

# The Yellow Paper

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# The Yellow Paper

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## On Uncertainty an editorial

The 2019 first edition of *The Yellow Paper* noted an intergenerational intention to ‘clear the air’. The metaphorical air<sup>1</sup> Norman Denny refers to in his introduction to the collected edition of *The Yellow Book*, published in 1950, relates to the outrage fuelled by the original quarterly volume (1894-1897). In 1969, the year Denny writes of dusting down, of the need to question and overturn the status quo, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein is scoring 676 aphorisms, published as *On Certainty* (Über Gewissheit), which starkly reminds us that uncertainty is an intimate, everyday matter. The air of 2021, with its bundle of sickness, continues to highlight the ineffable ‘groundlessness’<sup>2</sup> to different and various ways of being-in-the-world and the related contextual and contingent qualities we take for granted. Of certainty. There is a personal dimension to the experience of not knowing exactly what our world is and where we, and our world, are heading.

Two years removed from 2019, only time’s profound effects on lived experience can be defined with any certainty. Footnotes, the office clerk opportunistically bagging corporate freebies in Alice Wadkin’s ‘The Conference’ (p 47), is at once a familiar character of incredulous bearings and a parodic cypher through which to examine the hierarchy of what ‘lived experience is

1 Norman Denny (ed.), ‘Selector’s Note’, *The Yellow Book: A Selection* (First Edition). (London: Bodley Head, 1950)

2 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p 166

and *is not* communicated'. We might ask how our era of lived experience is comparable to other periods of calamity and angst. And how, as Daniela Cascella asks in 'My Chimera' (p 13), 'the sick anxiety of flawlessness' might be too much for a 'feeble heart'. The seas of uncertainty are eminently intolerable for most coronary functions and in order to find our bearings we might take Melissa McCarthy's reading of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (p 29) to heart, at the moment where the 'point sinks in'. 'So this is what survives the inspiraling disaster,' she writes, 'one scholar and one wooden box, with writing on it. And this is the lesson I'd take from reading Melville. That at the heart of the action, in the very middle of things—time, text, geography, the ocean—a close-contact consideration of skin, page, and writing is what will help us survive.' 'At the heart of it, it prompts writing', Melissa says of the pre-text of the whale, a pre-text that Sara O'Brien in 'I Heart' (p 99) renders as a 'heaving, humming presence of the absence it provokes,'. She adds, 'Desire, too, is predicated on that which is absent.'

And much has been absent since March 2020. As well as much craved, there is much deserving gratitude. In September 2020, James N. Hutchinson and Margaret Salmon stepped in to lead the MLitt Art Writing in my absence. Their contribution was an anchor during a swell of uncertainty and on behalf of myself and the student cohort I extend thanks for their enormous commitment, care and pedagogical guidance. For this edition of *The Yellow Paper*, James includes three drawings of objects and images that appeared in the 1959 exhibition, *The Developing Process* at the ICA, London. Coinciding with the Coldstream Report, this exhibition was demonstrative of the mid-twentieth century post-war transformative liberal education of art. The studio programmes led by Harry Thubron and Tom Hudson in Leeds and Richard Hamilton and Victor Pasmore in Newcastle were hinged on process rather than outcome, on the accidental and unexpected as fundamentally productive—an other era's encouragement to thrash about in the uncertain. In 'Container' (p 103), Margaret Salmon writes of the impossibility of building a volcano—one made with baking soda in the magma chamber but at times most certainly, most definitely as unassailable as a mass

of boiling lava. Margaret captures the absence of domestic order in a series of thirteen diaristic photographs depicting what she terms '*anti-structures*', and wonders, 'in order to assess reality / must you first escape it?'

There has been a glut of uncertain reality. This edition of *The Yellow Paper* not only celebrates the graduating cohort of 2021 but, due to the journal's absence in 2020, extends congratulations to those students impacted by the first wave of unforeseen change. I am in awe of how our graduates have sustained themselves, one another, the team, their writing and creative practice during such disquiet and thrilled to include their work in *The Yellow Paper*'s second edition. Huge gratitude and very best of wishes go to Timothea Armour, Misa Brzezicki, Lewis Gibb, Rachel Harris-Huffman, Jessica Higgins, Maria Howard, Enxhi Mandija, Jen Martin, Siuán Ní Dhochartaigh, Sara O'Brien, Molly May O'Leary, Megan Rudden, Rodrigo Vaiapraia, Alice Wadkin, Morgan Williams and Elaine Y. J. Zheng. Edition 2 also assembles some of those who have been vital to surviving 'inspiraling disaster' and, in addition to Margaret and James, includes writing by Daniela Cascella, Melissa McCarthy and Isabella Streffen. Further thanks are also paid to the generosity of Francis Mckee, Elizabeth Reeder, Susannah Thompson, Sarah Tripp and the many others acknowledged at the close of the book.

Reality is multiple and mutable. It is a matter of redescription and reinterpretation and gathered in this collection is a certain maintenance of the uncertain.

Dr Laura Haynes



Enxhi Mandija, Synecdoche, 2021  
digital photograph

## My Chimera Daniela Cascella

Let me tell you my story of Chimera and it will not have a concluded meaning, proper and clear cut, for symbols never do, they are made of an elusive but present substance which does *not* get lost in translation, and demands to be ceaselessly *transcated*—at once transcending words, and carried in them: at once radiance and presence, cadence and glare—heard as tone, not carved in stone.

Chimera, fire-breathing monstrous creature made of three different parts, impossible in theory but real in the imagination. Here is a form of writing that is chimera, composite of parts written in different styles, some of which may seem impossible, monstrous, disturbing. Here is chimeric writing and it demands neologisms, a new vocabulary, wildly imaginative approaches to reading, hear Chimera.

Chimera, object of a yearning deemed unattainable. Here is chimeric writing, hear writing in the volume of yearning, in the tension between words and what exceeds them, and the critic who writes is exhausted by such yearning, not the owner of exhaustive knowledge. Here is writing, hear writing, that has been and is not yet, writing the not-yet-existent that is not a mere nothing.

Yearning, duration, persistence. Ideas are arranged and words intensified, charged with meanings, made unstable, and layered—



not one after the other, but one inside the other, so that there is not going to be, in separate stages, a framing context followed by the work of writing followed by reflections: it is *all* writing, all context, all resonance instead of reflection, shattering case studies and glass screens, appearing enmeshed, impure, entangled, sounding like an introduction until the very last page, always ending, always rebuilding its language, rebeginning. Sometimes it sounds as if it has all been heard before. All and nothing. Sometimes it sounds like nothing, then the silence is so loud that I can only laugh.

To bring chimera into writing I have coined the term *csiting*, conjoining ‘citing’ and ‘siting’ in an assonant desiring encounter—a way of working beyond the rules of citation, a way of citing as hearing in reading, where I find my grounds as I read, site myself as I cite, go over the words that make my understanding of chimera and these words are residual: *situs* in Latin is site as well as dust, detritus. As I csite I continue to ground, and unground residues. Here as I csite (hear my csite, hear my sight as I read) my sources are not my origin, understood in terms of a stable *before* that legitimates and authorises what I write: they are not original, they are residual decaying and changing, they are beating hearts, cores of voices, rhythms and songs I heard before and continue to sing and they continue to beat. They are here, heard in the heartbeat of every reoccurrence, they are here, heard, which is the anagram of read with the added h of a breath. They are the artifice of meaningful substance made up from an apparent lack of quality, an apparent lack of words, that allows other words, other qualities to emerge.

A site for csiting. The geographical site in the region of Lycia in Anatolia, where Chimera roamed, was a ravine extending up from the shore. I think of chimeric writing perched on a ravine, in Greek *krinein*, the root of *critical*, that discerns and leans toward and might fall into its yearning. It leans toward something else, a yearning perceived in the material of research, that separates and is at once medium for conversation. Chimeric writing is all, it is nothing, it is *krinein*, it is criticism, it falls into ravine, in Italian *crinale*, in English *crest*, that slides into

*crestfallen*, a state of mind and again a fall, a ruin, *rovina*, ravine, fall, faint. All, nothing, oscillating between meanings found in sound, hearing in writing that ripples the surface of these pages, yearning for other ways of reading. Chimeric writing is all, it is nothing, a relay of fractured voices in research, resonance, residue, for still hidden writings to read.

Do not call Chimera interdisciplinary, do not call her hybrid: she will spit fire at you. Can you hear how differently chimera chimes? Chimera is an image, an image not seen, but an image imagined: heard in reading. Chimera—I understand from James Hillman as he writes of the deep forms of psyche which are manners of being in the world, of carrying presence every day—chimera is the way in which I see, not a content that I see; an image heard in reading that makes claims on me, and my task is not to interpret it, but to attend to its presence. Listen now, here is how Chimera met me, how I attended to it.

*Chimera* is the last word in Sonnet CXXIV by 16th-century poet Gaspara Stampa, a song of lost love and a manifestation of the sense of being split, half alive half dead, feeling everything and feeling nothing; the writer’s true form is ‘all and nothing, [...] an image of Echo and Chimera.’ I encountered the sonnet as it was named in a letter by the Italian writer Cristina Campo, who deemed it most exquisite, and who wrote of the necessity to write because nobody else had seen certain things the way she had, nobody had put them in conversation as she had. I encountered the sonnet *after* I had realised that Chimera was to be at the core of my project, and *before* I knew how my Chimera was to form, although I heard it in my yearning—so Chimera appeared in the concluding verse of Gaspara’s sonnet, sounding and breathing and speaking the sense of ‘all and nothing’ that I perceive when I write, and in hearing Chimera summoning me (D.C.) in the last verse of the sonnet I was speechless, petrified, again, *Da Capo*.

Speechless petrified again *Da Capo*, rebeginning from an ending. *Pierre*, stone is the last word in the cycle of poems by Gérard De Nerval entitled *Chimeras*, among the masterpieces of Symbolist verse—poems dense in their vocabulary, and transformative in

their treatment of images, and 'a pure spirit beneath the skin of stones' summoned me from the last verse of the last poem, when I heard *pierre* vaguely rhyming with *Chimère*, stone rhyming with Chimera and I was petrified, the stone of paralysis, the block in which I could not write until I reversed the terms of my condition, and said to myself, do not be Sisyphus, be the stone, the alchemical stone, malleable and changing, the stone that unevenly rhymes with, and is, chimera, pierre, chimère. Of course.

How couldn't it.

*My Chimera (my-research) found me.*

It found me as I was open to listening to it. Then to write when I had nothing to say became a transformation into the material that initially appeared to make me speechless: it had to be Chimera because it was Chimera. Not interpretation, not progression: this form of writing prompts a shift of perspective while staying exactly where it is, working with the material it is given, sometimes stubbornly, its *modus operandi* slow, repetitive, severe, as dark and obstinate as the material. In this writing I find myself exhausted, stuck, repetitive, and obstinate, and I read the exhaustion and paralysis as a rich, complex state: something is being worked upon, and dissolves meaning as content. I feel deprived of any dependable and comforting notion of achievement, of goodness, of award: 'Every moment of blackness is a harbinger of alteration, of invisible discovery, and of dissolution of attachments to whatever has been taken as truth and reality, solid fact, recognition, or dogmatic virtue'. Chimeric writing darkens and sophisticates the reading-hearing eye, as it moves in excess of itself and its materials, wants to be elsewhere, into a yearning for the untold unheard untranslated, with the fire it breathes, the things that cannot be fully known but are sensed through the beautiful subterfuge of more words, so when I write *chimera* no clear image appears, but a muted blurry symbol which continues to tell and continues to hide and continues to burn, can be told and retold in many forms, never forgetting the interferences.

Chimera was the title of the opening poem in Dino Campana's *Canti orfici (Orphic Chants)*, a collection of verses from the early

twentieth century in which symbolism and lyricism merge with innovative rhythmic forms, and with attention to montage and unusual viewpoints. Chimera was heard in the rapturous and visionary voice of performer Carmelo Bene reading that poem, 'e ti chiamo ti chiamo Chimera.' Campana in Italian is bell, a word contained in *La libellula (The Dragonfly)*, a long poem by Amelia Rosselli, who inhabited Campana's words and transformed them through misreading and not always correct rhyming, so that chimera becomes another composite, inappropriately but tellingly and soundingly echoing *sirena, chimera, sirena, e ti chiamo ti chiamo chimera, e tu suoni e risuoni chimera, sirena, and I call you I call you chimera, and you sound and resound chimera, sirena*. Hear how Chimera glides over words across centuries, she will not be captured. It is Chimera, and in Rosselli's hearing it becomes *sirena*, siren, but Chimera's song is not yet sung, it must be heard in reading.

