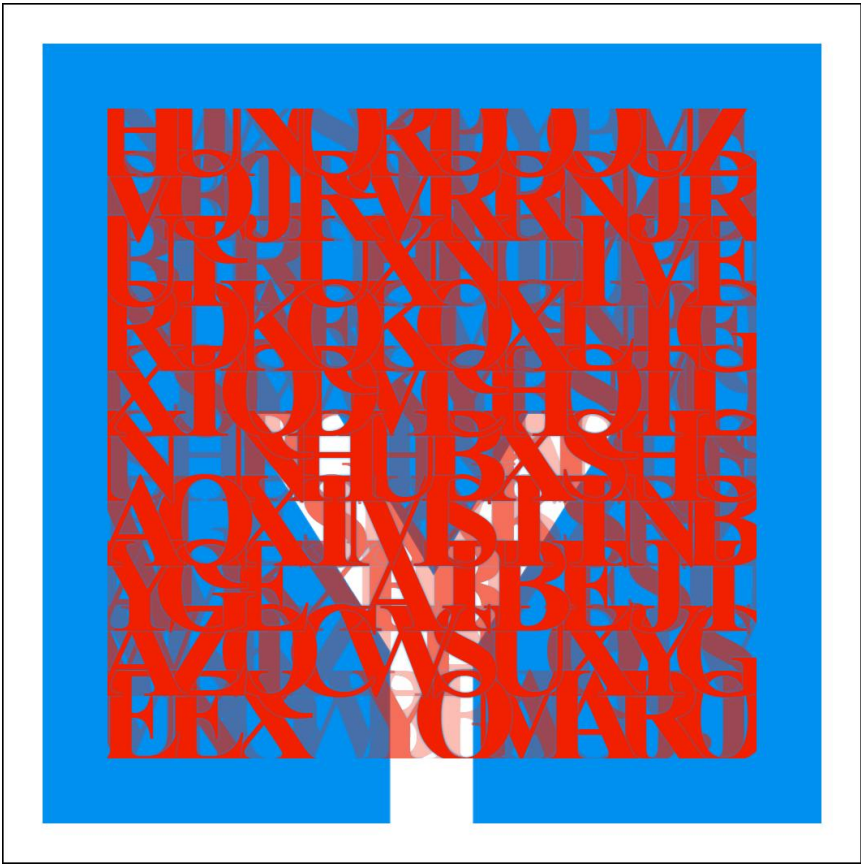
Ted Warnell

Canopy 73



Ted Warnell

Canopy 75 Clipped



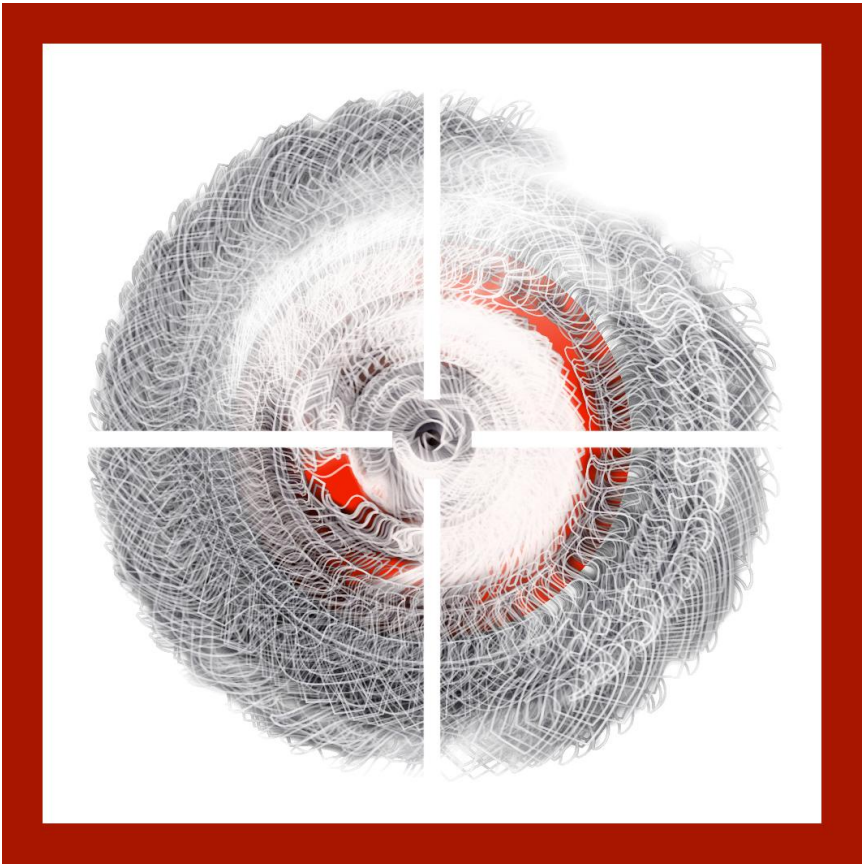
Ted Warnell

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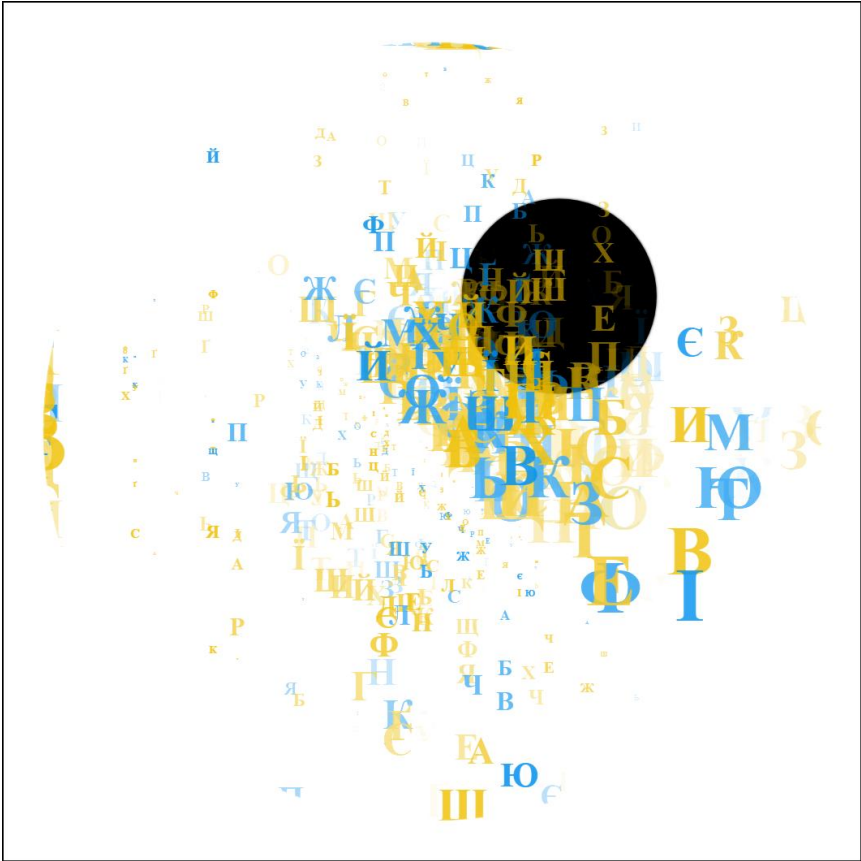
Ted Warnell

Silver Sun (A Eye)



