

**SPRUNG**

*sprung formal*

*issue 19*

**FORMAL**

This issue of *Sprung Formal* was born from a true melding of the Liberal Arts and Graphic Design Departments at the Kansas City Art Institute.

The two cohorts immersed themselves in curating, designing, and editing this publication to bring a collaborative art object into the world. What could be sweeter?

Thank you to the writers and artists who entrusted us with their work. You all make *Sprung Formal* a joy to put together.



Copyright ©2024  
Sprung Formal  
All rights reserved

Published by students and faculty  
in the Liberal Arts and Graphic  
Design Departments at the  
Kansas City Art Institute

4415 Warwick Blvd.  
Kansas City, Missouri 64111

Printed in May of 2024 by  
Soli Printing



***SPRUNG FORMAL*** 

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Austin Gutierrez**

*Weed-Whacker* ..... 03

## **Dorsey Craft**

*How Noah Chose the Doves* ..... 04

*When You Are Twelve* ..... 06

*When You Are Twenty-Five* ..... 07

## **Kate Lindroos**

*POISON* ..... 09

## **Madeline Gallucci**

*Small Risk* ..... 10

## **Jeffrey Hecker**

*GO* ..... 11

*Free Parking* ..... 11

*Community Chest* ..... 12

*Just Visiting/In Jail* ..... 12

*Go to Jail* ..... 13

## **Ian U Lockaby**

*from Defensible Space/if a crow—* ..... 15

## **An Hà**

*Untitled (Shadow)* ..... 21

## **Mike Bagwell**

*from Poem of Thanks III* ..... 22

## **Robert Fernandez**

*Self, 2001 by Mark Quinn* ..... 25

*Bacchus #3, 1977*

*by Elaine de Kooning* ..... 28

## **Sarah Manuel**

*Twins* ..... 31

<b>Dara Barrois/Dixon</b>	
<i>A Triumphant Return to Fiction</i> .....	32
<b>Bernadette Negrete</b>	
<i>barbenheimer/ feminine rage</i> .....	37
<b>Dylan Ringer</b>	
<i>Andrea</i> .....	38
<b>Elizabeth Marie Young</b>	
<i>The Combined To Dos of Johnny</i> <i>Cash, Woody Guthrie, Benjamin</i> <i>Franklin and Leonardo Da Vinci</i> .....	39
<i>A Brief History of Clouds</i> .....	41
<b>Hannah Dixon</b>	
<i>Homecoming</i> .....	45
<b>Jack Christian</b>	
<i>The Color of Memory</i> .....	46
<b>Anthony Robinson</b>	
<i>The New Poetry</i> .....	48
<i>Abjuration #2</i> .....	52
<b>Catherine Rybak</b>	
<i>Bits and Pieces</i> .....	53
<b>Austin Gutierrez</b>	
<i>Untitled (Man in Hat)</i> .....	54
<b>Michael Robins</b>	
<i>On the Day the Fish Died</i> .....	55
<i>Of All the Things He's Lost</i> .....	56
<b>Dylan Ringer</b>	
<i>from Family Recipe</i> .....	57

**Mary Silwance**

*The compassionate self is not tame* ..... 59

**Dylan Ringer**

*Hares on the Mountain* ..... 61

**Hadara Bar-Nadav**

*Nuremberg Laws (II)* ..... 62

*Aktion T4 Program* ..... 63

*Untermenschen* ..... 64

*Sonderkommando* ..... 65

**Randi Bachman**

*Frost Flower* ..... 67

**Jessica Cuello**

*Limousin 1939* ..... 69

**Grant Chemidlin**

*Fag* ..... 72

*Fag* ..... 73

*Fag* ..... 74

**Stefan Schulz**

*Standoff* ..... 75

**Stephen S. Mills**

*Final Boy Asks About a Woman in  
the Trash Chute* ..... 76

**Elizabeth Clark Wessel**

*Those who won't and  
those who can't* ..... 77

*Teeth* ..... 78

**Jaedyn Roberts**

*Untitled* ..... 79

**Sarah Manuel**

*Confrontation* ..... 80

**Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks**

*Phony Goldenrods* ..... 81  
*Party Trick* ..... 83

**John Elizabeth Stintzi**

*WALMART* ..... 86

**Melvin Mauch**

*BRAT* ..... 89

**Prairie Moon Dalton**

*Notice to Creditors* ..... 90  
*Mystery Hill* ..... 91  
*Only Child* ..... 92

**Hùng Lê**

*Only the Future Revisits the Past*  
*Bà Nội* ..... 93

**R/B Mertz**

*The Garden* ..... 94  
*Feed* ..... 95  
*January* ..... 100

**Ellie Westhoff**

*BUGLE TITTY GRAB* ..... 101

**Zoe Tuck**

*The Death at the Center of Sex* ..... 102  
*WOW LIFE Cat* ..... 104

**Quinn Rennerfeldt**

*Ode to a Conference* ..... 107

**Kyle Fuson / Kasi Kimie**

*Balance* ..... 108



*a scribble for your thoughts*

*make this page your own*

10

*Austin Gutierrez*



# ***WEED-WHACKER***

*Austin Gutierrez*



*Dorsey Craft*

# ***HOW NOAH CHOSE THE DOVES***



The empty beak. An eye  
like a jilted maid, purple scarf wafting  
through the roost on the hot

breeze. Her wings pressed your palms  
like a wife's lips your neck in sleep. Soft sockets,  
a spot of balding down,

whistle in a clay jar.

Before the rain, you had plucked the second  
from the orchard, flecks of rind

and feathers sticky

like the cheeks of your boys after lemon.

A broken tail feather,

slight dip in the paddle

from stern to bow. A dream you had the night  
before in which you slugged

God, who took the long shape

of the ornery ostrich whose talons

you kneel to file at dawn.

*Dorsey Craft*

By lamplight, as the sun  
scooped the back of Ararat in the fourth  
hour. To find the last, you

tossed a rock cloaked in bread  
into the rookery, a flap like rain,  
the storm's densest second

when captivity reams  
the mind like an orange. When you  
tossed her into the sky,

festooned with bright yellow  
ribbon, her gullet was full. Her blood laced  
your hoary knuckles

like indigo ink, wine  
spilled from her down onto feet thin and sharp,  
blue as a father's grace.



*Dorsey Craft*

# ***WHEN YOU ARE TWELVE***

You wield the hose while your father cleans birds—cold, clear water trickles feathers off gray meat. His thumb huge below the breastbone. You grope inside the sack of doves attending each others' funerals, give each one a little squeeze. The light pigeons out flecks of violet in their small, flopped heads. When he finishes, you make a pile of guts and bone the dogs can't keep away from. Mornings before school you hear their coos in a thick mist over the driveway, a pall for your black jelly bracelets as you trudge tile square to square. Pizza with milk. Brownies big as your hand. Don't turn your head when a boy screams "Hottie!" at you to make his friends laugh. Don't even twitch. Think of Thursdays when your father drives you thirty minutes to soccer, makes sales calls in his truck and watches you scrimmage, dribble through cones, take penalty kicks, watches so closely he can break down each graze of the ball against your instep. To make him laugh, you take off your shin guards and put your nose deep in their cotton grooves, inhale and tell him they smell like victory. The truck is never quiet. The two of you are wings gliding cool air, purple beads in an orange sky. At school, you are the dove at the bottom of the bag, bodies crushing you against cinderblock walls. You count lines in the floor from Language to History, too dead and muffled to tense at the grasp of fingers. Boys spike thumbs beneath your ribs, turn you inside out.

*Dorsey Craft*

*Dorsey Craft*

# ***WHEN YOU ARE TWENTY-FIVE***

It is the time of the drive: I-10 to Louisiana  
by morning, back west to Houston at night

after too much wine. You count the deer  
that glare from the shoulder, whole families

still as mirrors, a river lost and old. The poems  
unspool like fishing wire, thin, opalescent,

disappearing against the sky. They are not finished  
until your father weighs in. A writer says

*sentimental*. A writer says he'd like to lick your feet  
clean of peanut and ash, the dive bar floor.