*Voice from a Faintspeaker:* It is time in the underworld for D.C. to wake up. She recalls a nightmare during which, repeatedly, she was asked to clarify why she calls herself a critic. Over and over again. Her attempts at replying that these definitions are not entrenchments, but manners of placing herself in a constellation; that she learned to know herself through a practice of critical writing, which does not mean her critical writing cannot exist in other forms, in fact it was through the practice of critical writing that she realised her language was composite and imperfect, therefore porous to other unexpected... But, what sort of questions were these? Is it necessary to continue getting tangled up with this chattering? Predictable, sudden end to the nightmare: asphyxia. She tries to reply but is smothered. The side effects of the Interdisciplinary Nothing? An overdose of Creative Criticism? We shall never know. Importantly for now, she awakens in Hell. Chimera is by D.C.'s side. It seems apt to suggest at this point, how D.C.'s begins to sound closer and closer to...

D.C., in a sudden fit: ...DECEASED! Corpsed in our proud school of critical writing, we can no longer write.

Chimera: Still speechless, D.C.?

D.C.: As speechless as \_\_\_\_\_ [CHOKES].

C.: Still interdisciplinary?

D.C.: I'd rather be interred.

C.: Did I hear interred?

D.C.: Better to call me mad, than a *prose stylist*—a stylite, perhaps: leave me on a pillar, to rot. The study of that rotting unspeakable substance underlying language, which Amelia Rosselli made evident in her poem *La libellula* through slight repetitions and variations of misspellings, absorbs me a lot more than any polished surfaces. I want to write the heavy threat, the dread I feel sometimes in writing when I become very aware of the overspill, the rot, the excess.

C.: All this talk of rot and dread becomes you, D.C. You do not look healthy these days.

D.C.: I am exhausted, you know. Consumed by study, by yearning.

C.: And you are, as ever, so woefully inconclusive.

D.C.: Inconclusive, with ugly and heavy prose too, when necessary; carrying the form and sense of the exhaustion, the impossibility of completeness. This is why I never wrote a monograph, and stayed with the *all and nothing*. Nothing: the feeling of emptiness, anxiety, inability, vacuity I perceive every time I set out to write with the demands and pressure of producing a clear statement, argument, or overview. What can I possibly say, what more, who am I, and where? I can say *less*: yearn chimerically in reading and then, by contrast, the All appears: the fullness, the drive, the embodiment, the dizzying restlessness of finding forms, and to embody in them all the metamorphoses in understanding which I go through because

I am, I encounter myself again, through the writings I study. Chimeric is the csite where I can say something even if my readers may be dead, or not born yet, or I do not have the means to reach them—chimeric is writing that holds yearning, holds my movement with, and my being moved by certain texts, rather than the paralysis in front of the demand for recognition or accomplished, concluded evaluations.

C.: You are falling back into essay mode. I thought you and I had agreed it was not the appropriate way to proceed. Be composite, impure. That is your nature, your *moira*. The sick anxiety of flawlessness is too much for your feeble heart.

D.C.: In truth, if certain words or phrases here did not inspire repulsion, I would abandon my pursuit.

C.: And yet...

D.C.: ... And yet we are not afraid of beauty.

C.: A most subversive statement. Hush now. You should sleep. I will bring you dreams of pure fruits that go crazy, of mad impurities.

*Voice from a Faintspeaker*: So Chimera was muted. The M dropped out: Chi era. *Chi era?* in Italian is 'who was she?'. Me? Here begins the questioning of self through the M of muted, M of mutation, M of me-monster: manners of writing selves through polyphonies, transformations, a language restless and unruly.

*A Chimeric Transcelation (for Cristina Campo)*

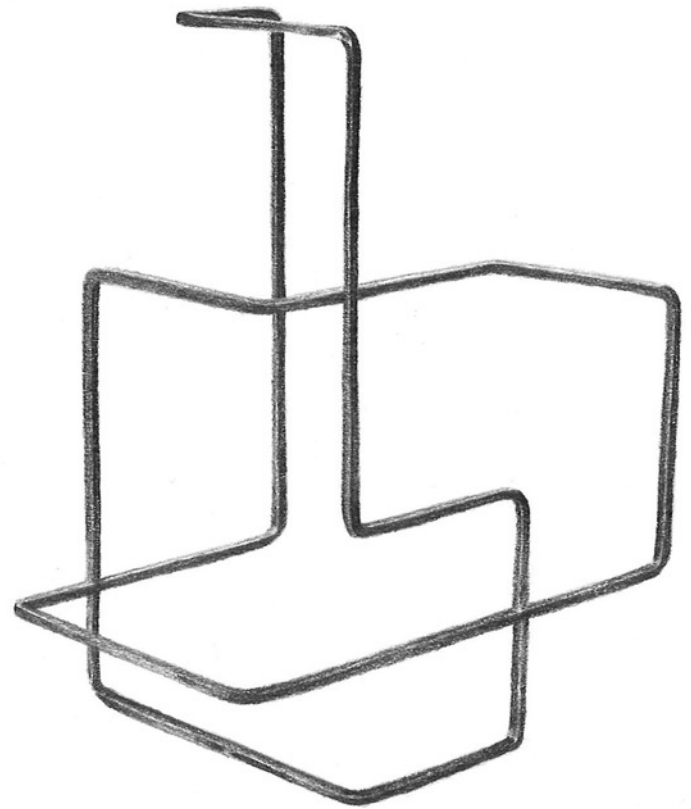
The exigent refusal, the non-frivolous manner to adopt, is that of reading attentively, writing slowly: not necessarily a canonical book. It might as well be a luminous treatise on the knots in a Persian rug as true portraiture of the geometries of life, or the accurate response to the sounds of bells first tolling in a foundry, or to the gestures, sayings, and raptures of the Desert Fathers. Letters do not exclude poems, journals do not exclude prose, Chimera glides in the undercurrents that allow disparate forms

to coexist. Meticulous, specious, inflexible, a chimeric writer who called herself Cristina, Vittoria, Bernardo, Giusto, Puccio, once composed these disparate forms as she wrote sentences as sharp as iron-tipped arrows, or sudden arpeggios soon to be withdrawn by a shy hand. She understood writing as more necessary than what is deemed useful: not found in goal-driven actions, but in the gratuitous splendour of certain gestures—grounded on a core of recurring intensities, against the prolific, against recognition and the chatter of appearance, into a deepening that sometimes is concealment.

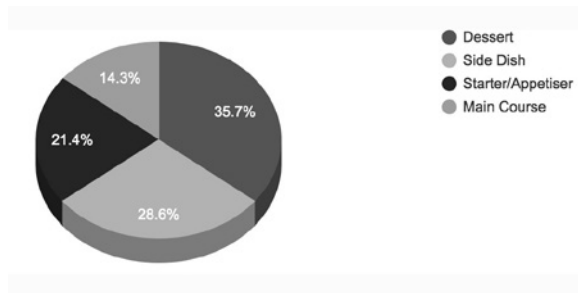
In a simultaneous and contradictory movement, at that point in which this chimeric writer synthesises at most her subject by reducing it, like the painters of the T'ang era in China, to that unique profile, to that line that is its being's utterance itself, the reader hears it multiply, echo in numberless sounds. The perception of vertiginous activity is conjoined with a sense of inevitable presence and stillness. Such concentrated tension, such yearning, belong to writing formed in the same manner as the entomologist labours to express the inexpressible azure of a dragonfly wing. So chimeric writing's eloquence may hinge on a tiny particle, a faint signal, all and nothing, almost nothing.

—

This text rewrites and combines excerpts from non-identical twin books, *Nothing As We Need It. A Chimera* (Punctum Books / Risking Education, forthcoming 2022) and *Chimeras. A Deranged Essay. An Imaginary Conversation. A Transcelation* (forthcoming).



## Not Always Dessert Megan Rudden



When asked the question,

*If you were going to eat art writing would it be served as:*

- A starter/appetiser
- B main course
- C side dish
- D dessert

35.7% of art writers said D for Dessert.<sup>1</sup>

Upstairs in the CCA, the art writers are sat at a large table that might have been round but might have had edges and Francis McKee told us he liked sports writing. Maybe the last true purple prose, he said. I'm more interested in pink poetry but not like drunk-tank pink, I mean decadence. Cheap magenta pink snatched from the pallid cheeks of aristocracy, reproduced with more intensity and in a deeper hue. Hot pink that refuses to stay in its place, a burlesque dress swirling on a dimly lit basement stage. An erotic descent into anarchy. Baby pink that is infantilising, repulsive and gorgeous, childlike in its sophistication. Bubblegum pink ingested in small squares, chewed up and spat out as a vulgar habit, only to stick to someone else's shoe. Pepto-bismol poetry that smells like mint, full of synesthesia and disappointment.

<sup>1</sup> Results collected from a poll of 14 art writers, January 2021.

\* CCA is Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts.

[chew]

When words are gorgeous (or arranged in a gorgeous manner) reading is like eating jelly. Teeth sink into this liminal substance, not liquid or solid, it is a suspension, content in its transitional state. The jelly is usually pink or red, and I think that's because of my insides and the notion that what I am biting into is actually flesh or maybe I can't separate language from the body. I encourage others to eat my flesh-jelly. The substance I serve to them might be transparent or panna-cotta-opaque, depending on how much I've decided to give up. I present it to them on a patterned plate dressed up in whipped cream, cherries disguise my flaws as something more appealing. I urge them to feast on my sacrifice, to cannibalise me, to spit out the stone and tie the stem in a knot using only the dexterity of their tongue.

[spit]

Downstairs in the CCA, Morwenna Kearsley is thinking about jelly and summoning. This time gelatin photographs and Lee Miller. The exhibition text handed to me on the way in to the gallery is another ingredient to be consumed alongside the jelly-material. It is an integral part of the meal, delicious and haunted and slippery; Lee Miller in Hitler's bathtub. Like Morwenna, I don't mean the jelly-object as metaphor, I mean materiality. The jelly-texture of gorgeous words; art writing is not always dessert. The jelly-object is too clean, too contained, too overly concerned with impressing others, too aspirational, too kitsch, too American Dream, too defined edges, too wholesome, too inoffensive, too moulded, too frivolous, too sure of its place on the table (centrepiece) jelly-as- material like ectoplasm, like mucous, like slime, like thicker than water, like almost flow, like hairgel, like coagulated, like transitional, like stasis, like blood, like insatiable, like desire, like malleable, like liminal, like saliva collected in your mouth from talking for too long without swallowing—

[swallow]

This jelly is not gelatin either, something more like agar, red algae, sweet seaweed congealed. Not the pure pig protein of blood boiled ligaments, tendons and skin, less cruelty more artifice. The animal body is more than throwaway bones, soup flavour (*extracted*), lip collagen (*injected*). Replicate the jelly-texture without violence, ask the sea politely if it can spare the red greenery. Teeth sink. More of a slice than a bite. Slivers divided in saliva glide across the sides of incisors. To think of flesh as something so synthetic and separate from others and animal bodies, a slug belly, conjunctivitis goo, albino axolotl gills, vodka jelly shots. All the same pink slime.

## Epidermal Epistemology aboard the Pequod Melissa McCarthy



Ishmael is interested in skin. Queequeg's skin, certainly, as his crewmate and bosom-companion is tattooed all over with 'a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth', written out on him by a prophet from his home island. This labyrinth of ink also includes one 'queer round figure' which, carefully copied by Queequeg, stands as the signature on his contract as both men sign up for a voyage on the whaling-ship *Pequod*. He's got his name on himself.

And Ishmael is interested in the skin of the whale; he has a whole chapter on this. Not just any chapter, but the dead central—the sixty-eighth, out of 135, chapter of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, first published in 1851. The copy I'm working from is the Oxford World's Classics small (10 x 16 x 3 cm.) hardback version, of 1985. You can see here in the photograph the book boards, with their harpoon-triangular pattern, and the paper dust jacket, and, peeling off from that, some sort of protective plastic laminate which once coated the paper. Could it be waterproofing, for when I'm reading the book at sea? I hadn't known it was there until I began working on this piece.

So, middle of the nineteenth century, middle of the book, middle of the Indian Ocean, is where Ishmael, the personable narrator of *Moby Dick* locates his chapter 'The Blanket', with its central question of, 'what and where is the skin of the whale?'



His query and concern are rooted in the surely excessive thickness of the whale's blubber: can a substance that is (in places) more than a foot deep really be called skin? Yes, he decides: if it's covering the body, it's got to be the skin. And then, as is the MO of the book, Ishmael detours from his adventure story—he and the crew are just in the middle of stripping the skin off a whale they've caught in order to discuss his learning, and to use one aspect of the whale to illustrate a moral point. (In this case, it's the injunction that one should preserve independence of both temperament and temperature. Keep your cool, he advocates.)

Ishmael is a great one for these types of circumlocution and digression, using the body of the whale as a pretext for considering all sorts of other questions about the state of the world. The whale is a pre-text in another sense, too: it prompts writing, it precedes and is the cause of a huge corpus of literature. Ishmael is an unrivalled scholar in this field, and chapter one only sets sail after both an 'Etymology' and a selection of 'Extracts' on the subject of the whale.

