

# **DELIVERED BY DRONES**

**UCLA Creative Writing**

**2013-14**

## PILOTS:

gracia amos  
aman batra  
lucy blagg  
anna chen  
lawrence chen  
rosie diaz  
stephanie gorman  
gavin halm  
faith kearns  
zane lowry  
jules nguyen  
brian kim stefans  
cameron wu  
pricilla yap

# ORDNANCE:

1  
3  
6  
7  
10  
17  
19  
23  
27  
30  
32  
36  
41  
48



# GIRL GIRL

## liminality

Daddy stop playing pretend  
I don't like this game  
anymore. Let me control my desire  
to breathe and be the wolf and you can be vermillion,  
still. Each time you haunt  
me I wake aching and covered in ink. You read me a story

in which a man wears a dress. Instead of that story  
ours is the kind you read to a skeleton, so we pretend  
to die, reincarnate, and haunt  
each iteration of ourselves. A guessing game.  
Keep me under for minutes, with vermillion  
in sight and I'm over before my desire.

This is a real last time. I can promise only desire,  
years later and us - a bed time story  
which may harm children or pregnant women. The vermillion  
on my sheets means an accident has occurred in our pretend  
forest. This is fair game  
and there isn't a single lonely cabin I wouldn't haunt.

Let's get covered in leaves and scream and haunt  
the silent, shivering sheep behind high fences. Caught with the desire  
to crawl into your stomach I play the waiting game.  
I won't sleep for days. Tell me a story  
in which we survive so I can pretend  
you aren't the wolf when a vermillion

moth on my pillow tells me what else you've done. Vermillion  
is the only thing I can think of. It haunts  
my boney branches with phantom sensations, like your pretend  
scratching on my door. Our desire  
drives the moth away to tell our story  
to grandmother, who says "This is not a nice game."

This is not a nice game.  
I lost my senses to the vermillion  
in this forest, and I will follow you until your story  
becomes mine and I find your mouth and haunt  
your body. Desire  
darkens our quiet forest when we play pretend.

Daddy stop leaving. Tell me a sad story and pretend  
this game will never end with us in vermillion.  
More than wolves haunt us, daddy, let me hide in desire.

## fight or flight

Repeat an hour. Dip me in beeswax.  
Light me on fire. I wish my cactus  
looked more like Noel Fielding.

Inanna, reclining on the Lion's back  
observes her supplicants with grandeur.  
Her supplicants roar, oh oh oh.

I am going to turn your body into poetry  
so baby lock the door and kill the lights.  
Freeze-dried brains incite tender nights.

This shit could get real real quick.  
Prelude the first: why are teenagers so sexy?  
Prelude the second: how do you feel about cross-dressing?

Go away you fat fuck! You look like Reptar.  
Where are the communists when you need them?  
It was an iconic year. Virginity had never been so ironic.

Let's talk about liquor—  
and how when I was six  
there was definitely an -ish  
to follow  
Licorice  
was my always my favorite  
because it reminded me that some things  
will never stop tasting sweet.

Now I'd rather follow bitter liquor  
with a sweet chaser  
to chase away  
the bittersweet days  
I can barely pronounce my name.

Fuck it.

Let's take a shot to Nothing Was The Same  
and probably never will be.  
There's no alcohol in my system, just music  
and this addiction, poetry.

But what does that say about me?

21 hours from being 21  
and missing you has already begun.

You're the only man I've ever trusted  
and this Daddy's little girl  
has been feelin' a little bit rusted.

I need you,  
but I can't even touch you,  
so I keep lists, lists of things I cannot touch:

Guavas, green with succulent centers,  
that grew in our front yard next to the  
jasmines and fallen rose petals.

How you would eat wild flowers in East Africa.

The Lion King, half because it is the most depressing fucking movie  
to be created by Disney and half because I would always say "we're  
pals, right?"

Your cane, black with silver scrapings, ice-cold iron, which, to me,  
was somewhat of a po-go stick that could never leap,

the Liverpool scarf you never let me keep,  
Laker gear that now hangs at the deep end of my closet,  
National geographic magazines still sent to our doorstep,  
Daily Show recordings, foot-long subs, and McDonald's apple pie;  
the Monte Blanc pen I only used on occasion,  
your million and one art supplies, organized by oil and water  
and pastel and brush and painter  
and you, everywhere  
and nowhere at all.

So I revisit Biglow Street quite often  
in thoughts, lullabies, and charcoal  
colored memories, in lucid dreams in which I'm floating  
into nothing but open sky.

I wonder what you'd think if you saw me now?  
Am I still as beautiful as the jasmines and fallen rose petals  
that decorated the grass on our front lawn?  
Or am I too decorated to be as natural as a flower?  
My lips are deceptively pink and my eyes are covered in black ink  
I wonder if you saw me, I wonder what you'd think  
I have changed far too much to be considered the same,  
yet I keep dreaming of things I can't change.

