

MAGPIE ZINE

SLIGHTLY UNHINGED LITERATURE ART
HUMOR EXPERIMENTAL SPRING/SUMMER
2025 ISSUE III RESIDUAL

JENNIFER **CALOYERAS** ANDY **CLARK** BRIAN **CONLON** ANNIE
DIAMOND WILLIAM **DORESKI** AARON D. **FRIED** J. KRAMER **HARE**
JADEY **HOLCOMB** TASH **KAHN** SANDRA **KOLANKIEWICZ** LINDSAY
LIANG ELIZA **MARLEY** MICHAEL **MURPHY** FREDERICK **POLLACK**
DAVID B. **PRATHER** J. **RODRIGUEZ** CATHY **ROSE** HAYLEE **SHULL**
THOMAS **VOGT** ROBIN **YOUNG** THOMAS **ZIMMERMAN** AND COVER
ARTIST H. LEE **MESSINA**



14 June 2025

Dearest human, alive or somewhere between:

Our third issue of Magpie Zine lingers in the space after impact. The pieces gathered here shine not in resolution but in aftermath; they are the residuals of grief, longing, absurdity, and memory, offered in fragments, ghosts, impressions. The gift to the reader is not the event but the echo: the small accumulations of disturbances that build like the smoke that *"obscures / the innocence of the winter sky"*; a former existence scattered across continents as here and now as a pebble in your shoe; the resurrection of how it felt to meet at *"the great divide alive"* and *"chew fishnets for dessert"*; or a new year of waiting for grief to recede, for meaning to clarify, for rain that never quite falls.

The body, too, is a remnant. A prehistoric animal, tender and extinct, is pulled into visibility only to be laid out and made inert again. Past intimacy leaves behind a bruised mythology, and the physical self is also both transgressor and witness left wondering whether *"it was an accident, / or is that by accident?"*, both ornament and artifact complicated by a delayed truth (*"For so long I wanted / to be beautiful, and then I found I was"*), and by how others insist we reveal ourselves (*"You're tall. / Is it a problem? / You didn't mention it."*). The body is also both evidence and ideal, bearing physical traces such as a summer-revealed scar and emotional ones explored through the fragility of agency (*"Did she adore without losing / herself?"*).

Beneath the estrangement in this issue is the friction between being seen and being known, between presence and disappearance. There's a weariness with chronology itself. What we carry through time—classic paintings, classic texts, classic languages, classic debates like good vs. evil—doesn't just fade. It stacks. It weighs. Even in moments of humor, the residue persists, and we see what happens when everyday reliabilities malfunction just enough to leave us suspended between identities. Are we dead or alive? Are we willing participants or hostages of the systems we rely on? What lingers afterward is a kind of existential static wherein we can dissect a not-so-implausible balloon-based bureaucracy, explore untapped marketing hypotheses or our dream monster creation, and safeguard ourselves against all emotional vulnerability and unpredictability via a safety coffin.

Across the pages of Issue Three: Residual, meaning doesn't arrive—it accumulates. This issue doesn't ask for closure; it suggests a gentler reflection: we are made up of partials, of what hums beneath the surface, of what clings and shapes.

Please enjoy the remarkable 21 writings and visual arts within.

xoxo,



- 04 J. RODRIGUEZ **Wrapped in a Banana Leaf** - *poetry*
- 06 DAVID B. PRATHER **Trespassing** - *poetry*
- 08 H. LEE MESSINA - *collage*
- 12 CATHY ROSE & TASH KAHN **Giraffes** - *experimental*
- 15 WILLIAM DORESKI **A Plain Old Man** - *poetry*
- 17 ELIZA MARLEY **To the Saber-Toothed Tiger Cub Found in the Permafrost** - *nonfiction*
- 19 ROBIN YOUNG - *collage*
- 24 ANNIE DIAMOND **Self Portrait as the Last Kumquat** - *poetry*
- 26 SANDRA KOLANKIEWICZ **Strauss's Last Songs** - *poetry*
- 28 FREDERICK POLLACK **Be There or Be Square** - *poetry*
- 30 J. KRAMER HARE **Investigations into The Death of Socrates** - *experimental*
- 32 LINDSAY LIANG - *art*
- 37 MICHAEL MURPHY **Safety Procedures for Supposed Cadavers** - *fiction*
- 41 AARON D. FRIED **Seventh-Grade Book Report: Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus** - *humor*

- 44 THOMAS VOGT - *photography*
- 50 BRIAN CONLON **Sit and Spin** - *fiction*
- 55 ANDY CLARK **Terrible Pitch: Gatorade for Babies** - *humor*
- 57 JENNIFER CALOYERAS - *collage*
- 61 JADEY HOLCOMB **I Wish I Was a Riot Grrrl** - *poetry*
- 63 THOMAS ZIMMERMAN **Old Daze** - *poetry*
- 65 HAYLEE SHULL **Horoscope / Affirmation / Promise / Prayer** - *poetry*

ISSUE THREE
EDITORIAL STAFF:

MICHELLE QUICK
RACHEL BASH
HOTSPUR CLOSSER
REBECCA ROTERT
& SHYLA SHEHAN

ART:
MICHELLE QUICK

Wrapped in a Banana Leaf J. Rodriguez

Born in New York and growing up all around the United States, **J. Rodriguez** has called Minnesota their home since 2019, and has been writing for as long as they can remember. They have previously published poetry in *Chanter* and *Spaces*, two student publications at their alma mater, Macalester College. Now, they spend most of their time taking pictures around Minneapolis and regularly updating their Letterboxd profile. They are mother to one child, a tabby cat named Howl the Destroyer.



Wrapped in a Banana Leaf

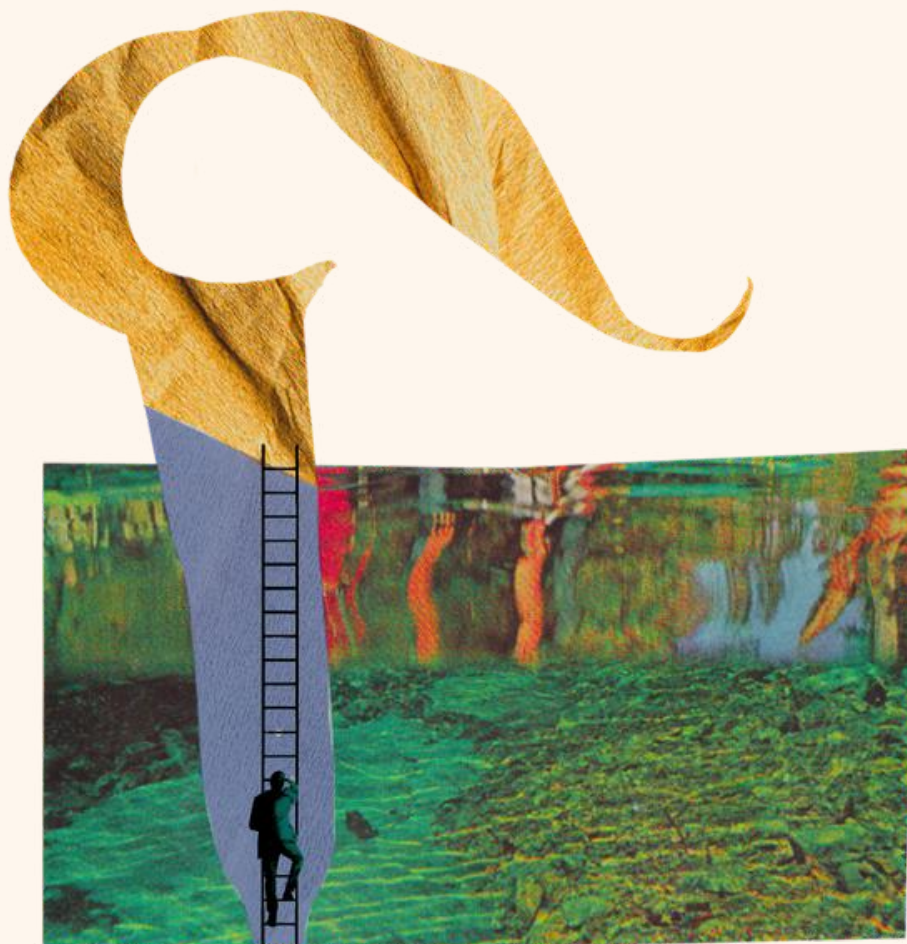
J. Rodriguez

wrapped in a banana leaf, // i float in the sea. // i smell like earth. // i am still green. // and
when the soldiers come to get me, dressed // in their sunday killing best, // i will raise my
arms // up towards the sun // and i will put up no fight.

... in boston, tío pedro is wrapped in ashes // and
spread across the world. // in some other version of our lives, // he is laughing in the kitchen //
and the hospital room is far, // far away. // in another version, // he is given a proper burial. //
in this one, // he is just a stone in my shoe // that rolls around and around, // and my mom
keeps his photo // on the shelf by the television. // it is a ghost that haunts me. // now, he is a
day in the calendar year, // and christmas passes like a ticker // counting up and up. // in this
version, grief // is an unwound clock, // and i am waiting still // for the soldiers to come and
get me.

