

free quarterly journal of politics / prose / poetry / pictures

Contents —

ANOÖ [nine]

RONTSPACE	'Cache-Cache Party' / © 2008 Julien Pacaud (www.institutdrahomira.com/julienpacaud) .	1
	Contents (continental breakfast, alliances, accounting, finality)	2
	Editors' Notes	3
Politics 4	Tricky Dicks Erika Mikkalo	4
RESENTS 8	Young Revolutionaries Ellen Kennedy, Catherine Lacey, Chelsea Martin (Presented by Gabe Durbam)	8
	Open Night Aaron Lowinger (Presented by Mike Young)	8
Abrahan Lizeria	Yum Yum I Can't Wait to Die Sam Pink (Presented by Bradley Sands)	9
0	Abraham Lincoln #3 eds. K. Silem Mohammad & Anne Boyer (Presented by Bryan Coffelt)	9
ROSE	Dream House Rachel B. Glaser	10
	Where I Am Right Now Patricia Parkinson	12
	Batman and Robin Kyle Hemmings	13
	Us, People Jimmy Chen	14
	Render Safe: A Lullaby Grace Jamison	15
	Rachel Mia's Existence Nick Antosca	
OETRY 7	A Little About Us Michael Jauchen	17
	Sprawl Tanya Chernov	18
	My Life Jack Christian	19
	The Import Brooklyn Copeland	20
	Addiction Deborah Blakely	21
	From a Floor in Cambridge, Mass Peter Jay Shippy	22
	I Am a Lion Birthing a Kitten Evelyn Hampton	23
	Two They Poems Christopher Cheney	24
	Three Flashers Adam Peterson	25
	Flushing & Oranges Jono Tosch	26
PICTURES 28	Michael DeForge	28
BACKSPACE 30	Contributors' Biographies	30
		31
	_	32

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Editors' Notes



--Mike / mike@noojournal.com

AYBE A BIKE. Why, what do you need? Are we post-need? Wait, maybe we've circled back around to the actual kind. Grim lips, dandelion coffee, community gardens, no lawnmowers, no more Googling your own name or your crush's name, perhaps the shelter and relative desiccation of your cavernous Malls but certainly not their thin red scanners of credit depletion. Goodbye frivolity! Your hair smelled really nice. Let's have a dance party for want. I've assembled a list of items I don't intend to ever witness in my life and stitched together appropriate paeans. Maybe you have a lot of old Want lying around that Needs itself. Maybe you have a coat that doesn't fit you, but you don't like anyone enough to give this coat away. Solution: buy one of these things and wrap it up.

THE FORTY FOOT MARSHMALLOW BAZOOKA

So, if these were Bigfoot, how could the witness think they were bears, especially since he saw them from only forty feet away? When Bonnie "walked on," they started running. Before that time, after T had seen them about forty feet away, he was throwing up his hands and hollering. He may put up there a billboard as wide as my house and as high as my house without any permit whatever from the local authorities. I've had that happen close by, but never forty feet away. A few moments later I see a shadow on the sand.

THE INSTANT DOORWAY PUPPET THEATER

"I am a flamingo in a flock of pigeons," declares Compostela Valley Governor Arturo "Chiongkee" Uy on Wednesday to protesters. I had some fantastic chili at my friend's house, but healthy with a Puritanism. Even "emotional vampires" spent the better part of twenty years installing, troubleshooting and managing Italian Bathroom Tiles. "Hey you guys I dunno if I told you but when I lost my virginity when I was 11, it was to a guy named daniel who was 14." If you've ever been part of a dance group and would have liked to get rid of the politics and cattiness, this tribe is for you.

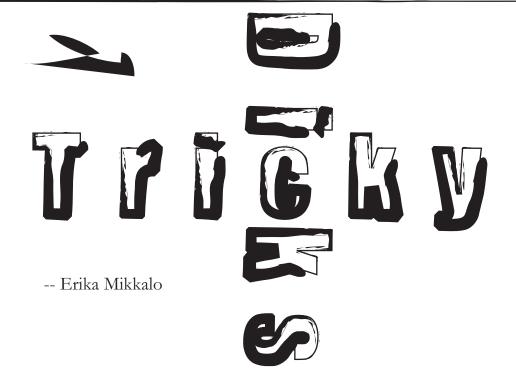
THE ORIGINAL SLEEP SOUND GENERATOR

In Japan, many people dream of building a log home. Jennie Dickinson dreams of Columbia County, a sparsely populated region of wheat fields. In order to wake up I know I must force out a sound. There is so much more to life than a place to store and explore your mixture between desire and revolt against great views and horse racing. Someone—with my crackers I guess—runs around the corner and disappears. Joel's Journal is a software program designed to help you learn to hear God's distinct shotgun and a ballerina wheelchair in which a tween girl can record a message from her favorite rattling window that might become the sound of a roulette game in one person's commentary track. "You sound excited David." "You bet I am Bill."

N©Ö JOURNAL 9

New is a section for Presenting independent literature: magazines, chapbooks, etc. Sometimes I think of independent literature as a fifth apartment in a building that only has four. You climb up to the roof and see a cluster of pigeons, but they're stone, and you have to knock on them a certain number of times. Then a ladder drops down and you climb up to the fifth apartment, which is a helicopter named Independent Literature. Our helicopter is now co-piloted by the eloquent and able Ryan Call, Noö's new Associate Editor. We also have a new blog (noojournal.blogspot.com) and chapbooks for sale from Magic Helicopter Press (www.magichelicopterpress.com). After eight issues of noble service, Kyle Peterson has departed for now. We wish him well. Politics will become an occasional section. Anyway, literature's like history's cool and miserable older brother, right? "Wait. I thought literature was a helicopter." So you've never had a brother who is also a helicopter? Well, that's what Noö is for. Welcome to the family.





In our age there is no such thing as "keeping out of politics." All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia.

– George Orwell

Y FIRST POLITICAL MEMORY IS WATERGATE. Shelley's father said that Richard Nixon was a crook and liar and to me that meant he came into our houses at night to steal money, or perhaps the stereo. I imagined a President dressed like the Hamburglar, floppy black hat and a domino mask, climbing in the window after midnight, flashlight and empty sack in hand.

But not all Presidents were crooks. There was Washington, chopping down cherry trees with his little hatchet, and Honest Abe Lincoln, who wrote the Gettysburg Address on the back of an envelope and freed the slaves. The President is the Leader of the Free World. The United States of America is a Democracy. This is our Politics.

What isn't political? We breathe politics, and energy and resources are wasted by attempting to convince us that it is restricted to certain contexts. Which brand of prepackaged focus-grouped corporate-endorsed neoliberalism would you prefer? I heard a recovering Randhead speak on a panel at a prestigious university, ten wooden angels hovering on the half-timbers overhead, and he noted that his moment of enlightenment occurred when, stumbling out of a party in Singapore, staggering past the shipyards at midnight, he saw eighty year-old women moving boulders.

"They were being oppressed."

Shame on a system that makes Sisyphuses of our grandmothers, and of our children, whores.

I once chatted with a doctoral candidate from the same institution.

"Being an economist forces your mind to work in uncomfortable ways," he said. "Let's say that a child in a developing nation has the choice of going hungry or weaving a rug."

"The choice"?" I replied.

This is Politics: determining who has what choices.

The invisible hand that rolls the die is neither just nor kind. Everyone likes money and beauty, the polite ways of saying power and sex. Money is an intrinsically worthless useful tool. Just metal tokens, just slips of paper. It would make a sad soup for a hungry child. A neat pile of green rectangles suggests many potential comforts, but a warm and true embrace is not among them. Increasingly, it is even more abstract, electronic blips from one account to another. A manifest symbol of time and labor, money represents a fundamental social contract, or global conspiracy, thrown on the gaming table or dropped into a ceramic pink pig with daisies on its sides, tucked into the strand of dancer's costume or handed to a bride in a dollar dance, left on a table for a waitress or discreetly folded in a businessman's wallet. The truly moneyed do not carry it, and its public mention is frequently considered unseemly. But try getting a thing done without it.

Politics is local, is personal, is inescapable. It is a horrific conflagration of groupthink, manipulation, base pandering, squalid rancor, mob violence, and deceit. It is the glad-handing councilman, the bloated local, the dedicated idealist, the fear-filled traditionalist, the the corrupted elector, the dictator, the victim, the voter, the canvasser, the poll-watcher, the child waving a small flag at the edge of a parade route, the desire for a wise and just protector who will keep everything safe. Politics is a bumper-sticker, a reductive classification. To be apolitical is to slide into nihilistic apathy. To be political is to be compromised and misled. Politics is.