I dream and I pretend that Biglow Street will be mine again.  
though I do not fit in with the peaceful dog walkers,  
and SUV automobiles, though I am no longer lunch boxes,  
fruit snacks, and Sunday afternoons.  
I am much bigger and much less sure of myself

I continue to dream.  
I am standing, standing underneath a guava tree,  
standing with you right next to me.

>AMAN BATRA<

## contemporary gypsy

Summer shirts hang off my shoulders  
and high-low skirts hug my waist.  
I play boys like tambourines-  
slap my hands on drumheads  
just to hear the music, I move  
to plastic beats.



(three untitled poems)

LUCY

We go together like Sonny and Cher.  
We go together like cherimoya and Cheyenne,  
like garbage and a garbage can,  
like a two-car garage and a parked sedan.

We go together like a Chevrolet and a Che Guevara  
t-shirt. We go together like neoprene and a preacher.

I am insufferable.  
And you are unutterable.  
I am a trilled r.  
I am a palatal fricative,  
and you are the palace guard.

You are a glue sniffer,  
and I am affixed to this spot  
by your sneeze.

BLAGG

Every abandoned project a wasted effort  
Every good boy a morning prayer  
Every living thing a dead giveaway  
Every morning a broken record  
Every morning a record broken  
Every morning a limited mean  
Every wasted effort a means to live  
Every home an unlimited data plan  
Every body an expert  
Every expectant mother a dead language  
Every good boy a home body  
Every prayer an abandoned project

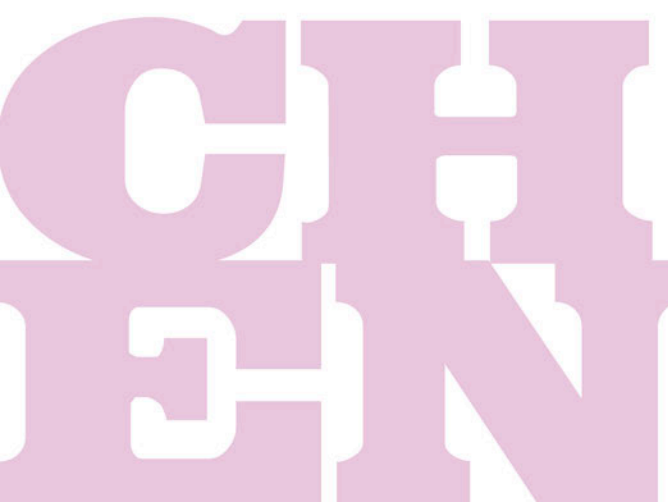


## dissociate

erupt from this fragile prison  
of flesh feel  
brushstrokes of leaves  
slip through the sleeves  
of the soul  
as it swims in midnight blue

a mind lost perfectly  
in cosmic consciousness  
in chimeric narration a carcass  
left in the hands  
of another and plans  
to the fire of fate

for the others  
to dissociate is  
a great ill in appearance  
for them it seems worth the trade:  
a soul for a sliver  
of coherence



## your stars are stuttering. . .

Your stars are stuttering,  
Oh, wand'ring child!  
Eyes pale with metropolitan  
fairies twinkling wildly  
like teeth of a feverish wolf.

## primitive

the golden tremolo of fireflies  
the night sky alight alive  
infinity of eyes the blinking  
the sinking of "society" "civil" "wishful thinking"

remembering some-nothing  
but being creating  
chasing what's here facing fear  
the year a fading figure  
bound by nonexistent numbers

darkness swallows defined lines  
the air is glass fast asleep  
the sheep dream on repeat  
and I oh I am evermore complete

## serve

I am here with unwatered time  
anxious leisure, pleasure meter  
dropping  
seizure of dreams in a green  
bottle I got from the corner shop

Each day each dream  
it seems the seams are ripping in my heart  
in camouflage I played my part  
and again I'm here  
at delirium's feet

>ANNA CHEN<

Kissing through the window pane  
it's you and I— oh my insane  
mind! How you've trapped me  
now at half past adolescence  
And here  
in the crevices  
of my memory  
the machine gun's laughing  
the ratta-ta-ta  
like hail  
on the rain-proof  
tin roof  
where they serve  
freeze-dried foods  
to the pride of the nation  
with silverware and artillery and  
eternal damnation

## summer days troll but never get cold

I got my throwback jersey on in the backyard let the sizzling heat flow  
Through the metal, coal grill. Thick smoke got my eyes blown  
But still cooked up A beef, filet mignon. Trey Songz's  
Wompin' on the radio. Partying with Mario and scary movies with my girl  
Are exactly what my summer's for. Staying up late becomes a ritual.  
Mom and Dad still ridicule that I'm still awake at four  
Drowsing in the soothing rhythm out my earphones.

Then there are those summer nights. Don't even get me started.  
Somebody always, ALWAYS yelling "Let's get retarded!"  
That's never my intention but you know how these nights proceed  
Henny and Remi will guarantee you tipsy.  
A sip and another sip, even I'd forget me  
In the construction of my mind, lost into a world of make-believe.  
The fleeting night ultimately chooses tricks over treats  
Unleashing upon me the summer night frenzy.