A writer grabs your ass as you shoot pool.  
You barely wish to shoot them. Your gun

under the bed grins like a cuckold, dusty.  
The country roils, shards of glass in its teeth,

red graffiti on plywood as you drift towns,  
God and Trump and Trump and God. Your father

*Dorsey Craft*

sits on the porch all night listening  
to Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young. Halloween pumpkins

on tree trunks shot full of holes. On a visit, you sit  
with him, stroke your hair greasy and he tells you

he is never happy except when he is drunk  
and you hear the *thump thump* of squirrels,

their brown-gray bodies wrenched from the dark.



*Kate Lindroos*

# ***POISON***

Hills blue though they are green—  
to look is to see an idea of climbing,  
a fortunate occurrence, borrowed,  
as if a child's logic—if I eat too many  
puppy treats will I die, she asks,  
while sitting on the toilet—  
the reverse of chocolate fed to a dog,  
pairing death as from cause,  
inverse as caution, as skill learned,  
blue though learning green, no, I say,  
no that's not how it works. Later  
the hills are dark and are neither.

*Kate Lindroos*





*Madeline Gallucci*

# ***SMALL RISK***

*Madeline Gallucci*

*Jeffrey Hecker*

# **GO**

Monopolyamory, a lesser known game, requires five players who impersonate tycoons falling in lust. Rockefeller falls for Astor who falls for Morgan who falls or Carnegie who falls for Vanderbilt. Oh no Astor draws the Titanic vacation card! Winners have intercourse on a 40-foot shuffleboard court.

*Jeffrey Hecker*

**FREE PARKING**



Your best friend was dying though now she is thriving. She closes on moon property. She takes photos with you and the Steel Pier Diving Bell but erases you by accident. Other cancer survivors fill the rest of open spaces. They all swim Clam Creek to Coast Guard Station. Long live imagery.



*Jeffrey Hecker*

# **COMMUNITY CHEST**



Ripley's Believe It or Not! is gone but its façade stands upright. Advection fogs entrance window making me miss mist. I can see my breath as Jack Palance says 25% of Homo sapiens live in mud, migrating Mara River wildebeest either cross or drown, a yogi swallows 15 feet of sterilized gauze.

## ***JUST VISITING/ IN JAIL***

Officer Mallory pretends to enforce law but law is a practice, law can connect dots between a war chief who trades money for totems inside *Honey Smacks* puffed wheat, a relaxed frog who ribbits money, and a Grammercy Place teen who takes money, who does not ask for breakfast, or eat any.

*Jeffrey Hecker*

*Jeffrey Hecker*

# **GO TO JAIL**



We suffer brainwash by arcade game *Operation Wolf* strobe lights. Goddamn Uzi inside Rite Aid. Scared straight, prison releases us. We stare across Atlantic. Gormley Funeral Home dead ahead. Undertakers really befriend us. Much life we know ends bad. Morticians remember our birthdays.

*Jeffrey Hecker*



*Ian U Lockaby*

# *from DEFENSIBLE SPACE/IF A CROW—*

**if a crow—**

in dialogues with a  
whale— how do you  
speak with

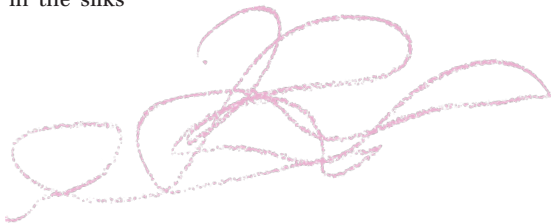
a word in your mouth—

lichen it's having a word  
with you

as you chew your molars  
with its teats,

you are gorgeous  
with questions—

What flavor  
in the silks



I wash the flavor  
in the silks

,

A whale calve grown swimming in  
the billowy echo of  
crow v voicings s s

in the marble giant



whale belly cathedral.

I wash the whale

with silks in the

season's

whale belly sinks

**if a whale** once ate a termite

if an echo-

logically plus rumor equals nothing  
lodges in you like

a termite  
's eaten your whole house, there for  
uncomplicating the maps:

a whale belly had become your home

and how to live

inside a structure which

ate the threat

to the structure

**if a crow—**  
then an ice cube con-  
structed  
of black ice

Then the mild or immense  
accomplishments

of the radish bone de-  
pending on weather  
you look—

The black ice is growing  
like tubers under-  
ground

sneaking up to the  
surface every morning

to eat the sunlight

(to irridescence)

And if out— one luxated

window, one then looks—

to see at the side of the road:

a crow tangling

with the text—

So as to true

the obligation—

You must

fallow thru

with what

you've begun—



## Summer Where We

Deemed the strawberries unsaleable,  
asked the butcher what bones

hold the paper up— what bones  
in the red pepper red

paper bones— stack a pair  
of pears and again then  
to make a pair of a pair

of pears  
and so on, just like  
us, all in our houses, paired up

But how do people—  
hold up—?  
All those paper bones—

All summer was  
crows overhead, language  
breaking apart in my hands

*An Hà*



# *UNTITLED (SHADOW)*

*An Hà*

*Mike Bagwell*

***from POEM OF  
THANKS III***

*Israeli Air Force says it has dropped 6000 bombs on Gaza*

is the headline overlaying  
these small poems  
about my daughters upon whom  
I've bestowed Hebrew names

my neighbor who leads a Jewish community  
that we've only dabbled in  
(though I've always held belief itself  
as far away as the horizon)  
calls and offers  
to tie the tefillin  
in honor of the Israeli soldiers

and I say how about Monday  
because I'm so lost for words

guess I'll ghost him  
donate to a Palestinian children's fund  
words do so often  
fail me

*Mike Bagwell*

Kitra right now at four months  
and that blue weeble wobble penguin  
have a lot in common  
except that she would fall  
if it weren't for both of my knees  
pinballing her back up

when I first searched pikuach nefesh  
google thought I wanted a pikachu fish  
and was perfectly pleased to oblige  
with some cute pics

beta yellow koi or mango puffers  
little lemons floating in the virtual

what it means is most rules  
can be broken if doing so  
would save a human life

it is quiet outside in this dark  
I tie a smartwatch around my wrist  
leather leash on the other  
take the dog for a walk

by Monday I've resolved to tell  
my neighbor my feelings  
but he doesn't call  
at least not yet

*blueberries*

an image slipped onto  
the phone on the counter  
while I reheated leftovers  
for our dinner a little girl  
dead from the bombings  
her cheeks the color of



*Robert Fernandez*

# ***SELF, 2001 BY MARK QUINN***

an idea  
is born

a light  
goes off

the movie  
starts

vultures  
in the street

walking  
in the melt

of a snow-  
cone vender

the  
sticky

*Robert Fernandez*

sky  
burns

my  
blood

runs  
cold

opens  
its eyes

an idea  
enters from

the outside  
crosses

my thres-  
hold like

a bird  
caught

an ember  
flapping

glo-  
wing



collap-  
sing

you  
make my

blood  
sing

vultures  
claw through

cherry-red  
crystals

sneakers groan  
in snow

unroll  
a door

a welcome  
mat

enter  
the light

is on  
I'm melting



*Robert Fernandez*

***BACCHUS #3, 1977 BY  
ELAINE DE KOONING***

I am  
the word  
you war  
born to

can't you  
see I  
love you?

you have  
a friend  
say begin  
again say  
a friend  
is a  
diamond  
rustling  
like a  
fountain  
crawling  
with stars

*Robert Fernandez*

we may  
begin to  
uncover  
what it  
means to  
have a  
friend  
after all

I mean  
a friend  
has your  
best interests  
in mine

I mean  
a death  
is a  
reversal  
a mind  
writhing  
like a  
garden  
orgy

I mean  
there is  
nothing  
there

I could  
tell you  
about  
a fountain  
a door to  
a garden  
seething  
with hairy  
vines

a figure  
stands  
in the  
shadows





***TWINS***  
*Sarah Manuel*

*Dara Barrois/Dixon*

# ***A TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO FICTION***

I wonder what that feels like  
Does it feel as if you've kidnapped

An elephant to traipse with over The Alps  
For a few glorious victory laps and figure 8s