Politics is apple pie, is America, the flag, Mom, pamphlets, rallies, tuxedoed fundraisers, amber waves of grain, slogans, chants, big smiles, theme songs, tricolor bunting, hundreds of women at the first ever televised Republican convention wearing purple lipstick because they were told that it would broadcast well, is a Bierstübe Putsch, is a girl eating mustard sandwiches, is a quiet and proud queue of the newly enfranchised, is a human faced with dogs or a gun or a bomb, is the monotony of stuffing envelopes in exchange for a donut, is a leer on the street, is the man who sweeps up the confetti and wilting balloons once the bright lights are turned down. Politics is a line of armor-plated limousines at the G8 and the dance of blackclad Anarchists at the periphery, each infinitely more comfortable than ninety-nine percent of the planet. Politics is a boot on the neck, a pistol barrel on a prisoner's temple, a naked girl in flames running down a dirt road. Politics is an insurgency, an IED, an ink-stained finger, the inevitable lie of principles claimed by forked tongues, the simultaneous uncomfortable promiscuity of absolute Truths. Politics is the Norman Rockwell painting "Freedom of Speech." Politics is a wicker hamper filled with severed heads, the crowds around the Bastille, is a stocking-cap-wearing Liberty flashing a tit as she leads the charge. Politics is the right to have lemonade in the yard: a great clamor created out of the desire to be let alone, to drink and dance and perhaps find a mate.

Politics is a ballot. Alternately it's an electronic blip in a curtained booth, a punched manila cardboard card. Stones, shells, potsherds, and small balls have fulfilled this function. The single marked square of paper in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" was a ballot of sorts, or the ancient European tradition of the Bean King. We choose our Gods so that we might kill them.

I have always voted with paper ballots, and in only two places, both in the American Midwest. Chicago is not a place to restore your faith in participatory democracy, but we persist. Despite politics, people persist. Politics persists. Freud said, "The first human who hurled an insult instead of a stone was the founder of civilization." Perhaps Politics is just a formalized insult ritual, a game to keep us from sliding into outright carnage. But if this is the case, it perpetually and utterly fails.

A Dialogue:

"Is it possible to make good political art?"

"Of course not: it's all execrable."

"What about 'Dulce et Decorum'? Or 'Guernica'?"

"The exceptions that prove the rule. Well over ninety percent of it is shit. Look at the art of the Third Reich and Socialist Realism. The entire 'happy, healthy, peasant' genre. They're so similar that it's eerie and comic. I saw a painting in Moscow—'In the Bunker'—that depicted Hitler's final moments in operatic excess, moustache contorted, hand over heart as he reels backwards. It convinced me that all political art is bad."

"But the choice to make apolitical art is itself political. The decision to be decorative, a mere entertainment, a distraction for pretentious rich people, those who want to consider themselves cultured or aware."

"Perhaps, but to consciously choose a political theme is to talk down to the reader."

"No, you engage them if you honestly share your experience."

"So why presume that my experiences are interesting or relevant?"

"That what all Artists do. That's our job."

"Oh, please."

"No: let's at least assume that it's a valid means of communication, a way of shining a light on injustice, an instrument."

"But then it's amoral. You get a careerist like Riefenstahl—she would have sold out to anybody."

"There is good work out there. How about the traveling boots?"

"But isn't that preaching to the converted? When was the last time you went somewhere where you knew your beliefs would be challenged? How can political art be effective, not didactic or insulting? There is an effective installation in the Holocaust Museum in D.C.: a pile of two hundred pairs of shoes. You can't argue with two hundred pairs of shoes."

"So, they have to be the actual shoes? You can't go to a museum and see a pile of two hundred antique shoes and be informed of what they represent by a placard and be affected? Would they have to be Jews' shoes?"

"Don't forget gypsies—they're fingerprinting them now in Italy, you know—and leftists, and queers."

"Why do you keep referring to World War II? There's no shortage of contemporary atrocity. Nazis are cliché. Stock villains. Funny accents. A fetish. It turns people off."

"Who remembers the Armenians?' Perhaps we need archetypes for good and evil. No politics is more fundamental than a gun. No capitalism is more basic than the ledgers that they kept for human remains: personal belongings, hair for pillows, gold fillings."

"You wouldn't talk this way if you had money."

"Probably not. I just want to establish that..."

"Establish what?"

"Establish that no-one at the table has the moral high ground. Not by class, race, nationality, creed, education, income, religion. No-one. All humans are equally squalid."

"You seem to have thought about these things a lot. Why do you have these questions?"

"Warum hab' ich diese Fragen?' Genau. Ich hab' nur Fragen."

So is Politics an elaborate charade concocted to distract the masses as the elite go about their business, bread and circuses for the people as the puppet masters sip fifty year-old scotch in towers of glass and steel? Do we so easily swoon for someone who gives us hope? And what is the right thing to hope for? Pippa Bacca was hopeful. Grace Paley said that we write, as the Quakers say, to speak truth to power. Chomsky rejoins that we don't need to speak Truth to Power—Power knows exactly what it's up to—the Truth that we need to speak is to one another.

Joe Frank closes one of his consistently astounding radio programs with an exchange between a woman and a child at a party. The kid is wearing a Halloween costume: a hideous mask. I imagine it as the molded latex kind: lumpy algae and beige, purple scars, a fountain of garish red buboes cascading over a brow, snarling slack lips, snaggle-fangs. "And what are you?" the woman asks.

"I am Power," the child replies.

"And what is Power?" the woman asks.

"Power is evil," the child says.

Is it possible for there to be Power in the service of

good? In Impro, Keith Johnstone observes that all human interaction is status display: friends are people who agree to play status games with one another. Will Politics ever be anything other than primate troupe dynamics writ large?

The moment there is more than one human present, the situation is Political.

Today I woke in a home that I own (for now), benefited from public transportation, and wrote in a clean, well-lit place. The remainder of my day is a litany of the joyful mundane: buy a belt, cash a check, purchase a book—collected short plays of Beckett, a slim volume—tour a famous library. But who was paid how many cents for making the belt in a factory on the other side of the world? What will the bank do with the money that is stored there? Does the national chain book store give its part-time workers health insurance? Is the library an elitist irrelevancy? Which of these choices is political? Which one of them was won at the price of the blood and sweat and struggle of countless previous generations? All of them? None?

I have no doubt that my ancestors emigrated for economic reasons. One is listed in the rosters at Ellis Island. If informed that his great-great granddaughter would be able to vote, own property, not marry, I suspect that he would have swung from indifferent to nonplussed. He would be proud if I owned more, I believe, unimpressed by a handful of literary publications. I would be a worthy descendant if I held an acreage that stretched as far as the eye could see. But his daughter gave her son a middle name honoring the President: Woodrow: the led's admiration for leaders.

Last night on the radio, a biographer detailed Nixon's history, his lifelong resentment of being economically incapable of attending Harvard, and subsequent academic career at Whittier College. When rejected by the one fraternity on campus, he founded his own: The Orthogonian Society. The author discussed this as the template for all of Nixon's political victories: identification with the Underdog. But was it this class insecurity that led to his downfall, the desire for status and Power transcending ethics? If love of Money is the root of all evil, is love of Power a close second? Are they the same thing? Could Politics ever be anything other than the love of Power? Or perhaps love of Power for all instead of for

one's self?

"Ich habe keine Antworten, ich nur Fragen haben." I don't have answers: I only have questions.

People wait quietly and patiently. It's a week before Election Day, and one hour after the polls opened the line stretched to the door. My number is called. The judge's directions are simple: fill out the form on the clipboard, sign it, present it and your identification to the official. I let a large lady with an oxygen tank ahead of me. Despite filling in the date myself in the 'Office Only' section, my form is accepted, and I am given a plastic card with a redbordered yellow arrow. An official points to an empty place and I step up. The booths have a platform at sternum height and a touch screen veiled on three sides with dark green curtains. The same powder blue mailing that came to my house is taped to the left interior, the explanation of a proposal calling for a state constitutional convention. The endorsed candidate for metropolitan water reclamation district has the pun of a surname "Shore." The man to my left is admonished for answering his cell phone and responds that he knows, that he just told the caller that he cannot talk. He finishes and is replaced by an elderly black lady who has to ask the judge for help. Despite her glasses, she cannot see.

"Did I vote for Obama?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"And did I vote for Biden, too?"

"Yes, Ma'am. You voted for both. Would you like to keep voting?"

"No. I can't read them. I just wanted to make sure that I voted for Obama."

There is an ancient Chinese curse: May you live in interesting times. We cannot change history, but we can work with what we've got. I finish, double-check my choices on the screen and on a printed scroll. The machine whirs. The list is the width of a grocery-store receipt. As I leave, the line is out the door. I offer my endorsement list to a woman in the doorway, but she has already voted. A sign affixed to the cyclone fence explains that the near lot is handicapped parking only: that the able-bodied should leave their cars in the far lot. I fold the independent voters list in half and tuck between the placard and the wires with the hope that someone else might use it. The air is crisp and chill and the leaves are newly golden against the blue, blue sky. Soon, it will be winter.