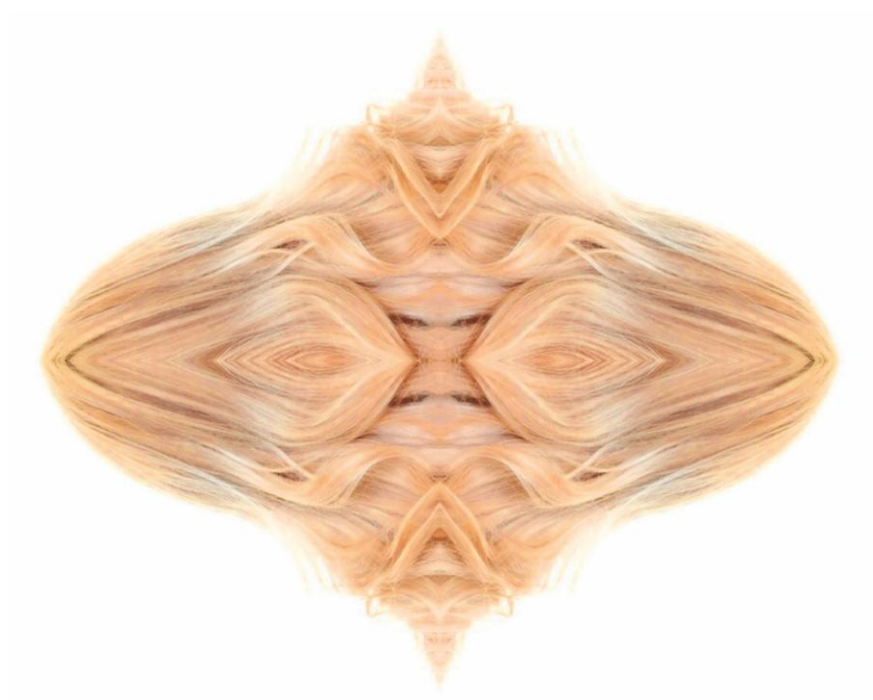
Ted Warnell

С л а в а У к р а ї н і



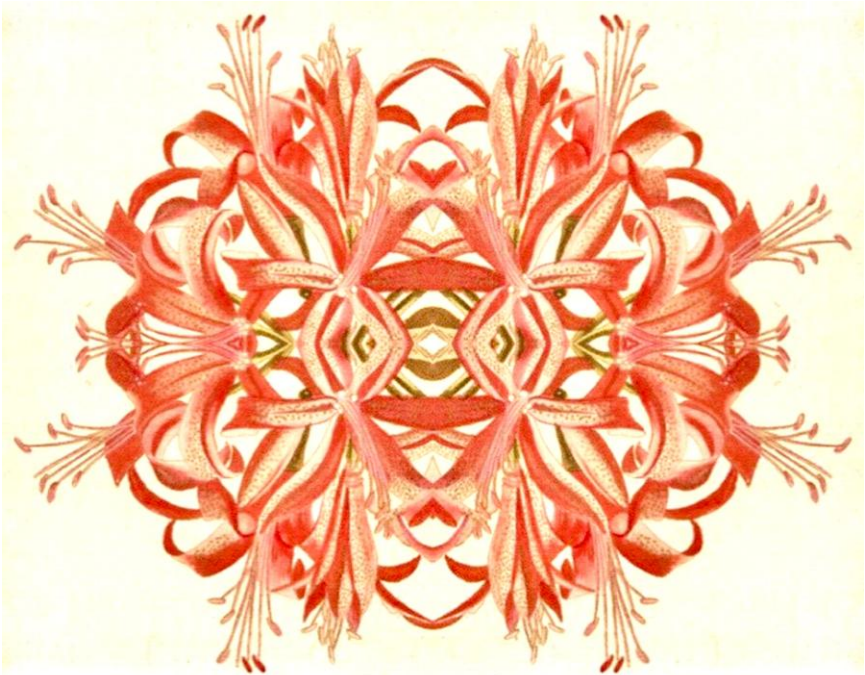
Bill Wolak

Because Everything Can Vanish in an Instant



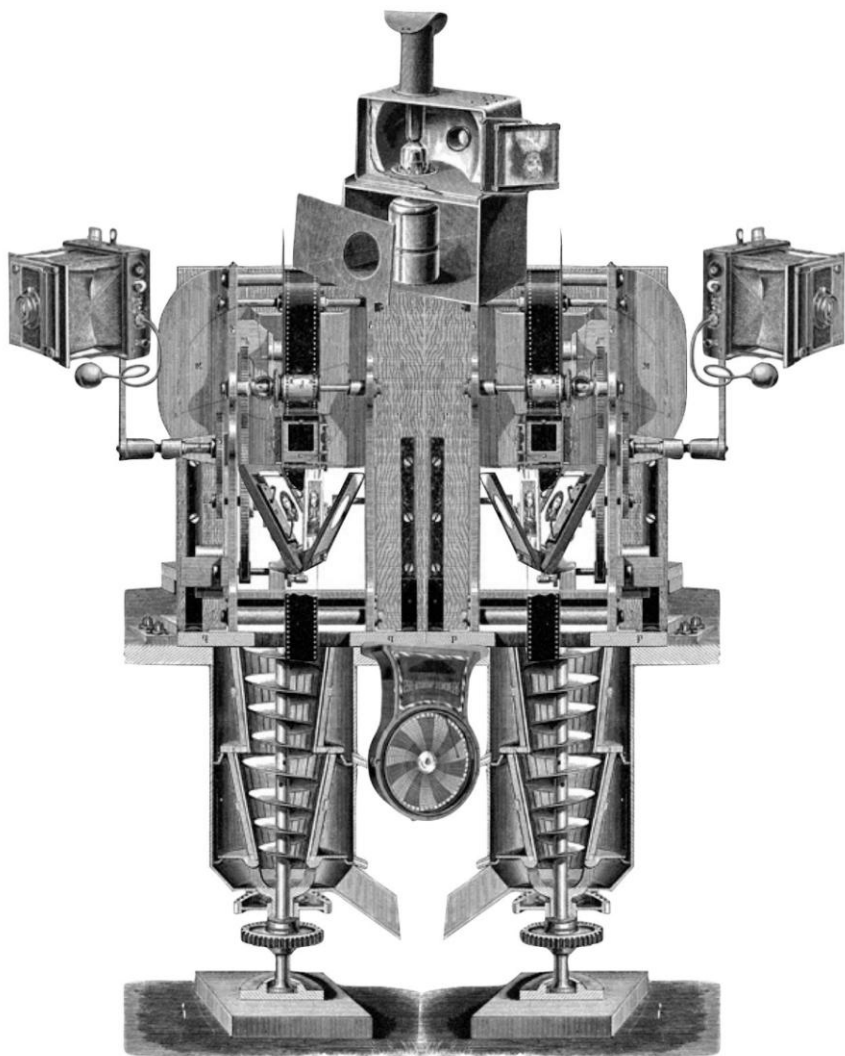
Bill Wolak

Any Smile Licked by Moonlight



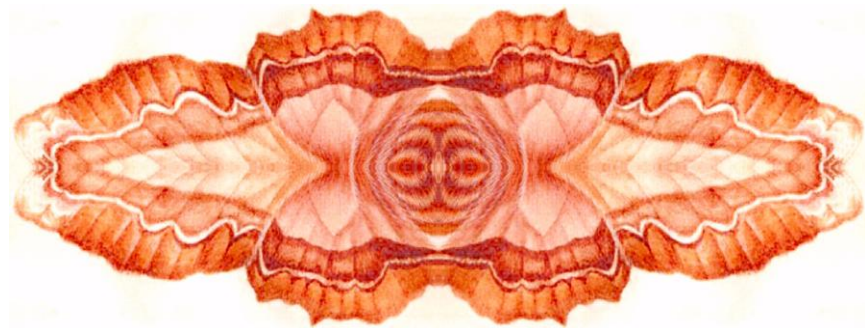
Bill Wolak

The Itch of Precarious Scars



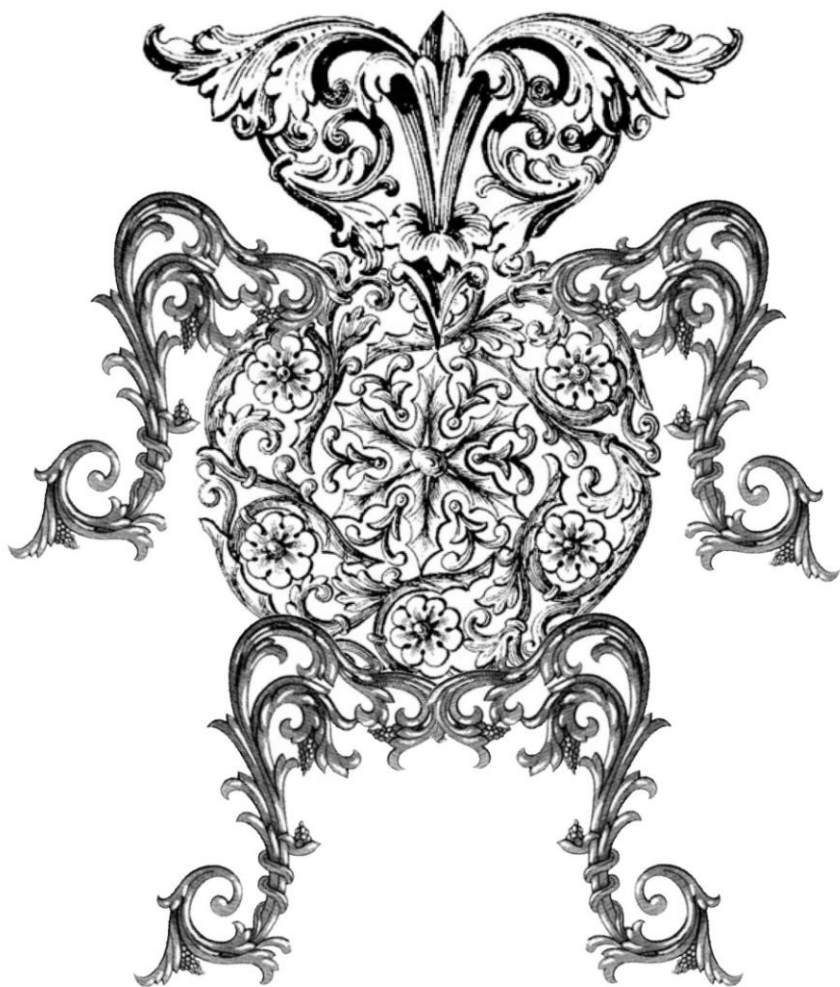
Bill Wolak

The Wonderment of Unexpected Wings



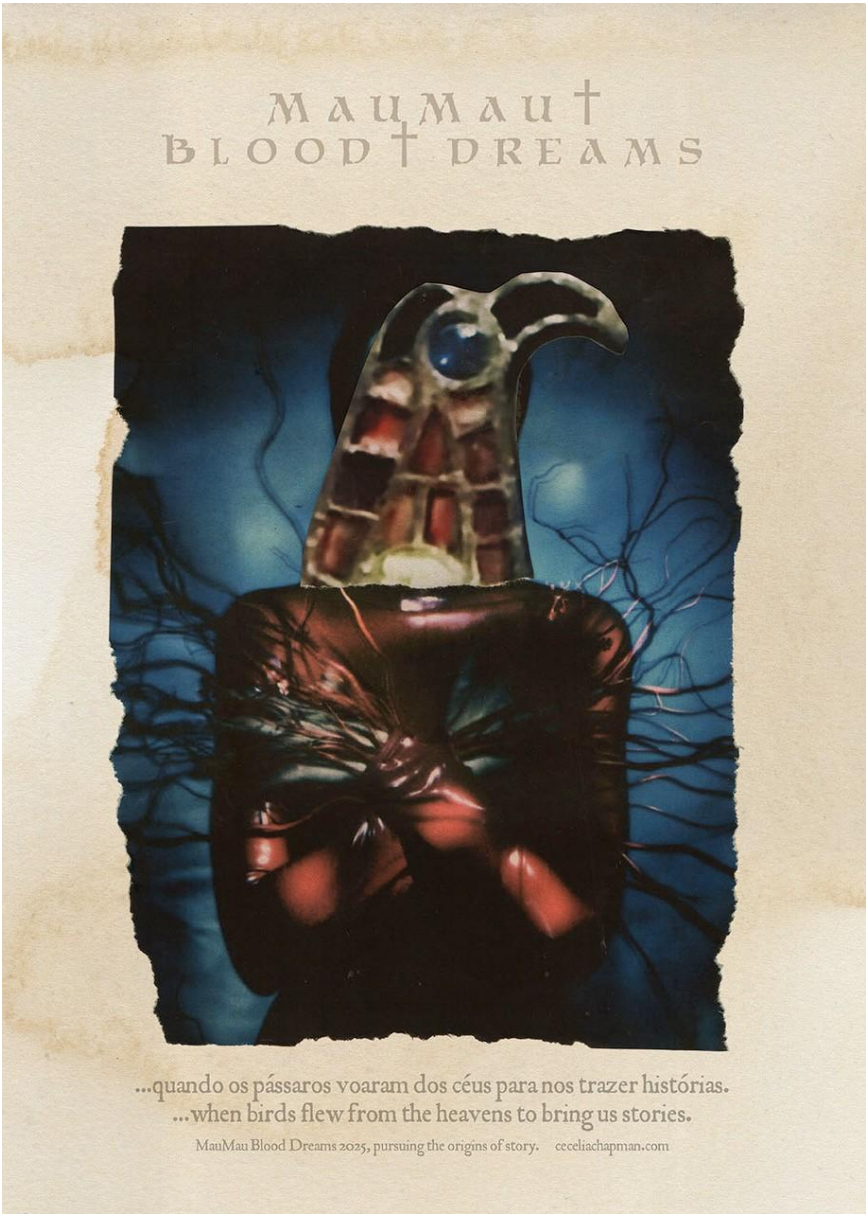
Bill Wolak

Dazzled by Seeds of Moonlight



Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams



Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams



Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams

MAU MAU †