Next morn I find myself on a couch with demented fragments of memories  
Struggling to piece together last night's ob-scene-ries.  
Every attempt that I make, my crackled skull screams in agony  
But still remembering hangover 101, pho dac biet, the remedy.  
I open my eyes, daisy, my vision blurry.  
Licked my teeth, cheesy, fucken all grimy.  
Let me tell you there's nothing like them summer mornings  
When you wake up looking shitty and feeling sorry.

# lady? luck

Clayed coins clattered  
Around like dominoes in the smoke-filled room.  
Are these the sounds of confidence and prudence  
Or of frustration and fear?  
I did not know.

The lone upright vested oriental asked  
“Sir, are you in this round?”

\*Pause\*

Slowly her inquiring expression  
Warped into a set of trenchant stares  
As if she was capable of x-raying my thoughts  
With her hissings near.

In.

I just had to.

An uneasiness trembled through my shaky finger tips  
As my nails scraped along the plastic corners.  
This feeling doesn't sit right in my stomach but

\*Flip\*

The faces of the queens  
Never looked so elegant in my life.

There and then

I knew she was with me.

Win.

With her I am invincible

But also vulnerable.

She whispers in my ears

“It's all now or none later. “

Wild but sure I listened to her and staked all-in

Except this time, I pulled up my hand in quick confidence.

\*Bust\*

Without her, even chance canceled.  
Truth be told, she's incredibly irresponsible.  
Sometime she's here  
Sometime she's there  
Sometime she cares.  
It's so unfair.

What a flirt.

>LAWRENCE CHEN<

## orient express

I drive further down the road east of the Angles.  
Exit off the 10 as letters being to morph.  
Took notice of the strange clouds so I rolled down the window.  
What are those weird characters on the billboards?  
By the second, everything I hear grows more bilingual  
And that's when my stomach begins to grumble.  
Suddenly I'm craving for something a bit more oriental  
Perhaps with a teeny hint of spicy Latino.

I continued down the road, following the slow traffic flow.  
Vroom! An Evo blasts me by just to catch yellow.  
Atlantic, Garfield, New or Del Mar...  
Hm, which one should I take again  
If I want a restaurant above four stars?  
Confused by the markets and the storefronts,  
I took a random left got on Valley Boulevard.

I pulled up to a lot looking for a spot.  
Finally found one but the space was blocked.  
Tail in first on the gravelly tar.  
I squeezed in tightly and made it out the car.  
Looked over my shoulder, please don't even start.  
Jeez, who taught you how to drive? Grandma Park?

Ring ring. The sensor on the door announces my arrival.  
All eyes fell on me as soon as the door closed.  
I look around and notice the only other white face,  
But somehow, the cosmo tells me I'm in the right place  
For a scrumptious meal of splendid tastes  
Under the Garden canopy's chilly shade.

The server attended with a cold attitude  
But I was well-compensated with the orgasmic food.  
One bite after another, I just couldn't stop myself.  
For this I will run to the end of earth, even hell.  
Plump and juicy, this is dank Hainan Chicken.  
Oh food cupid, please save me of this torture  
For I am love-stricken.



>LAWRENCE CHEN<

## i ain't no joke

Every morn' I wake on the go,  
Then brush my teeth and dress in clothes.  
Put on two shoes, sleep in my bones,  
Insert ear phones and nod to the flow.  
Hop on the bus and drive down the road,  
Been going to school without a federal loan.  
So let me tell you, I ain't no joke.

Got in to UCLA I got stoked  
But never thought that I will choke.  
Got back up myself off all four  
Cause my Dad taught me with a moral worth.  
Grew up with a stick, a belt, and a bruise.  
Although it was rough, tough love, wasn't cruel,  
So let me tell you, I ain't no joke.

Beneath the frame, a draining pain  
Prods sharply against my knee like prickly rain.  
Is it the same ol? Nah, everyday is a new day.  
Bury the hatchet in the past fade away, fade away.  
I Rose up to The Game, champion LeBron James.  
Untamable cause I – the bulldozing freight train.  
So let me tell you, I ain't no joke.

# fe bruin

Wake up early in the morning ready to train  
While properly attired for the cool weather in the fall.  
Slowly perspiring arriving on campus, waiting on Wooden  
Center to open its door to the public.  
Five thirty arrives and shines the morning light  
For the proud, proud patron known as the Bruin.

Access granted to those who present a Bruin  
Card at the door. Systematic entrance working like a train.  
One by one we go through excited, feeling ever-so light  
Looking forward to a day without failure hoping not to fall  
Off the treadmill in front of the public  
For it'd be a shame to Coach Wooden.

Proceed to jumping boxes, particularly wooden.  
One thousand jumps is nothing for a Bruin,  
Setting an example for the young, the peer, and the public.  
The pyramid of success lies within our persistence to train.  
We always give it all learning from our fall  
For skills to mediate fights while beaming hopeful rays of light.

Only doing ten pounds, why so light?  
Sky is the limit, meeting the Wooden  
Standard set by the contract commencing fall.  
A contract that binds the Bruin  
To honor his integrity to educate, learn, and train  
For a life of service favoring the greater good of the public.