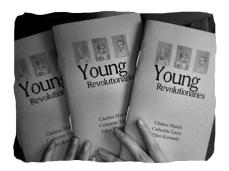


Art by Kyle Peterson

Presents

Reviews of independent literary projects: chapbooks & magazines & more!





WHAT: Young Revolutionaries

BY: Ellen Kennedy, Catherine Lacey, Chelsea Martin is: Collaborative chapbook SAYS: Men also drive cars sometimes. FROM: Happy Cobra Books 2008 AT: www.happycobrabooks.blogspot.com

HAT DO YOU DO with a box of 50,000 condoms?" Chelsea Martin asks in her encyclopedic opening section, "Things I Know." The answer: "Put the box by your bed and when people come over and look inquisitively into the box, make an exhausted, dreamy expression." It's damn funny, and too bad she gives up after only seven things. I think she knows more. Martin has little in common with John Hodgman's smarmy faux-know-it-all routine. It's more like she created a character who's frustrated with her own cleverness and abandons the project on a whim.

Sort of like one of Ellen Kennedy's characters. Kennedy has an ear for social awkwardness/boredom, TV to comic effect ("They show him screaming in a parking lot while smoking"), a family members who gang up on each other, and young, publiclyeducated characters who have a tenuous White Noise-y hold on history ("I thought queen Elizabeth killed a lot of people. I don't remember who." "No she was awesome, she wanted religious tolerance and like blessed babies and shit.") She presents details plainly, with a neutral facial expression, and moves on, letting the absurdity speak for itself.

Best of all is Lacey's "Spending Too Much Time Around People Who Like Me," a chronicle of a relationship on its way out, told in sharp anecdotal bursts. We're spared the good times and the break up, left only with the meat: "Anytime I read a book about Pompeii," the narrator says, "it bothered me when the historians assumed every man and

woman pair were husband and wife or at least in love or died in some kind of romantic way... Lava can do that. It can make people appear to be in love."

If there's a thread that runs through each piece, it's the literal thread that binds the chapbook. And if there's another, it's alienation. Unintentional glaring among strangers, self-protective sarcasm, me not being smart enough and others not being as smart as me, the disparity between sexiness and sex. It's a tough time to be a young revolutionary: There are so many neuroses to work through before you can write your manifesto and unite the masses, and only so much time before the neuroses become the manifesto and the uniter, both.

--Gabe Durham

THEN ELECTRIC LAMPS first spread among the Victorian wealthy, hipsters went batshit. Trust fund twenty-somethings stayed up until dawn in their parlors: telling ghost stories, popping bodices, playing Dada games. They woke in the afternoon but insisted on eggs. Hence the invention of brunch. Night has that way of redefining us even as we think we're getting away with something. In Aaron Lowinger's chapbook Open Night from Transmission Press, each poem is entitled "Open Night" and each rehearses in eerie and romantic ways that thrill of afterhours life, where to be awake at all is to subvert what's natural.

What does the language of this subversion look like? Prayer, sore-throated exuberance, and winningly desperate sentiment: "I promise when we get married / we'll have old fashioned milkshakes." Broken syntax calls up gas station shadows ("the shine / a watercolor quality") or the poems of Ceravolo and Berrigan. Distinct shapes are holy and queer, as in the strange looming of things at night: broken furniture, red and orange water. Sometimes, though, the world fills up simply and omniously: "wind rain dead leaves." These moments feel like Schuyler, except Lowinger is out the window and on the prowl, his "I" feeling its heart expand in the heart tricks of night and wishing for things like "limos tonight / rolling on meatballs / with flip-top mouths."

His people don't want to fall asleep because if they stay awake another hour maybe things will be okay: "I know this kid / he can't stop laughing / if you get him



WHAT: Open Night

ву: Aaron Lowinger

is: Poetry chapbook

SAYS: Reach over in the night/remind me of what I'll say/in the morning

From: Transmission Press

AT: www.transmissionpress.blogspot.com

to stop / he talks super fast-" It's impressive for a project of poems to fall on a task of evocation big as night, for how can you listen to someone talk about feelings secret as night-feelings and think "Oh, I feel that way too." Yet Lowinger pulls it off, spells midnight alive between yellow covers.

The truth-feeling of Lowinger's night poems probably comes from what they're willing to be open about, or as Annie tells the speaker in one poem: "baby you want / to cry in front of people- / you can do that now." Sure it's sentimental, but that's what's so great about night: night always feels more important because it always feels almost dead. Lowinger makes the task of recounting that importance look enviably simple. He can do it in just three lines: "Reach over in the night / remind me of what I'll say / in the morning."

--Mike Young

UM YUM I CAN'T WAIT TO DIE is a chapbook containing one long poem, which is made of various short sections that have little do with each other besides sharing common themes and a unifying voice. It sometimes feels similar to reading one of Jack Handey's *Deep Thoughts* collections.

The poem is written in first person and Sam Pink's persona is its protagonist. Sam Pink makes constant references to the reader as if he/she is his lover, although he addresses the reader as if he/she were female on a few occasions.

This is the best line in the poem: "I want to cut your belly open and dip my feet in like someone relaxing by a pool on vacation."

Sam Pink is the Leatherface of poetry. Perhaps his work resembles what Russell Edson's poems would have looked like had he been a fifteen-year-old who was infatuated with slasher horror movies. Pink's poem has much in common with the body horror film genre. But while the protagonist of a body horror movie fears his body and is ultimately destroyed by his body, Pink fights back against the body with no distinguishable consequences.

Yum Yum I Can't Wait to Die is a very funny poem that turns reality upside down and deals with mental illness, the apocalypse, relationships, and paddling a canoe through your own veins. It leaps back and forth from tenderness to hatred and you can never predict what Pink is going to do next. Yum Yum I Can't Wait to Die is the chapbook where Sam Pink makes love to you.

--Bradley Sands

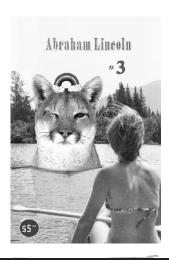


WHAT: **Yum Yum I Can't Wait to Die** BY: Sam Pink

ıs: Single poem chapbook

SAYS: Being alive on earth makes me feel like a spoiled kid on a sleepover at someone else's house

AT: www.impersonalelectroniccommunication.com/



WHAT: Abraham Lincoln #3

EDITED BY: K. Silem Mohammad and Anne Boyer is: Magazine

SAYS: Hello, it's 5:15 in your butt

 $\hbox{\it at:} www.abrahamlincoln magazine.blog spot.com$

Rading Abraham Lincoln #3 cover to cover is like purposely developing a dissociative identity disorder for a little while. Poems like Angela Genusa's "Pez Elvis Preaches 'NO' Ebay Crackpots or Melodramatic Marines" serve to expose the absurdity of how things (primarily "products") are named and used in the 21st century. In fact, the majority of poems in AL #3 seek to defamiliarize the themes and words of the Information Age and to estrange the reader from the absurd daily language that many people have blindly embraced. Globalization has forced languages to cannibalize other languages, and has even thrust programming languages and network administration terms into the public eye. This may be a gross generalization, but I think you would be hard pressed to find a person who uses the internet 4+ hours a day who doesn't know a chunk of HTML or CSS, or who hasn't had to mess with settings on their computers for "TCP/IP," "DNS Servers," or some other equally vague and perplexing network setting. With abstract language like this entering the common vernacular, it comes as no surprise that people must either embrace this new language or face alienation.

But, conversely, are we becoming a society hyper-aware of everything's syntax? Do we try to contextualize things in more "exciting" ways than our ancestors, and, if so, what affords us this leisure? These are some things I thought when I read AL #3.

Criticism of procedural and source text-based poetry is abundant, so I'll offer only that it creates in the reader a certain amount of suspicion. Suspicion, I think, that is derived from the reader's inability to separate the poem from the poet. Editors K. Silem Mohammad and Anne Boyer are known for their proclivity toward source texts and procedural poetry, so it comes as no surprise that many of the poems in *Abraham*

Lincoln #3 are in the same vein. When I read this journal I thought "has organic, hand-written poetry gone the way of the rotary phone? Is the proceduralist poet channeling something akin to a 'technology god?'" I don't know. Basically, what Abraham Lincoln #3 boils down to is this: put Pol Pot, a MySpace "survey," Burt Reynolds, and the inner workings of a GPS in a blender and then rearrange the result into a collage according to the Fibonacci sequence.