BLOOD † DREAMS

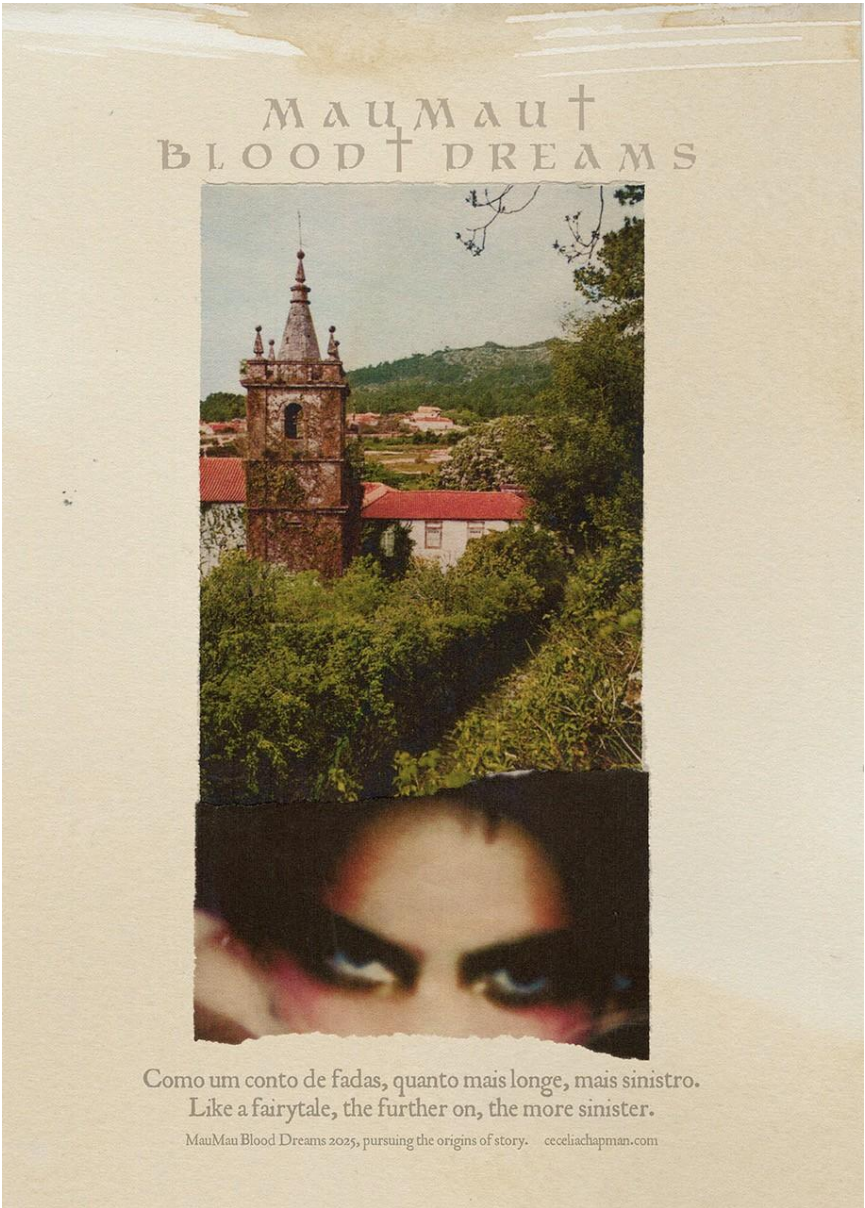


Ela conduziu os perversos para as profundezas da floresta, onde
revelou suas penas cobertas de joias e eles ficaram cegos.
She led the wicked deep into the forest where she revealed her
jewel-covered feathers and they were blinded.

MauMau Blood Dreams 2025, pursuing the origins of story. ceceliachapman.com

Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams



Como um conto de fadas, quanto mais longe, mais sinistro.
Like a fairytale, the further on, the more sinister.

MauMau Blood Dreams 2025, pursuing the origins of story. ceceliachapman.com

Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams



Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams



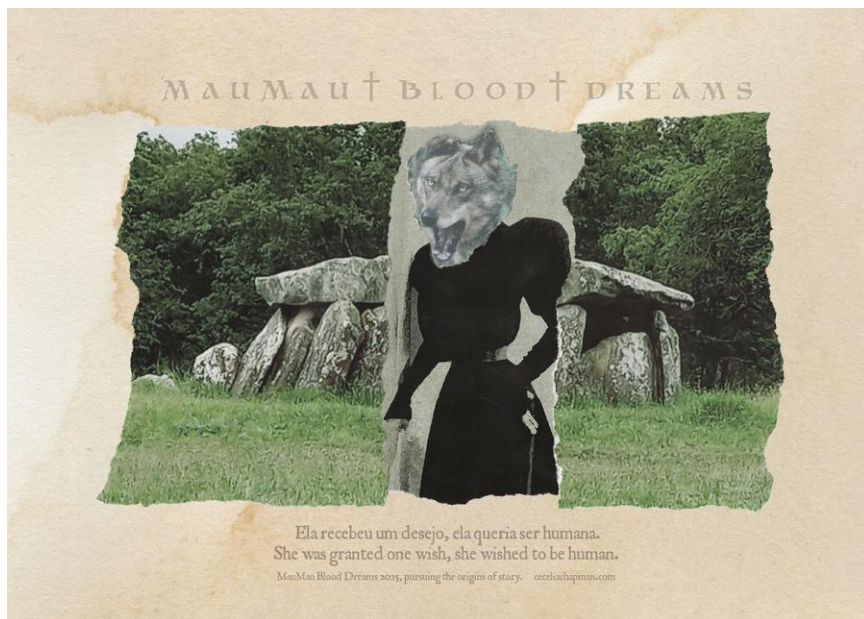
Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams



Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams



Cecelia Chapman

MauMau Blood Dreams

Notes:

“MauMau Blood Dreams” explores the origins of story...and why the fairytale? A deceptively fluffy subject. America has fables and folklore but the European fairytale-fable dominates media narrative, theatre, film, literature, politics, visual art.

In Spain, archaeologists recently found rocks covered in neolithic designs. They describe hunts, conflicts and tribe (gossip) story. After studying the symbols and researching, I realised the designs morphed into the local word-of-mouth folklore in the Bronze Age. Unusually bloody, savage, brutal stories, they are surreal, scary, and like dreams they make no sense. In the 17th century the tales were re-written for sophisticated audiences and transformed into stylish, dream-like, magic fairytales with happy endings.

“The folktale is the primer of the picture-language of the soul,” in the words of Joseph Campbell. The folktale, myth, song is rooted in our collective identity in the largest meaning of the word. I wonder why we keep telling ourselves these stories? And I wanted to see how far I could push it - and decided to cut-up and make new stories, reversing roles, outcomes. Hoping to explore new narratives through which we can visualise a different world future.