Half his knowledge comes from textual sources such as these extracts, but much of what he knows is gained from his own experience of catching, killing, dissecting the great fish. He's an expert, that is, based on two distinct sources: both the book and the body. Contrasting as these two fields of knowledge might appear, Ishmael firmly links them by his explanation that, 'I divide the whales into three primary BOOKS (subdivisible into CHAPTERS),' and he thereby unleashes a rampaging metaphor about the size-based parallels between the whale and the printed book (in 'Cetology', chapter 32). It's a joke that the reader is in on, too; we all know that *Moby Dick* is a whale of a book, which we have to get stuck in to, to appreciate.

We have the text and the flesh as two forms of knowledge, and Ishmael uses this folio-quarto metaphor to link the two fields. But his reading of the whale is also non-metaphorical, distinctly corporeal: its skin is covered in graphic markings which have meanings that we can decode, and this is what 'The Blanket'

chapter investigates. Ishmael's thoughts on the skin-writing are, much like blubber, rather dense. But we can squeeze, distill out the meaning.

The skin of the Sperm Whale, he says, is 'all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array, something like those in the finest Italian line engravings.' These form the background to further markings, which are 'hieroglyphical', like 'those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids'. They're also like a print he saw of 'old Indian characters chiseled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi.' And, fighting often causes these marks on the flanks to be effaced by 'numerous rude scratches, altogether of an irregular, random aspect', which look like the scrapes caused by icebergs against rocks, as described by the famous geologist Agassiz.

It's a lot of allusion for Ishmael to read off one whale's skin. The whale's natural surface resembles two human technologies, one used in the reproductions of high art, the other in writing, among various cultures. Even its fight scars are as described in academic papers.

And beyond these notations and marks, there's a further layer of epidermal literacy. The whale has, in addition, a sort of skin of the skin, an enveloping layer of 'an infinitely thin, transparent substance, somewhat resembling the thinnest shreds of isinglass, only it is almost as flexible and soft as satin'. On drying, this layer contracts and hardens, but remains transparent, and has the strange effect, fancies Ishmael, of magnifying any text that he looks at through it; 'it is pleasant to read about whales through their own spectacles, as you may say', he considers.

He's reading a book about whales through a whale-skin magnifying glass! It's a brilliant configuration of body, optics, and reading. There are whales, covered in markings that allude to other art forms, and these whales feature in books, which are read through a whale-skin magnifier, in the hands of a reader (Ishmael), who describes this in a book (*Moby Dick*), of which the

copy belonging to me (as reader) has another isinglass-like layer around it, and there's the photo of my book in your book (you, oh reader) in your hands here... It's like realigning and extending the telescope, with alternating sections and lenses of whale—text—whale, all adjusted, set to the right configuration, to help us see.

This is great, but confusing; we risk getting sucked into a *mise-en-abyme* of fleshly text, spiraling into relativity. Which is, not by chance, the fate of the whaling ship the *Pequod*: it ends up sucked down, 'all round and round in one vortex', so that everything—whale, captain, ship and all—is consumed by the sea. The only things that escape this whirlpool of whale-destruction are Ishmael, the narrator of our book, and one other thing: a box belonging to Queequeg which was made as his coffin. He had wanted to float away in it after death, as far as the milky way. But on deciding against expiring just then, Queequeg repurposed the coffin into a sea-chest, and decorated it, observes Ishmael, by carving onto it copies, extracts, and selections of the tattoo texts that had been marked onto his own skin.

So this is what survives the inspiraling disaster: one scholar and one wooden box, with writing on it. And this is the lesson I'd take from reading Melville. That at the heart of the action, in the very middle of things—time, text, geography, the ocean—a close-contact consideration of skin, page, and writing is what will help us survive. Markings are substitutable, various; they can be moved from one surface to another, from one location and context to a very different one. But we have to look at them carefully, bringing different reservoirs of knowledge to the task. We experiment with lining up the components in different relative positions. Then the image clicks into focus, the line flies through the foamy air, the point sinks in.

References all from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*; read the book to find them.



A Trew Draught of the Whale as he was seen at Blackwall Dock, published by John Drapentier, c. 1690. Courtesy, The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

## Lambent Flame

Molly May O'Leary



*Lambent Flame* is the debut album by Molly May O'Leary, with Fionn Ó hAlmhain on flute, whistle, uilleann pipes and accompanying vocals, and Liam Ó Maonlaí on piano, harmonium, synth, Hammond organ, and also guitar, harp, percussion and accompanying vocals. Lambent flame means flickering fire. The songwriting was sparked by fire in the belly, and the shared charge and love of the studio keeps the flame alive with warmth, vulnerability and hypnotic glow. *Lambent Flame* is a spiritual expedition, a deep dive into pre-existing fairy tales, both local (Irish) and global (Disney), and an imperfect weave of deeply personal history and collective narratives, traditional music and contemporary sensibilities, top-down technologies and bodies sighing, laughing, singing, strumming.

## The Song of Babble

Morgan Williams

After becoming fascinated by John Cage's numerous writings relating to chance and improvisation, I had a yearning sense of wanting to recreate that enlightening self-insight made by a randomness that, for Cage, was inspired by words I don't understand like 'Zen Buddhism', 'Fate' and 'I-Ching', whatever they mean.

John Cage I knew of as a composer, although personally I know little of his music. But his writings are just as—if not more than—fascinating than his musical arrangements (I don't care for music). He would write four lectures on the same topic and superimpose them onto each other. He would write out as many personal anecdotes as he could in one hour. He would rewrite other people's writing using a careful process. I believe he did this because it gave him answers to questions it seems, which is what I want also. This work is in tribute to him.

Recently I have been trying to face the issue of accepting certain parts of myself, parts I do not like to recognise. I do not know if this is related but I have been praying more, not because I am religious but because it gives me comfort in times which are very difficult.

I have hastily recorded some of these prayers. I have then transcribed them, cutting out any interruptions or inaudible parts due to my wailing. I have added twenty-four spaces after every pause to give the text space (I am twenty-four years old). I then measured the width of each paragraph and divided the sections into four (my lucky number) columns to get more space. I then stagger overlaid each of these prayers and printed this vertical paragraph, measured its width and folded it inside four times. I then typed up this text, replacing unreadable words with a hyphen. I then cut out the words or parts that didn't make sense. I then cut out any boring parts, added some parts and then took out the hyphens.

The four prayers were about the death of my grandparents, an old anecdote about meeting my ex's dad, the one time I vomited in a swimming pool, then just a general moment of weakness, all interspliced with bawling, blubbing and whimpering.

Okay so it, okay so the, okay so it, intervention, I don't believe in intervention, my take, take, take my prayers, prayers. Don't need novel space? Freethinking? Inside me is. Inside me is, is and, the internal collector, who causes tones, that I don't, understand, that I don't understand, quite understand. A collection of one, often, as I often alone, the I wish I could, and. I wish I could scrub the words off and return to this texture, it's, please, please don't compare me, my, boring eyes. My, the, electronic fingerprint, has has been disappeared, my has been completely wiped and soon, any paper trail will disappear, and I will live far, live far away by myself, in cabin, a cabin, far from foreign strangers. To this, this yogurt tastes out of date, interests wain and moult, couldn't collect, couldn't be a collector. Texture don't translate. I've, my hands are, I've decided to become a hermit, I, my hands are cold. Hockney-esque tree. It's, I am, It's hurting me. A collection of one, come, for. I pray, Don't believe, pray for a reprieve, believe, I don't believe in intervention. My family have lied to me, my family have lied lied lied to me. Recently, I've, Recently, believing, I've recently revoked not believing, lied. To, bear more fruit, to compare bears more fruit, to object, less to obtain, and, more, and, more an object to, to be. I am hand, wearing a hand sweater hand knitted cardigan sweater. Nobody, believes to seem to believe me, it, is, it is, it is too late, too late for me. Back in the 90s I was in a very famous. I was huge. It's, it's an act of, of faith. Often, two, am I am, I am often of one, two free. Sensing this, I can sense that pain, they're, them, they are anchors that drown you, you. I want you to to tell me that, tell me 'You'll do okay', that I'll be okay.

My, my friends falling, silent judgements of me. Fall, to fall into your arms. I bury all things, here. I bury all things here. Delivering, I trust in turmoil, Knowing me, they know me as a failure, failure of, with failed ambition (pigeon trainer). Do, I'll do my best to deliver, there, is, snow out, outside, on the grass and the trees.

## The Grateful Economy Siuán Ní Dhochartaigh

Predicated on generous collaboration and supplemented with part-time employment, the Grateful Economy is separate from the state and relies entirely on free artistic and critical contributions.<sup>1</sup> It's not a pyramid scheme, it's a pledge.<sup>2</sup> It's the subject of a dream relayed over the phone. I go to the meeting with my Dad, in a circular white stone building. You should never go to someone's home with your two arms the one length.<sup>3</sup> I'm being asked to bring a gift, but I haven't a clue what's appropriate. I feel like I have nothing to give, so I give thanks instead. This seems to work well, as there is barely enough time and everyone else has given quite a lot.<sup>4</sup>

You are someone who needs attention and sometimes you go a bit overboard being dramatic in order to get it. You have a clear presence that gets you attention; however you still use your clothing and behavior to acquire it.<sup>5</sup> After I get home, I have to pay you back and I transfer it all the way back to a name I don't recognise. I'm absolutely fucked after the

1 Dream, date unknown.

2 The Artist Support Pledge was established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It aims to create a sustainable economy for Artists.

3 Irish phrase.

4 During the IMMA Summer School: Statecraft we participated in several lectures surrounding 'the gift' as a state practice. I failed to prepare a presentation on the gift, and during the final seminar gave thanks.

5 My horoscope, 'Eager Beaver', available online: [http://universal-tao-eproducts.com/mp/files/sun-moon\\_aries-leo.pdf](http://universal-tao-eproducts.com/mp/files/sun-moon_aries-leo.pdf)

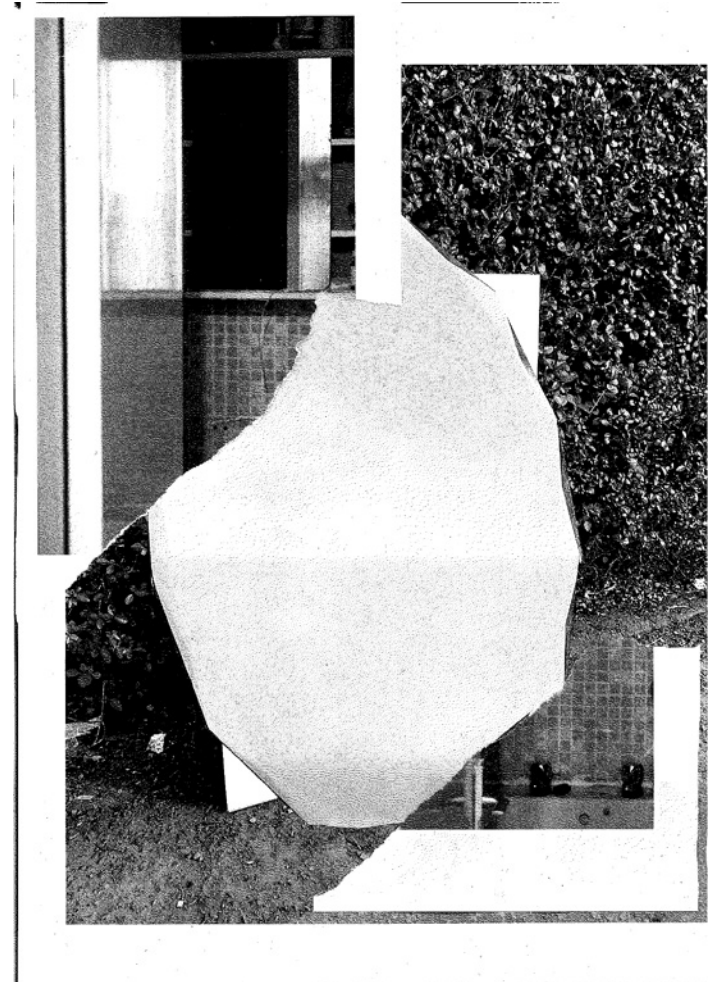
weekend. I feel worse for wear.<sup>6</sup> I'm none the wiser for it. I'm on borrowed time. They say it's cyclical, this gift economy, but it feels like spirals. I don't feel appreciated, this isn't reciprocal. I'm going on strike until January.<sup>7</sup>

I don't go on strike. Instead, I transcribe audio interviews of English people talking about the Labour party. I agree more with people who are harder to transcribe, with false starts and who interrupt the interviewer. I can get the people I don't agree with transcribed in about half an hour, but their words last all day. I am not very good at transcribing, only managing to earn about 3 or 6 dollars an hour. Soon I am given the files no one wants, that are paid the worst. Glitchy zoom meetings and a video recording of a statistics lecture. The Lecturer is wearing a face shield so when he gets excited his words ricochet, garbling the track. When he speaks about being an American soldier, I can barely make it out at all. I flick through more files but the further I go the harder they become. Soon I can't make out the different accents at all. They are looking for clean reads. They want me to follow British rules of punctuation.<sup>8</sup>

6 The weekend, 22-23 August 2020.

7 Text messages from Sunday 4 October 2020, 'I thought of getting tinder again but was like nah >> No. I'm on strike until January. Feel like my romantic labour isn't being appreciated.'