Trespassing David B. Prather

David B. Prather is the author of three poetry collections: *We Were Birds* (Main Street Rag, 2019), *Shouting at an Empty House* (Sheila-Na-Gig Editions, 2023), and *Bending Light with Bare Hands: A Journal of Poems* (Fernwood Press, 2025). His work has appeared in many publications, including *New Ohio Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Colorado Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Cutleaf*, etc. He lives in Parkersburg, WV. Website: www.davidbprather.com



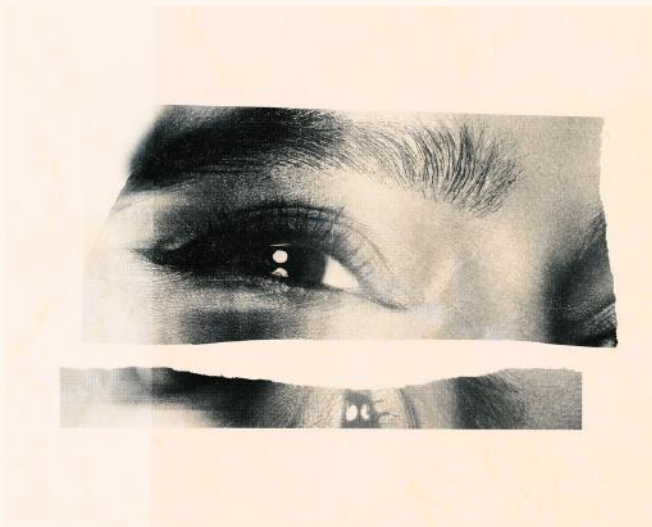
Trespassing

David B. Prather

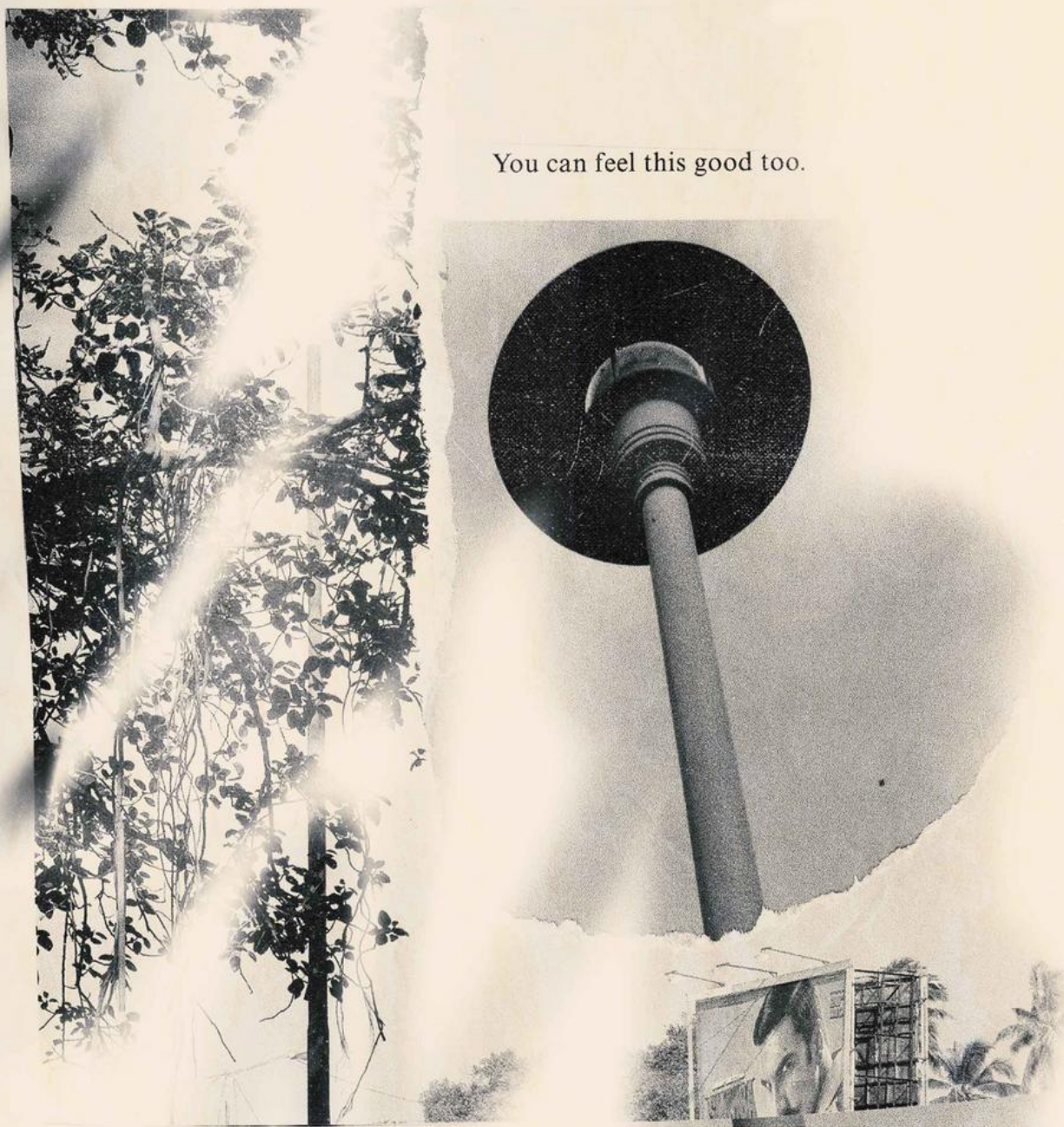
The first time I saw a jack-in-the-pulpit,
 it was an accident,
 or is that *by* accident? Trees scattered
 shadows, and
 a freshwater spring wept from the side
 of a hill. Or was that me?
 The sun tried to part the leaves
 for a better look,
 and a breeze crept low in the weeds,
 chasing mice and grasshoppers,
 or it may have been searching a place to rest.
 I thought the plant rare,
 and my father told me if I were careless,
 I could be punished,
 or was it admonished? I was afraid
 to touch those leaves,
 sure they were toxic as poison ivy, sure
 there would be a sermon
 in mist and shade. I was alone, or was I lonely?
 Sometimes, I can't tell
 the difference. There had to be birdsong,
 and surely wild animals,
 though I don't remember either. I could
 take you to that place,
 but we'd have to secure the gate behind us
 to make it appear
 we were never there.

H. Lee Messina

H. Lee Messina is an East Coast native, self-taught artist, and owner of The Dutch Spork. The bulk of her creative work includes mixed media collage and digital paintings, utilizing magazine clippings and a simple drawing table. You can view more of her work here: dutchspork.com



You can feel this good too.



YOU CAN FEEL GOOD TOO
mixed media, magazine clippings,
digital manipulation using Photoshop and drawing tablet, 8.5 "x 11"



IT SOOTHES ME
mixed media, magazine clippings,
digital manipulation using Photoshop and drawing tablet, 8.5" x 11"



GRACE
mixed media, magazine clippings,
digital manipulation using Photoshop and drawing tablet, 8.5" x 11"

Giraffes Cathy Rose & Tash Kahn

In August 2022, Tash Kahn and Cathy Rose met on a residency and started a collaborative project with Tash taking Polaroids and Cathy writing stories to go with them. They have continued with the collaboration from their respective cities of London and San Francisco.

Cathy Rose is a San Francisco, CA writer, whose fiction has appeared in *Hunger Mountain*, the *Greensboro Review*, *Fourteen Hills*, *Your Impossible Voice*, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA in creative writing from San Francisco State University and practices as a psychologist.

Tash Kahn lives in London, UK. She has exhibited both nationally and internationally, with one project in NYC that involved dust, three people, and a single Polaroid. In 2014, Tash co-founded the visual arts project DOLPH, helping facilitate 22 exhibitions across London, NYC, and Berlin, as well as partnering with two schools, The Royal College of Art, and numerous artists across the world. She is also a freelance editor for Random House and *Sluice Magazine*.

Giraffes
Cathy Rose, words
Tash Kahn, photography

MAGPIE ZINE ISSUE III



You're tall.

Is it a problem?

You didn't mention it.

I forgot. You wanted to know my favorite authors. I was working on my list, which was fun, but then you changed it to "the books that have shaped you," and that's a different question. I mean I was shaped by odd books, not always great ones. Things fall in your hands. When you're young, you paddle on down that river. I've started rereading one, a French author, Romain Rolland, not so known these days. I can already see he was a flawed visionary, but at age twenty, he basically knocked my socks off. I'd prefer not to say the actual title while I'm sorting out my current feelings on it. My favorite food is the artichoke. How's that as a placeholder?

Do you like being tall?

It's like water. You drink it, you swim in it, you are it.

Hah, tall glass of water, anyone ever—?

Yes.

Did you play basketball?

Ping pong.

Do you wear heels?

Barefoot shoes.

Not those ones with toes like a bear?

No.

Your parents must be really tall.

I'm picking them up at the airport after this. You could see for yourself.

Wait, in your Mini Cooper??

YOU, I think, we could squeeze in back, but you know what, let's not.

Shall I guess your favorite animal?

Maybe don't.

A Plain Old Man William Doreski

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. He has published three critical studies, including Robert Lowell's *Shifting Colors* (2024). His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.



A Plain Old Man

William Doreski

Being a plain old man stuck
in a savage village, I take the wind

as personally as a bar brawl.
Trees consider touching their toes.

A copper weathervane goes south.
Wood smoke flattens and obscures

the innocence of the winter sky.
I read only quarrelsome books,

especially Plato. His version
of Socrates addles the young men

flaunting their marble torsos.
His arguments squeeze their brains

like oranges shipped from Egypt.
The village hunkers down and grins

that bestial grin I first saw
in the Forest Park Zoo when

my mother crushed my hand in fear
of great apes mocking their jailors.