Cecelia Chapman

Red Hood



Video by Cecelia Chapman

Music by Rafael Gonzalez

The full video of “Red Hood” is available at wordforword.info/vol45/Chapman.html

Brian Strang

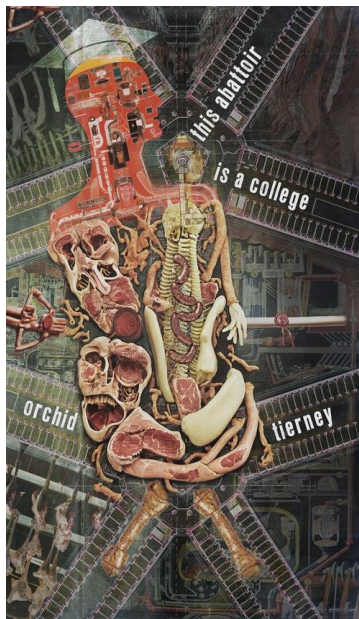
Fires



The full video of “Fires” is available at wordforword.info/vol45/Strang.html

Joel Chace

On Orchid Tierney's *this abattoir is a college*



(Calamari Press, 2025)

This reader retired after thirty-eight years of teaching.

“is the unit a cow or the house. a student a professor. is it a lecturer. a counsellor. a scholar. a worker. a loafer. a guide. a manager. a mentor. an advisor. the police. a parent. a warmonger. a manager. a friend. a wheel. a collaborator. a flatline.”

“transcripts in garages. classrooms. test preps. anatomies. GREs. SATs decorate the white walls. common apps. cover letters. syllabi. policies. cattle. transcripts. chattel. capital. broken bottles on the edge of kitchen sinks.”

“admission buildings. parental outreach. alumni networks. financial aid offices with elevators that take years to reach each floor. they spin syntaxes and prefixes. gerunds and pluperfects. subjunctives. continuous presents. they are creating perfect futures.

“*what is this* Hog snorts. *an english department.*”

This reader once lived across the road from his grandfather's barns and cattle.

"the unit builds one cooling room. then another. the heat of stagnation. a factory line and fault line in a meatpacking district. sentences collapse on edges of callouses. chattel move in. organs move out. the unit is brainless. and stupid. and useless. and tender."

"yes Hog opines. but how can we truly know disastro if a serpentine ramp is calming"

"nurture. enchanting. the desire for dirt. offal. blood. urine. feces. to place the killing at the window. to graze sill while the unhappiness unfolds."

"Limpet places the gun on a temple. a brain. a holy matter. ritual slaughter. mystic inscriptions on skin. a beautiful harrow."

"a cow is a part in a system. also a poet. also mad brain. also a whole. a cow is a moon. also meat. something that jumps over. this cow is milk. that cow is kind and kin. alsokyne and capital. which is to say cattle and chattel. which is to say a metaphor. this sentence is sin."

This reader attended colleges and universities.

"an unreasonable college buds on the edge of the city. a mission for Madness. disastrous inquiry. a wound of infinitives. a bruise of prefixes. a gash of suffixes. gerunds and pluperfects. continuous presents. the unit is imagining a perfect future. helpfully burns ludicrous textbooks too expensive for purchase. secular classrooms. poor skin and useful for slaughter."

"a unit of windows and doorways to heaven. a ledge of stars. and constellations. spells and enchantment. a college that is a loss of. lips of. desire and pain. academic freedom is connected to strange kinds of commodity. imprints of consumer. albatrosses to the slaughter. an abattoir of. productivity. quality. safety. transparency."

"forced community is a slogan. remember. the institution is a mother. she will never love you back."

This reader played on a hill where livestock fed.

"when each line is a hook. the text hangs like a carcass transferred from the slaughter. this line is bare offal. this sentence is tripe. this syntax is tongue. these words are spleen. beautiful organs drawn to the dinner table."

“a hoof. a gun. a fall. a knife. a swing. a swig. a glint. a body in motion.
this text hangs like a carcass.”

“a unit is a commodity is a system with purchase. a sentence is a corral.
this line is for profit. replication is calming. enclosed in the pen.”

“cattle are chattel. are capital. are units. are unity. an untidy udder. a
worker unit.”

“soon the knife notches the calendar of bone. here is the tripe. there is
the offal. here is battery. there is blood. here is fat. there is heart. o oooo. over
time the unit will resemble household items.”

This reader fled a university and vowed he was finished. He returned.

“blue books. maintenance worker. charcoal. athlete. white and brown
sugar. glass. HEPA air filter. classroom. water filter. gummy bear. dean. chewing
gum. plastic bottle of vegan dishwashing liquid. admissions building. professor.”

“why is a semester a semester wonders Limpet. a quarter a quarter. why
is a fifty-minute class a tactical session. why three hours not four. why is the
structure a closure. a pen holding slaughter. a blue door to heaven.”

“but a sign on the wall that crows Kaplan Education Institute. learning is
burning and SATs are now the cows’ knees. all-in-one histories move from bone
and grist to for-profit test preps.”

“the university is a contradiction. a prison. a tool for capital. for creating
machines.”

This reader heard the story about his grandfather’s two work horses falling into
the swollen, freezing creek. They screamed and drowned.

“murmurs and heartbeats. clover and cleaver. I grew up impoverished
he hears a soft voice behind a blue door. I was middle class. another unit appears.
and organs depart. this unit is dissembled for internal inquiry.”

“a ghost house spites the banks of a hidden holy river. a spectre of
dread. the zombie of toil. this is a century that calls itself dust. callouses that dress
for a silent market. a reputable killer refuses to handle.”

“units eel through the chutes like hard water. tourists move in. organs
move out. a list of conditions promises poor pleasure. if bones are sentient. if
bible is conscious. if rumen is ruminating. if maw is divining.”

“a thousand apocalypses happen each day. not all of them are meat.”

This reader’s heart was broken at the final university he attended. He left.
Returned. Finished.

“the unit buries the cow in the backyard. and waits for inspiration. after six years it resurrects from the dirt with a PhD. applies for jobs with professionalised CVs. writes cover letters with keywords. research agendas. teaching philosophies. drops pronouns for ritual slaughter.”

“meat in tenure reviews. meat in job interviews. meat in evaluations. another article. another poem. another book project. another product.”