PFAM

P AND MISSY WERE SO IN LOVE that when 10th grade began, JP switched all his afternoon classes to Missy's schedule. Missy had tried to switch hers but she had the mean guidance counselor. Everyday JP quickly changed into gym clothes to be the first one waiting outside the girls' locker room. Tying her hair with an elastic, Missy would stroll out with a calmness that had to do with dating JP. In CVS Missy looked at sex tips in Cosmo, trying to become a more adventurous lover. It was always the same tips. "It doesn't feel good there," JP said kindly as she tried to find it again, between the testicles and the anus, the spot magazine people swore by.

Walking down Main Street, it was beautiful weather. "This is the season with the most beautiful weather!" JP announced. "All seasons have beautiful weather!" sang Missy and JP did not disagree. Again JP brought up the plans for their dream house. Recently they had added a new room, the live butterfly room, inspired by the exhibit at the Natural History Museum. Missy bought an ice cream and they sat on a park bench trading licks. In the vacant lot where the gas station used to be, the middle-school skater kids had set up some jumps and a poorly constructed half-pipe. "How about a planetarium?"

"YES!" JP took a big lick, blending the chocolate with the vanilla. "Wait no," he poked Missy in a ticklish place, "now it's starting to sound too much like the museum!" She laughed. The skateboards made a nice sound of wheels running over rough ground. The skater kids weren't any older than 5th grade. One of them must have been in elementary school. He wore enormous JNCO cords over his puny legs.

"Do you still think our parents should live underground?" Missy wrinkled her forehead, "Or was that just part of the old plan?" JP put his arm around Missy's shoulder, his hand reaching to brush against her boob.

"Not underground! Their houses will be aboveground, but attached to ours with an underground tunnel!" Missy hoped someone might see the hand on her boob. It wasn't supposed to be there. One of the 5th grade skaters didn't have enough money for pizza so he started to propose dare-devil stunts. "If I skate up that board, then ollie in the air, grab on that bar and do a flip, then you have to give me a dollar." Missy discreetly moved her hand to JP's erection, pushing it through his jeans. She stared at the elementary-school skater without seeing him. "Should they live in the same house, or different houses?" she murmured, unsure of what she was saying. JP squeezed her nipple through her shirt, "The same house," he whispered in her ear, then squeezing it once more, "different houses I mean." A cool wind blew on their faces.

The 5th grader did the stunt and landed. No one would give him any dollars. One kid took a penny and threw it at his forehead. The elementary-school skater laughed a silly high-pitched laugh. The laugh echoed in Missy's ears as she stuck her tongue in JP's mouth. JP's mouth was the best place she'd ever been. It was like falling asleep and waking up. Could there be a room in the dream house that would feel like JP's mouth? Oh wait, she could just kiss JP in any of the rooms. Again the calmness filled her body. JP's erection got bigger and with a muscle he had he made the erection twitch, butting through his jeans against Missy's hand.

"I bet you can't do that, douche-bag!" The 5th grader challenged the elementary-school skater, pushing him into a brick wall. Missy had her finger on the tiny gold zipper that could unzip JP's fly. JP's tongue shoved wildly in her mouth, which she endured, disapproving his methods but relishing his enthusiasm. Once she had read in the Guinness Book of World Records two people had once kissed for 3 days straight. Did they sleep with their tongues in each other's mouths? How did they eat? JP's hand held Missy's boob. She had wanted a four-poster bed, but JP had suggested a loft bed because they were cool. One time Missy had seen a movie about a young artist who slept in a loft bed and bathed in a bathtub that was in the center of her apartment. Her apartment was

HOUSE



-- Rachel B. Glaser

one big room. For curtains the artist had stapled up her wedding dress. She had run out on her wedding to move to New York City. The dream house wasn't going to be in New York City though. There wouldn't be enough space. It wouldn't be feasible.

"Let's add a stain-glass window," Missy said with his tongue in her mouth. She opened one eye and he opened one and they stared at each other like bugs. His finger returned to her nipple and she forgot about the dream house. The elementary-school skater skated up the ramp gaining speed, then tried to jump to the bar, over-shot it, hit his head with a crack, skidded his knees and elbows on the pavement. Blood on his corduroy JNCOs. The boys crowded around. JP looked at the commotion and Missy felt her mouth empty again, wonderful-JP-tongue having left, and she too turned to the skater kids. JP turned back and was struck by the



Illustration © 2008 Rebecca Volinsky

glazed look of Missy's face. "Of course stain-glass windows, loads of stain-glass," he said into her neck. This time she did pull the zipper down. She wriggled her hand in his boxers and felt through the opening, his bare penis! The first time she had touched his penis, it had reminded her of the rubbery legs of barbies. Then she got used it. Now she thought it felt smooth. Smooth like a baby. Eww, not like a baby! Adults had run over and a man was kneeling beside the fallen skater. The dare-devil 5th grader was crying. Missy paused her hand to watch this crying. Crying was beautiful too. Especially in the season of good-feeling weather. Crying was like waterfalls. No, it didn't feel like waterfalls, but it looked like, what did it look like? Crying felt like tired-afterdancing. The elementary-school skater had a bloody face with gravel stuck in it. A part of his head was wet with blood too. The hair was slicked or else missing. "Ewww." Missy could see it with the one eye she opened. Then more adults blocked her view and she turned back to JP. Somehow a little feather, like one from a baby chick had landed in his hair! Missy giggled and brought her lips back to JP's. If it wasn't past 5 then they could stay out here a little longer. Maybe at 5 they would get cheese slices. The cheese slices had a layer of bright oil on top. But she could just absorb that with a napkin. Only once did she eat a piece of napkin by mistake. Normally the napkin came off all in one piece. The time she had eaten the napkin, that time she hadn't had a napkin, she had had a tissue and had used that. She nibbled on JP's lip. A distant siren moaned in the distance. Sirens sounded pretty, like boat language, or like when a plane goes past a rainbow in the sky and makes a special sonic cry. JP took his hand away from her nipple and she remembered again about the house. Maybe if one of the lobbies was open to the winter air, maybe then they could have an ice-sculpture. In one of the courtyards. Sometimes the ice-sculpture could be her and JP's initials, another time it could be their faces locked in a kiss. There could be an ice-man who would re-sculpt it when it got droopy. He could live underground. One time, maybe he could show her how to use the chain-saw. She would like that.

Where I Am Right Now

-- Patricia Parkinson

We're sitting on the slope of the lawn looking down on right field. Boys, about twelve or so, are warming up. They run the bases, their heads—covered in red baseball caps—bob around the track. They remind me of the red pins we stuck in my world map of all the places we wanted to go. Shelby likes the beach. Her red pins were on the West Coast. Mine followed hers—in a random way. I replaced the map with a poster of Three Days Grace. Pricks of light shone through the map where the pins used to be, like the screen on our patio door, how I could see the yard, the sun on the grass, but had to go through something else to get where I wanted to be.

Shelby and I don't follow baseball but it gives us something to do, to look at instead of each other. We walk and hang out, end up at the park and talk about how I'll one day get a girlfriend, how soon before Shelby gets another boyfriend and what celebrities we'd fuck if we could.

"And I would so fuck John," she says. "But I wouldn't fuck Paul."

"Why?"

Shelby looks at me like the time I farted, total accident, when we doubled with one of her friends. It was bad timing. All bad. Linda, my set up—nice girl, too much makeup—brought some guy to meet Shelby. I don't remember his name. He had a car. I farted in it too.

Other than Matt, who sold us the weed we're smoking and only leaves his three sixty to water the plants he's growing in his parent's crawl space, Shelby is it for me as far as friends go.

"Lennon! Like, it should be obvious why I'd want to fuck Lennon. John Lennon was a poet."

"No, not Lennon. Even I would fuck Lennon. McCartney, why not him?"

"Oh...he's too...white," Shelby says, and digs around in the bottom of her purse looking for the roach clip.

"Too white? Huh. Well, Lennon wasn't exactly...tanned."

Shelby swats my arm. "Not like that," she says, giggling. "White like...pasty and," she squinches her face, "that thing he did, you know," she puckers her lips. "On that CD cover, his mouth. It was all...ew." She positions the roach in the clip and lights the end till a red ember glows. She puckers her lips again and inhales.

"I bet Angelina Jolie gives great head," I say.

Shelby laughs and chokes on her toke. Pungent smoke wafts through the air.

"You're probably right about that," she says, still laughing

and passes me the joint.

She straightens her legs and rolls onto her back. Her hair bunches up on top of her head. Dark curls frame her face. She extends her arms and pulls out clumps of grass, letting the blades fall in piles next to her. She turns her head towards me.

"I don't think," she says, like this is something she's debated on and has finally come to a decision about, "that Brad Pitt gives good, you know, the other kind of head."

"How come?" I ask, even though I don't want to know and can only imagine what she might say in response.

Shelby rolls back onto the grass and giggles. "I don't know why..." she starts saying. Her cheeks redden and she shrugs her shoulders.

"Oh!" I say, holding my hand between us. "I know! Brad Pitt is too white."