The wind today could topple
a tree and render me homeless,

but I strain my elementary Greek
and believe everything I read.

To the Saber- Toothed Tiger Cub Found in the Permafrost Eliza Marley

Eliza Marley is the author of the book, *You Shouldn't Worry About the Frogs* (Querencia Press, 2023). Her work has been featured in *Red Ogre Review*, *Chaotic Merge Magazine*, and *Stoneboat Journal*, among others. Eliza is a PhD student in Chicago, where she studies climate fiction and ghost stories. She can often be found haunting the Chicago River in a kayak herself.



To the Saber-Toothed Tiger Cub Found in the Permafrost

Eliza Marley

still have left to lose, would you explain to us
what it all looks like from inside, would you
tell us, do you feel saved? ♦

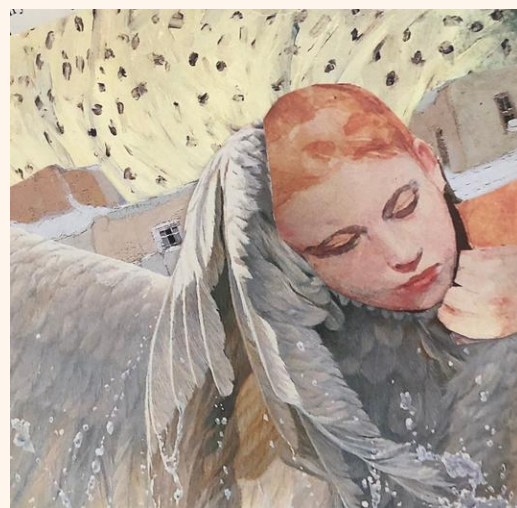
When your eyes open again, it will be with
glass and wood wool, foreign fiber coaxing
the ghosts of orbital muscles back to full
roundness, how you might have looked at
your mother when feeding from her or
basking in the sunlight, your claws not yet
sprouted and your fangs not yet
seasoned, unable to sink down, into the
earth, birthed and interred where soil
becomes pressed into itself, making more
space for your body, downy soft like a
womb, how the ice cradled you through your
long slumber, many things have died since
then, and we have all moved on to walk
above them, the drawings we've made have
forgotten the curves of a jaw softened with
rest, how you might have yawned and
curled your limbs to make yourself small and
warm, they will place you in a neutral
position, touched with carefully gloved
hands reaching to part the follicles of
your fur and wonder what winds ruffled
them, and when they might return again for
us, many things have melted since then, and
your skin is thicker than ours and better
suited for hard winters, the space between
bones still remembers the pull of the joint
when the weather changes, what shape will
it take, a hole, a cavern, a burrow, so much
time sits between the small roof of your
mouth, and your petrified tongue is lax,
there is nothing left to say, but they will still
ask you, not how the grass smelled, or if it
grew at all, many things are still melting and
we wait for them to reveal to us what we

Robin Young

"The act of collaging for me can sometimes border on the impulsive. Sitting on my soft, yellow sofa, I often begin flipping through sourced magazines until something piques my interest, and off I go with a pair of scissors, slicing the image from the pages. Then delving through the stacks of collected materials, adding, weaving, and pasting the many images together. Not stopping until satisfied with the finished piece. Along with many other artistic pursuits, I create these small pieces daily as a sort of meditation to start the day."

Based in Borrego Springs, California, artist **Robin Young** currently works in mixed media, focusing mostly on collage and contemporary art-making. Her focus on collage art using magazine clippings, masking tape, wallpaper, jewelry, feathers, foil, etc., allows her to delve deeply into the whimsical and intuitive.

From large, life-sized pieces to 3D sculptures and small postcard-sized arrangements, Robin's keen eye and gripping aesthetic guide her viewers into her own semi-readymade world. Repurposing nostalgic images for lighthearted and sometimes disquieting messages; Robin's artistic universe is strange, funky, sometimes perverse and always alluring.

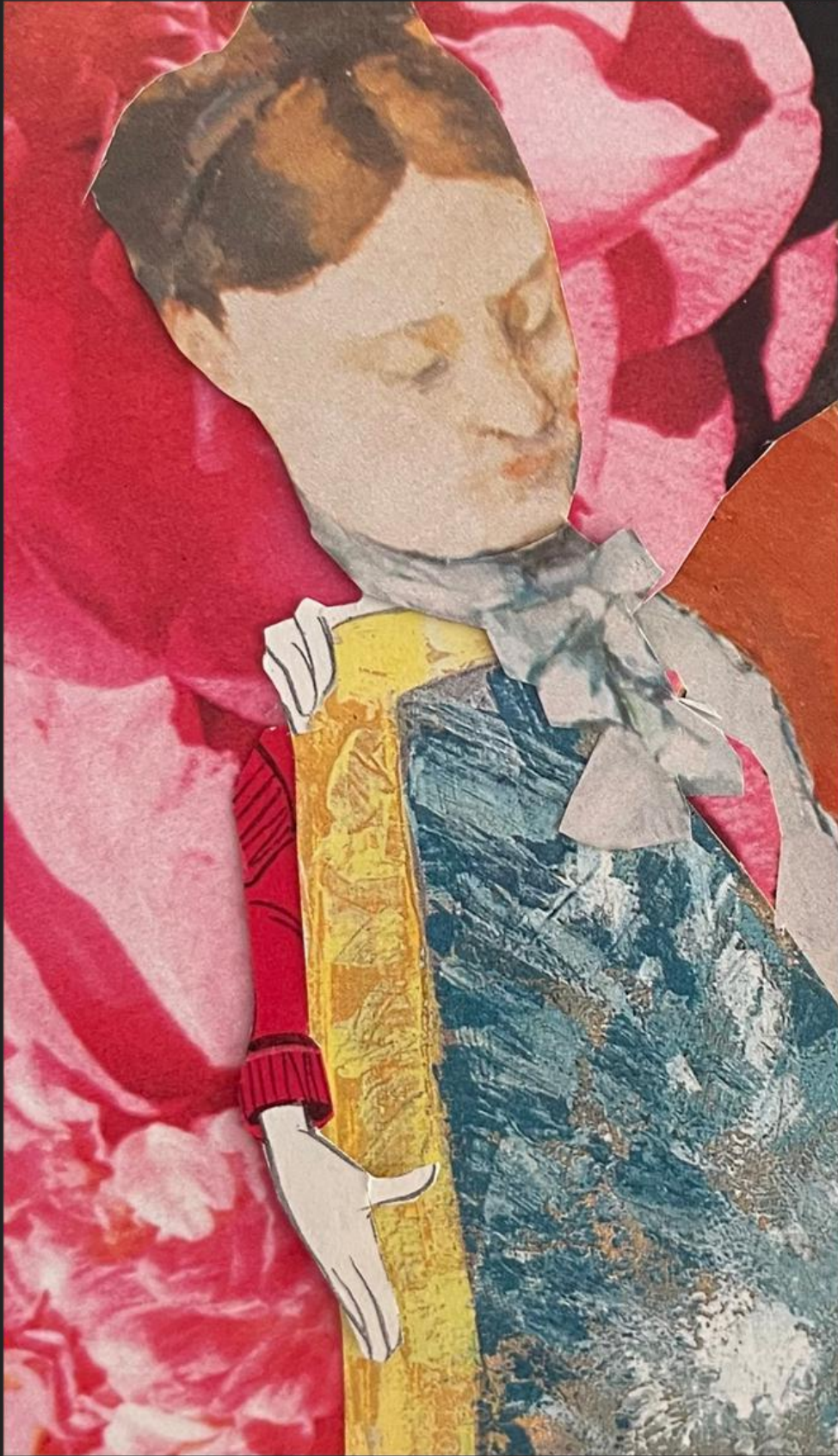




RESTING SWAN
paper, 8" x 6"



SURROUNDED SERENITY
paper, 5" x 7"



PEACEFUL AWAKENS
paper, 5" x 7"



HEARTBURN BABE
paper, 5"x7"

Self Portrait as the Last Kumquat Annie Diamond

Annie Diamond is an Ashkenazi Jewish poet and recovering academic who has made her home in Chicago. She has been awarded fellowships by MacDowell, Luminarts Cultural Foundation, The Lighthouse Works, and Boston University, where she earned her MFA in 2018. Her poems appear and are forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*, *No Tokens Journal*, *Western Humanities Review*, and elsewhere. She is currently trying to place her first poetry manuscript.



Self Portrait as the Last Kumquat

Annie Diamond

We cool our feet in the oldest pool in Santa Ana,
built 1929. I am 29, inelegant save for swimming.

Remembering how to breathe among wisteria
and lilies, Easter. Is the Eiffel Tower the most

famous thing in the world? Took a boat
on the Douro under Gustave Eiffel Bridge,

eat the last kumquat off its tree, share one pitcher
of gin cocktail. California a conundrum. Sunlight

psalmic, smells of ocean. For so long I wanted
to be beautiful, and then I found I was. Novato

we ate Peruvian food and drank pisco cocktails,
hiked Cathedral Grove, Muir Woods: devotional.