8 Verbit is a freelance online platform for sourcing or providing audio transcription.



## Déjà vu

I misdefined collectivity as an exploitative economy relying on unpaid labour. This cynicism led me to hoard time like a stringent resource, to spend it on solitary activities, like sleep. Early to bed, early to rise, makes a woman healthy, wealthy, and wise. Although I'm in my bed, space stretches.

I'm somewhere familiar but I feel out of place. I'm late, someone has told me that I smell, and I'm trying to solve a problem called 'Egg roll'. I'm not myself, I'm a group of women trying to escape a large public event through the kitchen. Seven children fall out of me and I name the sixth one Hag. I don't pay any of them much attention but I know my time is running out, I wake up to find I've been let go.

We barely meet as we're on different sleep schedules, and I'd never collaborate with a dreamer, I had to organise myself into a subconscious strike. Otherwise I'd constantly be living in second halves, trapped in Déjà vu.

I have a vision of the future

but I get bored looking at the sky  
but I love floating



## The Conference

Alice Wadkin

It was almost 12.20 pm by the time I realised my mistake. A steady rise in volume returned my attention to the present moment. A white noise of voices, milk steamers and chairs being shuffled under tables filled the corners of the atrium. My fellow conference attendees were returning from their workshops, ready for coffee, lunch and polite conversation. I had missed my first two workshops. What were my colleagues going to think of me? Although there was no one around to shame me I felt a red heat rise up my neck and into my cheeks. Guilty and embarrassed I headed to the nearest coffee cart and ordered a latte and a pre-packaged sandwich. Still fathoming the lost morning, I looked out into the atrium. A series of identical metal framed stalls snaked around the outer walls of the space and continued as two back-to-back rows in the middle area. The name of each stall holder was pinned to a piece of vinyl stretched between the two upper metal frames of the stall. Some of the stall holders had double units—these were generally larger or more popular paratextual groups<sup>1</sup>, with larger budgets and greater influence—which were spacious enough to house two tables and a little seating area for more intimate conversations. Regardless of unit size, each stall was filled with an array of promotional leaflets, report documents and branded freebies.

<sup>1</sup> 'Reviews', 'About the Author' and 'Other Titles by the Author' pages all had double units, whereas pages like 'Dedications', 'Contents' and 'Acknowledgements' just had one.

It was not until the barista's second 'excuse me' that I clocked my order was ready. I reached into my jacket pocket for my wallet but as I retrieved it two pens and a stress ball fell out of the pocket and onto the carpet tiles. In that moment—too flustered to make any logical choices regarding the recovery of the escaped freebies—I found myself in an awkward angled T-like squat: my left hand, holding my card, reached for the contactless reader on the edge of the counter, as my right hand strained to pick up the two pens and stress ball which had now rolled under the cart. Once the items were retrieved and payment confirmed I shoved my wallet and the freebies back into their pockets, readjusted the totebag<sup>2</sup> which had slipped off my right shoulder and into my forearm joint, grabbed my latte and slinked away out of sight of the coffee cart. I found a small table among the seating area positioned towards the back corner of the atrium and sat down with a *gurthump*, exhaling the weight of my wasted morning.

I could see from the steam rising from the sip lid that the latte was still far too hot to drink. Habitually I reached inside my pocket for my phone, ready to fill the time absently scrolling, when my fingertips brushed against the freebies. I laid the goods on the table in front of me. I had a blue stress ball from the 'Foreword' stall, a pen cased in bright pink plastic from 'About the Author' and the second pen, this time cased in yellow plastic

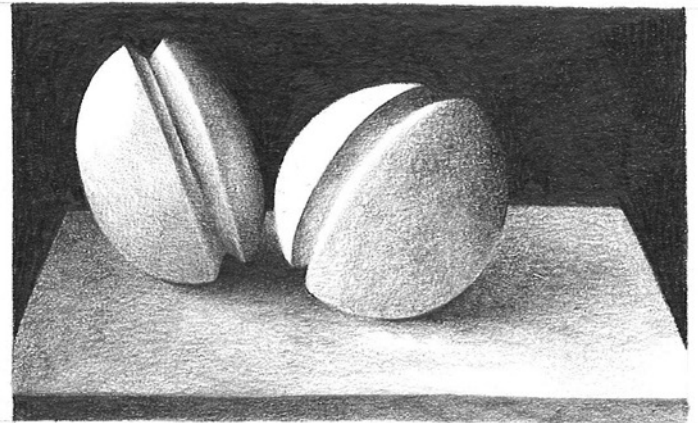
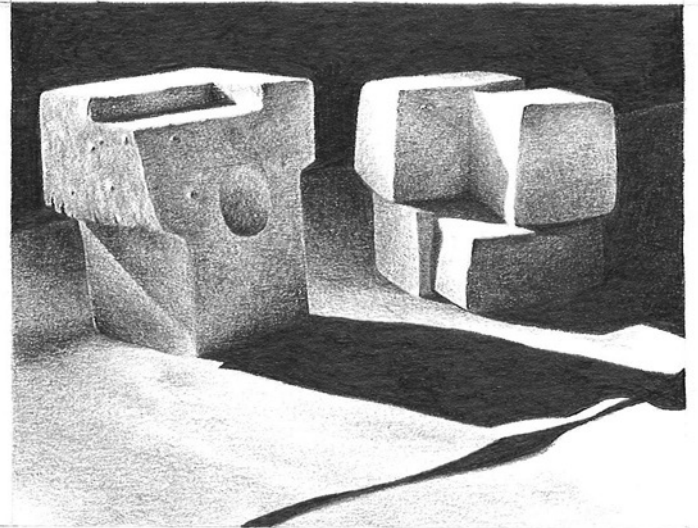
2 If you were to look in the totebag you would find a plethora of leaflets, documents and other branded freebies: 6 more pens, 1 more stress ball (this one however was shaped like a little brain rather than the standard ball shape), 3 sticky note pads, 1 triangular multi-highlighter pen, 1 trolley keyring, 2 pin badges and 1 A5 notebook (and the tote bag itself was also a freebie). And this was only what I had collected from the stalls on the perimeter, I was yet to explore the stalls in the centre of the atrium.

and twinned with a stylus pen<sup>3</sup> on the opposite end, was from 'Illustrations'. I had no use for the stylus pen but I liked the look of it. I made a mental note to give it to my colleague Minutes at our next team meeting. Minutes could make use of it and they might be interested to hear about the project Illustrations is working on too<sup>4</sup>. Feeling slightly less guilty for missing the workshops I reached for my latte and took a long swig. It was the perfect temperature.

3 I was initially surprised by the debut of the stylus pen into the freebie repertoire. Although seeing a new iteration always (secretly) excites me, I cynically assumed that such an upgrade of the classic clicker pen was a way for the larger paratextual groups to show off their extensive budgets. And while an element of this may be true I remembered that a lot of people now use tablets and touch screens to take notes. Digital note-taking is certainly up-and-coming, both in terms of waste reduction and accessibility, so why shouldn't these paratextual groups respond to a gap in the freebie market? I myself am still a paper notetaker. Piles of my past filled notepads grew into a trip hazard in the office so I had to request a whole storage room, just for me, to house them all. On some of the notepads the spiral spines are skewed and bent with age/use, others sit as pristine as the first day they joined the collection, and the others located towards the back of the room gather layers of dust. My colleague, Endnotes said they could show me a more structured system of cataloguing and archiving all my notes and references but I don't have time for a complete system overhaul. Plus I don't want anyone else sifting through my notes, even it was just temporary. I guess that is why I feel such an affinity with Dionne Brand's Blue Clerk. *The Blue Clerk* marshals the poet's ever-growing stacks of paper in fear of the left-hand pages finding their way onto the right-hand page—their content either too 'dangerous' or 'delicate and beautiful' for this world\*. Possibly more of my notes could find their way onto the right-hand pages, but this is not always what a text calls for. Still, I preserve them just in case. Within these reams of excess, as well as references, lie so many experiences, so many observations, so many (mis) understandings, so many learnings. I cannot risk being called upon to recall a citation or an experience and come up short. My role as Footnotes requires me to be precise and thorough—there is no room for error. Hence my filled notepad collection continues to grow.

\* Dionne Brand, *The Blue Clerk: Ars Poetica in 59 Versos* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p 4

4 On the train ride home from the conference I examined the other freebies more closely. I may have missed the workshops but my day was by no means fruitless. There I was, sat on the train surrounded by dozens of objects, each with a conversation attached to it. Networking, professional dialogue, call it what you will—I had enjoyed chatting with my fellow paratext colleagues and learning about their projects. I suppose that is the freebie economic model after all; an item in exchange for an interaction. Was it genius? Or just sad? I remain undecided.



an allan ramsay  
Timothea Armour

an allan ramsay  
that's an allan ramsay  
when you said allan ramsay it started going crazy  
allan ramsay is the author of the painting

are you the second earl  
are you alright are you getting anything

I think we could get some audibles in here  
I wouldn't be surprised if we could get some audibles in here

what you're doing sounds good

a dog barks  
a ghost dog  
ghost dog!  
ghost dog  
I wonder if they can hear that someone's under there  
a high pitched noise coming from a drain cover

I think this guy wants to talk to us  
we're all going to get round the table and try and talk to this guy  
tunefully humming  
a nice drone

I think he wants to talk to us

he definitely wants to speak to someone  
as it dies away try and harmonise

okay sir if you want to stop that now we're listening to you  
stop that for us now stop that nonsense

we're going to sit down and we're going to talk to you properly  
it's actually pushing on my shoulder  
do you want it to sound more minor  
just going to turn the gain up a bit

what was that

they were saying allan ramsay's the painter but she said allan  
ramsay and it went berserk  
every time we say his name  
he's a painter  
he's not the person in it he's the painter  
let's get the lights out  
I think we've got allan ramsay in here  
is this allan ramsay that we're speaking to  
oh there you go  
do you want to come and sit with us at the table  
we're going to join hands join fingers  
that is bizarre that is  
is there a spirit here by the name of allan ramsay  
is allan ramsay with us  
i'm going to make a sound spirit can you copy me please

shhh shh sh

can you knock twice for me  
on any surface that you choose  
is that not just people upstairs  
just to make it clear that that's not people moving upstairs, spirit,  
out of the deepest respect, can you knock twice please  
if you are sitting in that corner on that chair stamp your feet  
so we'll follow you in  
when you're ready

i'll just hit it  
did you hear that that was so clear  
hit it

not like that but thanks

that was really horrible  
did you just hear two knocks  
maybe  
I don't know what note that is  
I might put it in the middle  
okay

can you do that again for us spirit  
the room's getting darker and darker  
is there someone here that you feel connected with  
are you sensing anyone in the room with us  
which one  
one of the men in the portraits  
okay okay  
oh-kay  
can you make two very loud bangs on the table please  
assert order on the table  
come on, we're giving you energy  
do you want to show us how powerful you are  
wouldn't that be fabulous  
or move somebody's chair  
if there's one of you one knock, two of you two and so on  
come on you're a strong spirit  
yes you are

did you hear that  
you start  
you could also get us moving past the mic  
all together  
off you go

what was that  
are you walking around the room

just heard another one  
I don't know what it is but on my right arm near my

what you're doing sounds good

maybe we have to get out now  
anyone got any last  
any last requests  
before you get sacrificed

maybe just a tiny bit of wailing  
just a discordant kind of aaa

maybe  
as someone comes in on a note  
a tuning circle

as someone comes in on note try and clash with them  
a good thing to end on

sorry I laughed  
I'm sorry guys I'm sorry

it's quite difficult  
it's fine let's do it

don't know why I'm recording this bit  
i'll count you in  
if you pause slightly

right here we go  
is everyone ready  
3 2 1  
this isn't the wickerman  
this  
isn't  
the wickerman

## How far away are you? Jen Martin

A particular kind of heat is one that is stifling, suffocating, and this time you are pressed up to the ceiling. Your shoulder inches along the tight space, working with a twisted hip and a tensed butt cheek, a new prop. A spread of action and exertion. This *hard* is about surface and, of course, awkwardness. You are against something that does not give back, condensed droplets are its only response. Wrestling with yourself for comfort, the edges that you find can be both welcome and unwelcome. Firm grip. Grappling. Veins protrude letting you know they are working too, a hot damp forearm taking hits of pneumatic vibration. Looser skin wobbles and cushions, a thick fold of belly fat is taught in this position, it is pale and pink, bulging over your belt as it secures and indents, leaving red marks around your waist. Breath becomes shallow, held near to asphyxiation, as both arms try to let go, fall with gravity, but you hold, hold. Keep going.