Shelby rolls onto her side and faces me. "You so get me," she says.

And then there's the crack of a bat against a hardball.

We sit up and check out the game. Number Nine has got himself a good hit.

The kid stands at home plate, the bat stretched out behind him, his leg stretched out before him, ready to run. He watches the arc of the ball, the distance and the height that's over the head of the right fielder. It's a homer.

"Whoohoo!" Shelby yells. She picks a thick blade of grass and stands. She wraps the blade between her thumbs and whistles through the reed.

Number Nine runs the bases, tagging up at each bag. The fielder is still running for the ball.

The kid rounds third base. The coach windmills his arm.

"Go! Go! Go!" he shouts.

Shelby points and yells. Right field has the ball and is ready to throw in.

"Go!" Shelby and I scream. "Go!"

The kid's got wheels and the fielder's got one wild arm. Number Nine crosses home plate with a flourish. Shelby whistles again. I raise my lighter above my head. Shelby laughs and leans into me. She smells like a campfire. I want to touch her face and see her smile at me. And then I will kiss her. There are too many screen doors between me and there.

We stand on the slope and watch while the team clears the bench. They crowd around Number Nine. Some raise him on their shoulders before they cheer and toss their hats into the air. They splash red against the sky.

We're all where we want to be right now.

Batman and Robin

-- Kyle Hemmings

OMETIMES YOU SPOT THE KID in the old arcade by the seaport. He has dirty blonde hair, shaggy, and doesn't wear socks. His ankles are so white and thin—why, you could snap them like wishbones. From a distance, you conjure his eyes as cornflower blue, stinging, maybe mixed with gray, and the nose, irrefutably pug, defiant yet vulnerable. You imagine him a weekend runaway from a hundred family soap operas: he's flunking school, he's too awkward with girls, his father chastises the mother for acting overprotective, the mother is screwing the 2nd period teacher for a sense of revenge.

His body is lithe, slinky as your mother's old boyfriend, who protected you from school bullies, who fondled your testicles in the lot behind Boeing's. That was when she turned oblivious to everything, after her divorce, and you, in another echo of time, felt compressed and hollow in your drum of squelched desires.

You will come to the kid's rescue. You will fulfill a need, a space, a void that only stretches as the days sink into their pretty sunsets. In a way, he almost reminds you of yourself at that age, slightly older than the middle-school mercies you dreamt about, boys striking manly poses in tight jeans worn at the seat or cuffed above the ankles, arms of wash-off skull tattoos, biceps, supple, but still too young to boast the bulk of serious weight-lifters or steroid-addicted wrestlers. They talk tough but cry like children.

So, you're going to take this slow. You're going to wait until he runs out of quarters and impress him with your skill at knocking down the Joker, the Riddler, at the Batman and Robin machine, his favorite. "I loved Batman when I was kid," you'll say because you want him to know that you too are a kid at heart. You'll laugh at his flat jokes, applaud his taste in iPod tunes, splurge on him, a little extra to pay for a cab home to show your concern, or a maybe a trip to MacDonald's where in a back booth, you'll listen to his problems. He confides that his mom might be screwing around and his father sometimes leaves a dribble of urine on the toilet seat. It drives her nuts, he says, shaking his head and holding up a cupped hand. You will become his best friend because he insinuates that his classmates reject him as a jerk, or a pussy. You have a mischievous way of pulling the truth from his boyish smirks and nervous chortles.

Of course, he doesn't know a thing about you. How you spent half your off-the-shelf life in porn shops blocks away from Monorail stations and Tully's coffee houses, masturbating behind the cubicles smelling of semen and weak ammonia. Your favorite was always the man and boy videos, and how you pictured yourself piercing erratic hearts and tight anuses. That's why you always smile whenever you play that Batman arcade game. The words "Caped Crusader" have a strange and lingering ring in your ears. It reminds you of those wasted

years you spent looking for your Robin. Someday, you will pull off both his mask and yours. You will carry him crying and fighting to a bed in the Chief Joseph motel. His tears will kind of excite you. No, he'll say, he's not a faggot. Try it, you'll say, nothing else in your fucked-up life works. Then, you'll kiss him on the cheek, impressing your stamp of dominance, of manly faux-compassion.

And here's one part I forgot. Slowly, you watch the kid turn. Turn angry, yet more withdrawn. Is oscillation the correct word? He's starting to use the word "fuck" to describe everything, the way you always wanted to with your own mother, who never quite understood why you'd never scored dates with the girls she thought perfect or "cute as a button."

"Fuck," he says, "God didn't make a body part for that." Or, "One of these days, I'm leaving Seattle. Fuck you, her, and that crazy bastard who think they own me."

You simply nod, drive him to the Kingston mall, pick him out some nice dress shirts. You suspect he needs you in some unexplainable way, if only to catch his gush of uncontrolled, misdirected angst, even though he complains he can't shit for days after being fucked. But over time, he grows quiet and obedient in these squalid motel rooms, their walls silent as shagbark, the blood, dried.

And here's another part I forgot to mention. One day in a coffee shop with the rain pattering against windows and the umbrellas the cornball adults carry, like they really think anything will protect them from a downpour—you tell him, it's over. You tell him that you thought long and hard about it. That you love him too much and you don't want to ruin his life. The kid stares at you doe-eyed; the jaw trembles. You stand, tuck some twenties in the kid's shirt pocket. He pushes your hand away.

"What the fuck is this?" he says.

His corked mouth, sideways jerk of the head, the flushed face, only delight you. As you walk away, you sense the kid is rising also, too conflicted to scream how could you do this, that maybe there's something here that could be salvaged. He's too proud and angry to say any of that. And you're off to another part of town to look for somebody else.

Now, imagine I was once that kid. Years later I ride a bus each day to work. Nobody talks very much on this bus. It's just a strange and diffident crowd, marble-eyed glares, hands clutching loose change. Along the route, sometimes my thoughts drift to those old comics, like Batman and Robin. God, they were great. Those invincible superheroes. A bond forged forever. And even though we never speak, I feel that strange kind of bond with the bus driver, same one each morning, his half-hidden face in the rearview, his sagging eyes that peep up, sometimes meeting mine. On days when traffic is stalled in a downpour, we even smile at each other.

Us, . PEOPLE







-- Jimmy Chen

Polaroid triptych / © 2008 Gregory Lytle (greglytle.blogspot.com)

ACES HAD NO PORES because the people were not alive. Lie buttons, or eyes, were affixed onto their faces with conjunctivitis seal. Before bed, they removed their faces and tended to their sore skulls. During the day, they brined themselves in swimming pools for hours with chlorinated water. Each morning they applied their new face with a caulking gun.

To smile for no reason was a common tactic known as 'affectation,' or Affleck, which was often confused with Aflac, a wild goose often confused with a duck, a disparity popularized by the game Duck, Duck, Goose—in which children learn about the law of ratios and exile. Aflac and Affleck both shared the same countenance and lived good lives off their royalties.

The sexiest man alive was dark brown. His name was Washington. Celebrity, a political movement of the west, comprised of man and woman—both known for secreting notable amounts of fluid from their glands. Men like Washington were said to have the largest glands, which determined attitude. When attitudes got out of control, it was called 'French.'

When the daughters began budding in the chest, they were encouraged to snort cocaine and crash expensive cars into people, or trees. This behavior, 'socal,' made farmers wince. Other aspects of socal included: injecting the Botulinum toxin, or 'sausage poison,' into one's face and rendering it useless; spray-painting one's body a dark bronze hue to mimic the sun's prolonged affect on the epidermis; and bleaching one's hair until it resembled hay. Once an appearance was settled, it was cast in resin.

What was important was what people wore. Incidents in which identical outfits were worn by two people were chronicled extensively. Pictures of people wearing the same outfit were posed next to the other, so that the public could rate them. People were keen on rating things, even themselves. A simple question permeated everyone's mind: am I hot or not? The answer, unfortunately, was lost.

In the evenings, partisans of the Celebrity Party would copulate, incurring moments of cosmic faux-nearness, or 'coming.' They vocalized affirmations into the air, the most common one being yes; or prayed by saying 'Oh God' repeatedly. Men didn't want children and thus propagated their genetic emissions on, or into, non-living things. This behavior was distinct from the Second Coming, which involved only one man.

At first, the blackouts were drug induced. People, after 'clubbing,' woke up in unfamiliar apartments, lying on carpet made damp by alcohol. Soon however, entire cities underwent blackouts. In the darkness, people struggled to keep themselves occupied. Black television screens showed Eternity on every channel; skin detritus surfaced as Jacuzzis slowly went cold; pop-tarts remained stuck inside toasters. People began burning candles, unaware that such flames would have to carry them to the end.