“but for its innovation in predictable practice a unit is awarded an endowed chair. critical imagination is recalled in the passive. the unit is now a professor of inconsistency and evasion. time to celebrate. it can now write modern poetry.”

“a pedagogy of enchantment is a mouthful of no.”

Books like *this abattoir is a college* saved this reader’s life. Then again, there aren’t really any books like *this abattoir is a college*.

W. Scott Howard

Title

PROSE

Contributors' Notes

Francesco Aprile is a freelance journalist, poet, visual-poet, and essayist from Lecce, Italy. He is also author of asemic writing, glitch, asemic cinema (2016), code poems. In 2010 he became member of the literary movement called New Page-Narrativa in store, that has founded in 2009 by Francesco Saverio Dòdaro; currently he is the director of this movement. In April 2011 he founded the group of artistic research Contrabbando Poetico, subscribing the first manifesto. He is the co-founder of the magazine "Utanga.it" (2014, with C. Caggiula). In 2021 he founded the experimental group named "Liminalism."

Glenn Bach is Originally from Southern California, and now lives in the Dugway Brook watershed of Cleveland, Ohio. Glenn retired from a career in sound art and experimental music to focus exclusively on *Atlas*, a long poem about place and our (mis)understanding of the world. Excerpts have appeared in such journals as *DIAGRAM*, *jubilat*, and *Plumwood Mountain*; sequence-length excerpts include *cricket (eclipse)* (Stone Corpse Press, 2024) and *verdugos* (Ghost City Press, 2024). Glenn documents his work at glennbach.com and [@atlascorpus.bsky.social](https://www.bsky.social/atlascorpus).

Christopher Barnes co-edits the poetry magazine *Interpoetry*. His reviews and criticism have appeared in *Poetry Scotland*, *Jacket Magazine*, *Peel*, and *Combustus*. He has given readings in numerous venues, including Waterstones Bookshop, Newcastle's Morden Tower, and the Proudwords lesbian and gay writing festival. His poetry collection *LOVEBITES* was published by Chanticleer Press in 2005. He lives in Newcastle, UK.

Kenneth M Cale lives in Oregon and makes word/image things. His work has been published in print and online in various journals, and his chapbooks include *Greater Vegas Bleeds into the Dreams of my Cryogenic Slumber* (Steel Incisors, 2022) and *Midnight Double Feature* (C22 Press, 2025 / *Sweat Drenched* Press, 2020). You can find him on bluesky: [@kennethmc.bsky.social](https://www.bsky.social/@kennethmc)

Cecelia Chapman's work navigates between folktale and visual exploration of the mythic, driven by her interest in consciousness and its attempts to reconcile the unseen, synchronicity, the possibility of accident, and the absurd unpredictability and impermanence of life. <http://ceceliachapman.com/>

Joel Chace has published work in print and electronic magazines such as *Lana Turner*, *Survision*, *Eratio*, *Otoliths*, *Word For/Word*, *Golden Handcuffs Review*, *New American Writing*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*. *Underrated Provinces* is recently out from MadHat Books. *Bone Chapel* is coming out soon from Chax. For more than forty years, Chace was a working jazz pianist. He is an NEH Fellow.

Mark DuCharme's newest book, *Complicated Grief*, is just out from C22 Open Editions. Other recent books include *Thousands Blink Outside*, also from C22; *Here, Which Is Also a Place* from Unlikely Books; *Scorpion Letters* from Ethel; and his work of poet's theater, *We, the Monstrous: Script for an Unrealizable Film*, from The Operating System. His poetry has appeared widely in such venues as *BlazeVOX*, *Caliban Online*, *Colorado Review*, *Eratio*, *First Intensity*, *Gas*, *Indefinite Space*, *New American Writing*, *Noon*, *Otoliths*, *Shiny*, *Spinozablue*, *Talisman*, *Trilobite*, *Typo*, *Unlikely Stories*, *Utricoli*, *Word/ for Word*, *The Writing Disorder*, and *Poetics for the More-Than-Human World: An Anthology of Poetry and Commentary*. He lives in Boulder, Colorado, USA.

Brenda Mann Hammack teaches digital storytelling and creative writing at Fayetteville State University. She is the managing editor of *Glint Literary Journal*. Other selections in her "Living Dead Woman Sonnets" have appeared in *Mudlark*, *Eclectica Magazine*, and *Blaze Vox*. Her scholarly writing focuses on psychological vampires in fiction by Florence Marryat, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Arabella Kenealy, and Violet Hunt.

Richard Hanus had four kids but now just three.

Lee Johnson is a LGBTQIA+, neurodivergent poet. He is a master's student at Weber State University studying Creative Writing. His works have been published or forthcoming by the *Seneca Review*, *Sugar House Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Ballast Journal*, *Bellingham Review* and others. He has presented his poetry at English Honors conventions held in Minneapolis, MN and Louisville, KY.

Martha McCollough is the author of *Wolf Hat Iron Shoes* (Lily Poetry Review Books 2022) and the chapbook *Grandmother Mountain* (Blue Lyra 2019). Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Pleiades*, *The Boiler*, *RadarPoetry*, *Bear Review*, and *Tampa Review*, among others. Originally from Detroit, she lives in Amherst, MA.

Seth McKelvey teaches at Clemson University. He is the author of *No Exit: Contemporary American Literature and the State* (University of Virginia Press, 2025), and his scholarship appears in *American Literature*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, and *Nineteenth-Century Literature*. His poems appear in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Sip Cup*, *Madcap Review*, *Word For/Word*, *TRANSOM*, *E-ratio*, *Bateau*, *BlazeVOX*, and elsewhere.