For dappled things. Lemon trees so casual.
Once I thought I knew the size and shape of

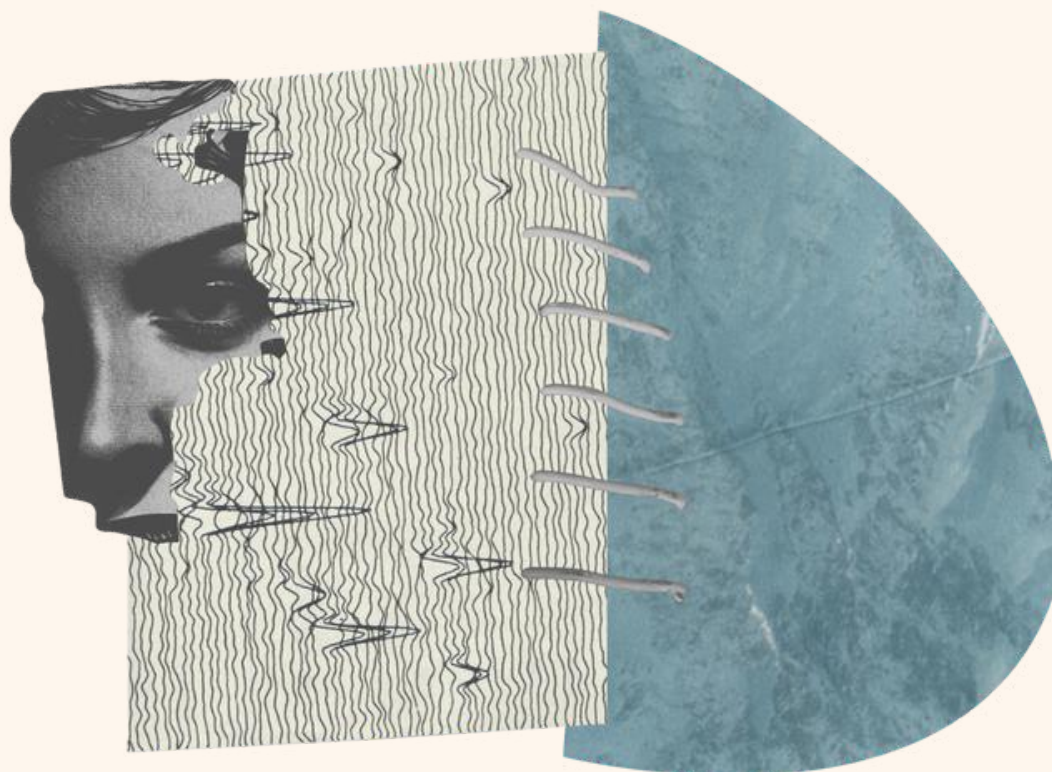
this heart; I was 17, arrogant. Muscular
where I have not been before. Last week

a stranger in an elevator told me
I was *radiating happiness*, I think

the best compliment I have ever received. Once I
misread *sunbathe* as *unbathe*, preferred the mistake.

Strauss's Last Songs Sandra Kolankiewicz

Sandra J. Kolankiewicz's poems and stories have appeared widely over the decades, most recently in *New World Writing*, *The Write Launch*, and *Courtship of Winds*. Her most recent chapbook is *Even the Cracks*, published by Finishing Line Press.



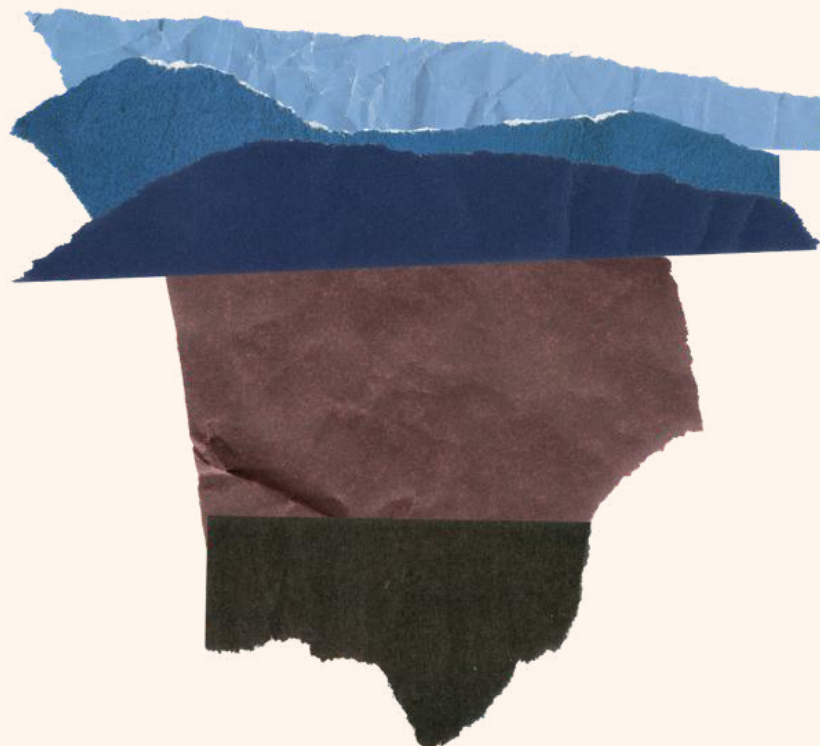
Strauss's Last Songs

Sandra Kolankiewicz

Later, I sought solitude, sure being
alone was not the same as loneliness,
till I started to recall and, in the
remembering, understood the broken
glass, the hand moving faster than I could
see. On my wrist the scar's now visible
only in summer, my skin browner.
Unwanted thoughts, determined memories
intrude on my view of the river in
the midst of one of Strauss's last songs,
composed for his wife when he was ninety,
an urgent celebration of love and
ecstasy, his bliss vying with my past
despair. Did she adore without losing
herself, embrace for a lifetime without
being caught up in his arms, find her breath
if wrapped too tightly, struggle to break free?

Be There or Be Square Frederick Pollack

Frederick Pollack is the author of two book-length narrative poems, *THE ADVENTURE* and *HAPPINESS* (Story Line Press; the former reissued 2022 by Red Hen Press), and four collections, *A POVERTY OF WORDS* (Prolific Press, 2015), *LANDSCAPE WITH MUTANT* (Smokestack Books, UK, 2018), *THE BEAUTIFUL LOSSES* (Better Than Starbucks Books, 2023), and *THE LIBERATOR* (Survivision Books, Ireland, 2024). Many other poems in print and online journals. Poetics: neither navelgazing mainstream nor academic pseudo-avant-garde. Website: frederickpollack.com



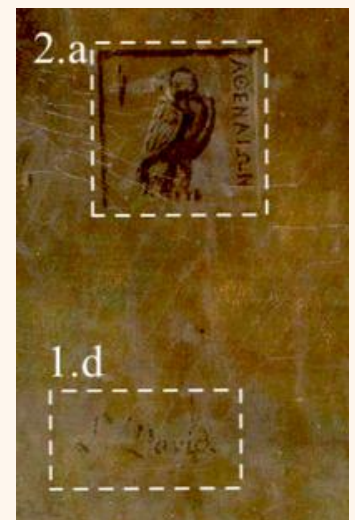
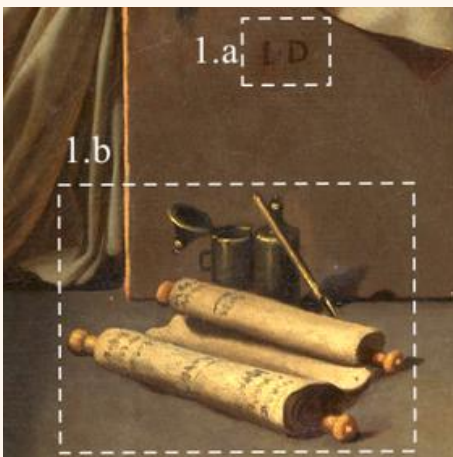
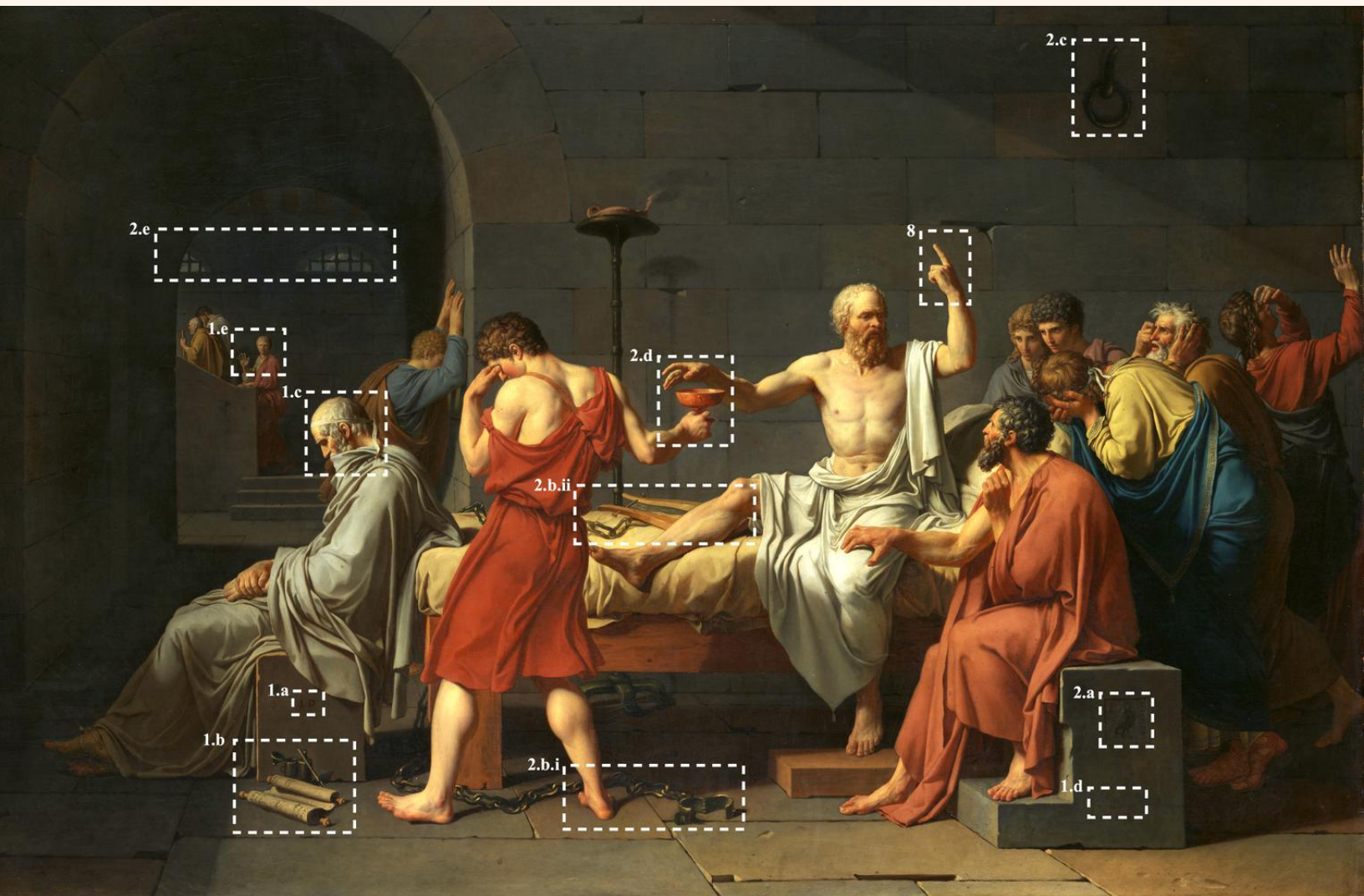
Be There or Be Square Frederick Pollack