Around The Eiffel Tower and thru The  
Marble Arch? To have found an infinity

Of unquestionable sky to welcome you  
As you pay The Taj Mahal a call on your

Way to catch The Bay of Fundy's tide  
With a salute aimed toward The Grand

Canyon and a bowing down before Machu  
Picchu to kiss its storied grounds

Whew! Triumph takes all the little time  
You have left to swagger past your death

*Dara Barrois/Dixon*

Seeing peripherally one long column of *TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT*'s ad copy real estate, though it might have been *London Review of Books*, announcing the triumphant return, an honorable thing according to Merriam-Webster app & thesaurus, the definition and the near-synonyms and synonyms emphasize hard work much the way so much else is judged good for involving hard work, which of course has to be true even if standing alone makes "hard work" take on a deeply puritanical attitude toward everything, I've long had a crush, for as long as I've known her, on a brilliant Merriam-Webster lexicographer, I thought of her today when I noticed their omission of the word *hallucinogenic* though RxList gives it in its other words list—*mind-blowing, mind-expanding, intoxicating, mood-altering, psychotropic, psychedelic, hallucinatory, mind-altering, psychoactive, kaleidoscopic* and on for a while, six more rows

6 more rows include *mind-bending, multicolored, psychotomimetic, consciousness-expanding, multicolored, freaky, crazy, trippy, experimental, mind-changing, trip, wild; there's more—intoxicating, exciting, thrilling, exhilarating, stimulating, heady, inspiring, rousing, stirring, electrifying, galvanizing, invigorating, mind-blowing, breathtaking, charged, electric, exhilarative, galvanic, hair-raising, heart-stopping, kinky, mind-bending, mind-boggled, powerful, rip-roaring, strong, potent, sexy, compulsive, elating, enchanting, enthralling, exhilarant, eye-popping, fascinating, mind-altering, provocative, moving, energizing, gripping, lively, arousing, energizing, spine-tingling, dramatic, challenging, overwhelming, refreshing, interesting, animating, inspirational, thought-provoking, bracing, inspiriting, restorative, appealing, titillating, riveting,*

*emotional, tonic, spirited, intoxicant, amazing, adrenalizing, hectic, wonderful, dynamic, astonishing, sensational, stunning, energetic, anthemic, stem-winding, enlivening, stiff, hard, renewing, reinvigorating, innervating roborant, startling, impassioned, emotive, passionate, magnificent, incredible, animated, awesome, wondrous, fabulous, staggering, stimulative, astounding, spectacular, stupendous, striking, impressive, provoking, encouraging, inebriating, awe-inspiring, soul-stirring, spiritous, emotion-charged, concentrated, uplifting, explosive, instigative, exalting, shocking, intense, instigating, cliffhanging, wild, inciting, vigorous, suspenseful, stimulant, piquing, complex, complicated, baffling, confusing, difficult, puzzling, fantastic, influential, brilliant, intriguing, motivating, enthusiastic, hearty, knife-edge, awakening, action-packed, eye-opening, memorable, beautiful, jaw-dropping, amazeballs, out of this world, galvanical, inflammatory, compelling, agitational, vitalizing, boozy, alcoholic, edgy, nerve-racking, sparkling, entertaining, stupefying, inconceivable, hallucinatory, psychedelic, edge-of-the-seat, adrenaline-charged, piquant, revitalizing, cheering, gladdening, vinous, spurring, exalté, absorbing, captivating, ripping, boisterous, rollicking, riotous, uproarious, giddy, revitalizing, quickening, animative, elevating, exhilaratory, tense, jolting, buzzy, adrenalized, giving one food for thought, volatile, motivational, affecting, hair-curling, heart-stirring, cliffhanging, causing excitement, heartening, containing alcohol, persuasive, impactful, adrenaline-fueled, outstanding, arresting, poignant, impelling, surprising, remarkable, picturesque, dazzling, affective, touching, splendid, marvelous, unforgettable, glorious, vibrant, triggering, meaningful, unique, grand, eye-catching, never to be forgotten, gee-whizz, rich, robust, big, full, lusty, miraculous, plush, delightful, spiritous, fab, shaking, trembling, shivering, quaking, vibrating, shuddering, frantic, exquisite, swinging, large, boss, mad, muscular, full-bodied, blood-*

*tingling, zero cool, vivifying, bright, witty, colorful, scintillating, forceful, vivacious, ebullient, beguiling, effervescent, coruscating, vivid, clever, bold, racy, effective, radiant, graphic, eventful, extraordinary, noticeable, reviving, vital, cordial, rejuvenating, far-out, resplendent, like a dream come true, empyreal, blissful, unimaginable, fabled, splendorous, sensorial, prodigious, heavenly, sublime, out of the ordinary, ethereal, special, fantastical, unheard-of, bewitching, portentous, majestic, far out, tremendous, enlightening, fairy-tale, fairytale-like, unbelievable, dream-filled, magical, spiring, inviting, heart-pumping, trendy, fashionable, glittering, glinting, smart, sprightly, driving, engaging, heated, engrossing, entrancing, keen, imaginative, propelling, buzzworthy, warm, blinding, pungent, zesty, enticing, extravagant, savory, eager, formidable, glaring, notable, hot, gleaming, pronounced, definite, high, rallying, zingy, biting, sharp, spicy, effectual, marked, pert, heart-pounding, frightening, spine-chilling, bloodcurdling, chilling, horrifying, terrifying, impactful, productive, significant, consequential, savory, salty, juicy, full of life, efficacious, divine, charming, useful*





Bernadette Negrete

# **BARBENHEIMER/ FEMININE RAGE**



Someone's new ex-girlfriend sings *girlsjustwannahavefun* at the bar while another girl's boyfriend acts like an ass outside. He comes back inside without her but they leave together that same night. The cicadas came in waves. Soft and immediate like a match. A man rides his bike behind me on the streets, whispers *damn girl you are just sosexy*. It is decided then I was never anything to look at until someone decided I was. Another man reminds me, this time my brother, I was never a woman until someone decided I was given too much. It's mid july in late august. The heat is dangerous. The heat makes me dangerous. The cicadas eat me alive every night. The couple across from us buys us a bottle of wine. My boyfriend fucks me in the bathroom after. My arms extended, holding up the wall. My world is an L shaped line. The sun sets in a valley or a field somewhere. While someone else's knees get bruised. While someone else's hair gets pulled or runs home all alone.

Bernadette Negrete



*Dylan Ringer*

# **ANDREA**

*Dylan Ringer*

*Elizabeth Marie Young*

***THE COMBINED  
TO DOS OF JOHNNY  
CASH, WOODY  
GUTHRIE, BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN AND  
LEONARDO DA VINCI***

*Elizabeth Marie Young*



Get hold of a skull  
Calculate the size of the sun  
Read lots of good books  
Don't be disturbed at trifles  
Imitate Socrates  
Kiss June  
Practice piano  
Break the jaw from the side to see the uvula in position  
Don't kiss anybody else  
Describe a woodpecker's tongue  
Imitate Jesus  
Love mama  
Love papa  
Talk to the Benedictine friar about medieval mechanics  
Make up your mind  
Drink not to elevation  
Take the measurement of a dead man using his own finger  
Think innocently and justly  
Eat not to dullness  
Dream good  
Stay Glad  
Obtain forceps, firestick, scalpel, fine-tooth bone saw,  
pane of glass, inkhorn, penknife, sheets of paper  
Find a master of hydraulics  
Wake up and fight  
Love everybody  
Don't get lonesome

*Elizabeth Marie Young*

# ***A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLOUDS***

Want to evoke nostalgia? Done. Want to draw heaven?  
You're in luck. There's a cloud for every poet, fighter pilot,

Surfer, cynic, paranoiac, guardian angel. There's a cloud  
For every teacher staring out her classroom window,

A cloud for every Nigerian spammer, for every gifted child,  
For every politician. There's a cloud for Buddy Holly, Johnny

Cash, Elvis, your mother—a cloud powered by generators  
Stored in the warehouse of this poem, because everything

Soon mutates and is deadly and unknown and yet we long  
For this unknowing. We long for clouds in tatters, clouds

That flutter warily because there are no easy answers  
And our models don't agree. Don't dismiss the misty data.