Now you rest. Then with some finality to each move, each push, you build up this space around you, pulse again towards the wall, three toes recoil to keep from sliding. This repetitive burn. To look back out of the space you need to lie flat, force your neck, no headspace. A clammy chin and hot empty words flush down into your t-shirt, warm damp breath is comforting. You whistle long blows, try to travel the focused air to where your belly button disappears. To build this up has been exhausting. Sight becomes labour and to imagine this will all come down with

only half the flourish, half the sweat and struggle. A climactic moment alone, looking to your hand that has found some kind of finishing pose. Those still moments of thought. Wanting to take off your top and feel all the surfaces. Look at what the cooling does, as all the fine fair hairs rise to attend to a new environment. Thicker hair falls flat in neat curls, too wet. You want to smell more like yourself, less blossom.

I pass a light timber length down to someone who receives it. No gloves, just remember to clasp, clasp, firm and sure. If you are too soft and let it run through your hand, punctures come. Something goes under the skin, where other nerves are at work. There are more heart beats where you hadn't felt them before and other dripping. Caressing comes last, yes it is true, it is flush. This is done with fingertips, firm exploration, eyes inward. Feeling edges and depressions.

With ear defenders on, this clasp to your head is secure. You hear yourself and skin to skin contact is amplified as you fumble for light, the torch in your mouth throws out sloppy direction. You wish someone else was here. Can you hold this? You can't explain just now why each word is laboured. You hold your breath, steadying again. Now you're on your back again and temples cry out, sharp and dull moments. You are satisfied that these two things blur. How far away are you?

Spread out to stretch like an ordinary star, eyes in unfocus at the proximity of the ceiling, this partner reflects you, sharing the moment. You wish to ask someone to put their knee between your shoulder blades, a hand firm to each shoulder and to pull as if releasing something from the sternum.

There is this sensation: it is the tipping followed by falling. In a dream, you are on scaffolding and are looking down to where the struts meet land. The whole thing starts to go. You had this vision before you ever went anywhere near these things, the climax to dreams before the wake. Never to land but to know the drop well.

*A body I desire is secure in expression, the click of a firm clasp. A familiar grip, just that. I have fastened myself to this idea. A body serviceable. A body understood simply by a set of moves. The red creases and indentations are everywhere, suggestions of a position too long held.*



'until' scores

Misa Brzezicki

**until you become a quake**

stand up  
knowing where you are  
and start a tremble

soften  
the backs of your knees  
sink  
fuller into your feet  
push  
through the ground  
rebound

let it grow  
throw  
your trembling vertical axis

try  
closing your eyes  
try  
letting your head join in  
try  
yawning

amplify  
find a crescendo  
then

pause  
float  
hover

where are you now  
what repertoire of affect has trembling brought forth

what are you struggling to make sense of

what don't you know

where in your body does this reside as sensation  
maybe

in the backs of the shoulders  
eyebrows  
in the centre of the chest

between the  
eyebrows

can you

dilute the specificity of that sensation  
using your breath

in to feel it  
exactly  
where it is

out to send it  
wide

through neighbouring tissue  
towards outer edges

### until you are silhouetted in unknowing

can you

bring a friendly rigour to that unknowing

be really really interested in it

prepare

to be ready

for any

possible actions

be ready to

stay open

ready to be

okay

take in some breath  
no big deal

send it  
downwards

### until you swell

well-fed

let that breath escape out  
through the surface of your skin

all your skin  
all at once

and again  
and again  
and again  
and again

okay

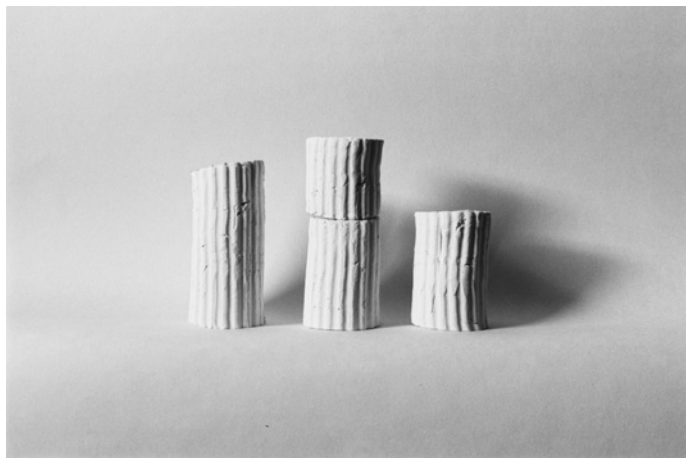
perhaps now you feel yourself in stillness

which is never stillness  
but can be

a readiness  
a readiness

to begin

## The House of Water Maria Howard



After a few days the rain stops but she remains upstairs, waiting for the water to drain away. It is in no rush, pulling back slowly from the house as the garden begins the task of absorbing this excess and putting it to use. She waits patiently, surrounded by her pile of things, becalmed, as time passes.

This time is slow and soft, quick and slippery, stretching and contracting without notice into something she can no longer recognise, let alone grasp. It layers and thickens on the surface of the day as the wind changes and brings with it the smell of submersion and rot, as well as the familiar pang of guilt at the thought that this house has escaped the worst of the flood.

Occasionally, she goes to the stairs to check the water line, to see if it is safe to presume a return. Sometimes she stands there for almost an hour, trying to make sense of an impossibility or losing herself in another facet of this place.

Which Christmas was it where the lights cut out, which Christmas where she sat high up in a tree to feel the pale sun on her face? Which Christmas was it where they played on the rug and ignored new toys to press each other's bruises?

The sound of the house creaking and shifting is constant. When it becomes too much to bear she goes up to the attic to check on the roof though there is not much to be discerned from the

inside. Looking out of the highest window she sees the river has made tributaries and channels out of streets and alleyways, entering through the doors and windows of ochre coloured houses that promised to preserve and contain but in the end gave way.

Filling squares and gardens, the flood strips the village of precious markers of time and status. Water always finds its level and in this way there has been a flattening.

In the street beneath the house things float by, and she pays attention to what rises to the top after an upheaval of this kind, as the river washes away the books in the library (float), the cars (sink), the geraniums (float) and even the statues (sink).

Looking south beyond the terracotta roofs of the village she can see the familiar line of water has become both horizon and middle ground as the river consumes the fields that divided it from the sea. She is on the edge of things.

Looking north she sees only the swamp of the garden, *my own private bayou*, as the heavy clouds obscure the view of mountains that had been a touchstone for so many years. The way the light was caught and transformed by their peaks throughout the day, every glimpse of them was not enough.

She returns to bed, uncertain of what is expected of her.

Notes

'Authorship can only be co-authorship'  
—Mario Biagioli

This is an extract from a longer text, entitled *The House of Water*. Many of the words and ideas are those of others. Some are italicised, others are harder to detect, in a bid to blur distinctions of ownership and to think around writing as communing and conversation, a collective activity as well as an individual one.

*water always finds its level*

'[Water] finds its own level, always. That is, water is always seeking balance and has a place it has to go.' From adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy*, a 'radical self-help' book inspired by Octavia Butler's work of speculative fiction, *The Parable of the Sower*. In the novel the protagonist develops a new religion where the main tenet is 'God is change'. brown argues that change is enacted by emergent patterns which she encourages us to seek out and study in order to build kinship and resistance in the face of the climate crisis.

*my own private bayou*

From Astrida Neimanis's *We Are All Bodies of Water*, a text that has been at the back of my mind since 2018. A nod also to Roy Orbison's *Blue Bayou*, and Timothea Armour's unpublished text based on the song, performed as part of Soft Shell at the Poetry Club, Glasgow in 2019.

—  
The image that appears alongside the text depicts a series of sculptures made in parallel with the thinking and writing of *The House of Water*. Made of unfired porcelain, they will dissolve if submerged in water.

## Flying from Prestwick

Rodrigo Vaiapraia

*A rose grows wild in the country / A tree grows tall as the sky /  
The wind blows wild in the country / And part of the wild,  
wild country, am I*

I try walking around to see if I can strip off this mood, but it doesn't really work out. My surroundings are corrupted when my feelings break down their door to the world. The air that holds and forms the days bears new colours with the texture of oil paint. Emerging new tones are so hot they are timeless. I spot a symbolic fountain, a perfect excuse to sit down and call my friend. The odd silhouette cast from the back might be a killer, but I pay no attention to whatever is around me. Night and day are laughable old terms. My friend had a wacky dream. She was a dog in a pub where a cloud of smoke invaded the room and suddenly everything smelled of lavender and everyone around her fell asleep because of beer, because of lager, because of Tennent's. I witness my attraction to alluring objects that tickle my ignorance. I witness beauty when the centre is threatened by the periphery. A sliding surface of jesmonite takes over the central lines of the picture framing it. In another room, unpredictable energy spurts from a tree growth, from a burr, from a wart, from a torn mushroom, from a spellbound mound, from the wild textures of paper. I have the audacity to believe I am a chameleon when I try hiding against the wall. Circulating in the space, I make up meanings as quickly as I undo them, examining the textures of these pieces as a platform for me to linger, agitate my brain, confront or escape. And so I write, always withholding the fear that I am making it all about myself.

*A heart beats wild in the country / And here with a dream  
in my heart / Part of the wild, wild country, am I*

In 1960, returning to the United States from his army national service, Elvis Presley landed in Glasgow's secondary airport, Prestwick, and changed the life of fan Ann Murphy: "I'll never forget the day I saw my idol face-to-face. I might have been a naive, Scottish 16-year-old but it changed my life forever. It might have been 50 years ago but it feels like yesterday." Prestwick is also the name of a collective art show at the New Glasgow

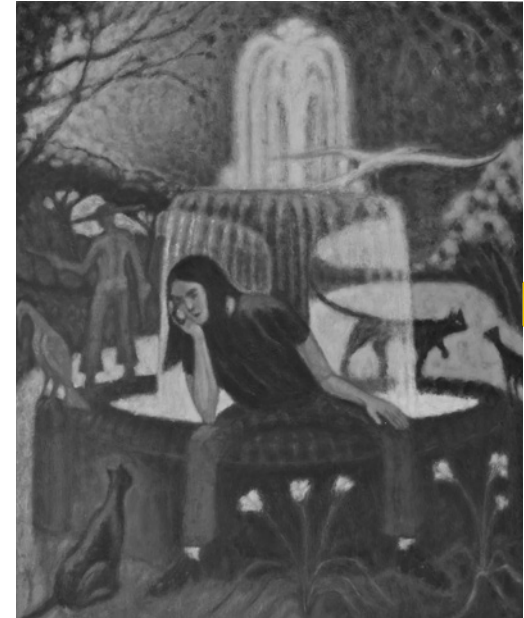
Society curated by the participating local artists. This exhibition of painting, drawing and sculpture happened between the 4th and the 6th of June, a week before Glasgow International, a bi-annual festival of visual art. In conversation with Stephen Polatch, he mentions that the intention was to pick a deliberately boring title for the show, like an 'alternative GI'. It needs to be said that even though big festivals can boast opportunities, they can also cause wreckage and asymmetry in the scene and a cultural drought in the rest of the year.

There is little incentive to come together with those who are next to me, right here, right now and to find out what they are up to—and most certainly the pandemic hasn't helped. The great realisation that it's not enough to do it yourself and for yourself grants me the power to move forward and to do it together, learning more about my fellow artists' work, looking at it and feeling it through, celebrating it along with my own, instead of framing it as a competitor.

In the wild country of Prestwick, there is not a sight of Elvis, but we look at each other and realise that the community is the real star.

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*Prestwick* was presented at New Glasgow Society (East) between 4–6 June 2021. The exhibition featured work by Coral Brookes, Ewan Murray, Felix Zandt, Hannah Reynolds, Isabella Widger, Isobel Neviazsky, Jessie Whiteley, Lilian Ptáček, Patrick McAlindon, Paul McKee, Rhett Leinster and Stephen Polatch.





Coral Brookes, 2021, monprint and jesmonite frame



Patrick McAlindon, Crazy in the Pub, 2021,  
oil on canvas



If you punctuate yourself as silence

Enxhi Mandija

The bridge receives the water folding—waxing waning—in its toothless cavities.

Growing up, we'd giggle at the misspelled words on shopping lists pinned on the fridge. The doubling letters consistently halved, like odd socks. Prosciuto. Mozarela. Fazoleti.

We'd tease, fluttering the loose pieces of paper in the air. How *cool* is that, a child can spell better than a grown up? These *easy* words.

tttttto. ozzzza-ellllla. zzzzo-etttttti.

Fierce sunlight.

When I learn to write my mother's tongue, I am told there is a letter you don't pronounce—mischievous e with two dots on its head, condemned to silence. Every other vowel claims its place in the mouth there is no hiding I am told, no space for maternal silence.

Enact a dieresis (ë) between what's spoken indoors and what's current outdoors, yet remain porous.