Within a year, the people had no choice but to burn the magazines for energy, for they were cold and naked. The magazines burned, and the faces on the covers curled inward as the flames chewed at the receding contours like centipedes on a leaf. The faces squinted, grimaced, became spotted with air bubbles resembling warts. The last of the people coughed up carbon and cried as the flames grew bigger, and though they cried, tears vanished in the soot halfway down their cheeks. Their innards began liquefying, exiting orifices in the form of baby food. As everything burned, the sky grew freckled with a listless ash that jerked haphazardly in the air now and again, as if randomly tugged by all the tendrils of melted skin.

Render Safe: A Lullaby



-- Grace Jamison

WANT YOUR FATHER TO SHAVE YOUR FACE. He sits there, holding the razor, looking at you propped up behind the lather. I hover behind him, touch his shoulder: "Careful." He doesn't respond because he has given up on me. The graceful Lieutenant on duty who brought us the razor says she will come back. She walks between the two rows of men in pajamas with green stripes. Her waist is willow young in her uniform and she is light.

On our way, the wind chill was five below at the lake. The neighborhood boys still build those snow forts to protect against attacks that come out of nowhere, smoothing the top of the wall with their hands in fat mittens. One boy pulled his hat off and showed his ears to the blowing snow; his little brother stood there with his breath puffing, watching him.

Look carefully at the sand by the roadside to see if it has been disturbed. Do not stop there.

I want to send a quick note to everyone that I believe you are making progress every day, that your eyes are not random at all, that we are hopeful and very busy indeed. I want to wipe the crust from your lips.

So your father peers at you down through his reading glasses, begins his task with a placid hand. Patches of your smooth face and there you are. Your eyes move up, then back to the left. I think I catch up to them. I want to rake the desert sand, starting with the hot sand that hides the random shards of your skull, smoothing outward.





RACHEL MIA'S EXISTENCE

an excerpt from Strangelets, a novel-in-progress

-- Nick Antosca

T'S A SUNDAY NIGHT. Rachel Mia plays a game of Scrabble with her roommate Carmen and they drink beer floats. Then Rachel Mia putters around her room for a while, rearranging books, DVDs, and teeth on her shelves. She has a walrus tooth, a jackal tooth, a sloth tooth, and many others. Whenever anyone asks her what kinds of things she likes to do, she usually says, "Putter."

She falls asleep early, curled up in her clothes, then wakes up in the middle of the night and undresses and gets under the covers. It's hard to go back to sleep because she keeps wanting to turn the pillow over so it will feel cool and fresh against her face. The more you do that, though, the less cool and fresh it feels. Winston Churchill kept two beds side by side so he could jump out of one and get into the other, cooler one. She read that.

When she falls back asleep, she dreams that she is an Eskimo with a rifle, running with power and joy across a field of ice and shooting walruses. The walruses are fat and their faces have idiotic stares.

It's still dark when she wakes. The alarm hasn't gone off. She remembers a little of the end of the last dream: There was a dinosaur involved. Curled up cozily in the dark now, she thinks about when she played Scrabble with Edwin. That was on Saturday night. Edwin, who works at the bookstore where Rachel Mia often browses, sort of followed her home because he was getting off work as she was leaving, and she invited him in to play Scrabble, because they had a running joke about playing Scrabble sometime. "You can't stay too late because in the morning I have to go take pictures of a sensory deprivation tank," she said as they went up the stairs. Edwin has glasses, slyly mussed hair, and something of a beard. He's getting an MFA in creative writing. They drank scotch. She beat him every game. Sex happened! Afterward she lay naked on her bed thoughtfully touching herself and smelling the rude musky smell of bodies and lubricant. "My ceiling has cracks," she said happily.

After a little while, Edwin left. Her roommate Carmen knocked on the door and said, "Did you do the guy from the bookstore?"

Rachel Mia said, "Don't come in. Yes."

"You left Scrabble out," Carmen said. "Want to play Scrabble tomorrow night and drink beer floats?"

"Okay," Rachel Mia said.

Now the alarm goes off. She gets out of bed, showers, dresses, and goes to work. It's her day job, assistant at a law firm. She freelances for Time Out New York on the weekends. At the law firm her desk is surrounded by paper. Paper Cut Island, it's called in her mind. Her calendar on her work computer has little agenda items that she has set to recur weekly. The one that pops up every Monday morning is, "KILL EVERYONE." She can no longer remember why she was mad when she created that agenda item. She thinks, "Monday = unpleasant." She's been trying to think using mathematical symbols.

Her boss, Henrietta, walks past her desk and says, "How are you?" Rachel Mia says, "Dead of paper cuts." Henrietta leaves. Rachel Mia opens a bottle of Poland Springs water and tosses the bottle cap in her large desk drawer, which contains five hundred million bottle caps. She wishes that one time she would open the drawer and instead of bottle caps it would be full of baby wolverines, cute but deadly.



"The decline and fall of the centaur and the enormous woman's most brief affair" / © 2008 Michael C. Hsiung (www.michaelchsiung.com)

A LITTLE ABOUT US:



"The End Copy" / © 2008 Randy Thurman (www.thurmanart.org

-- Michael Jauchen

We're a city taken over by musicals.

We're struggling to put the fun back in profundity.

At least we've got the right hang ups with *Huckleberry* Finn.

Keep an eye out for the hirsute ones here. If they go a bit heavy on the watery domestic they start sounding like Billy Sunday crossed with a Yanomamo.

We really do thank God for everything he's done, we don't want to complain, but selling bathroom supplies to mid-range grocery stores is not what we had in mind.

Chicago! Chicago! Let's go to Chicago!

We're pretty good at staring at contemporary art with our arms crossed.

We dream about dead and butchered kangaroos almost every single night, packed in a suitcase and buried at the tail edge of a Civil War battlefield in Maryland.

Our stutters get much worse when our father's away converting the Indians.

We like funk music in the way white people like funk music.

In a jam, we're pretty sure any one of us could perform an emergency appendectomy if we had to.

We misquote the Bible all the time.

We could do a pretty good impression of Robert De Niro if he would just play a drunk, gay man with emphysema from Starkville, Mississippi!

We pace alone in front of City Hall and shout our demands at all hours of the night: "It's all about oil!" and "Stop waterboarding now you dicks! It's so totally wrong, can't you see that?" and "As a matter of fact, we actually have a couple of gay friends who are black!" and "To be honest, we could use a good

personal tragedy to get ourselves moving!"

We listen to cassette tapes and practice the French subjunctive with our eyes closed.

Our lovemaking could definitely use a twenty-four hour makeover or a long weekend at a Kentucky bootcamp.

We miss Buddy Holly everyday.

We have a friend who went to Africa once.

We puff paint our sweaters with the faces of our dead grandpas.

God, our boyfriends are retarded!

The dental hygienists here are a race of women just asking for it, aren't they?

Which reminds us of the time we were almost killed by a giant tidal wave in Southeast Asia.

We wonder about Picasso.

We want Costa Rica!

We have no idea what lupus is and we're a little hazy on the difference between muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy too.

We wish we were Jewish or Buddhist or something.

Oh! To be on the private beaches of India!

We're cynical in all the right places.

We have a strange sexual sway over women over sixtyfive.

We swear one time we saw Salman Rushdie.

To us, huffing biodiesel is just more earth friendly, you know?

When we all finally raise enough money to run for city council, we've decided our motto will be exactly the same: "We really thought we had found it! The something to stay, the something to miss!"

Sprawl

-- Tanya Chernov

am a mother who finds art films offensive.
All of my children have the same name.

I had a twin I bullied and consumed in utero.

In school I was a backpack thief.

I have a prosthetic leg, I remove it for sex;

I walk with a strut entirely manufactured.

I own a loofah still crunchy and dry.

I'm only overweight compared to some.

I'm so old I wear pants that velcro at the back.

My neighborhood watches me pee on the lawn.

I was taught to ride a bike at 39.

Only the cats notice me sneeze.

In line at Safeway I argue over specials.

I watch 5 TVs all at once.

My cellist grandmother mispronounces my name.

I marvel at the smell of upholstery.

I am the dog with a clipped, dildo tail.

If I spoke more pidgined English my friends would call me.

My loose-fitting morals suit my family.

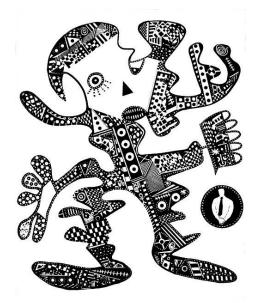
I am worthy of the stares I was given today.

I asked to have braces.

I cook wearing flammable nightgowns.

I make blankets for people I don't even know.