Heavy lifting in the private and the public  
May not always ensure lime light.  
Give up or stay? Take the high road or the train  
Home? Reflect in the glasses of Coach Wooden.  
He probably would say, "Live it up as a hungry Bruin,  
And into a new wonderful world you'll fall."

Another school year begins this fall.  
UCLA remains one of the best school, public.  
Enter cubs that are not yet fully-grown Bruin.  
May your whole journey here shed a career path to light.  
Greats have come before Wooden  
And after. This succession goes on like a never-ending train.

Overcome the scrutiny of the public and the fall.  
Train diligently and be that Golden Bruin  
Who shines under the brightest light in honor of our dear  
Coach John Wooden.

>LAWRENCE CHEN<

## chocolate éclairs

Chocolate éclairs fill the frosted pink box.  
Effing frosting has you wondering,  
What will the diabetic elders eat,  
Emulsion paint, perhaps?

What's your major they ask  
English is the key, you explain.  
You'll end up as a footman  
They say, as a forkful of puff pastry  
Fuels their rotten game.

Enter a galleria full of gestures,  
Mostly from grief,  
Remember, we are wiser, they haunt,  
Hence you're the fool who thinks  
"I'm an Impressionist"

Was that intentional, you wonder?  
As you make your way astray towards  
Irish coffee that soothes more than words,  
You're more than knee-deep  
In this literature shit.

I'm late, I've let long-term majesties  
Manipulate my time at no one's party.  
So I'll slip into my nightdress,  
Occupy an open day the next,  
Overturn their words and lay at rest.

Pale as I please, discard their prophecies  
Of me; keep their loving words at queue  
And quick, take a book and read about  
The Prince & Me.  
It's a royal affair.

## (as seen through moments of hunger pangs and schizophrenia)

I made a point of eating so fast  
I never kept the other people waiting  
who generally ordered only chef's salad  
and grapefruit juice because they were trying to reduce.  
Almost everybody I met in New York was trying to reduce.

This poet ate his salad with his fingers,  
leaf by leaf, while talking to me about  
the antithesis of nature and art.

I couldn't take my eyes off the pale,  
stubby white fingers traveling back and forth  
from the poet's salad bowl to the poet's mouth  
with one dripping lettuce leaf after another.

Nobody giggled or whispered rude remarks.  
The poet made eating salad with your fingers  
seem to be the only natural and sensible thing to do.

"How was the fur show?" I asked Betsy,  
when I was no longer worried about  
competition over my caviar.

I scraped the last few salty black eggs from the dish  
with my soup spoon and licked it clean.

I'd discovered, after a lot of extreme apprehension  
about what spoons to use, (or no spoon at all)  
that if you do something incorrect at table with a certain arrogance,  
as if you knew perfectly well you were doing it properly,  
you can get away with it and nobody will think  
you are bad-mannered or poorly brought up.

They will think you are original and very witty.

# STREET PHENOMENA

## the airport poems

# GOING DOWN AN

### Sassy Airport Security

Please,  
Hold onto your attitude  
While you take off your shoes

I may work at TSA  
But I don't need  
your baggage

\*snap snap snap\*

### Know-it-all X-Ray Machine

I have seen all walks of life  
walk and pace and hobble  
and scoot by in electric wheelchairs.  
Whether they are led by children  
or seeing-eye dogs  
or plans for big business  
everyone must go through me  
and enter my big fat electronic whale belly  
that is bullet proof, impenetrable....  
Yet sensitive to liquid over 8 ounces.

# after her!

One word

Plays a quiet game

another word

steps in,

two words

play (nice)

side by side.

The game:

*word play.*

*words* play

casual,

conceptual,

contingent.

All of the sudden

worlds play!

disagreements occur.

arguments happen. f

ighting words

step in, decked in,

drug paraphernalia.

Flashing teeth,

razors blades,

knives...

(Run-on, get her!)

“GO AWAY!

LEAVE ME

alone.”

I am a good  
Word  
play nice.

Look at my vowels  
Shapely and  
Round. Delicate,  
Simple,  
Innocent enough; I mean,  
So much  
To someone.

Two words  
run away  
to  
get  
her.



## the doritos day massacre

Today I saw before my eyes  
a man hold his dignity  
and a bag of chips.

A co-worker who suffers  
from psychosis took the bag  
and crumpled it, screaming, “Did you get those  
from the back office? Those are mine!”

So crunch, crunch, crunch,  
made the sound of a dozen fragile bodies,  
already broken, compressed into dust  
by the hands of malicious intent.

These days there is no respect  
for the last and holy tortilla chip  
that waits strong and alone in silver home,  
beckoning with its powder of cheddar prophecy.

The practice of delayed gratification  
proves fatal and the vicious stranger  
with big hands and greed  
gets to you first.

In a court of law, with a twisted smirk,  
the wrongdoer will utter in confidence,

“That chip deserved everything he got.”

GAV  
IN

## scene fragment (from kielowski)

Passenger train,  
car:

slow motion stop–start.

The landscape bleeds  
through a vertical fissure in the window.