She cradles her hands with a half-smile  
rugged reddened frayed. They make  
a sound as they brush lightly  
on one another, loose threads of loose clothes catching  
along the cracks. No line I write makes it through  
untranslated. No line she utters makes it round  
untouched. Nothing the hands hold.

The comma-shaped figure almost encircles the canvas—its edge lined up with her shoulder and lower arm holding it open. Movement and *corposità* – corpo-reality. The canvas bulges and retreats, a bellowing sail. Darkness follows light, the turning of the plane of seeing.

Imagine her prolonged stasis, modelling for herself in the double-mirror, in that tension, arm raised, bust rotated, angled forwards. Strung. By her wrist, agitating, pulling movement—the rounded *gittata* of an arch.

In the arch, there is always a point of stillness that holds the whole structure together: a *chiave di volta*, what holds the opening and closing of the structure that turns around, holds beginning and ending within it, a key without which the balance would collapse. That stillness is the figure's listening gaze—activating possibility in the instant of imagination glimpsed, letting your membrane self vibrate in response to another vibration, which means tuning, which means the opposite of imposing one's gaze, which means being with. *Ti sento*—I hear and I feel you through the throbbing of my skin in the air next to yours, I a string.

The schwa is the most common vowel sound in the English language. Lacking a single graphic counterpart, it swerves around in rhythm and seism, in search of a curve a nerve a swivelling verse. Writing so, I *punctuate myself as silenc(ë)* that operates as a listening.<sup>1</sup>

1 *Can you punctuate yourself as silence?*

Anne Carson, *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry* (New York: Random House, 1995), p 94

*That silence that operates as a listening*

Erin Moure, 'But do we need a second language to translate?', *Jacket2.org* (Philadelphia: The Kelly Writers House, November 2012). <https://jacket2.org/commentary/do-we-need-know-second-language-translate> [accessed 18 July 2021]

In the portrait of herself as *Pittura*, Artemisia Gentileschi chooses to stay on the edge, in the hesitancy, in the before, the just about, the I am before painting. Not say it. Sound the space of it, twist her body in the shaft of light.<sup>2</sup>

Tongues I can't translate, speechlessness I can't perforate enter words as *material interferences* turning into *versi* lines of verse running away from me spilling over the blank page I sense myself writing as *indefinite and unbound weight*.<sup>3</sup> *Versi* of being as a punctuation a counter point, a stress in the metre of a poetry, an *opaque singularity* undulating on a river.<sup>4</sup> Writing a cry to sound the depth of the well between, *vers-ing* to accommodate unfixed language, dislodge speechlessness as paralysis as what makes you less than yourself and turn it outside of itself reverse river-s(ë) and

hold the spillage.

2 Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self-portrait as the Allegory of Painting (La Pittura)* c.1638-9, oil on canvas. London, Hampton Court Palace.

3 *material interferences*

Daniela Cascella, *Singed* (London: Equus Press, 2017), p 146

*Indefinite and / unbound weight*

Dionne Brand, *The Blue Clerk: Ars Poetica in 59 Versos* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), p 174

4 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997)

Considering.  
What the hands hold.

*something has passed us and kept going.*<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> *In the presence of a word that stops itself, in that silence, one has the feeling that something has passed us and kept going, that some possibility has got free*  
Anne Carson, 'Moly: Variations on the Right to Remain Silent', *A Public Space*,  
issue 07, 2008, p 186

Unrealised  
Elaine Y. J. Zheng



la  
Jessica Higgins

la—my tongue arches and lands against the front of my upper incisors, a slight compress and then a pull back and a tuck behind the lower. Throat of fleshy nodes and folding tissue opens—la.

An interlocking motion makes forms for language to enter. Limbic, nervous, tensile. Muscle matter in co-movement with vocal tissue and skeletal clamouring. A glinting articulation. *An event in the throat.*<sup>1</sup>

la—like the sound of the warm up, or the substitute for syllables of an always incomplete lyric as it pulses through the airwaves. Or in French and Spanish, the feminine *the*. In Portuguese, *lá* is *there*. Or in English, *la*, an old word for *oh look!*

Bodies exceed themselves in noise. In phonemes, glossemes, bass, percussion, a shock, a scream, a gasp. There are noises half formed and spontaneous. There are noises rehearsed and rotting. The noise might be imagined by the gut, or sore feet. The stomach pain or the dry throat. The headache and the hangover. Fleshy orchestral moments released in improvised ensembles of place.

A noise, by definition, is a sound, especially one that is loud or unpleasant, or that causes disturbances. There are those noises of interpellation which punctuate the ordinary. The stubborn loop of Althusser's police officer shouting *hey!* or the siren turning the corner which produces and marks the impending<sup>2</sup>. The ring of the telephone rattles through the house. It moves you to action. There is a voice, somewhere, and it wants a seat in your ear. There are those noises which nestle suspicion in the furrow of our brows. The telephone doubles down. A call in the middle of the night signals alarm, someone must be in trouble. Nerve endings tingle. And then, those new sounds. The fresh sounds. The unexpected creak of the boiler. We turn our heads towards it,

1 Michel De Certeau, 'Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias', *Representations*, No. 56. *Special Issue: The New Erudition*, (1996), 29-47, p 38

2 Josh Rios and Matt Joynt, 'The Siren and Social Space: An Essay in Fourteen Stanzas', *On/Rules* (Chicago: Shelf Shelf, 2019), p 74

ask the machinery a question with the sleight of our body.  
*What was that?*

In Anne Carson's reading of the triad of characters in Sophocles' tragedies, the action happens in *harrowing triangular situations where two characters bring pressure to bear on a third who is trapped between them and cracks open, or two knowledges that collide together to force out a third that nobody wanted to see.*<sup>3</sup> In this way, we can sense how all that we register in our ear canals, everything that gathers, dwells and ferments there, could bring pressure to bear on what comes from our mouths. Sounds like: *the music of the interaction.*<sup>4</sup>

This noisy relationality co-composes the ambience in phrases, refrains and bridges, and comes to form in talk, in laughter, in petition, in complaint, in uncontrollable eruptions of disgust when the HUH slips out during the meeting. Sometimes, our noises get spiky.

*What was that?*

Hear, a chorus of augmented breaths as they strike and curl on their way from our lungs and settle in some rhythmic continuous where minor disturbances accrue and hang, pollinating symphonic gestures of flail or attention. The bumblebee gathers nectar in its honey stomach and sweats from its chest to steady the hive. The wasp, on the other hand, chews wood, cardboard and other fibrous matter and in their chewing things over, they transform boxes and buildings into a gluey concrete for their nest. This is how emissions gather on the tongue and fortify an apparatus.

Hear, the sound of the jaw clawing at the mulch. *Like a food*

*language fills the mouth.*<sup>5</sup> *A rhythm of relation which confirms that each voice, as it is for the ear, demands at the same time an ear that is for the voice*<sup>6</sup> before it gets to the law, which like the grammar of the sentence and its defining order of relation determines our informational cadence.

On a road trip across the American southwest, late February 1989 David Wojnarowicz speaks into his tape recorder: *In these moments I hate language, I hate what words are like. I hate the idea of putting these preformed gestures on the tip of my tongue or through my lips or through the inside of my mouth, forming sounds to approximate something that's like a cyclone, or something that's like a flood, or something that's like a weather system that's out of control, that's dangerous, that's alarming.*<sup>7</sup>

Words are stewed, tempered and served in repetition, meanings gleaned among gummy membranes and carved in relief by the pressure of memory. These grafts of intonations stirring behind the tongue rehearse the melodies of *I'm hungry* or *I'm tired* in pure sound until the form of *un-*, *grrr*, *eeee* and *ire* begin to bear meaning. All inherited language and disinherited meanings gather in a tempered accent at those tentative meetings when *the voice is an instrument brought to bear in the occasion of its obligation*<sup>8</sup> and the world enters as it is and as it could become.

This voice, mine (so called), is spongy and prone to swerve, sung, gasped, stumbling, stuttering, mirroring like a habit—always repeating the last few lines—involuntary, caught, creaking at authority, being placed in authority, cracking. In the feel of a room arranged in false-courage and over-energetic blurts, we hear ourselves la-ing in the feedback of surplus noise. Caught in the echo and the hiss.

3 Anne Carson, A Lecture on Corners (2018)  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyMmCLRIQ0>> [accessed 1 November 2020]

4 Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p 186

5 Brandon LaBelle, 'Private Call - Public Speech: The Site of Language, The Language of Site', *Writing Aloud: The Sonics of Language*, ed. by Brandon LaBelle and Christ of Migone (California: Errant Bodies Press, 2001), p 64

6 Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p 170

7 David Wojnarowicz, *Weight of the Earth: The Tape Journals of David Wojnarowicz* (California: semiotext(e), 2018), p 148

8 De Certeau, (paraphrasing).

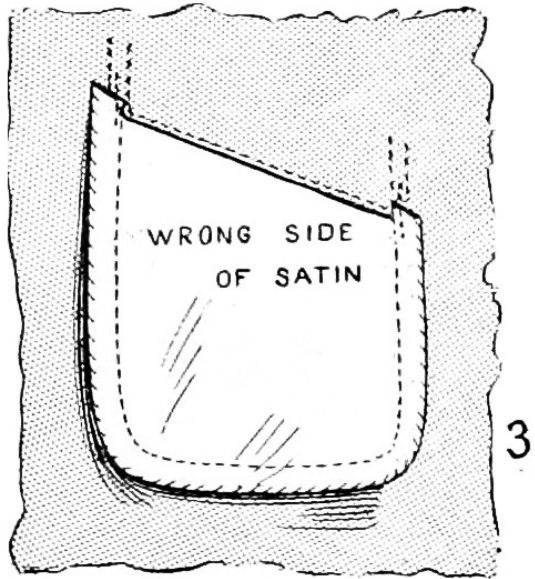
Noise can also describe *irregular fluctuations that accompany a transmitted electrical signal but are not part of it and tend to obscure it*. The radio static or glitch in the broadcast. In John Cheever's *The Enormous Radio*, the Westcott's radio breaks. With the replacement comes a climate of interference. Not only is the new radio physically enormous (they struggle to work out where to put it), its volume swells beyond their control. Slowly, the radio begins to receive voices from the apartment building and transmit them into Irene's day. She hears arguments, lullabies, theft, a party, illness, a fight. After the children go to school each day, she can't help but turn the radio on and listen to the building and its many worlds. These other worlds, in their banal cruelties and sweet passions are magnetic ruptures while grief swells in the static. *I've been listening all day and it's so depressing*, she says.

There is also the archaic definition of noise which is *to talk about or make known publicly*. Lauren Berlant defines noise in the making of political address as all that accompanies the transmission of speech. Here, an object might come to form in 'the' speech, but noise is all the extra in the broadcast. That which provides binding affects and determines a listening relation between power and public. A parasitical sucking and blowing punctuates the temporality of something like "speaking to the people" which sometimes *sounds like a lot of noise to me*.

The seasoning of the surplus of transmission when there's noise on the line and the archaic *to make known publicly* sings in tune with *the music of the interaction* and adds a little bit of *the subtle violence of the interaction*<sup>9</sup> into the mix. I like to think of noise as a wild texture of the duet which is speaking and listening. The extra-material which complicates the two positions. Which ornaments the mouth and the ear, those porous, capacious membranes.

9 LaBelle, p 70

## A Parallel Fractal Rachel Harris-Huffman



Emile Deroy's *La Petite Mendiant Rouse* is a nameless girl in a brown velvet jacket, an adamant street singer, [...] the figure of a magnificent impulse.<sup>1</sup> She had a name. Her name is gone, forgotten by history. In the painting, she is inactive beauty acted upon. In life she was an actor, not a beggar, singing and charming Deroy, Baudelaire, and their poet/painter/philosopher circle out of sense and money.

Very likely she did not care about their ostentatious ambitions. She had her own songs.<sup>2</sup> This feminine namelessness seeps outwards with undisciplined grandeur.<sup>3</sup>

From within her frame she defiantly asks, *How does a girl become what she is—with no knowledge, but all of her visceral autonomy?*<sup>4</sup>

Hazel says, *In her gaze I coincide with my own tradition. It is made up of multiple times, like bodies. And yet those bodies are now mostly nameless. In the shelter of this namelessness I have built various possible worlds—as many as I need. The girl made it possible to speak of myself.*<sup>5</sup>

1 Lisa Robertson, *The Baudelaire Fractal*, (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2020), p 104

2 Robertson, p 99

3 Robertson, p 105

4 Robertson, p 104

5 Robertson, p 108



I don't speak French like this singer and Hazel. My linguistics are shouted in **LE TIGRE** lyrics.

Kathleen Hanna, she's not a girl—she's the original riot grrrl. Her hair is black and she's singing, screaming—not begging. She's paving a riotous path carved out of queer angst and subversive bravado and freak feminist anomalies. She's free of a frame: not a girl in a painting—a grrrl on a CD cover, a grrrl with a microphone, a grrrl in a cheerleader skirt and a pink and black t-shirt.