Clark in his book on Modernism
goes on and on about the green
half of the canvas above David's dead
Marat. To which one intuitively adds
Malevich's Black Square. They are images
of the Other World – at least *an* other world,
which is not, admittedly, inviting,

but also not, in a strict sense,
unattractive. A choice is required,
the kind you don't make;
someone makes it for you. Meanwhile
lunch, the sky brightens,
the world outside is distances (unlike
the other, which cosmologists say,

although unreachable, is next door),
and several cars from the neighborhood leave
for a party. It's been so long
since you were invited anywhere ... Though
it's true that almost everyone
you know has died or otherwise dissolved,
you still regard your quarrel as with space, not time.

Investigations into *The Death of Socrates* J. Kramer Hare



QUESTION 1: What is the meaning of L·D?¹

A last dissertation₂ lies on the floor,
caught between two scrolls. A pair of inkpots
prop a stylus called thought between their lids,
dialectically₃ posed—open and closed.₄
His loyal disciple₅ has nodded off.₆
He is not witness to the deal of death,
but he has known that death before, for all
we learn is but remembrance unconcealed.
He is a lonely doubter₇ now, knowing
only that he does not know. Yet he dreams
an escape from L. David's₈ mimesis,₉
as Master taught—as Master now will show.₁₀
From dreams a lost diaspora₁₁ will spring,₁₂
as logic discerns₁₃ what is and what seems.

¹ See Figure 1.a (“Signature as Signifier”).

² First (“Textual”) hypothesis.

³ Second (“Hidden”) hypothesis.

⁴ See Figure 1.b (“Scholarly Still-Life”).

⁵ Third (“Lineal”) hypothesis.

⁶ See Figure 1.c (“Still-Live Scholar”).

⁷ Fourth (“Pathetic”) hypothesis.

⁸ Fifth (“Null”) hypothesis.

⁹ See Figure 1.d (“Signature as Signified”).

QUESTION 2: What distinguishes circular letters?

Θ: the image of a jutting tongue,
stuck between vices of bone, producing:
th—the breath of Aeolus, no longer
canvas-captive, lofts an owl of stone.₁₄
Q: one split open, among unfettered
ankles on the floor,₁₅ its long descender
leashing a lyre.₁₆ Another hung high:
the knocker of an undetected door.₁₇
Ω: the final apostrophe—
the all-invoking O! His last address
(a letter chiseled₁₈ irrevocably):
“O Hemlock,₁₉ teach me what only you know!”₂₀
I: he throws the sigil₂₁ of open eyes₂₂
and peers beyond a lemniscate of sky.₂₃

¹⁴ See Figure 2.a (“Wisdom’s Relief”).

¹⁵ See Figure 2.b.i (“Pareidolia: Serpent”).

¹⁶ See Figure 2.b.ii (“Aeolian Harp on Kite-String”).

¹⁷ See Figure 2.c (“Pareidolia: Cyclops”).

¹⁸ See again Figure 2.a (“Wisdom’s Return”).

¹⁹ See Figure 2.d (“Holy Grail”).

²⁰ *ANSWER (Hemlock): They are means of escape.*

²¹ See Figure 8 (“Singular Gesture”).

²² See Figure 2.e (“Pareidolia: Stereoscope”).

²³ *ANSWER (Sky): They are means of return.*

J. Kramer Hare hails from Pittsburgh, PA. He is a rock-climber, jazz-head, Best of the Net nominee, and volunteer critic with Pencilhouse. Look for his latest work in *Rust and Moth* and the *Dawn Review*. You can find him at kramerpoetry.com.

Lindsay Liang

Lindsay Liang is a visual artist and writer based in New York. Her practice explores fragmented subjectivity, residual power, and the disassembly of bodily structures through pastel, graphite, and acrylic media. Drawing from medical experience, psychological rupture, and dream logic, she constructs visual states of suspension—where agency is compromised and control becomes architecture. Her recent works investigate the body as a site of mechanized vulnerability, often portrayed through partially abstracted figures that float, turn, or tremble under invisible forces. She is interested in the aesthetics of passivity, the illusion of order, and the collapse beneath precision. Her work has been exhibited in NYC galleries including Bobst, Rosenberg, and Mr. Kills.





EXECUTOR, AUTHORITY, AND ROBOT
acrylic on wood, 12" x 12"



LIVID
acrylic on wood, 8" x 12"

QUEENCARD
acrylic on wood, 12" x 16"





TRITONE
acrylic on panel, 8" x 8"

Safety Procedures for Supposed Cadavers Michael Murphy

Michael Murphy's fiction has been featured in the *Notre Dame Review*, *Squawk Back*, *Sunspot*, and *MONO*, among others. He was a finalist for the 2024 Oxford Flash Fiction Prize and a semifinalist for both the 2025 Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize and the 2025 John Gardner Memorial Prize for Fiction. While living in London, Michael wrote an award-winning satirical column for the Hampstead Village Voice.



Safety Procedures for Supposed Cadavers Michael Murphy

Apartment C is wonderfully spacious relative to most safety coffins. And the amenities? Bathroom, kitchenette, Wi-Fi from Caruso's Cafe – like a pharaoh's tomb. A veritable house of eternity in comparison. The Taberger is representative of the norm. Coffin-sized. Reliant on a simple mechanism – a bell connected to a rope connected to the buried's hand or foot. The moment a revived corpse stirs, a jingle and – teatime – prompt exhumation.

Replicating the function of the bell and rope with a mobile is easy enough, but the two-way nature of the communication remains troubling. I silence alerts, ignore texts, block the overly inquisitive, and pass unanswered calls to a message stating *if I do not call back, I am likely dead*, but the ever-present distraction of the world above reminds me I am likely alive even if my wish is to remain unclassified.

Taphophobia, the fear of being buried alive, although rare, is not nearly as rare as the fear of being discovered that you've been buried alive. A condition that, to this day, remains unfairly dismissed by certain armchair psychologists.

Safety Procedure #1: Never respond to a knock. Yes, it could be saag paneer. It could also be a grinning psychopomp, wellness check, or Maxine Jablonski from 1A.

The Vester improves on the Taberger by adding a laddered escape hatch that the plucky can use to scramble to blue sky. A built-in feature of Apartment C – the climb from basement to sidewalk, a twenty-six-stair ascent. I refer to the stairwell as a feature, but this assumes one values equally the ability to climb up and the fact that stairs can be climbed down.

So, yes, this – the fatal flaw of most safety coffins. Although they guard the presumed dead against premature burial, they do not guard against meddling by the confirmed living. This is where Clover's Coffin-Torpedo gets it right – in its consideration of the bidirectional relationship. But his booby-trap device assumes the buried dead are dead or the buried alive wish to be dead. In either case, tampering with the coffin results in kaboom and dead, dead, dead. And although I'm not one to suffer intrusion, I also do not wish for passersby to pick pieces of concerned family or Maxine Jablonski from their hair.

Safety Procedure #2: Consider non-lethal devices to discourage snooping. Disable your doorbell. Post ominous notices: *Self-Isolating - Return in 2 Weeks or Danger - Fumigation in Process*.

Surprisingly, many early models fail to account for carcasses who wake and wish to remain resident. An appalling number lack air tubes or conveyances for food and drink. Inadequate life support, convoluted grave signals, pyrotechnic contrivances – in terms of safety coffin technology, it is clear we

stand on the shoulders of toddlers. Historic miscues abound. Adopting even the most promising advances requires implementing workaround procedures for when and where they break the bounds of sensibility.