Cut two:  
a girl's face.  
One hers, one

another's  
same.

Glass ball, toy:

held between fingers,  
stars embedded–

its zoetrope, axial-swirl  
throws buildings, trees  
and the universe

upside

down.

Stars into houses,  
houses into stars.

HAAL

# a new system

1. Because her attention
  - A. fissured,
  - C. was now a new system,
2. Tributaries of thought
  - A. shuffled,
  - B. contrasted;
    - i. because an instant is a container of
    - ii. what is lost.
    - iii. *Amyloid precursor*
3. As a description of
  - A. false reference:
  - C. an array (
    - i. iteration of
    - iii. lacunae.)
4. Shown tears (*accretion?*),
  - A. gathered as a wellspring
  - B. (*love*)
  - C.
- 5.
6. Cities
  - A. overlay themselves
    - ii.
  - B. get lost
  - C. in her mind,
    - iii.
  - D. fall in love
    - i. with different names
    - ii. (swap places),
7. So that communication
  - A. stops dead.
  - D.
  - E.
    - i. (forgets)
    - iii. my face.

# memorandum

Green into

red–

invisible directive:

chemical messages  
transport song

into craving

and motion.

*So as not to begin again?*

Shadows of leaves

question  
a tendency

towards

revelation.

## the quarry jumpers

Jumpers released,

as if they were  
swallows

mining gravity  
from the air.

Thoughts,

not wanting to be seen,

are recorded only  
as sound

*splash*

(synaptic  
transmission)

# friday morning

We picked him up, my mother and I,  
in our fancy old Bentley my father  
had purchased at an auction back East,

before my time, something infinite  
there in the darkness I cannot place,  
shining like some distant promontory,

but he had trouble finding the door  
for a strangely prolonged period of time,  
his hand stretching out, contorting space.

We drove into the mountains above  
Santa Cruz where my school was placed  
amongst the distant trees and dusty earth,

this stranger and I in the back seat;  
me, staring at him while he looked blankly  
ahead, immovable within a world, whirling.

“I can smell them”, he said. “What do you smell?”  
“The trees in the forest. I see them in my mind,  
speeding past us. It’s impossible to discern each leaf.”

I turned to look out the window, saturating  
my eyes with incoming movement.  
“Did you know that what you see in your mind

is a kind of ‘other place’? It is not simply  
a photograph or movie shown on the inside,  
but a kind of alternate universe, forming

constantly, with its own rules, like a game  
no one understands, but blindly played with  
varying degrees of confidence and promise.”

He tuned as he spoke, towards me, his eyes  
a mixture of surface non-movement, yet piercing,  
as if they could puncture past my face.

*The car started to spin, then went dark.*

>GAVIN HALM<

## solstice sestina

Incense named “Solstice”, and light music, and I am lying  
Prostrate on the floor in meditation, feeling  
Spirit play gently with my hair like  
A lover, following a woman’s hummingbird voice  
Guide me through Fibonacci spirals, meeting deities  
Come out of retirement just to see us lying there.

Freya and Isis and Quetzalcoatl and Archangel Michael are there  
Among others, depending on your preference, no point lying  
You can use “God, Goddess All that Is” if specific deities  
Give you an icky, selective, un-liberal feeling.  
“You’re approaching a cave. At the door you meet a guide.” says the voice  
The thing I picture is a horse. “It can be anything you like.”

I change it to a dragon, an angel, something a little more like  
A creature you’d want taking you through the mysterious “there”  
A coyote. A bear. A mighty eagle with a human voice.  
Something like that great benevolent cyclops I imagine lying  
Next to Barbara over there. Though I have a feeling  
He’s probably not a favorite among the other deities.

I could’ve chosen Thor, but only assholes take actual deities  
Or worse, famous historical figures, to do grunt work like  
Be their spirit guide. There’s nothing like the oppressive feeling  
Of judgment from ten unconditionally loving lightworkers, there  
To connect, when you announce-- when you start lying  
About how Queen Elizabeth loves your singing voice.

So I decide on the eagle with Jeff Goldblum's voice.  
It's just cliché enough to believe. Besides, it's unlikely these deities  
And ancestor spirit guides are really anywhere near us, lying  
As we are, there on the floor. There's a fissure of experience, like  
Bad forced perspective paintings. You can change your reality, but there  
Is still a reality beyond you. My eagle seems to have a queasy feeling.

"You're gonna have to shut up that nasty, cynical feeling,"  
He says, and adds, just because it's Jeff Goldblum's voice:  
"Faster, must go faster." He's right. Wherever "there"  
Was, whatever spiritual mysteries and ultimate truth bearing deities  
Were met, have gone and the voice asks if anyone would like  
To share their experience. I sit up and say I would. Maybe I'm lying.

I tell how lying there for an hour didn't really give me a feeling,  
At least not a very enlightened one. I'm not sure I like it. Though Goldblum's  
Voice through eagles and deities are cool, I don't think they exist out there.