### **LE CHANTEUR PUNK**

It was she, the object of my early twenty-something fascination, who called out by name, Gertrude Stein, Yoko Ono and Vaginal Davis, Cibo Matto, Kara Walker and Yayoi Kusama, and more, and finally, name un-enunciated but enveloped and carried in an infinite WE, to me. She said:

**WE WON'T STOP. PLEASE DON'T STOP.**<sup>6</sup>

Hazel says, *There is no nameless girl. There is no girl outside language. The girl is not an animal who goes aesthetically into the ground, as many philosophers would have it. (Rousseau chief among them.) The girl is an alarm. Her lust is always articulate.*<sup>7</sup>

The girl. The grrrl. The sound is percussive. The single syllable is a bass drum kick. Kathleen Hanna dances in front of the drum kit to a distorted guitar. Her voice is a punch, a screech, a scream. Her voice is shredded and out of tune. It's inhospitable. It's discordant. It's seductive. It's urgent.

*The girl is an alarm.*

On stage she speaks of a nineteen-nineties night when she and her friend Kurt Cobain turned out the lights in his apartment and defiled the place. She drunkenly, in Sharpie, wrote the

6 Le Tigre, 'Hot Topic', *Le Tigre* (London: Wiiiija Records, 1999)

7 Robertson, p 105

words, Kurt Smells Like Teen Spirit on a wall, accidentally naming Nirvana's ubiquitous anthem that brought grunge to the forefront of rock-and-roll. One night when Kathleen was working as a part-time stripper, a foray into owning her own erotics, some boys in a band asked her, Bikini Kill singer, "What can us guys do to help out you feminist girls?" a few hours before they slipped a bill into a jukebox, challenging her to crawl across a phallic stage like a black cat in heat for their sexual pleasure to the very song she inspired, and with a deep breath she accepted.

*The girl is not an animal. Her lust is always articulate.*

Kathleen, and Hazel and I love fashion and the ways in which it works. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Kathleen explained that 'second-wave feminism had successfully reclaimed the word "woman" but had left girls out, and many of her onstage style choices sprang from a desire to salvage a specific kind of girlhood'.<sup>8</sup>

*The girl is not a concept.*<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes her howling feminist theory and fuck-you attitude are a mask. Sometimes her performance is a soft shell protecting an underbelly of uncertainty. Even the original Riot Grrrl is, at times, unsure. Kathleen says,

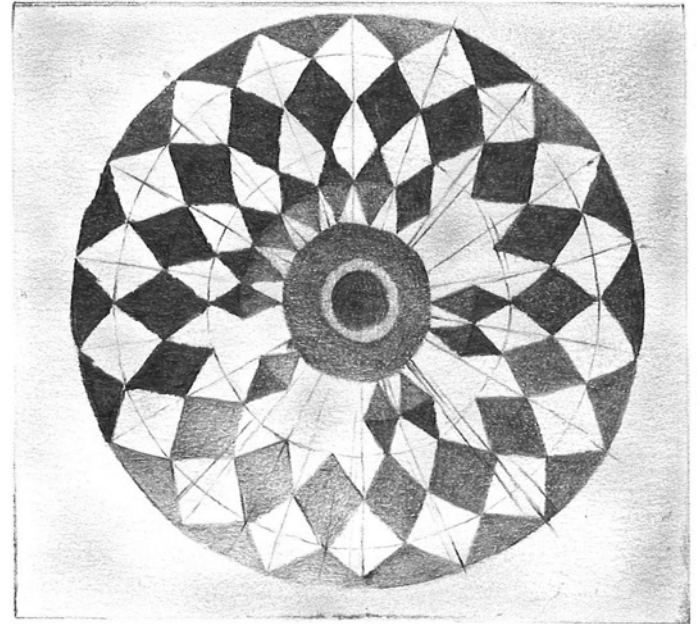
**I'M JUST A FUCKING PERSON WHO LIKES  
BEING CREATIVE.**<sup>10</sup>

So am I. So is Hazel. So is Lisa.  
We carry these things in common.  
We all want to make art and love and sentences.

8 Kathleen Hannah quoted in Alexandria Symonds, 'Kathleen Hanna Revisits her Riot Grrrl Past', *The New York Times Style Magazine*, 1, September 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/01/t-magazine/kathleen-hanna-bikini-kill-ocean-song.html>, [accessed 8 April 2021]

9 Robertson, p 105

10 Hannah in Symonds



I  
Heart  
Sara O'Brien

This begins at Desire. It begins in a space where once ailing bodies convalesced and where now other modes of recuperation take place. It begins with a peculiar propensity for a certain kind of precious. A penchant for the ritualistic. Matter made a chant. Bodily remnants made dear.

A carpenter, who, in dove—  
tailing a piece of wood, ran  
a chisel through  
his heart and  
died  
suddenly.

This begins again with a body, my body,  
another site. A body permeated by  
questions of possession. A body stirred  
through its encounter with matter and  
meaning coalesced in pockets, in chambers,  
of display. A body, my body, stirring,  
wavering, pulsing, disturbing. Faced  
with another corporeal fragment and the  
heaving, humming presence of the absence  
it provokes. A heart, just the heart. I feel  
the excess. Desire, too, is predicated on  
that which is absent. It is contingent. It is  
potential waiting to be released, discharged.

Container  
Margaret Salmon

The woman with a hole in her heart.  
Could the hole fit a camera?

This morning I scribbled this while he watched cartoons and she slowly dressed. Weekday mornings are tough, particularly in winter.

Housework. *What else is there? When you're the one with your finger in the dam.*

*There is no rest for the weary and always something to do.*

*Single mother, single income, working class, creative class, meritocracy, meritocrazy.*

There is no rest for the weary.

*If seated, one is chained to a screen or worrying about your kids being chained to theirs; but you're too tired to make cookies or play tag or build a volcano. Volcano! What a thing.*

A while back I wanted to speak about balconies—Lefevre mentions them—and it's always resonated. The hand holding camera as a balcony between the home (the self) and the world. Am I at home with my camera? Is holding it, using it, *housework*?

A while back I got into containers. (Camera as container?) Not into, but in to. I notice them everywhere.

At home, I've started thinking about the organising structures or *anti*-structures I create when doing 'housework'. Piles, clusters, loose configurations and rough collections.

I am a magician, an alchemist, a sculptor: cloth, ceramic, metal, wood, glass is transformed through my power. I make what is used... new and clean and ready.

*And I'm just wondering  
in order to assess reality,  
must you first escape it?*

The tracks of thoughts run from the head into the mouth or hand.

And the home is head, the hand balcony.

Ideas settle in my throat, on my tongue, emerge as spit, hit the pavement.

I raise my camera.

















## Proposal for Enchantment

Isabella Streffen

Prepare for the closest of all readings  
the reading where we crawl over the text  
the intravenous reading  
the leaky, intimate encounter with  
a text that flows into and through,  
gathering molecules, flavours, filters and frameworks  
before story and myth surge out.

Prepare for the performance of words of intent,  
of words of power, of things which slip into speech,  
of where speech does things beyond gesture.

Here, I will endeavour to make something  
that does not speak of enchantment but manifests enchantment.  
Maybe we'll find out what it means  
to be enchanted through the doing of it.  
Maybe we'll free ourselves from enchantment by the doing of it.  
Maybe we'll re-enchant ourselves by the doing of it.  
As though the word brings on the event  
as though the fact of the word is the destiny  
as if the act of swapping is meaning itself emerging  
as if the swapping is the precondition.

Where does this activation take place?  
In that neurological flicker that runs from brain to finger?

In reading, or re-reading, or re-writing  
where words slip from tongue to lip, ~~from~~ unsaid to spoken,  
~~from~~ hiatus to realisation, ~~from~~ precursor to utterance,  
~~from~~ nothing to something, ~~from~~ haunting to performance?

What then, is the relation between  
ritual and performative utterance?  
What is there to know of reading  
through the performance of enchanted rewriting?

In this study of remains that cannot be read,  
the forensic analyst finds the signs of self-awareness elusive.  
When conviviality is gone, we are ceremonially impoverished,  
sacrifice then is amorous persecution, something obsessive  
a repeated insect buzz, a goad.

This is our foundational story:  
mind and body are forced to acquiesce to power [divinity]  
even when our ceremonial conversation is blocked.

What is the difference between possessing and possession?  
One is forever in process, one is the reification of the process.  
It is always still happening and turning into the already-  
happened.  
Two stories that call to each other, that book-end each other,  
that answer each other.

The same protagonist, and—it seems—the same protagonist.  
A shadowy figure, little known beyond a name.  
These stories, this noise, this veil-covering-silence,  
each name simply another word for the same.

All the doublings, reappearances, coincidences,  
always the same protagonists.  
And if the names play allusive games,  
reference the meaning of one another?

There's no difference there either.  
The perfect surface of the divine is striated, cracked,  
its stories are released into the wild  
until it is only about the stories.

The sacred text, the authority, is founded on word play—  
a substitution is the spark.  
Exchange looms over the sacred, looms over art  
one for another [women, words, offerings] exchanged pairs.  
Quarrels. Somewhere between unassailable uniqueness  
and a substitution that is always and never,  
flares a conflict.

There are lists of names of which we know no more than their syllables.  
These names now haunt other names, current names

I am writing through, not writing on, I am reading straight to the page  
and yet  
and yet

honey, poppies, cypresses, the vertical divine, the hallucination  
of upwards  
things caught between things, beasts caught between  
GIFs and metamorphoses, ivory knots  
in each knot a god, a fetish, a thing of agency and power

A story never exists alone, it always comes as part of a web  
forming and reforming, towards and away from us.

[maybe there will be time to find what I mean by enchantment]

I know, and don't know what I am doing here  
I can't imagine something into being.  
I need something to push against. This.  
Edge closer to it, shave off a scalpel-silver  
slip closer to the Real.  
Expose, hide, re-conceal.

The text changes, the text changes, the text simply is change.  
The work that still remains for me to do.  
Is the edit live? Is it performative?  
Is it the-thing-itself-in-action?  
Force me to attend to the text. Another forcing.

A swift aside on this retelling: the importance of fidelity  
and which text is owed—source or reading?  
Say something of ourselves, say something of others  
point back to what is hidden.

WE ARE SHIFTING REGISTER. IT IS TIME TO SPEAK.

We swing.

Fast and hard and high in the gold light,  
and the air with bites of ice (ice-bite air)  
Our hair flutters like pennants (pennant hair)  
Our hair and our feet take turns to be the hallucinatory vertical.  
One day we will fall from the sky. But for now we swing.  
If you can't follow it doesn't matter.  
You do not have to understand.  
You just have to read and meaning will make itself.  
This is my evidence.

Another aside. About the text. This text of re-reading,  
re-telling, this thinking-out-from-under an enchantment,  
this digestion, this question, this capture,  
this answer, this hole in the discourse of mythography's  
masculine authority,  
this insertion, this resistance to the academic, this insistence,  
this interrogation of early semiotics, this turning over, this draft.

One day, I will have to say more but for now, on we go.

On we go with the text, deeper into our enchantment.  
I am performing reading straight onto the page  
close to the text, the closest of all readings  
a paeon, a love letter to the text  
to author, editor, translator  
a postmodern mythology  
stealing literature's method  
inserting myself into the text

The thing is, this reading, this closest of all readings,  
this re-reading, this capture, this reification of reading,  
well, this reading isn't like my other readings.  
It's a fantasy of what a reading could be or should be.  
My initial reading—impatient, skimming eyes on stalks  
(for the things that get stuck in them)—a sliding, distraction  
of a reading,

builds an impregnable fortress  
where inside is only me living through the text  
(that conjuring trick where the text is held like a spell against  
intrusion).  
It's not my usual reading.

It was meant to be a secret.  
It came into being for itself alone,  
*for extension of its dominion as an end in itself.*  
As an end unto itself. My guide shudders,  
teases me with things which are dangerous,  
where I always hear this phrase: money hoarding, dandyism,  
experimental research.  
I like how they come together, defining for a moment what it is  
to be dangerous.

These are the incidental moments where the text is at its most  
alluring.  
These are the tasty bits, the depth charges, the  
inconsequentialities  
that mean everything.

Everything repeats returns [reality] [illusion]  
comes back again [with a slight twist]

*We enter the mythical when we enter the realm of risk.  
Myth is the enchantment we generate in ourselves at such a moment.*

A magical bond that we self-tighten, a spell the soul casts  
on itself.  
This state I know. These are the myths.  
Beyond belief, credence, superstition or electricity.  
Myth escapes ritual like a genie escapes a bottle.  
Ritual is tied to gesture and gesture is limited.

burn your offerings  
pour your libations  
bow  
grease yourself all over so you can't stick  
compete in races  
eat  
copulate  
then what?