I am not a stupid man. I do recognize that early innovators were motivated by market demands and stymied by the limitations of their day – The Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick, an example. A windowed abomination was built on his behalf in the 1700s that invited gawkers to monitor his body for signs of life. To the good Duke's credit, the two-way mirror was only invented in 1903. Easily implemented today.

Replacing the rectangular slash of a window set in the upper wall of Apartment C could be accomplished in an afternoon. A window that is blessing and curse. Through it, Caruso's Wi-Fi flows, but so too do the unwanted stares of the occasional dog or child. And although the passing of shuffling feet has a meditative visual cadence, being forced to retreat into the shadowed corners is far too fishbowl. I remain confident the HOA will approve my request for a mirrored window. Quite confident.

Safety Procedure #3: Every effort should be made to convert bidirectional to unidirectional. In lieu of two-way mirrors, invest in blinds. Place tape over camera lenses. Disable read receipts.

Safety coffin pioneers – in their wildest imaginings – could have never conceived of the invisible, omnipresent communications

grid that today's not-quite-dead take for granted. And while the Internet has been a boon for the passive, like a boundless window, it empowers external monitoring and intrusion on a scale hitherto unseen. In many ways worse than the Brunswick. And despite its remarkable power, or perhaps due to it, the untethering of consciousness from the here-and-now remains aspirational – the illusion of escape, a bothersome tease. A game of hide-and-seek on a vast, barren plain.

It's not that genuine escape was uncogitated. Karnicki's ejector coffin showed promise as a Vester alternative. A wiggle of hip and, leaping Lazarus, you're thrust up and out of the grave. Clever, but more jack-in-the-box than catapult. To suit my purposes, I would require propulsion far above the prying eyes of nearby onlookers, well over the skyline, and into another – equally well-appointed and preferably unmarked – safety coffin. This would require the fitting of powerful underfloor hydraulics – cost-prohibitive and necessitating yet another HOA approval. The very same association I am relying on for the two-way mirror, which proved hostile to even the suggestion of plumbing pneumatic tubes into apartments for mail delivery. An association with no resident quorum. No mandate. A star chamber wallpapered in red tape.

The mail idea is Gutmuth's. The Gutmuth featured a feeding tube through which victuals could be supplied to the coffin from above. As proof of concept, the man himself

enjoyed a subterranean meal of beer and sausages to the delight of an audience of Victorian dimwits. Distasteful showmanship aside, Herr Gutschmidt did understand that a fundamental-sustaining inertia requires the occasional schnitzel or saag paneer. It does not, however, require an audience. In this, the Internet proves useful.

Safety Procedure #4: Online instructions for the delivery of essential provisions should be written pseudonymously and state, *Place delivery at door. Knock and depart. Do not wait for the door to open.*

The Internet. The Internet. Even with its god-or-monster ambiguity, of this I am sure: Companion technology is the path to safety coffin perfection. Cryptographic privacy safeguards, A.I. doppelgangers to mollify above-ground busybodies, teleportation. But of this I am also sure: Now is now. We cannot set our status to unknowable. Our toasters are watching us. We are pushed, prodded, measured, and reminded. Forever taking on-ramps that are off-ramps. And the horizon remains on the horizon. And we are not where we want to be.

Safety Procedure #5: Be mindful of operational risks. Do not become overly reliant on any one feature.

Never assume evolution knows where it's going – seek improvement and never stop. Because when you stop, you will find and find. You will find that procedures must align with physics. That high energy seeks low. You will find the super will enter uninvited.

You will learn that the fumigation of individual apartments breaks HOA bylaws. You will be told they tried to call, but it went to voicemail, that you never participated in the resident group chat. You will say this, sir, is a sacred space. You will attempt and fail to send a strongly worded email. *The Wi-Fi network "Carusos_Cafe" requires a WPA2 password.* You will find yourself queued in Caruso's. You will find yourself pursued by Maxine Jablonski. You will find yourself forced to pay for a cheesy zucchini muffin to obtain a small slip of paper. And you will say, to be crystal clear, Maxine, accusing me of being cataleptic is accusing me of being happy. And there is such a thing as happy, Maxine, there is such a thing. And she will tell you your life is a lie. And you'll ask how she recognizes a lie when she doesn't know the truth. And the string of characters on the paper reads *Coffee!Cafe!JOE!* And you will find a finger buried in your chest. You're a beating-heart cadaver. You might as well be dead. And you will say there is no agreed-upon definition of dead. Or you will ask about the two-way mirror. Or you will say, yes, you are right. And she will sigh a sigh. And you will know that you are right. And your thumbs will fumble *Coffe!Cqfe!JOE!* And each refined procedure is a step closer to gliding undisturbed in the ether. And *Coffee!Cafe!JOE!* and *Hot Summer Deals and Reminder: Your Opinion Matters!* and *We've Updated our Terms of Service and Last Email Attempt* and *Critical Security Alert and Vital Message for You.* ♦

Seventh-Grade Book Report: Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus Aaron D. Fried

Aaron D. Fried recently retired from the insurance industry to focus on writing—an endeavor he finds significantly more fun and only marginally less glamorous. Aaron lives in Michigan with his wife and, when he's lucky, one or both of his grown children.



Seventh-Grade Book Report: Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus Aaron D. Fried

My book report is on *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. My whole life I've wanted to read *Frankenstein* ever since last month on Halloween. My mom told me not to. She said it was too old for me, but ha, I read it anyway. My dad says he writes his work reports using something called bullets, and since writing this report was a lot of work, I used bullets here too. Anyway, here it goes...

- I love this book! It was very inspirational. Any time you can read a how-to guide on creating a monster, you have to do it. And I'm excited to try it out! The only difficulty is figuring out who I should use. I thought about my little sister, but after I'm done transforming her into a monster, no one would be able to tell the difference.
- Another part of the novel I loved was when Dr. Frankenstein stopped doing his homework and going to class in order to focus on creating a monster. This is an important lesson—if you are excited about a project, you should skip school to do it. I have a bunch of these types of projects in mind. See Mom, I told you I should read this book!

Unfortunately, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* wasn't all killings and craziness,

there were some negatives too.

- The title's kinda mid. She should have just called it *Frankenstein* and not added the *Modern Prometheus* part. First, she wrote the book over 200 years ago! That's definitely not modern. Second, I read about Prometheus in Wikipedia, and what Zeus did to him is totally gross. Don't look it up.
- Parts of this novel are totally cap. The whole book is a bunch of letters some sailor wrote to his sister. His letters tell a story that Dr. Frankenstein told him. That story includes a story the monster told Dr. Frankenstein. That story includes a story a family told the monster. This novel is a story inside a story inside a story inside some letters. And we're supposed to believe nothing got changed along the way?

The whole thing feels fishy to me. Have you ever played the game Telephone? Me neither. But apparently, it's an old person's game where a phrase gets more mixed up the more times it's told. That's totally happening here. Not about creating the monster, of course, or about Dr. Frankenstein skipping school—I'm totally sure those parts are correct, but about the other stuff.

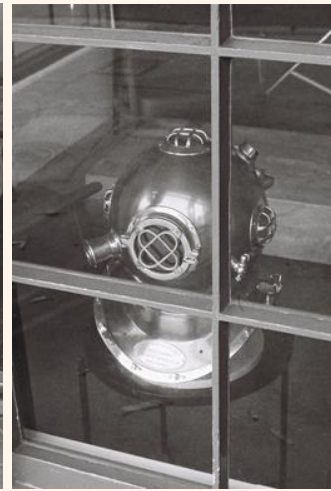
I did some research on this book (Mrs. Gingerbread, please note for extra credit). Apparently, some people think this book is about the dangers of science without morality, and others

think it is about taking ownership and care for what you create, but I think *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* is really about how gullible sailors are.

Overall, I give the book two big thumbs up! This novel should especially appeal to anyone who wants to create a monster for themselves, and sailors bored at sea. ♦

Thomas Vogt

Thomas Vogt is an aspiring poet, photographer, and city planner in Sacramento, California. He enjoys capturing the 'every day' through a pen, a lens, or behind a mug at your local coffee shop.





from CANNERY ROW CONTRAST
Olympus 'Pen EED' Half-Frame Camera
Lomography Potsdam Kino 100-speed 35mm film