## got a light?

Balancing my nicotine torch steady  
Between the pulse pumping in his thumbs,  
Which reverberates throughout our hut  
And sets the hearth fire to flickering,  
And my own lips quivering, I clutch  
My addiction tighter in my mouth.  
Then contact, I'm lit, the hearth goes out.  
I exhale, like the chimney of a home  
He once built for me with his bare hands.  
I smile, "thank you" and he waves goodbye,  
Fingers spread like white flags.

## adieu joan

It's only the clay body God gave her melting,  
and first sin evaporating into black smoke,  
the smell is God's terrible love for His martyrs.

Adieu Joan  
To God Joan

>FAITH KEARNS<

She, who followed His voice into earth-king's courts  
And heavy, clanking armor and wartime, murder,  
She must know heaven is longer than this horror.

Adieu Joan  
To God Joan



## i noticed a boy

i noticed a boy this afternoon.  
He was running and jumping  
like how a boy would run and jump in a pocket flip book,  
with each step splashing down in unique rushes of pastel.  
The red of his shoes made his laces pink as it smeared  
in with their white. Above the sky was white,  
and i sensed that it was warm here.  
And i wished that each step  
could be made slower.

## george ng

when my grandpa types LOL  
he means to say lots of love,  
but i always pretend he's laughing anyway  
because it'd make me happy to hear him laugh

i picture that stoic thin-lipped chinatown face,  
slightly palsied with a pacemaker in his chest,  
sitting in a chair in one corner of a jackson heights row  
(wrapped in blankets because the heater doesn't work anymore)  
patriotically forwarding chains about politics, healthcare,  
war

i imagine the brown lids of his illegible eyes—  
all of the death they still hide from the korean war,  
from before my aunt deborah was born—  
lifting up like they do when he strains to reads menus  
and a hudson of tears emptying out onto the wheel  
of his hail-pocked hyundai sedan.

# to say you

to say you  
an i me mine

i'd smile  
a mark  
on your ear

a me i mine

(so rightly)  
left there  
by your rub

to say  
you a was

a pretty  
pinch of  
something sparks

a mine me

>ZANE LOWRY<

JUL  
EST

NGU  
YEN

## scribbles

He flew into my dreams last night  
Revealed to me his clandestine pleasures  
Spoke of the yearning, the longing he had  
To make love to the letters of my heart  
Between the sheets of parchment paper  
So I got lost to the rhythm of eight beats  
Of John Keats  
Intimately connected, we started to breathe  
Started to dance to the sonatas of lit moonbeams  
The stars floated in the sky and yet  
We were as brief as a bright moment in time  
So I crossed his tears and dotted my eyes  
My pen whispered into my ears last night

# blackout

I remember.

the touch of your soft lips, the spit dripped as the confusion hit and grazed the side of my ear as every word lingered clear. a split second longer, than, than you could ever hear cause, your mind, your mind was too preoccupied

Preoccupied by my screams and cries under the grips of your calloused hands and watchful iced eyes as I pleaded, "please, please, please. these tears, even these tears weren't meant for you."

I tried

To equate the situation but every hint of cold persuasion, of fingertip as it unzipped stiff hips out of blue denim like cold vapor hitting metal just didn't settle, it just didn't settle the way passion should feel.

It's like I fell asleep at the wheel.

Blackout.

Tell me this isn't happening, tell me this can't be real.

Instead, I opened my eyes and it was below zero cold. it was the chilling breeze of winter rushing through an open window. it was crunching, bone white sheath of snow filling the spaces between my bear toes. tenfold. it was painful, it was angry. it's every place that I can't be. every silhouette of light in the darkened hallway of my worst memory.

Blackout.

Once in a while that clock'll tick-tock, that door creaks and a little of your leaked thought poison seeps over beige floral bed sheets. and your weapons, your actions, your words, return and leave their trace on my cheek like a massacre.

Blackout.

Hard push of your palms on my shoulders like a rock boulders and the night just kept getting colder. tightened, a rush of compliance began to flutter from the ground. this body, beat, broken and bound, my eyes got real heavy, the harder you'd pound and that rhythmic pulsating of breath started to flush out the sounds. my mind gets a little hazy, but bustles of boots, beers, and bass beats brings me to believe

We're at a party.

Blackout.

When I finally came to it, it was one in the afternoon. made it hard to consume the fact that no matter how hard I was trying to retract, not even a royal blue war medal of honor could ever get that night back. I looked for a trace of something that would trigger but the more I tried the black hole just got bigger. there was no weight on my waist, and although my heart raced, the sun was shining through a crack in the drapes.

I looked around the room and all the glimpses of the incident surged into my vision like a vacuum. my silk shirt that was broken and split, candle wax dripped and the drink that he slipped sat lonely and fixed next to condoms with white filled tips. I could feel my cracked lips and now the consuming, pulsating between my hips. thunder hit. I pleaded, "please, please. please. send me another

Blackout."

>JULES NGUYEN<

# culture

I am popular culture.

I am the manifestation of every iPhone application, every Tweeted statement, every filtered photo, the countless Facebook pages. My decisions, however submissive, may lack measure but still perpetuate what's addictive.

I am mass culture.