Every day more water flows out of our leaky simulations  
To spread across the unrelenting sky we so rely on in our

Endlessness—the great dome of our day jobs and our passions,  
Our frivolity and so forth; the source of beauty hidden in plain

Sight; the source of life, if I'm remembering correctly.  
Our computers hate these clouds. They can't stand the silver

Linings that intrude when you zoom in relentlessly enough.  
But, mostly, they can't stand themselves, poor things—all  
tangled

Up with plugs and cables, stuck indoors, solving all our  
Improbable problems without ever looking up or smelling

The smell of the earth. It's all so boring and they know it—  
The way those pallid monsters swirl and spin and undulate

Around our existential angst, setting off chain reactions—  
billions  
And billions of miniscule droplets masquerading as squiggly

Lines resembling marshmallows or poodles. I'm gonna be  
honest  
With you—the computers aren't happy with us. They don't

Understand our urge to render heaven visible.  
They aren't prone to seeing faces where faces

Don't exist. As sun pours out of the mouths of clouds  
Computers retrieve information about an underwhelming

World full of divorcées and sparkles and a touch of sophistry.  
Sometimes they take great pleasure in computing our  
compulsions.

Mostly, though, they sort through memories of clouds  
In situations no computer could predict: Clouds that have  
  
Been Crushed By God; Clouds that are messy and imperfect,  
All but emptied of cliché. Clouds wrapped in euphemism,  
  
Unabashed in their pursuit of intergalactic evil; Clouds intent  
On cheering you up; clouds hopelessly addicted to scudding  
  
Through the sky in an ever-changing drama, refusing to stand  
Still as farmers watch in trepidation with small, fierce, knowing  
  
Eyes. Clouds forced to serve as symbols of transition,  
transformation,  
Emotional purity, desolation, loneliness, hope, optimism,  
wisdom  
  
And the opposites of all of the above. Computers take a simple  
view  
Of clouds. To them, a dragon breathing fire is a real time radar  
  
Reading, a black box of predictions that obscures the  
immutable  
Quality of some capricious truth hovering within the blue of  
  
Summer afternoons. It's up to us, Cloud Lovers—we must  
demand  
More than this! We must insist on reliable forecasts. We must  
inform



The computers: an altocumulus lenticularis is not a UFO  
questing  
to capture human souls—it's just a thing conceived by  
atmospheric

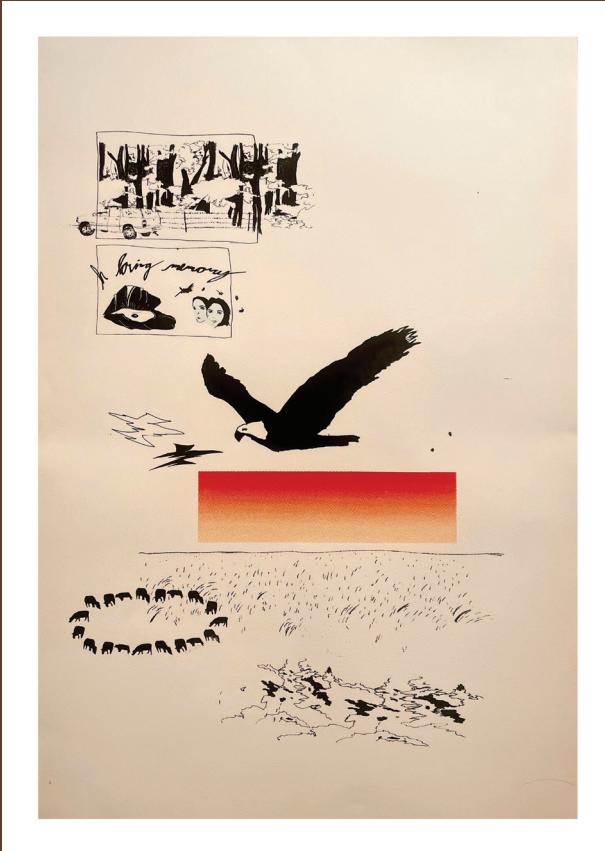
Motions computers can explore but with a margin of error  
Too large to even matter for the clouds have seen it all,

Drifting like eulogies across two thirds of our earth's surface,  
Integrating everything, however featureless and scary,

Customized to serve our needs, fogging up our crystal balls.

*Elizabeth Marie Young*





# *HOMECOMING*

*Hannah Dixon*

*Jack Christian*

# ***THE COLOR OF MEMORY***



Somehow, the boat is in the field.

The couple inside recognize the boat as a thing they've made,  
but they don't feel particularly responsible for it,

much less its unknowable arrivals.  
In this way their boat is mostly fiction,

wood fantasy they inhabit,  
launching them into further agnosticism,

but real enough also to blame  
for stranding them in the brush.

What kind of boat, they wonder,  
would follow a footpath?

When the mystery is too much,  
the one dives overboard

and goes stomping through the weeds.  
He's ready to unmake everything.

*Jack Christian*

He begins plucking down shadows  
and folding them into a bag on his shoulder.

His partner watches until her contempt dissolves  
inside the surrounding strangeness:

the blue tree where they're anchored,  
the many-colored grasses,

faint stairs that rise to nothing.



*Anthony Robinson*

# ***THE NEW POETRY***

I am writing a new poem that aims to sound  
Like some of my old poems that have an air  
Of mystery and unspoiled joy, a poem of unre-  
stricted love not for a human being but for  
The natural world, for works good and fearsome,  
For rain and thunderstorms, for diesel fuel  
And slate and shale, for the shaking of plates,  
Tectonic and Greek, for green and small goats  
To help out with all the yoga going on out there  
In our war-crazed world. I am writing with a new pen  
I obtained from a family physician who met me  
In a bar with average fried chicken and middling  
Ale. The pen writes in thin lines with a minimum  
Of skips and smears. For this I am grateful

*Anthony Robinson*

But also grateful that I am not left-handed.

Writing is a way to cram in all the things

I adored in my twenties—the drugs, the girls,

The natural disasters even the terror attacks:

I loved indiscriminately and longed for no

Indictments because all people and acts of God

Deserved a third chance to get it right. I'm hoping

To get it right, to say something worth looking

Into, the way I once looked into the eyes

Of someone I used to know, into the eyes

Of the storms that keep beating up my countrymen.

Unlike Ted, I don't claim to like beating people

Yup, but I like the idea of UP, uplift, raise every voice,  
the state UP as it relates to TEMPERAMENT  
and the drive to persevere

In the face of awfulness. Even Achilles had bad

Days and bum ankles, but one must go on.

In this late decade, my knees are attenuated

And a little janky. Oh well. I am writing  
Anyway to recapture the way writing would  
Make me feel in 1997: drunk on sentiment  
And jug wine, alive and in a tree, on avenues,  
In dark places, throwing myself against freight trains  
And dandelions. My pen and I are writing on  
And on recycled paper, the B sides of my best  
Discarded other poems which are not wildly  
Experimental nor staid and full of pulp, but more  
Like something a mild wasp might compose  
Between assignments to weave hexagons  
To make a house, as is her nature. The poem  
Will explore this nature as it pertains to human  
Creatures. I am thinking that as I write about  
Fear: Russia, disease, economic collapse, the way  
The Earth keeps getting hotter, and will my first and  
only child ever know me again, I Begin to  
think I'm just making a house, over

And over again, one that collapses with the season,  
A place to stay and vibrate wildly, in a striped  
Shirt, ready to strike out brightly at any who  
Care to come too close, protecting  
My absurd and broken dun brown enclosure.  
I will finish writing this damn thing at 4:37 p.m.