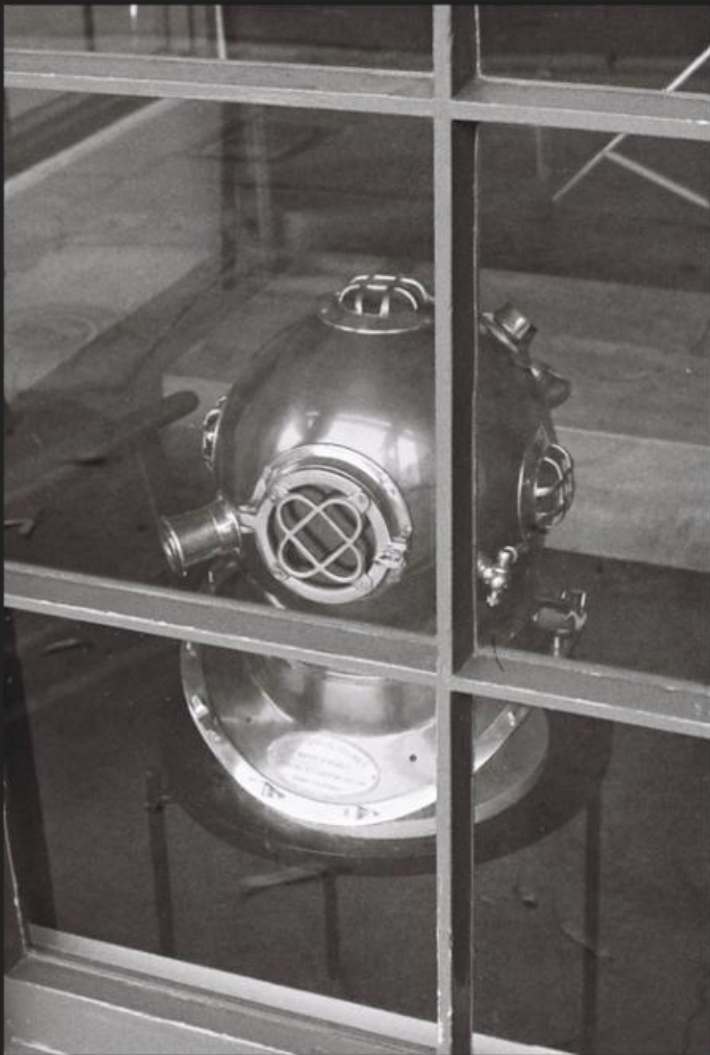




from CANNERY ROW CONTRAST
Olympus 'Pen EED' Half-Frame Camera
Lomography Potsdam Kino 100-speed 35mm film



from CANNERY ROW CONTRAST
Olympus 'Pen EED' Half-Frame Camera
Lomography Potsdam Kino 100-speed 35mm film



from CANNERY ROW CONTRAST
Olympus 'Pen EED' Half-Frame Camera
Lomography Potsdam Kino 100-speed 35mm film

Sit and Spin

Brian Conlon

Brian Conlon is a fiction writer from Rochester, New York. He studied at Harvard Law School and the University of Rochester, where he learned to name-drop the academic institutions he attended. His fiction has appeared and disappeared in various still-going and defunct literary magazines, including *Prime Number*, *Blue Lake Review*, and *The FictionWeek Literary Review*. He lives in San Francisco with his wife and three illiterates—two young children and a Samoyed named Mookie.



Sit and Spin Brian Conlon

The concierge told us to “sit and spin,” which we didn’t really appreciate at the time.

We booked with the hotel’s proprietary cryptocurrency through an app we were required to download and authenticated our sense of self by listing, under oath, all the subscription services we had used in the last ten years. The app reassured us in no uncertain terms that our booking was complete, and if we wanted balloons sent to our home as confirmation, we could do that with our leftover Bonsai Bucks. We declined that invitation, my wife and I not really being balloon people. According to the concierge, we did not read the fine print, which said that the only acceptable proof of booking was the batch of balloons we declined. Otherwise, he said, we’d have to go home, accept the balloon delivery, and come back.

“We’re not close to home,” I said.

“That’s why we booked a hotel,” said my wife.

It was our first trip in years. A road trip to somewhere young people lived, and people like us sometimes visited. Recommended by our therapist to spice things up, to give us some perspective on what he called our co-dependent relationship with our cat Alex, who slept in our bed, and whose feline malaise we’d both, according to him, to varying degrees, co-opted.

“I’ve experienced situations like this before, and it almost always ends with the hotel winning a corporate defamation lawsuit,” said the concierge.

“Let me speak to your manager,” said my wife, outraged.

“She went on vacation some time ago, some years ago. I still have her cell if you want it. She responds to texts,” said the concierge.

“No thanks,” said my wife, “Let me speak to someone in charge.”

“The app is in charge,” said the concierge.

We tapped at our phones and realized we could not access it.

Apparently noticing, the concierge said, “Once you leave the premises, you can re-log in through someone else’s wi-fi.”

“What about the hotel wi-fi?” I asked.

“It is immaculate.”

“Great,” said my wife.

“It will not be sullied by your online presence.”

We were insulted. Our online presence had never been questioned before, and was, in fact, as tame as Alex, whom we tamed before he could walk, and now was so tame that though his gait was majestic when he chose to use it, he generally chose not to.

Just then, a man walked out of the elevator.

"Are you a guest?" I asked.

"Yes," he said.

"How'd you book?"

"The app."

"You accepted the balloons?"

"Of course."

"And you brought them here?"

"Of course."

"Of course?"

"It was seamless."

"Balloons rarely have seams," said my wife.

"Some do," said the concierge, "but not ours."

By the time we turned back around, the guest was gone. I told my wife that I thought he had nice khakis and that, for Christmas, maybe she could get me a pair like that. She said she didn't remember the man's khakis, but if I sent her a link, she'd look into it. I told her I didn't have a link to those khakis at this time, but if she reminded me to research where to find the link, I'd look into it. She told me that she didn't have the bandwidth right now to remind me about anything, let alone researching pants links, but when all

this was resolved, I could remind her about reminding me to look into the khaki link, and she'd look into it. I asked her what she meant by all this resolving, and she told me that she chiefly meant the booking, right now, but also climate change, world hunger, the national debt, war, both as a concept and those ongoing, and our marriage. I told her all that would have to wait for now. She agreed.

After the guest left, the concierge said, "Our lawyers say I have to take a lunch break soon. Do you want a copy of our employee handbook?"

"No," we said.

"We're going to tell all our friends about this," said my wife.

"You don't have any friends," he said.

"We don't appreciate your tone," I said, rather than detail our extensive friend list. There were several, at least four.

"My voice is quite lovely, I've been told," he said.

We thought about it for a while and responded that we had no desire to insult him personally, though we would if that would help. He told us it might. We told him that his tongue split in the middle like a snake or a satan. He told us that if it were, which he officially denied, it was intentional, mandatory at his level of hotel management. He also told us that his lovers liked it a lot,

which was an added bonus we should be aware of.

Stepping away from the desk to cool our nerves, my wife told me that she believed he was exaggerating about how much his lovers liked his split tongue. I confided in her that even though we had been married for many years, I did not consider her my lover, and that the only thing that loved me the way I thought a lover would was our cat Alex, but not in that way, of course. She agreed that we were not lovers, and that Alex was a much better lover than she was to me and that I could ever be to her, but that Alex preferred fish really. I nodded. She credited me for not being jealous of her or Alex, no matter how many people or things they collectively and individually preferred to me.

"Your eyebrows are uneven," I said, upon returning to the desk.

Rather than respond verbally, he spat into a cup filled with cheap hotel-branded pens. He offered us the wettest pen. We declined. It was at this point that he invited us to sit and spin.

"On the pen?" we asked.

"If you like," he said.

"No thanks," we said.

"No, please, sit and spin," he said again.

"No," we said, resolute in our resistance to the idea.

"I have things to do," he said.

He then refreshed his email seven times, flipping his screen to be sure we saw that he had no new messages.

"You see, there's no way around it," he said.

"The balloons?" I asked.

"Yes, then. Now, the sitting and spinning."

"Don't worry," he continued. "None of this is sexual, legally, cannot be. Would you like to see the handbook?"

"No," we said.

"We're not even thinking about that," said my wife, looking at me with fresh eyes.

"You know," he said, "I'm not attracted to either of you. I don't really like the way you look."

"Your eyebrows don't really do it for us either, so it's fine," I said. I looked at my wife. She nodded.

"That's weird. Previous lovers, many say my eyebrows are fire."

Skeptical, we asked to see the data. He refused and recommended we take an online tutorial available exclusively through the hotel's app, *Modern Sexuality and You: A Guide to Hotel Etiquette*.

"If we agree to sit and spin, will you check us in?" I asked.

"The app will ultimately decide unless I employ a manual override, but I don't want to, so I won't," he said.

walked out of the hotel and into the neighboring pet shop, where they were selling cat beds and live fish. ♦

Noticing that none of the lobby chairs were spinnable, I asked if we could sit on the floor and spin. He said, technically, yes, if we were strong enough. We knew we weren't. We asked if he had any spinnable chairs we could borrow. He said that they had two chairs specifically for that purpose, but insisted that they had to be reserved at least twenty-four hours in advance via the app. We had done that, he said.

"You sure?" we asked.

"Of course," he said.

He invited us behind the counter because, according to him, the chairs were too heavy to lift and too annoying to drag. The chairs were red, leather, high-backed, and swivelly. We sat. We spun. I saw a lilt of joy in my wife's eyes I hadn't seen in years. It was the lilt I hoped for when we planned the trip months ago. The lilt I felt for all those years ago, before Alex, before apps. Was I lilted too? We spun and spun until the concierge physically stopped us. I'm worried you'll vomit, he said. We would never, we assured him. After regaining our balance by grabbing each other by both shoulders, we kissed.

"Gross," said the concierge. "I told you it couldn't be sexual."

"It wasn't," we lied. Hand-in-hand, we

Terrible Pitch: Gatorade for Babies Andy Clark

Andy Clark is a writer, educator, and state bocce ball champion (Special Olympics) from Portland, Oregon. When not tossing the old balls around, he can be found writing screenplays and attempting to contribute to various online publications. He recently got a pool, which is huge for him.

MAGPIE ZINE ISSUE III



Gatorade for Babies

Andy Clark

Hello! Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to my unscheduled pitch. Please put all your cellphones in the bag. Security will be breaking through the door any minute, and I don't want people distracted. You're not gonna want to miss this.

What I've brought with me today are three simple words that are going to revolutionize the rehydration industry.

Gatorade. For. Babies.