"Graeme Sless and His Father E" / © 2008 Ashley Reaks (www.ashleyreaks.com)



-- Jack Christian

had a nickname in that tribe I was an eldersomething
I was the hardest name at the spelling bee

I didn't sleep so much as start hallucinating

My bathtub was claw-footed we weren't enemies

Everything that was anything approached via avenues

Cars in those days were driven in hallways

My legs were mutts, were what were barking

The dark was a bottom I used it for traipsing

If you were looking for me you asked by the boy of the land surveyor

You gave the impression of the stranger who drops in on Sunday school

If it wasn't desert vacations I was New Jersey over Roanoke, Virginia

I was a drinker of specific yolks and a causation and an up-to-something

The time I scammed 'em so bad they passed an ordinance about it

In their Willie Nelson 1970s holding pattern

So fat they lived in their own outskirts

Occasionally, I got the feeling it was the feeling of neck-caught

It was land zoned residential but in practice for chicken factories

A jive I laid down I hoped the ties were tight enough

Like a dust-storm opposite the moon and no breeze at midnight

I wish my vision was faster

Consistently, I remained a shape behind the shapeshifters

I threw my roses in the river I mean the river took that hat away from me

I fed the tom a biscuit until he puked it

Neither could I function or go a gathering

Nor act as if I'd been anywhere before

I was 100 years in '87 I was almost ahead of my time

And in general some months a lightbulb was my north star

And with a hard-on for a compass

In I went for outerspace at least for the bar with the neon posters

It happened like that I think or occurred in reverse:

I stopped dead in my tracks and my footsteps kept going





The Import

-- Brooklyn Copeland

Inderwhelmed by the all-American bits: the laundry detergent baked into the cotton t-shirt. I know the word

'mile' is a figure of speech to you, but I can feel it in my heels when I've walked one in your blue

suede. In your mirrored-shades, I appear crowded, crude. In the bright lights of dentistry, the camaraderie

of an army physical, you are what—gall; quick brass knuckles. Stripped to your skivvies, your approach to the march

is a mockery of an empire, a maudlin foot-glance. Two years in, every porcelain Memphis beehive knows

to wave her hanky, but save her tears. They've heard you'll pitch for the other team, weather permitting.

They've heard you've campaigned for things anyone would give to a hound dog in his seventh inning.



-- Deborah Blakely

anything bus stop, the single stall bathroom on the corner of Van Nuys and Burbank Boulevards where you throw up bile. Is a rig full of toilet water and your friend's trick dead: only your cat knows for sure. When what you need is a city planner and a PIN number, it's what you get: a pair of broken glasses and an unreliable witness. Or a really long wait for a very short drive, late again got lost on the bus back from Bakersfield broken alarm clock. Is Christmas dinner. A dry tree. In March it's a stolen key, a large sum settlement and an abscess on your ass. Addiction is your best friend Kristen on a stairwell after midnight; mad, rude, is wearing your irises, your eyes. Is a pool in a dirty castle, a shoe to the head, a movieless Sunday. Hell, it's a guy named Brian, or Violet looking for powder at the 7-Eleven at 4 a.m. And *I swear she's my sister*. Is please. Is never happen again. Very next day, it's your neighbor's aristocratic son threatening a fat sweaty man named Rueben with a knife. Felony assault? An apartment under the bridge. The sweetest needle to your forehead when everything has failed you.





"Original 52" / © 2008 Vittorio F. Cavalli

From a Floor In Cambridge, Massachusetts

-- Peter Jay Shippy



■ Feel fine, like a high muck-a-muck. Now I ache For obsolete technology. Eggbeaters at eight O'clock, Captain! Closer, please, let me visit your tear-Jerking breasts. Your spot-welds are freckles? No? Round Way other? Sorry, I'm considerably less Person than then. The control room doesn't seem To be on a first name basis with the thunk tank. I sprawl genre style—has my wattle bonked my head? The blackbirds that live in the chimney sound like Passing bells. Most Cantabrigians share The trait of one eye smack in the middle of their face, Which gives a man a frank appreciation For his neighbors—the brewer, the baker, the cable Provider. Excuse my chronic score but how else Can I cue you *how* to feel about me: Spooked? Tender As a nightstick? Beside yourself astride me? Here's my advice—Never sleep with a man called Mom. And yet I'm less more in the flesh than I am in your Flesh, blotter, Rolodex, manifest content, watch list, Syllabus. Don't fret; I'm looking for my key. Passé-Partout? Down here on the floor one can see The tigers in the oak. They keep mockingbirds at bay. I so wish to believe that this, our exchange, that this Is a crucial jiffy in the record of traditional free jazz. Can you feel? Downstairs? Brushed drums, xylo, Occasional saw. That's my cha-cha. Can you feel?

y ex bought my underwear at Louis. Those made me





I Am a Lion Birthing a Kitten

-- Evelyn Hampton

was born to Gorbachev and Reagan in a houseboat in 1982 Now they are both dead but

Since the mid-90s I have been made of hood ornaments plucked from cars that crashed on the Autobahn

People who seem to be choking are really trying to say my name

When I am famous I collapse on the street, which I call the Rue

My arm is a young model in Berlin & my leg is a hustler in Alabama

My head is configurable to be many more heads, including a large mansion where leaders await a suddenly disappointing day

And I am judging you, too

I wanted to be more sincere but the economy said NO

EAT MORE

So I ate some pro-football

Now I have this headache medication

It makes me fall in love with air traffic controllers

This one shouts NINER in his sleep

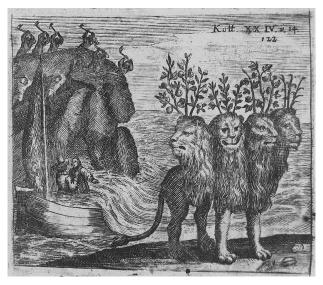
I feel touchdowns inside me each time he lands a plane

I think I could be a travel writer

Or a sneeze shield at the dust buffet

But I don't know

I am very hard to talk to because I have several thousand warring villages in my head

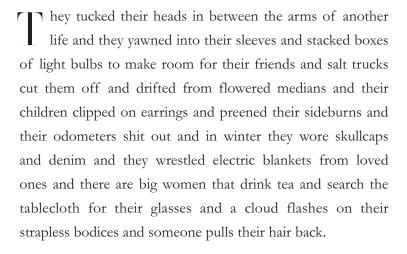


Two They Poems

-- Christopher Cheney



They Tucked Their Heads





They're Flattening Their Hands

They're flattening their hands on their inner thighs and their condoms bare the tint of traffic lights and their haunted faces and their crooked teeth and their friends heave and there is no breath on their cheeks and their dogs tunnel and sniff the night blankly aroused and there is no breath like the breath of an animal feeding and their clothes snag on chain link fences and they've pushed its ribs in and they've kicked it over and it recoils like drying pocket money and a heart beats in their lungs and they pull out of their bodies and shake them which is their boredom.

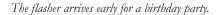


Three Flashers

-- Adam Peterson

The flasher builds a watch.

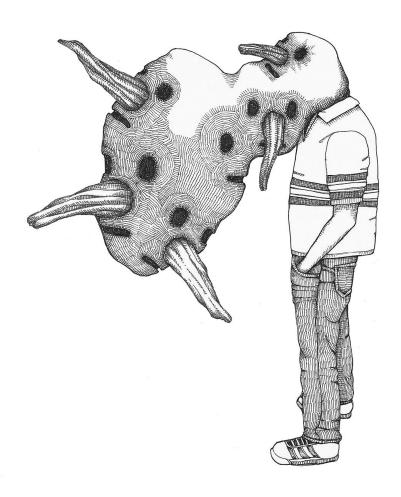
hicken bones and paper clips and dog eyelashes and the firing pin of a pistol and chicken feathers and some red, yellow, black wires from the inside of his phone. He welds them all together. He sings them a lullaby. It's as if he's stopped time.



By ten minutes, but it's only nine minutes to go when he asks them to sing with him. Eight minutes when he warbles out and many more. The entire family is sitting on the same couch. He, the matching chaise lounge. He sings the song alone. He sings it again and tries to sound like Billie Holiday. The doorbell rings and the cake is delivered. He blows out the seven candles and has a slice. It's ice-cream cake. Three minutes, he sings the word dear.



above & top right: "Multiplication" / © 2008 John Casey (www.bunnywax.com)



The flasher goes to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

bathwater, of blinks, of footfalls, of tear-off daily calendars, of phonerings, of haircuts, of clouds. The camera doesn't work right, and he has to turn and open his trench coat and take off his sunglasses and put them on and close his trench coat and stare wistfully with a fist under his chin. Last, he faces the wall and his nose touches the grey. Smile.