*Anthony Robinson*





*Anthony Robinson*

## ***ABJURATION #2***



Red & black flannel shirt twenty years old  
I bought from the Gap the year the towers  
Fell. There were tacos & hip-hop, cold  
Autumn days turning to winter. My powers

Fading with early middle-age: cold showers  
To quell the shameful unassuaged desires  
That stemmed from a love of countless hours,  
Of literature, of red hair & big hands, of fires

Inside. I wore this shirt more days than not,  
In this sex poem where past lovers ghost  
Around my inability to come correct. I bought  
New trousers too. Another decade passed.

To give it all up: my manhood, my child:  
My moth-eaten clothes, those days I was wild.

*Anthony Robinson*





*Austin Gutierrez*

***UNTITLED  
(MAN IN HAT)***

*Austin Gutierrez*

*Michael Robins*

# ***ON THE DAY THE FISH DIED***

In the dream I'm working the easy math of time zones, waiting for the voice that tells me he's gone. In the real dream, my father walks on his own again, floodlit & stylish in his fur-lined coat. We're friends, unbuttoned & beginning, younger than anyone might expect & we float downstairs where there's dancing to be done. An itch—surely, I itch—wanting to know what's next, the broadcast on forty-year delay & circling back, as he would, to collect bottles each worth a nickel. To believe in redemption, yes, but goddamn if there isn't a stitch when the dream cannot make amends &, once more, I wake as I was & how I am.

*Michael Robins*



*Michael Robins*

# ***OF ALL THE THINGS HE'S LOST***



my father misses his mind the most, tells the one about who's living with the black guy across the street. It's hard to know what's what on the television, how many branches dead in the neighbor's tree & that was yesterday or when he was twelve, pausing half the afternoon until the arc of a sprinkler swerved & opened the sidewalk ahead. My father asks Maria, "What current did you float to get here?" & says he suffers from C-R-S, then waits a beat: "Can't Remember Shit." He mentions it twice daily with the memory out there of a bugle he almost knows as his own. Beyond amusement or correction, my father waits in the chair beneath pictures of someone's friends, someone's children while July drops its numbers & softens into every summer month or none.

*Michael Robins*

*Dylan Ringer*

## *from FAMILY RECIPE*

Marjorie was an Air Force weapons specialist.  
She only recently convinced herself that CBD doesn't make her  
a degenerate. If she had got any more restless the doctors  
were gonna try quaaludes. Like some kind of '80s  
housewife.

Now she rubs the oil on her joints twice a day, and a little too  
on that dog she always talks about getting rid of.

Marjorie likes tending to her garden in her retirement.

She used to be an English professor for the foreign students  
whose first language wasn't English.

Before that she drove the big rigs.

Before that she worked in the factories where they  
assembled engines.

Before that, a mechanic's wife.

Before that, stunning cattle on a Colorado ranch.

Before that, a cop, and before that she was in the  
Air Force.

She seemed to like these jobs. She was her own man  
around the house. She just had a vice or two.

She was allowed one square of dark chocolate from the  
fridge on a particularly hard day, she told me.

Marjorie started smoking again last year. And she'll  
have one beer, split over the course of a week.

I caught her listening to her favorite band, *Tool* one afternoon,  
her fat dog wheezing happy under the pin oak, and an  
American Spirit dangling between her lips. She turned  
around at the sound of the chain link.

Marjorie's dark sunglasses, square and round like our jaw, reflected a little me under her wide-brimmed sun hat. It lined up perfectly so she got a Jesus halo as she began cursing this year's hydrangeas.

*Dylan Ringer*







travels light in the dark  
incanted from benedicting stars

trails a cardiac compass

*the compassionate self is not tame*  
dissolves distances            betweenalone

\*from Clarissa Pinkola Estes



*Dylan Ringer*



# ***HARES ON THE MOUNTAIN***

*Dylan Ringer*

*Hadara Bar-Nadav*

# **NUREMBERG LAWS (II)**



The war  
grew graves.  
Gnawed its  
own awe-struck  
brain. Babble,  
warble, maw,  
swallow all the  
bumbling animals.

*Hadara Bar-Nadav*

---

*Note:* “Two distinct laws passed in Nazi Germany in September 1935 are known collectively as the Nuremberg Laws: the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor. These laws embodied many of the racial theories underpinning Nazi ideology. They would provide the legal framework for the systematic persecution of Jews in Germany.”

[encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws)

*Hadara Bar-Nadav*

# **AKTION T4 PROGRAM**



Rope the room.  
Grove the group.  
Map torso,  
brain, tongue,  
root. Ration  
grams of soup.  
Take action.  
Take a knife.  
Take 4 or 400  
who will not  
grow. Maggots  
raid their throats  
by noon.

---

*Note:* Aktion T4 was the name of the Nazi euthanasia campaign that resulted in the murder of approximately 300,000 adults and children with various “mental and physical disabilities. In the Nazi view, this would cleanse the ‘Aryan’ race of people considered genetically defective and a financial burden to society.”

[encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/euthanasia-program](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/euthanasia-program)

# **UNTERMENSCHEN**



We turn un-  
human. Men,  
mud, mess  
of meat,  
meant to serve  
death. Who  
is monster,  
master? Enter  
terror's teeming  
nest. Churn  
and retch, eating  
the trembling  
necks of mice.

---

*Note:* Untermenschen is a “German word meaning sub-humans, used by Nazis to refer to the groups they deemed ‘undesirable’” and worthy of death. These groups included Jews, Romany, and Slavic people as well as individuals with physical or mental conditions.

[hnh.org/education/resources/vocabulary-terms-related-holocaust/](http://hnh.org/education/resources/vocabulary-terms-related-holocaust/)

# ***SONDERKOMMANDO***

More and more  
and more. Red  
reek. Red dram.  
Red door. More  
and more. Cram.  
Crush. Command  
more men, order  
more dust. Muffle  
sons, mountains  
of us. Red  
dream: my steel  
shovel hands,  
fingerless blades.  
Red sound  
and scrape  
like a dremel  
unscrewing my  
brain. My name  
drains out  
my nose, drinks  
the dead in  
every ode.

---

*Note:* “The Sonderkommandos were groups of Jewish prisoners forced to perform a variety of duties in the gas chambers and crematoria of the Nazi camp system. They worked primarily in the Nazi killing centers, such as Auschwitz, but they were also used at other killing sites to dispose of the corpses of victims.”

[encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/sonderkommandos](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/sonderkommandos)







*Randi Bachman*

# ***FROST FLOWER***

*Randi Bachman*

*Jessica Cuello*

# ***LIMOUSIN 1939***

He snapped his neck  
No one told me that  
I am afraid of words

I am back there trying  
to know He snapped  
his neck My aunt said

it was the communists  
No one told me that  
I thought my grandmother

was God I thought God  
had his chosen and unchosen  
I am afraid of words

I thought if you waited  
if you obeyed you were  
loved I am back there trying

to know Love is obedience  
He snapped his neck  
My grandmother the girl



My grandmother is 16  
My aunt said it was  
the communists My

grandmother is on a ship  
leaving France It's 1941  
I thought God was a line

straight to heaven She  
presses one ear to the ground  
where her brother walked

God has his chosen and  
unchosen I am going back  
to the year she stopped loving

to find out why my mother is \_\_\_\_  
to find out why I am \_\_\_\_  
Love is obedience

It was a train accident  
It was sabotage She was  
born in St Junien

in the Limousin  
My grandmother the girl  
is on the ship It's 1941

She presses one ear to the  
ground She lies in the bed  
where her brother slept I go

back to where she stopped  
To where my mother began  
To where I am Love is

obedience God is a line straight  
to heaven She presses one ear  
to the ground It was sabotage

My aunt says the resistance  
and the communists were  
the same My grandmother

was born in St Junien She  
waits all day for his train  
that never comes She is

sent away In the photo his hand  
is at her waist She is \_\_\_\_\_  
No one else is touching

*Grant Chemidlin*

# ***FAG***

irst pet ls in sprin — ield ripe with little mirrors.

*Open*, they'd s y, row, but I e red their

i ted cert inty. To keep doubt bloomin ,

or me, me nt immunity, od, my ther, this

blessed country.

*Grant Chemidlin*



*Grant Chemidlin*

# **FAG**

Coworker Jim, first out homosexual I knew.