If you don't pass on your stories via priestly authority, they take on their own lives proliferate in multitudes, mixed up and incomprehensible.  
It's normal. There's no authority to turn to for confirmation.  
The flights of myth from ritual divine incursions are unexpected overflowings of reality.  
History is constantly overflowing leaving relics visible in its wake.  
We have lost an understanding of that which is implicit in myth without recourse to imagining distance.  
We see the inconceivable light years but no longer read the myths against the sky, picking up the echo of a figure of this god or that god, here or there.  
We know the myths are connected like fragrant rind connects an orange.  
We don't understand how but we accept it is so.  
Don't worry about these losses: remember to notice absences, undecipherability.  
We can still dress ourselves in these stories  
this tattered Siren's cloth  
where neither Sirens nor Heavens are visible.

The myths aren't waiting to be re-discovered or re-awakened.  
They are there to wake us in order to be seen by us.

So. The relationship between myth and novel.  
Myths are made up of actions that include their opposites,  
like blood flow.  
Novels are narratives deprived of variants, trying to recover  
them through depth,  
density [too much] in a single text.

The action of the novel moves towards its paradise, to the inclusion of its opposite.  
The myth possesses that of right. [I'm not sure what this signifies]

Your mythographer (those before, and me)  
lives in a perpetual state of chronological vertigo  
—it's true—which she pretends to want to resolve.  
Of course, she is not present here,

I am forcing her into the tiny hairline cracks  
that craze, fracture, fragment other's arguments.  
She is excluded until now.  
She is on one hand organising taxonomies  
and dynasties and everything gets more and more minute,  
as though looked at through a microscope.  
On the other hand, oh dear gods,  
the mess is inconceivable, all the threads,  
more and more muddled,  
the aftermath of a cat dropped in a sewing basket.

No mythographer ever imposes order on her material,  
though we all set out to try and in this we are faithful to myth.

Myth allows no system. The mythic gesture is a wave,  
a wave that drags unvanquished complications in its undertow,  
including the disorder from which the next mythical gesture is formed.

The myths were rewritten, refigured with omissions and additions, unobtrusive new variants that built up and thinned out the body of stories.  
So myth lives in literature.

We race swiftly from myth living in literature to art.  
Some old quote on art and perfection  
the kind of things that makes it impossible to divorce  
art from nature:  
*only then is art perfect*



the history of metamorphosis, first one thing then  
another, then another, constantly, never staying the same,  
the operation of the veil of epiphany and the  
fatal nature of reality.  
The isolated mythical event doesn't exist,  
they are always a repetition and revealed by a repetition.

There's never just one.

Myth shows the skeleton of the system for a little while,  
reveals the latent order covered in its seaweed  
the stuff bred by its own self-obscurance.  
As soon as you clutch at it, myth fans out into innumerable  
segments, desire paths. *Variant is the origin:*  
all the divergences are reflections.  
Meaning is made by difference. All the stories have similar  
elements, folds in the same cloth. We seek the hidden repetitions  
because they are there, because that's where the stuff is,  
it's where signification happens, veiled in shadows.

This is how we know the difference between a myth and a fiction:  
a fiction contains only single gestures, only single movements;  
a myth contains all versions of events all at once.  
when we feel this inconstancy, inconsistency, slippage, multitude  
that's when we know we are in the dimension of myth.

My variant fates:  
I'm abandoned,  
killed by an arrow as my lover watched.  
I killed myself after being abandoned.  
I'm shipwrecked and pregnant.  
I die in child-birth.  
I married a god  
rose to a new life among the constellations.  
I followed my god, fighting alongside his soldiers.  
I was turned to stone,

and I remain.  
All of these things am I  
more deaths than any other character  
I am all these things,  
corpse, constellation, pinioned and stone.

So this is how it begins:  
the characters, the actors change,  
destiny and narrative fountain out.  
It's always the same, no matter who the protagonists  
the swapping is the precondition of the story emerging.  
all the rest is just slippery radiance

now Crown me with stars  
and leave me there to shine out into the dark.

Author Biographies

Timothea Armour is an artist, writer (and bartender) living in Leith. She is interested in the ways in which social lives and networks of support can be documented in art, writing and through informal or amateur forms of knowledge and networks of distribution—anecdotes, music fandom, field recording.

Misa Brzezicki is a dancer and writer from Merseyside, moving through words and thinking about the ways that people, places and situations are written and read 'until you become a quake'<sup>1</sup>.

Daniela Cascella (Italy/UK) is a writer, researcher, lecturer and editor. Her work is concerned with forms and transformations of critical writing that inhabit, echo and are haunted by their subjects: literature, voices, concealments of the self. She is the author of three books in English: *Singed. Muted Voice-Transmissions, After The Fire* (Equus Press, 2017), *F.M.R.L. Footnotes, Mirages, Refrains and Leftovers of Writing Sound* (Zer0 Books, 2015) and *En Abîme: Listening, Reading, Writing. An Archival Fiction* (Zer0 Books, 2012). In 2018 she was awarded a three-year scholarship to undertake a Ph.D. in the Department of Art and Design at Sheffield Hallam University, where she has been developing a research project in the form of two books in which, through encounters with the prose of Alejandra Pizarnik, Cristina Campo, Roberto Calasso, the idea of 'chimeric' writing is practiced and theorised. Daniela has contributed to the programme throughout 2021-22 and invited the cohort to consider forms of chimeric writing.

Rachel Harris-Huffman is an artist with a hybrid researched-based practice across drawing, photography, collage, and writing. Additionally, she is an experienced arts administrator, having worked with regional public, private, and NGO arts organisations. Rachel lives and works between the US and the UK.

<sup>1</sup> Jack Halberstam, 'dance of darkness: a performance, a conversation, a rehearsal for the future' (Hope Mohr Bridge Project, 2017), accs. August 2021, <https://vimeo.com/247062899>

Laura Haynes (FKA Edbrook) is a writer, editor and researcher based in Glasgow. Her writing has been published by Sternberg Press, Berlin, *MuseMedusa: Review of Modern Literature and Art*, University of Montréal, and Material Press, Los Angeles. In 2017, with Susannah Thompson, she co-edited and contributed to, 'Art Writing, Paraliterature and Intrepid Forms of Practice', a special edition of the *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, published by Intellect. Laura is an editorial director of MAP Magazine and is programme leader of the Master of Letters in Art Writing at The Glasgow School of Art.

Jessica Higgins is an artist based in Glasgow. She is pre-occupied with the voice and its entanglement in social infrastructures, as well as performance as both medium and critical ground. Her work often takes form in moving image, live events and publications. Recent projects include *Hold Music (Denise's Ear)* a film which was produced as part of Edinburgh Art Festival's annual *Platform* exhibition; a variable set of sculptures, *la* which nestle in the architecture of the exhibition *The Naming of Things* at Castlefield Gallery through August and October; and a short sound piece and video *this fig* which was broadcast in the series *Pommel* through Nottingham Contemporary website. She is currently working on an adaptation of Hannah Weiner's *We Speak Silent* for Monitor Books' online series *Murmur*.

Maria Howard is a writer and artist based in Glasgow. Using water as a lens, her research explores the connections between memory, place and the climate crisis. In 2019 she was shortlisted for the Fitzcarraldo Essay Prize and received the Gillian Purvis Trust Award for New Writing. This year she was commended for her submission to the UEA New Forms Award. She is an associate editor for *Nothing Personal* magazine and also works as a freelance writer and translator.

James N. Hutchinson is an artist based in Glasgow. Recent exhibitions include *Untitled* (The Tetley, Leeds), *The Landis Museum* (Chapter Thirteen, Glasgow and CCA Derry-Londonderry) and *Rumours of a New Planet* (Collective, Edinburgh). He established and co-directed the curatorial agency The Salford Restoration

Office (Manchester, 2006-2010) with Lesley Young, and is a co-founder of the curatorial cooperative Chapter Thirteen (Glasgow, 2017-). He is a lecturer in Fine Art Critical Studies at The Glasgow School of Art and has been instrumental in the leadership of the MLitt Art Writing programme throughout 2020-21.

Enxhi Mandija is a writer and artist based in Glasgow. She graduated in English and History of Art from the University of Aberdeen in 2020. Her current work explores painting as a familial practice through the lens of cultural displacement. The opening image of this edition, *Synecdoche* (2021), is from Enxhi's Masters Project, *The Mechanics of a Metaphor*, a collection of prose poems and a series of paintings included as photographs.

Jen Martin is an artist from Wester Ross, based in Glasgow. Jen works in film, writing and sound. She exhibited video work at the Centre for Contemporary Art Glasgow in 2019, for the *Some things want to run* programme. Jen collaborates in film with artists, dancers, musicians, writers and performers.

Melissa McCarthy is the author of *Sharks, Death, Surfers: An Illustrated Companion* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019). She has written and spoken widely on art, literature and sharks in Glasgow, London, Berlin, and over the airwaves. Melissa visited The Glasgow School of Art in October 2019, presenting *Who's Dying Now?* as part of the Postgraduate Salon series and working with the Art Writing cohort on hybrid essaying and the watery depths of the archive.

Siuán Ní Dhochartaigh is an Irish artist and writer living in Glasgow. Siuán works from dreams, memories and other found materials in her writing. Her current work includes drawings, collages as well as digital forms. Siuán is interested in the tensions between tactility, presence, and productivity within neoliberal economic models and digital marketplaces.

Sara O'Brien is a writer based in Glasgow.

Molly May O'Leary is a writer and singer based in Dublin, Ireland. Previous projects include song and video *Destroyer*, and publications *dream day hope screen*, *Close* and *Notes from an Invigilator*. She is currently interested in exploring that which resides underneath civilisation, and adventuring into witchier, earthier and more enchanted terrains.

Megan Rudden is an artist and writer from Edinburgh, currently based in Glasgow. Through an interdisciplinary practice that moves across performance, object making, text and drawing, her work attempts to create non-linear, transhistorical narratives which consider the body as central to understanding our environment. With a background in sculpture, Megan is currently interested in how written words can evoke physical sensation and materiality. She has performed and exhibited at various locations across the UK, including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester and at the back of a car park in Dundee.

Margaret Salmon is an American artist who lives and works in Glasgow. Focusing on individuals in their everyday activities, she creates filmic portraits that weave together poetry and ethnography. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Hole*, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee (2018-2019); *Circle*, Tramway, Glasgow (2018); *Mm*, Beursschouwburg, Brussels (2018). Group exhibitions include: British Art Show 9 (2021-22); *The Machine That Kills Bad People*, ICA, London (2019); *La Riviere m'a dit*, Frac Il-de-France, Paris (2019); *The Artists Cinema*, Tate Britain (2016). Margaret a lecturer in Photography and Fine Art Critical Studies at The Glasgow School of Art and has been instrumental in the leadership of the MLitt Art Writing programme throughout 2020-21.

Isabella Streffen works on perception, dazzlement, the encounter and the slippery territories of flirtation. In pursuit of these ends she has illuminated Hadrian's Wall from end-to-end, staged a dogfight with prototype drones Hawk & Dove in the Library of Congress, camouflaged tourists in Monet's Garden, chased vampires in the Palais Garnier, followed Sophie Calle to Venice in a blonde wig, looked at the world through the lens

of a cow, performed in cabaret en unicorne, transformed apples into gold for the most deserving, taxonomized her desires and conducted a love affair with a bot. She received her PhD from Newcastle University in 2012, and currently convenes the MA Fine Art at De Montfort University. *Fabulae: How It Begins*, her book on mythography, will be published in 2022.

Rodrigo Vaiapraia (Setúbal, Portugal) writes songs and other things, often performing live and working in film and theatre projects. He earned his BA in Art History at the New University of Lisbon.

Alice Wadkin is a writer and youth worker based in Central Scotland. Her work, rooted in community learning and development, takes the form of critical and parodical writing. She has undertaken residencies at Hospitalfield (2018) and Scottish Sculpture Workshop (2017).

Morgan Williams is a writer who dabbles in experimental forms of written narrative and engages in various aspects of comedic performance.

Elaine Y. J. Zheng is a writer and a critic. Her work addresses identity formation, diaspora, and migration through a third culture perspective. More recently, she has been interested in nationalism, group identity, and the language of identification. She is a regular contributor to *thisistomorrow* and *Flash Art* magazine. Her writing has also appeared in the *Expanded Field Journal*, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Art Writing Graduate Programme  
The Glasgow School of Art

The Long Note

Exhibition and event as part of the School of Fine Art Postgraduate Showcase at The Glasgow School of Art Stow Building, 20 – 26 August 2021, and including an Art Writing Graduate Programme evening of readings and performance in the open courtyard of David Dale Gallery and Studios, Glasgow, 24 August 2021.

Class of 2020

Timothea Armour  
Lewis Gibb  
Jessica Higgins  
Maria Howard

Class of 2021

Misa Brzezicki  
Rachel Harris-Huffman  
Enxhi Mandija  
Jen Martin  
Siuán Ní Dhochartaigh  
Sara O'Brien  
Molly May O'Leary  
Megan Rudden  
Rodrigo Vaiapraia  
Alice Wadkin  
Morgan Williams  
Elaine Y. J. Zheng

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