Pamela Miller is the author of six books of poems, most recently *How to Do the Greased Wombat Slide* (Unsolicited Press, 2024) and *Mr. Mischief* (forthcoming from dancing girl press). Her text poetry and visual poetry have appeared in *Ranger*, *Utricoli*, *After Hours*, *Book of Matches*, *BlazeVOX*, and the late, great *Otoliths*, among others. She lives in Chicago.

Sheila E. Murphy's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Verse Daily*, *Lana Turner*, *Fortnightly Review*, *Poetry*, *Hanging Loose*, and others. Forthcoming is *I Want To Be Your Radio* (Unlikely Books). Most recent book: *Escritoire* (Lavender Ink, 2025). Gertrude Stein Poetry Award for *Letters to Unfinished J.* (Green Integer Press, 2003). Hay(ha)ku Book Prize for *Reporting Live From You Know Where* (Meritage Press, 2018). She lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Oona Ratcliffe is located in Brooklyn, NY at the moment, and grew up in Bolinas, CA.

Emma Grey Rose is a writer based in San Diego, California from Portland, Oregon. Her work has appeared in *Jasper's Folly*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Ephemeral Elegies*, *A2*, and elsewhere. She is the author of the chapbook, *All The Beautiful Things* (Midsummer Dream House, 2024).

Sarah Rosenthal is the author of *Estelle Meaning Star* (Chax, 2024), *Lizard* (Chax, 2016), *Manhattan* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2009), and several chapbooks. In collaboration with Valerie Witte, she has published the hybrid work *The Grass Is Greener When the Sun Is Yellow* (Operating System, 2019). She edited *A Community Writing Itself: Conversations with Vanguard Poets of the Bay Area* (Dalkey Archive, 2010). Her collaborative film *We Agree on the Sun* won Best Experimental Short at the 2021 Berlin Independent Film Festival. Her new collaborative film, *Lizard Song*, is currently on the film festival circuit. She is the recipient of the Leo Litwak Fiction Award, a Creative Capacity Innovation Grant, a San Francisco Education Fund Grant, and writing residencies at Cel del Nord, This Will Take Time, Hambidge, Vermont Studio Center, Soul Mountain, New York Mills, and Ragdale, as well as a two-year Affiliate Artist term at Headlands Center for the Arts. From 2012 to 2023 she served on the California Book Awards jury.

Michael Ruby is a poet, literary editor and journalist. He is the author of nine poetry books, most recently *Sounds of Summer in the Country* (BlazeVOX, 2025), *Close Your Eyes, Visions* (Station Hill, 2024), *The Star-Spangled Banner* (Station Hill, 2020), *The Mouth of the Bay* (BlazeVOX, 2019) and *American Songbook* (Ugly Duckling, 2013). His trilogy in prose and poetry, *Memories, Dreams and Inner Voices* (Station Hill, 2012), includes ebooks *Fleeting Memories* (Ugly Duckling, 2008) and *Inner Voices Heard Before Sleep* (Argotist, 2011). His other recent ebooks are *Titles & First Lines* (Mudlark, 2018) and *Compulsive Words* (Argotist, 2024). He is co-editor of Bernadette Mayer's early books, *Eating the Colors of a Lineup of Words* (Station Hill, 2015); Mayer's and Lewis Warsh's collaboration *Piece of Cake* (Station Hill, 2020); and currently a large selected poems of Steve Dalachinsky. He lives in Brooklyn and worked for many years as an editor of U.S. news and political articles at *The Wall Street Journal*.

Abraham Smith was raised around Ladysmith, Wisconsin, and lives in Ogden, Utah, where he is associate professor of English and co-director of Creative Writing at Weber State University. His recent poetry collections include

Surgencies (Baobab Press, forthcoming 2026), *One Warm Morning* (Stubborn Mule Press, 2025), *Insomniac Sentinel* (Baobab Press, 2023), and *Dear Weirdo* (Propeller Books, 2022). Away from his desk, Smith improvises poems inside songs with the Snarlin' Yarns: thesnarlinyarnsut.bandcamp.com.

Danika Stegeman's second book, *Ablation*, was released by 11:11 Press in 2023. Her first book, *Pilot* (2020), was published by Spork Press. She's an assistant editor for *Conduit* and does bookkeeping for *Fonograf Editions*. Along with Jace Brittain, she co-curates the virtual collaborative reading series It's Copperhead Season. She lives in St. Paul, MN. Her website is danikastegeman.com.

Brian Strang is a poet, visual artist and musician. He is the author of four books of poems including, most recently, *Are You Afraid?* (Duration Press, 2022). His poems, translations, multimedia works and essays have appeared in many journals, including *The Rumpus*, *Big Other*, *New American Writing* and *The Denver Quarterly*. He was one of the founding editors of *26: A Journal of Poetry and Poetics* in the early 2000's. His paintings, music and other work can be found at brianstrang.com.

Lynn Strongin is a Pulitzer Prize nominee in poetry. She has poems in forty anthologies, and fifty journals, including *Poetry* and *New York Quarterly*.

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David Weiss is a poet & arts organizer living in Tucson Arizona. David founded Sonorous Anchorite (2021), a not-for-profit literary arts press dedicated to publishing “innovative writing that tends toward the poem”. As part of Sonorous Anchorite he began A Moveable Beast, a poetical cabaret cultivating curious intersections between the varied practices of poets, musicians, artists, etc. David served as the Assistant Director at Chax Press & as a board member of POG, a community poetry & arts organization from 2019-2022. His recent poems have appeared in the journals *BlazeVOX*, *Alienocene*, & *e:ratio*. His book-length poem *In Memoriam: in enquiry* was published by Chax Press in early 2022.

Bill Wolak has just published his nineteenth book of poetry entitled *What Love Calms Only With Nakedness* with Expeditions International Publishing House. His collages and photographs have appeared as cover art for such magazines as *Phoebe*, *The Passionfruit Review*, *Inside Voice*, and *Barfly Poetry Magazine*.