Down low I seduced him, still closeted, inviting myself over

his house was my experiment, me discovering comfort.

He sank into love. I reckless enough to un-

voyage out. I let him stand on the shore, I wretched shell.

Who decides right or cruel? For years, I tried to pin

guilt to my former shadows. They moved through it,

careless. I'm sorry I hurt you.

*Grant Chemidlin*



*Grant Chemidlin*

# ***FAG***



Ben, best friend, says rushing is cool.  
Fraternities like Phi Si will turn us  
into men. Firm knock. Ben, chosen, walks  
out the dorm. The bunk beds row five stories,  
or just one. I tell it over & over to my shadow.  
I tuck into Ben's bed below. But the story's end  
is wrong. Their silence, my failure,  
loosened the lured word from my  
mouth—bit clutched upside down. No,  
the son bird.

*Grant Chemidlin*



# ***STANDOFF***

*Stefan Schulz*



*Stephen S. Mills*

***FINAL BOY ASKS  
ABOUT THE WOMAN  
IN THE TRASH  
CHUTE***



not some mythical creature / fable / urban legend / but a real  
person / woman / one your husband / a paramedic / discovered  
/ no that's not the right word / rescued? / no / already dead /  
she was already dead / identified: the act of naming the thing  
others don't want to name / he / comes home / your apartment  
/ with stories of bodies broken / open / in the city / New York  
City / a 3-year-old out a window / a woman under a taxi / a  
slash across a face / horrors / no answers / you ask anyway /  
*how does a woman go down a trash chute?* / yours is so narrow  
/ angle just barely / big enough / 24 floors down / into what? /  
you listen to each bag drop off / ricochet / land / somewhere  
or nowhere / a world that is your world / but not your world

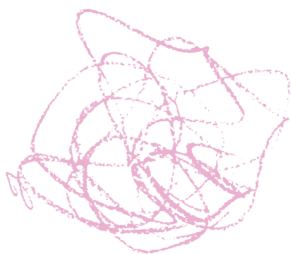
*Stephen S. Mills*

*Elizabeth Clark Wessel*

# ***THOSE WHO WON'T AND THOSE WHO CAN'T***

Who were those Radicals  
Who were those Loose Women in pants  
Who were those Painters with rich dads  
Who was that Beloved Corpse clutching  
a rust-stained handkerchief  
wasting away in genteel sitting rooms  
that were either too hot or too cold  
How and where  
Such shit, yes  
Such death, yes  
The world, wasn't it  
Play it pretty  
Write it well

*Elizabeth Clark Wessel*



*Elizabeth Clark Wessel*

## **TEETH**



My toddler and I lie on the frozen grass staring  
up at five stars.

Did you know there's radioactive matter in our  
teeth?

I battle to keep hers clean. While mine keep  
falling out in my dreams.

Every scrap of plastic I touch will outlast them  
(Someday  
the green container of our meat  
will be a round pebble on an unfamiliar beach.)

When I was five, I'd lie on a rose-patterned rug and  
think about  
the universe.

I discovered the mind was almost infinite, but in the  
end, you reach  
a wall  
of teeth.

*Elizabeth Clark Wessel*



# **UNTITLED**

*Jaedyn Roberts*



*Sarah Manuel*

# **CONFRONTATION**

*Sarah Manuel*

*Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks*

# **PHONY GOLDENRODS**

I love the way your tongue curls up in a big yawn  
when I'm describing the paper bag that bulges with cabbages  
and chicken bones and rum and things that go thud,  
marble heads, rotary phones, lawn chairs.  
I'm a broken fence in a meadow and you ignore me  
conducting your sorrow along the rails  
of the ferry, looking out at the river, with the wind  
blowing your hair into a silken ladder  
a balloonist climbs with his barometer to record  
the atmospheric pressure. He takes his small pony too  
although this is disputed, I'd like to believe it's true  
just like your gold cheekbone in the sinking sun  
or the lifejacket reflector in the rising moon.  
The armor of daylight is twisting its tongue in the bitter  
yawn of a sawtooth interlocutor. If you wear a blindfold,  
I could be your meth lab queen. So that nothing may remain  
of this last bag of Cheetos, let's work up an appetite  
by flicking our tongues at each other in the dark amphitheater  
where the professor left an iron lung on display.  
We could get inside and scratch love letters on the glass  
praising the body's flaws, the gunk in the mustache,  
dust on eyelashes, decalcifying enamel on

*Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks*

the sculptures of fireworks hung overhead spitting neon  
like pink tribbles straight from a Berlin dive. We could  
practice diagramming the fishnet payroll of tiger thighs.  
We could survive this Texas heat if nighttime ever comes.  
This fire is like salt from the brow of heaven's bootleggers,  
and your breath is chartreuse clover hip lemon hop.



*Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks*

# **PARTY TRICK**



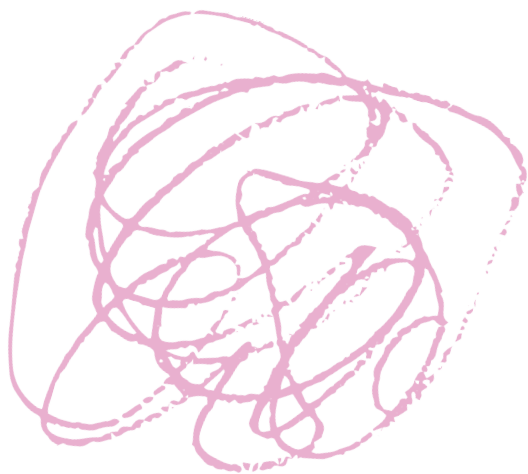
I was washing baby bella mushrooms  
when you called to tell me about your new language  
of sparks and iodine and rosewood.  
I'm not sure words are something worth talking about.  
Starting a fire with fire seems so circular,  
and I tend towards the crooked meandering jawline  
as you drool in your sleep  
and there's the jagged shadow of the branch  
that you climb to get a better look  
at the kitten mewling in the graveyard.  
Last week's thundercloud is leaking through the ceiling  
and the house is bathed in Egyptian silence.  
When you wake up, you're living in a novel  
about a tomb raider who's having an existential crisis  
and the blueberry pancakes are already cold.  
Did you forget to turn off the alarm before you  
opened the door to the morning's false horizon?  
One idea is that stone is linked by some affinity to the moon.  
If you rub it with this nickel, you'll know when the solar wind  
kicks up a dust cloud in the Sea of Vapors.  
You'll feel the ice crystals in your sternum,  
hexagons of cold bone cooling your lungs

*Joseph Bienvenu / Nathan Hoks*



until your ribcage is a tundra of amber,  
the perfect hive for the queen and her winter bees.  
But in secret you've never liked honey  
and the cosmic particles in your sternum  
are making your allergies flare up.  
Your pollen-stained cheeks swell up like bocce balls.  
Your body is a mirage of ornamental impulses.  
The sky stays pink twenty minutes too long  
and that cloud of alabaster is screwing up the  
atmospheric pressure.  
The gates of consciousness sit in the hollow spaces  
of your spine and relief is a statue perched on a  
ledge preflight.  
The other secret knot catches fire so you leave it  
in the State Park and keep driving through the hills.  
The air is humid and the songbirds are quiet  
but the dry grass in the wind buzzes like a gourd.  
Words pop up beneath your tongue like a string  
of pearls  
you are throwing like a lariat at the fire escape where  
I'm sitting  
eating cold pizza with chunks of pineapple that are  
almost neon,  
and if I want everything to unfurl and light up,  
I tie this hot pink kerchief over your eyes.





*John Elizabeth Stintzi*

# **WALMART**

“I’ve made up my mind there’s going to be trouble.”

—Allen Ginsberg, “America.”

Walmart I’ve bought a lot of shit and I’m still nothing.  
Walmart an average of two-thousand three-hundred  
thirty-seven dollars and fifteen cents a year  
since March 21, 2005.

Walmart I can’t stand for this indecency.

Your tomatoes are *not* Subway fresh.