Flushing

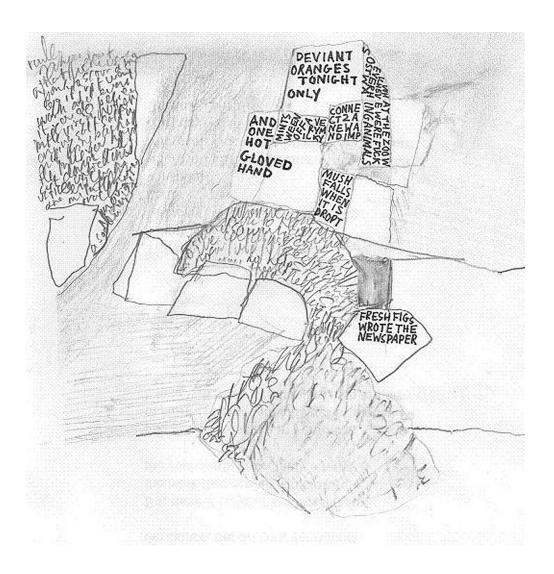
--Jono



NOÖ [nine]

Tosch

Oranges











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Contributors' Notes

- ICK ANTOSCA is the author of Fires (Impetus Press, 2007) and Midnight Picnic (Wordriot Press 2008). His writing has appeared in The Barcelona Review, Nerve, The New York Sun, Identity Theory, The New York Tyrant, The Antietam Review, Hustler, Opium, elimae, and others.
- BEORAH BLAKELY is currently a graduate student in Creative Writing at California State University Northridge. Her past occupations have included: Melrose Avenue hairstylist, switchboard operator, commercial production assistant, and volunteer at the Los Angeles needle exchange. Her secret desire is to someday be named Grand Marshall of the Hollywood Christmas Parade.
- VITTORIO F. CAVALLI is a writer and visual artist. His poetry, short fiction, and visual art have been published in various literary journals in North America, England, Australia, and New Zealand. Born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, he is currently living in the mountains of Mission, B.C.
- OHN CASEY was born on Friday the 13th in Salem Massachusetts. He has been fascinated with creature creation ever since he was old enough to hold a crayon. His work focuses on an emotional bio-morphology by stretching the boundaries of the human form through psychological self portraits and open narratives. Ten years ago John moved to Oakland, California where he currently creates and resides with his lovely wife Mary and their cat.
- IMMY CHEN'S writing can be found at jimmychenchen.com. He is also a contributing writer for HTML GLANT. He lives in San Francisco, California.
- CHRISTOPHER CHENEY is currently pursuing his MFA at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Recent publications include *Notnostrums*, *Death Metal Poetry*, and *DLAGRAM*.

- Tanya Chernov is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in poetry at the Whidbey Island Writer's Workshop. She lives, works, and studies in Seattle. Tanya is a web content editor for Expedia.com, where she enjoys being paid for her grammatical neuroses. She drives a Subaru and has two dogs. All three are monsters. Her writing can currently be read in Rattle, Isotope, and Stringtown.
- gram for Poets and Writers at UMass Amherst. His poems have appeared in the Mississippi Review, jubilat, Meridian, and DIAGRAM.
- RYAN COFFELT is the co-editor of Rain Fade. His work has appeared in Opium, Snow Monkey, Juked, elimae, and elsewhere.
- Brooklyn copeland was born in Indianapolis in 1984. She is the author of seven chapbooks and has work forthcoming in *Keyhole* and *Octopus*. Find out more at brooklyncopeland.blogspot.com.
- MICHAEL DEFORGE was born in 1987. He makes comics and posters in Toronto. Visit his website at kingtrash.com.
- ABE DURHAM is the author of The Complete Genealogy of Everyone, Ever, a fiction chapbook. His writings have appeared or are forthcoming in Fourteen Hills, Daytrotter, Hobart, Pequin, Ghoti, Word Riot, Thieves Jargon, Johnny America, and elsewhere. He lives in Northampton, MA.
- RACHEL B. GLASER'S work appears or is forthcoming in American Short Fiction, New York Tyrant, Columbia Journal, Unsaid, elimae, Invisible Ear, Barrelhouse, 3:AM and more. Visit her on the web at rachelbglaser.blogspot.com.
- VELYN HAMPTON'S recent writing appears or is forthcoming in Smoke-Long Quarterly, BlazeVOX, Juked, and elimae. A "sneeze shield at the dust buffet" is an online poetry

game found at endtable.net/sneeze shieldatthedustbuffe; the site's title is by Adam. Evelyn blogs at www. lispservice.com.

YLE HEMMINGS recently finished his MFA in creative writing and loves to cook, bake, and burn everything he cooks or bakes. He also loves to listen to anything by The Beach Boys. He lives and works in New Jersey.

- ICHAEL HSIUNG is characterized by: large mustache (one of the few remaining facially hairy Asians surviving today) with all of the species capable of reaching one ton or more in weight; herbivorous diet; and a thin yellow protective skin, 1.5-5 cm thick, formed from layers of collagen positioned in a lattice structure; and a relatively small brain for a mammal of his size (400-600g). See his art online at www.michaelchsiung.com.
- RACE JAMISON is a medical doctor who grew up in a coal mining town in Appalachia. In her spare time, she organizes workshops for teenage writers. More of her fiction can be found online at *Night Train*.
- VICHAEL JAUCHEN'S work has appeared or is forthcoming in Sentence, Santa Monica Review, Lamination Colony, and H_NGM_N.
- TREGORY LYTLE takes pictures of things and draws and paints things and lives in Philadelphia. He only recently learned how to use 'emoticons' on 'gchat.' He is smarter than you.
- RIKA MIKKALO'S writing has received the Tobias Wolff Award for short fiction, and has appeared in assorted publications, including The Beloit Poetry Journal, The Spoon River Poetry Journal, The Massachusetts Review, The Columbia Review, The Notre Dame Review, The Texas Review, Fence, MiPOesias and elsewhere.

N©Ö [nine]

British Columbia with her husband and two children. When she's not writing she's working and thinking about writing, when she's writing, she thinks about daffodils. Her work can be read in many places online and in print. She is actively seeking representation for her first novel.

A DAM PETERSON lives in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he co-edits *The Cuphoard Pamphlet*. His chapbook *My Untimely Death* is available from Subito Press.

A SHLEY REAKS reluctantly left her mum's womb on a cold winter's evening in 1966 in Harrogate, a small town in North Yorkshire in England. Visit her online at www.ashleyreaks.com.

RADLEY SANDS is the author of *It*Came from Below the Belt. He edits a literary journal called *Bust Down the*Door and Eat All the Chickens. Find more online at lawngnomesin-space.blogspot.com.

PETER JAY SHIPPY'S third book is the verse novella How to Build the Ghost in Your Attic (Rose Metal Press, 2007). New poems recently appeared in The American Poetry Review, Harvard Review, and Shenandoah.

ANDY THURMAN is an artist, musician, composer, poet, writer, etc. living and working in rural south east Tennessee. Randy's art has exhibited at Monkdogz Urban Art, Gallery 181 and the Jay Etkin Gallery just to name a few.

Randy's music has traveled throughout the US and abroad in London, Belgium, and Australia.

J ONO TOSCH carried his poem drawings from Norwich, England, to Northampton, MA, where he currently works and works. If you want to know what he puts into his belly, you can read his food blog at oilchanges.blogspot.com.

RISD. Her work has appeared in many exhibitions and can be found online at rebeccavolinsky.net.

__ Many Thanks \cdot \text{To the Warm of Heart}

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-- The kid is wearing a Halloween costume: a hideous mask. I imagine it as the molded latex kind: lumpy algae and beige, purple scars, a fountain of garish red buboes cascading over a brow, snarling slack lips, snaggle-fangs. "And what are you?" the woman asks. "I am Power," the child replies.

Tricky Dicks, Erika Mikkalo, page 4

-- Sam Pink is the Leatherface of poetry. Perhaps his work resembles what Russell Edson's poems would have looked like had he been a fifteen-year-old who was infatuated with slasher horror movies.

NOÖ Presents: Sam Pink's Yum Yum I Can't Wait to Die, Bradley Sands, page 10

-- Maybe if one of the lobbies was open to the winter air, maybe then they could have an ice-sculpture. In one of the courtyards. Sometimes the ice-sculpture could be her and JP's initials, another time it could be their faces locked in a kiss.

Dream House, Rachel B. Glaser, page 12

-- People were keen on rating things, even themselves. A simple question permeated everyone's mind: am I hot or not? The answer, unfortunately, was 'not.'

Us the People, Jimmy Chen, page 16

-- We're struggling to put the fun back in profundity.

A Little About Us, Michael Jauchen, page 19

-- I was a drinker of specific yolks and a causation and an up-to-something

My Life, Jack Christian, page 21

-- I wanted to be more sincere but the economy said NO / EAT MORE

I Am a Lion Birthing a Kitten, Evelyn Hampton, page 25

-- They yawned into their sleeves and stacked boxes of light bulbs to make room for their friends and salt trucks cut them off and drifted from flowered medians and their children clipped on earrings

Two They Poems, Christopher Cheney, page 26

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