I drink organic tea and wear Hobo chic. All of my information is derived from a screen and I still advocate for others to Go Green. My consumption, albeit a social construction, implies that they've successfully capitalized on some deduction.

I am low culture.

I engage in things that are generally saved for the information deprived who give aggressive replies that are supposedly well behaved. Reality TV still makes its way through my 42-inch Sony display while I attempt to concentrate on the theories of Nietzsche, Freud, and Ray. Differing in modes of production yet they still speak to the same discussion, what separates the highly refined, the highly sublimed, became a blurred line.

I am high culture.

Counter to the novel kind, the market manufactured as Macdonald writes, may only inform the norm but still found a means of being institutionalized. We critique advertising's doublespeak, we question the intentions of the media and its deceptions. Even then, Lucille Ball, after all, made her way to the front of my classroom wall.

>JULES NGUYEN<

BRIAN

## reasons to keep calling

### 1. For W.S. Graham

There's been so little  
because there's been no people.  
A jam between phrases  
makes them unintelligible.  
Arguing in the streets  
is hardly people,  
and noise is a parable  
of hardly getting people.

I'll up the bounty on communication.  
Set the heads on the table  
and let me swear, swear at  
them—they will hardly notice.  
After my death, will they notice  
the silence, my hardly  
getting people, as they work  
their way into my memory?

A quick success, getting  
people, is often called  
“small talk.” I can't do it,  
she says, opening profoundly.  
We get to talking. She  
swears, she only likes to talk  
deeply—and rather quickly  
our conversation turns to talking.

It's ordinary, not communicating.  
I forget, and master it  
daily, and with accuracy.

KIM

STEVE

FANS

## 2. Reasons to Keep Calling

Since someone might  
die,  
for example,  
soon.

## 3. Alba

I drank a piece of gum  
and smiled while she chewed.

## 4. Il Nonconformista

He couldn't say "good night" without  
trying to bring your attention  
to the language. He was  
that much of a fraud.

\*

We fed him popsicle sticks for breakfast  
and made him wear grown up clothes  
telling him he was grown up.  
This got hilarious when he forgot he was driving

a helicopter, forgot he was driving at  
all, in fact.

He forgot how to blow his nose  
out the window, like his people do.

\*

We were feeling circumscribed,  
he was learning quick  
how to write, how to get out  
of a jam when it didn't feel very natural



to be barnstorming a Burger King  
in lieu of content.

\*

All the rubber customs  
began to fit him like a suit  
and when the country began to go out  
and the days' night lads were switching to winter treads

he was forgiven his sins,  
but had to give back the suit.

## 5. Poem

You could come  
to change my mind about the world.  
Maybe I needed that,  
sounds of ice breaking

in the driveway as the car pulls in,  
evocative, tragic,  
young parents at their first go  
and having no idea what was happening

now, at this time  
as I talk to you, thinking  
no original phrases

except these challenges from the Sixties.

## 6. Before and After Silence

Vandalism of the sincere: that's almost a job  
when you think of it, something to iron the gabardine for  
day after day, priming the fingers  
as if for a recital

—only this time it's the sheer amateur  
who wins the ribbon, and can be smug  
like any sophomore who's made the cover of  
Artforum  
before earning it.

That's kind of like music:  
keeping the time interesting for the attentions of the addict  
to time, and getting credit for it—for being human—in an  
otherwise “methodist” world. But nothing is so easy.

You have to play fair with your silences, let them sing,  
stopping your breath for a moment: sex as you've come to know it.

## 7. For Robert Creeley

1.  
All that we know, and  
then some

is over there  
in us.

2.  
Someone who managed to love and be loved  
—amazing!

>BRIAN KIM STEFANS<

## 8. Our Welfare

I make it kind of easy on those around me  
by being obtuse: by silence, mostly,  
reading through cancelled checks, or the newspaper  
in the caffeine-free light coming from outside  
(I didn't invent that, the other stud did)  
so it doesn't matter what I think, things tumble down  
like it has for centuries  
—before kitsch was born, that is.

An enervating light, like the bad light  
of a train terminal in the off-peak hours:  
the bagel shops shuttered, dusty thrones  
of the shoe shine stalls the most impressive things gleaned  
in the clack of flashbulbs. I can take you there  
without concern for making a standard impression  
in impoverished shadows, in the gloaming of keeping things out  
—but back to not talking.

U2 has just stolen,  
I'm pleased to report, another melody from Stevie Wonder  
to keep it alive, but under the filter of novelty,  
oxygenating it for another decade  
of airplay (the other stud balks at such exchanges)  
which is why there has been nothing truly fashionable since  
the Fifties, when songs were dances, the leads still gay  
though they didn't know it (tattooed to another  
vocabulary).

So we round them up, these words, and shuttle them  
through time, pointing to a friend, saying that friend's  
not mine, like Picasso when Apollinaire stole  
the Mona Lisa (as if he did, as if you were Spanish, or cared)  
but meaning it, before the meaning hike broke in,  
and got us wedded to our welfare, where you read, and I just sit.