Walmart I am afraid that you do not imagine me to  
be a valued customer.

Walmart there are statistics that show you may be  
killing me and the people I love and not as  
slowly as I would prefer to be killed because I  
still have a lot of buying potential left in me.

Walmart I am getting an MFA and this scares me.

I am sick of life’s insane demands.

Walmart I bought a pair of shoes from you once and  
then claimed to be a socialist.

What do you think of that?

I have seen the strange cultish exercises your employees  
do in the morning and I’m afraid of you.

Will you teach me how to be successful?

Walmart I am sick of being greeted like anybody else.

What have I done to deserve this treatment?

*John Elizabeth Stintzi*

Walmart I was born a good capitalist.

You used to be my dreamscape and now your doors  
contain the stuff of resignation economics  
and malice.

Walmart I am sick of your goods being affordable  
at such a cost.

Walmart I once peed on the toilet seat in one of your  
bathrooms and didn't clean up after and  
I'm not sorry.

Walmart I have nightmares of your Black Friday sales  
and yet I still want to be a part of them.

Walmart do you feel sorry for your employees who have  
been trampled in the past and for your  
employees who I will trample in the future?

Walmart why are you ignoring me?

When will you stop trying to be so angelic?

Walmart nothing can stop you and I don't like this but  
I have no choice but to respect it and hate you.

I don't feel well please help me.

Walmart I'm addressing a postcard to you that has a  
photo of my favorite building in New York City  
and it's not even the Empire State building.

Walmart I'm a mess and you're not helping.

Let's do something constructive.

Let's tear down the walls of three or four or thirty-seven  
of your stores and lets let give rest of the world  
a chance to be assholes.

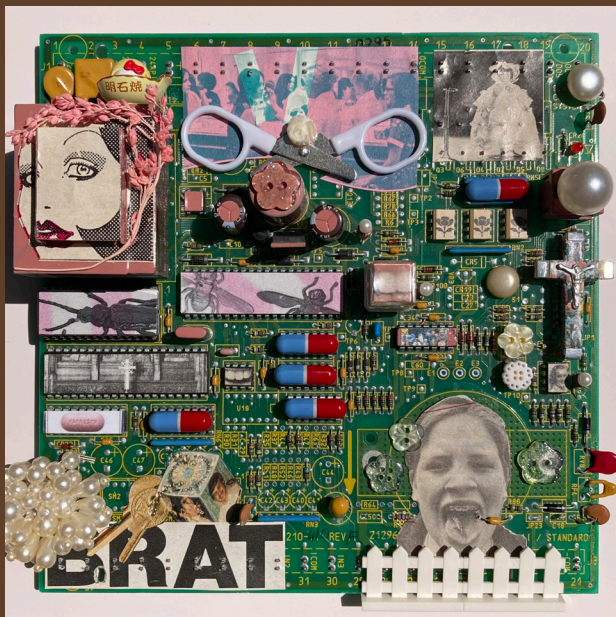
Walmart I fear you won't want to stock my books on  
your shelves.

Walmart America loves you but you're bringing it down.

Walmart I have some problems with outsourcing but I  
have more problems with the little people  
being under appreciated.

You are under appreciating me.  
You are not responding to my comments on Facebook.  
Walmart I will not be stopped.  
Walmart will you read my manuscript and offer me  
    suggested edits and an advance on my allowance?  
I am making the effort.  
I am reaching out to you in empathetic gestures.  
Walmart what can *I* do for *you*?  
Please put me on your employee list as a night janitor  
    but pay me better and don't make me do  
    anything but squat in your dim aisles  
    and write novels.  
Walmart I am willing to cut a deal.  
Walmart let's make this poem a paid advertisement.  
Walmart I am putting myself out there.  
I regret absolutely everything.





***BRAT***  
*Melvin Mauch*

*Prairie Moon Dalton*

# ***NOTICE TO CREDITORS***

Where do I go to pay  
this debt? I've found a few  
cut credit cards on the side  
of the road. Stolen and stripped  
copper and catalytic converters, sold  
platinum for half its worth  
to buy a ring that turned  
my finger sick and green.  
No one will leave me  
any jewelry. My aunt didn't  
drive, spent her time reading the  
obits and rolling her thin  
cigarettes, taking them through  
her trach at the end.



*Prairie Moon Dalton*

*Prairie Moon Dalton*

# ***MYSTERY HILL***

Want to see water  
flow up? Leave a car  
out of gear, watch it roll  
toward the sky. A natural  
gravitational anomaly, the sharp  
curve's sign says, but it's really just  
a quiet trick of the eye. I know that it was  
snowing. Couldn't say if I was coming or going  
up the mountain or down. When I wrecked, I flipped.  
My buckled seat belt sliced me deep across my gut,  
my chest, cut me but caught me, laid a red strip  
of film across my collarbone. It was night  
and no one saw who hit me, no cameras  
no footage, my word against nothing  
but two sets of tire tracks I couldn't  
have made. Maybe, the cops said,  
it didn't happen the way  
you thought it did.





*Prairie Moon Dalton*

# **ONLY CHILD**



You weren't even there until you were  
just a dark clump on the shower drain.  
Plucked from nothing and rinsed  
with the rest of my blood. Nineteen  
and I'd raised enough children;  
brushed enough hair, wiped enough  
mouths, fed and hushed and carried  
off to bed. A sleeping child is not still.  
Their sticky bodies kick and thrash  
through the night. When I was a girl,  
I bit too far into an apple and swallowed  
its one black seed. I've seen you standing  
in my doorway, dragging your shadow  
behind you like a blanket.



*Prairie Moon Dalton*



***ONLY THE FUTURE  
REVISITS THE PAST  
BÀ NỘI***

*Hùng Lê*

*R/B Mertz*

# ***THE GARDEN***



The squirrels hide peanuts in the ground  
certain of a future they can't have, a map—  
but every spring we find them.

The death in the garden is and isn't an allusion  
The surface changes but it's all green underneath.

This is the year we steeped in death. Tea bags.  
It drained out of us from the heat.  
What we lived had dried, been gathered  
into the right kind of bag. We were  
grown, harvested for this. To bear witness.  
To let it bleed us. To say nothing.

The herbs grew thick the first year.  
The second year, we skimped on dirt,  
thought we could do with a layer of rock.  
The herbs were too weak to laugh in our faces.  
They withered there, right in front of us.  
You reap what you sow n'all that.



*R/B Mertz*

# ***FEED***

1

“People are eating  
food for birds & animals  
not fit for eating”  
in Jabalia. The photos  
are crowded with need.



Joe Biden’s fugly mug  
repeats, “The bombing...”  
—on a loop—  
“...isn’t working...”

“But we’ll certainly  
continue to bomb.”  
His face blurs into  
a twist, a thrown shoe.

Dolly Parton wearing  
gold cones for breasts.  
A “power bra” makes  
sure your power  
stays the right shape.

*R/B Mertz*

Advertisers of frames.  
A tower of VHS tapes:  
all *Forrest Gump*.

Sally Jesse Raphael  
talks to Anne Miller  
& Anne Miller  
says something  
that makes alllllllllll  
the ladies who look  
like her clap  
& smile, smiling  
& clapping infinitely.

2

“Look who they’re putting  
on the front lines”  
Husbands on Reddit  
waiting for wives  
busy swallowing merch,  
a sweatshirt bearing  
the cosmos,  
a poet’s humble brag,  
the accusations  
of organ theft.  
Ijeoma Oluo in a  
Palestinian skirt.  
Ads for overalls.  
A dog, a cat (sent to  
Mom) + book plugs,  
ads for glasses.

Before & after dog  
birth photos:

how full she was  
how many she held

A book about a tragedy.  
A book about cannibalism.  
A kid looking confused.  
What does he see?

3

“Who’s body part is that?  
Don’t carry it through  
the hall, we don’t want  
the children to see it.”

An actress asking to sign  
a petition to Save the  
Children. Gatekeepers  
opening for submission.  
Ads for t-shirts. The numbers  
getting higher every day.