Please stop crying. This is not a hostage situation, and it's getting distracting. With me is a large sack, look inside. What's in there? That's right. Babies. Probably twelve of them. Go ahead, take them out. It's okay, they don't bite. They're babies, not bullies.

Did you know that currently, 80% of the world's population is babies? And that's just the United States! They represent the largest untapped gold mine since 2005 Taylor Swift. Why not tap in?

Picture it. There's a little kiddie pool full of Gatorade. What flavor? Whatever one you're thinking. Inside the pool? Half a dozen babies. We've got babies in goggles, babies with water wings, one of them is playing the electric guitar - she's the cool baby. Samuel Jackson does a voice-over.

"Gatorade - it's for babies."

Don't like that? What about a baby riding a horse in the middle of the desert? He leads the trusty steed to an oasis. As the horse gorges himself on water, the baby pulls out a 32-oz bottle of Gatorade. He's wearing a little cowboy hat. It's adorable.

Please stop crying. Everyone is going to be fine. I told you, the cellphones can come out of the bag when the meeting ends.

A clear night's sky nestles over a grassy field. It's quiet, still. From the black air, a single meteor falls from the stars and crashes into the earth. A pack of babies, wild and free, crawls through the soft, wet grass towards the smoky crater. What's in it? That's right, Gatorade.

Okay, security's breached the door. I'm out of time. Please put the babies back in the sack. I'm selling this idea for one million dollars and a binding verbal agreement not to pursue charges.

But before I leave, there's one thing I have to know:

Is it in you? ♦

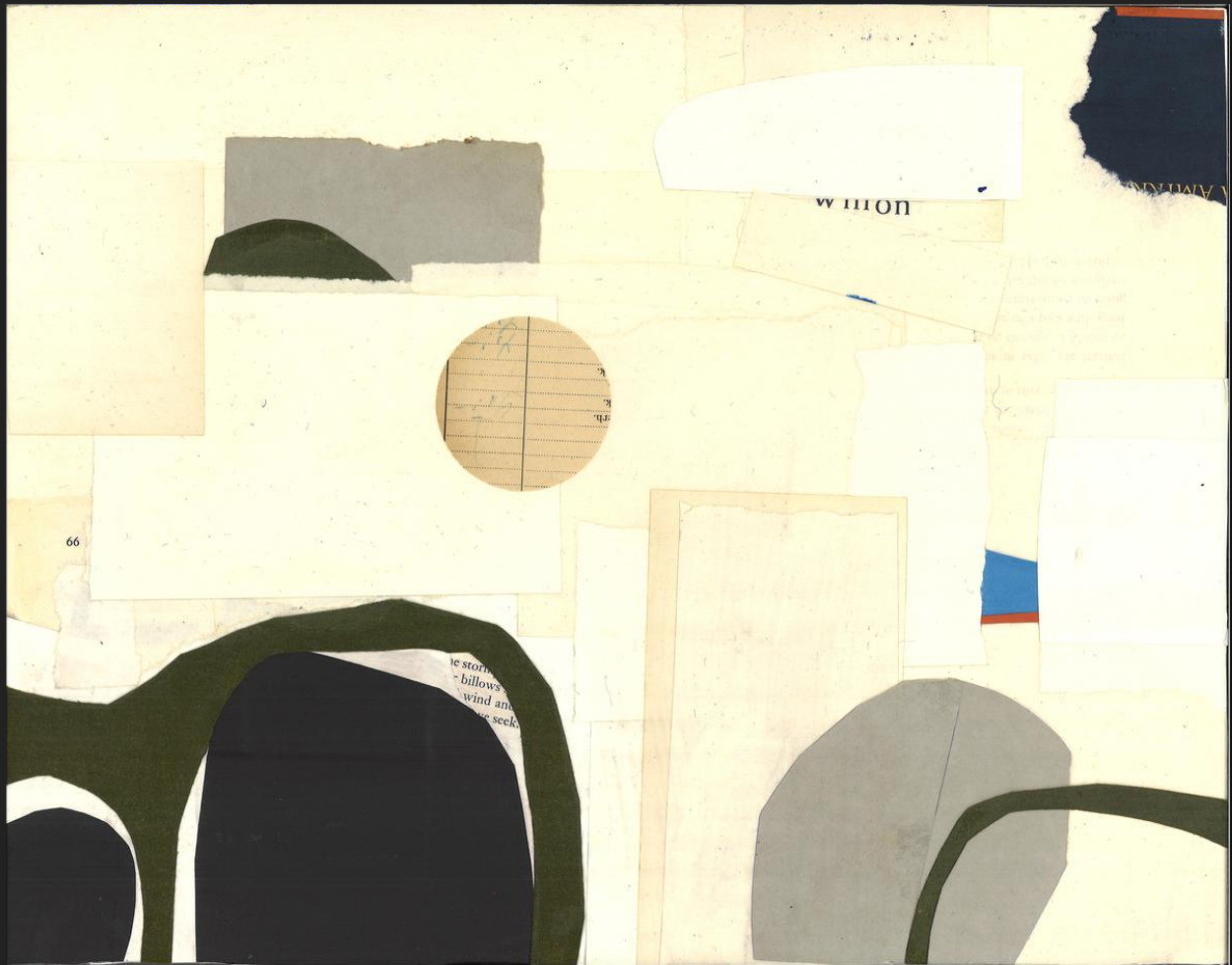
Jennifer Caloyeras

Jennifer Caloyeras is an author (STRAYS, UNRULY CREATURES) and a mixed-media artist. She enjoys reading and then deconstructing old books and making art out of them. She lives in Los Angeles and runs the online book community and podcast, BOOKS ARE MY PEOPLE.





CIRCUS
upcycled books



CAVES
upcycled books

FLOWERS
upcycled books



I Wish I Was a Riot Grrrl Jadey Holcomb

Jadey Holcomb (she/her) is a poet, storyteller, and author of *Average Asexual*. She is currently studying Creative Writing and is the poetry editor of her university's literary journal. She has a deep infatuation with Conan Gray, red eyeliner, and yearning for what she does not have. When not writing she can be found searching the night sky for Orion's Belt.



I Wish I Was a Riot Grrrl **Jadey Holcomb**

Darling, you make me wolfish
up on this rooftop, under this
volcanic light.

Can I drink Cherry Bomb
lipstick, chew fishnets for dessert?
Press your lips to mine, fill me -
bones and all - with your smoke.

Let me quarry your leather-cracked
ribs. Let me burrow under soft tissue.

Grunge girl, goddess of violets
I remember when you jumped
from that bridge, billowing into

glittering waters. Can you hear me,
under this bubbling music, under this erupting light?

old daze Thomas Zimmerman

Thomas Zimmerman (he/him/his) teaches English, directs the Writing Center, and edits *The Big Windows Review* at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. His poems have appeared recently in *Ablanatha*, *Cold Signal*, and *Lowlife Lit*. His latest poetry book is *My Night to Cook* (Cyberwit, 2024).

Website: thomaszimmerman.wordpress.com/



old daze

Thomas Zimmerman

Venetian blinds moonlit your belly sliced
like bread // before though kisses traded rassling
in the weedy lot behind the Beef Days
Ferris wheel // we bummed a ride back home
Cheap Trick Bob Seger playing loud inside
the F-10 cab yes we were stacked in back
with tarps scrap metal sparking when we tossed it
on the highway singing "I Fought the Law"
// then homeward you & i my arm slung cross
your shoulders drunken broken orphic such
was my delusion // notebook out i scribbled lines
a sonnet "College Daze" you poured the drinks
bikini line the border guarded no
i met you at the great divide alive

Horoscope/ Affirmation/ Promise/ Prayer Haylee Shull

Haylee Shull is a writer, artist, and Libra from Fayetteville, Arkansas. Her work has appeared in *Swim Press*. She has two cats and owns a super small, super gay art business with her sister.



Horoscope/Affirmation/Promise/Prayer

Haylee Shull

New Year's Day, 2025

Already the days grow longer a few seconds at a time.
 Already the light traces a path along the wall.
 The old years burrow and harden like swallowed stones
 stuck deep in your gut. You will carry them with you.
 There will be dancing and sparkly cocktails. There will be
 footprints in stiff snow and cat hair on all your sweaters.
 May will break your heart, but not for the reason you expect.
 You will know hunger. You can interpret this however you choose.
 On the other side of your grief is (I'm so sorry to tell you) more grief.
 What I'm saying is, you will hear the wind through the leaves
 and it will sound like rain. You will keep looking up.
 You will keep waiting for the drops to hit your skin.
 How long will you hold on to your dread? What I'm telling you
 is that the moon will fall from the sky. The ground will swallow
 you up along with everything you have ever loved. Then what?
 Aren't you listening? July is only July. A poem is only a poem and
 a fortune is only a wish. Kiss someone before it's too late.
 Tally up your losses. Stand in the middle of the street and wail at the sky
 until your sobs catch in your throat. Drop to your knees shouting,
why why why!, and *fuck you, stars!*, and *fuck you, fate!* Run
 until you can't feel your legs and then strip down and kiss
 every part of your body that you can reach—bare and clammy
 and yours and you. You're alive and then you're not. Alone, and then
 you're not. Teeth bared and then not. Don't mistake self-awareness for
 control. You will get sunburnt. You will pick at your wounds.
 You will wake up every morning and want and want and want
 and want. All these things will happen. You will swim. Sweat. Swear.
 Break the skin. Bite your nails. Coax. Confess. Float. Forget.
 Some days it will make you cry. Some days the light breaks through
 the window and that's all there is.