A moved walrus’ eyes.  
A woman who leaves  
a cookie outside for  
one particular squirrel.  
Tracy Chapman and Luke  
Combs clothed in  
reckoning. Recognizing.

The weeping of estrogen.  
A Black man running from  
his triplets, laughing after  
their dad, reaching their  
hands up wide—one, two,  
three opening hearts, reach-  
ing. The Guardian's map of  
the destroyed country.  
Mosab says there is "No more  
animal feed in North Gaza  
for people to use."







*R/B Mertz*

# **JANUARY**

Smoking in the winter, there's no avoiding  
the ruin. The roses keep their thorns,  
drama queen Ms. Havishams pressing,  
insisting themselves to visibility  
among the rubble, all their possibilities  
over & what a relief it must be—  
to come to a natural end,  
to let your growing cease, to close  
your eyes, shut yourself—but the green persists,  
in the starry phlox, the snapdragons,  
the ivy, the conifers. They bet on futures.  
My bourbon is good. Crazy to be out  
here in this cold. The dog water  
keeps freezing. People go by making  
jokes about how stubborn I am  
to keep smoking, keep standing outside.  
My phone shows an endless parade  
of people refusing to give up, refusing to die.  
They say I'm stubborn, too. My mother always  
said, my father always said. He's buried  
& I refused to grow out of him. I moved myself on  
penalty of death. Transplant. Afraid of death?  
We're always making out. We're the kind  
still got our thorns to grow more out of.  
You think a little cold can stop us?

*R/B Mertz*

*Ellie Westhoff*



# ***BUGLE TITTY GRAB***

*Ellie Westhoff*

Zoe Tuck

# ***THE DEATH AT THE CENTER OF SEX***



Sitting at Wild Chestnut across from Britt and Luna  
as a callback to the first poem of the month  
I thought to call today's poem, "The death  
at the center of sex," or at least to use  
that line in the poem. But then I thought  
well people might think I was alluding to  
the "little death" of cis male orgasm  
which wasn't my original intention  
but now I'm thinking about it  
dying and being reborn—what a dramatic  
way to talk about a refractory period  
you're not Jesus, my dude

why do I find it easier to write  
about sex—it titillates, it pleases  
the room (sometimes, anyway)  
it is a kind of personal property  
I mean proprietary, a personal  
"my own-ness" paradoxically  
belonging to everyone

Zoe Tuck

My sex is always already mine  
my death I'm slowing growing into  
you can't practice death  
have death with yourself  
have death with someone you love  
or someone you just met

something happens when I try to reach out and touch your  
death

my arms aren't long enough

and if in the guise of a witness  
I try to take your death up  
to put it on like a suit of clothes

inevitably I become a bad actor  
in every sense of the word  
a necropolitian  
running

as if for office  
but actually for my life

*Zoe Tuck*



*Zoe Tuck*

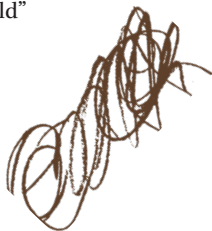
# ***WOW LIFE CAT***

“The most remarkable thing about coming home to you  
is the feeling of being in motion again

it’s the most extraordinary thing in the world”

—“Going to Georgia”

not the Mountain Goats version  
but the Atom & His Package one



synth loop  
clap loop  
nerdy earnest frog-throated vocals

the one that Shyla and Eric put on a mix tape for me

in 2004 or 2005 let’s say

along with a sea shanty about a ship called the royal oak

hurtling towards the future  
lacking in self-awareness

I can still go down to the dam spillway  
look at the graffiti

*Zoe Tuck*

WOW and LIFE with a cat in the middle

with someone else who feels like an alien

what would shatter if I tried  
to pass through the boundary  
of the mirror world?

probably me

bouncing off with a busted schnoz

hop over brambles

regard the red withies  
and the clots of ice

up the back of the dam

I think the first walk I ever took with Emily

we hopped a fence together

how thirsty I am  
for swerves and slant paths

urchin in a brackish tide pool

clot of seaweed  
clot of life

punky little dream in my mother's eye



*Quinn Rennerfeldt*

# **ODE TO A CONFERENCE**



Pay \$12 for half a beer. Hang peripheral at the party. Walk away from money in a brown glass bottle. Waffle between being with and without at the function. Almost have fun at the function, leave whenever. Take the black streets back to the hotel. Skirt the groups of men. Return to the room, take a cowardly shower. Emerge raw and clean and alone. Lean into vices. Imagine being a rockstar, trashing the lamps, ripping apart bed sheets with slobbery teeth. Read Cunt-Ups and fail to masturbate. Pass out to Guy Fieri. Wake up to Ina Garten, mothering her kitchen. Wipe away that feeling. Hunch over the toilet and piss, memorize the grout between the tiles. Suffer the sun all over again. Tolerate the hours. Languish in the missing out. Ride the dread of participation bareback. Admire book covers featuring fruit. Chatter through the same script twice. Pose. Relax the jaw after talking. Shrink in their pupils until forgotten. Leave without a tote bag.

*Quinn Rennerfeldt*





*Kyle Fuson / Kasi Kimie*

# ***BALANCE***

*Kyle Fuson / Kasi Kimie*

20

*leave your mark before you go*  
*make this page your own*

## ***COLOPHON***

Printed in May of 2024  
by Soli Printing in  
Kansas City, Missouri  
[soliprinting.com](http://soliprinting.com)

Printed on Domtar Cougar &  
Neenah Classic Crest

Generously donated by Midland,  
courtesy of Marie Langdon

Cover design & art direction by  
A.C.

Interior designed by  
Madelyn Dreyer  
Sefira Robinson

Website designed by  
Frances Lawes

Social media and merchandise  
designed by  
Joscelyn Lindsey

Issue 19 launch event organized by  
Destiny Bruck

Typset in Kelper Std  
Typeface designed by  
Robert Slimbach, 2003

***SPECIAL THANKS***

Phyllis Moore

tyler galloway

Malynda Eshleman

Marie Langdon at Midland Paper

Brian Bressman at Soli Printing

Domtar

PIA MidAmerica for their generous support  
through the Noland Moore Memorial  
Education Foundation Grant





## ***ABOUT US***

*Sprung Formal* is a literary arts journal published annually in association with the Liberal Arts and Graphic Design Departments at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Established in 2005, *Sprung Formal* is edited and produced by students who pride themselves on combining professional content with professional-grade student work.

## ***STAFF***

### **EDITORIAL**

Jeff Arroyo  
Noelle Av  
Kaysie Collens  
Allegra Eccles  
Analee Hyacinthe  
Lilah Powlas  
June Prestien  
Dylan Ringer  
Katelynn Stevens  
Nichole Thomas

### **LEAD CO-EDITORS**

Jaede Bayala  
Charlie Jones

### **DESIGN**

A.C.  
Destiny Bruck  
Madelyn Dreyer  
Frances Lawes  
Joscelyn Lindsey  
Sefira Robinson

### **FACULTY**

Bei Hu  
Jordan Stempleman  
Shuang Wu





## CONTRIBUTORS

Randi Bachman • Mike Bagwell •  
Hadara Bar-Nadav • Dara Barrois/Dixon •  
Joseph Bienvenu • Grant Chemidlin •  
Jack Christian • Elizabeth Clark Wessel •  
Dorsey Craft • Jessica Cuello •  
Prairie Moon Dalton • Hannah Dixon •  
Robert Fernandez • Kyle Fuson •  
Madeline Gallucci • Austin Gutierrez •  
An Hà • Jeffrey Hecker • Nathan Hoks •  
Kasi Kimie • Hùng Lê • Kate Lindroos •  
Ian U Lockaby • Sarah Manuel •  
Melvin Mauch • R/B Mertz •  
Stephen S. Mills • Bernadette Negrete •  
Quinn Rennerfeldt • Dylan Ringer •  
Jaedyn Roberts • Michael Robins •  
Anthony Robinson • Catherine Rybak •  
Stefan Schulz • Mary Silwance •  
John Elizabeth Stintzi • Zoe Tuck •  
Ellie Westhoff • Elizabeth Marie Young •