# CALM BERN

## saint's wall

The burnt penny quivers as the cracked pavement trembles,  
Letting out a final groan as its heaving chest sags one last time.

Barely seventeen paces away, the men lay prone, clawing for  
restitution—

None.

Legs torn to ribbons, eyes seared shut,  
Hopeless heat radiates from the various scorched Benjamins—  
Benjamin Longman, Benjamin Burke, that one Benjamin who  
lived three floors down in the apartment on Sixth  
Avenue who also worked as a janitor in the complex  
(or was he the security guard?),

And let's not forget Benjamin Franklin. Not entirely sure who  
he was, but he sounded important.

But I digress.

Clutched in their greedy mouths and stuffed down their bitter  
throats, their selfasssuming, selfconsuming notes are,  
oh, too green for consumption—

Or not green enough?

Kiwifruit or persimmon—

That is the question.

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

Or to suffer—

That is the question. Yes is the answer.  
Yes is always the answer for questions you don't know—  
Of course, that itself is no question for anyone in the right mind.  
Good thing he isn't.

It is 3 o'clock in the afternoon as the penny remembers.  
It is 3 oh six by the time the penny forgets.  
Mind of a philosophe, brains of a charred, semiliquified alloy.  
Zinc and copper. And gold?  
At odds and at ends and at once and at always—  
Wait, that doesn't make sense.  
What a shame. (Not really.)

It is 8:57 the next morning by the time the flames die down.  
Die down. Or die up?  
Do flames ever really die down  
Or do they go up into nothing and nothingness,  
Infinitesimally small pieces of everything exploding all at once, fusing into  
conglomerates in the bull's horns.  
Ahoy! Ding dong goes the bell. (That means it's time to set sail.)  
Oh, no! Look out for that bear!  
Quickly! Bear port, bear starboard! (That's left and right, respectively, for you  
landlubbers.)  
But, I guess it makes no difference in these waters of discontent.

It is 9:11 at exactly noon when the firefighters and paramedics arrive onscene.  
What a shame. With some foresight and licorice, this could all have been  
avoided. Just like the flames.  
You never answered my question, though. (Well, questions. Plural.)  
Do they die up or down? Or do they just lie still?

Will they ever never still always sometimes lie?  
And who is "they"? Who are "they"? Ah, semantics.

Quack.

## the legality of mercy

Ah, the sham of legality. What was that saying again? If life gives you  
lemons, make  
lettuce soup? I heard it's a good remedy for leukemia, but, then again, what  
do I know?  
After all, I'm only a liar.

I first obtained my licence to practice my practice several practices ago.  
Business was rough to start, needless to say. Lifeless days melded into  
lightemitting diodefilled nights as I ran through runic economic  
logarithms in my head,  
lopsided, loquacious equations that told me everything about nothing,  
threatening to turn my brain into a puddle of lotion.

But, that was before I found the lyre, before all the rattattat  
of the machine gun's melody of lead  
pounding in my head  
like the hoofbeats from some bovine stricken suddenly with mad  
cow disease,  
something something spongiform encephalopathy.  
Out of all this, I found clarity,  
like the arrow of a compass's magnet, drawn inexplicably  
toward the machine gun's majesty  
as it painted careless spirals in the mall's marble walkways.  
Ah, that was my canvas of maroon—  
my masterpiece against the machinations of an alltoowellgroomed society.  
That was my gift to them—  
my menhir of mercy.

## i-4-ai

There are four lights to dispel the entropy in our stars,  
that stereoscopic love affair of hydrogen and helium.  
It is minus twenty degrees centigrade, soon to be minus thirty with this  
wind chill.

Time to put on my summer tricorne.

Displacing longitudinal coshear waves with vectorized quantum fields,  
the emission spectrum from the first three lights glows iridescent,  
caught amidst

all the star stuff scattering to and fro in the eternal cadence of  
universal expansion.

All that in a day's work. Now, that's cool and all, but I'm from Michigan.

Thirty thousand miles away from here, a handshake of carbon dioxide  
and solar radiation scrambles the indigenous icicles like a sunny side up.  
Doubleproton chain reactions are catalyzed. Ne20 is ejected. Nihilism  
is rejected.

The fifth of November has come and gone.

The fifth. The five. What if there were always five?

What if two plus two always made five?

Would our sundried raisin brains turn to ONeNaMg?

Or, would the resulting flash burn away all our common sense,  
turning us toward this little thing called religion. Simple addition.

Because, after all, there are five lights,  
right?

# the tale of the three captains

*"God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms."* —Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125, tr. Walter Kaufmann

Arpeggiated chords speak softly to a sea of melodic discontent, while Ahab  
dreams of color pencil shavings  
and rainy nights spent in pursuit of the black and white whale.

Just three inches away,  
Nemo  
drones on with his Spenserian sonnets,  
filled with oh god whys  
and how did shes  
and Sally sells. But there are no sea shells,  
no whispered tales of any sharks swimming beneath the ocean's shoreline.

Strewn on the summer strand, broken shards of conic graphite struggle  
to capture the essence of Ahab's lofty proceedings. Swimming in a sea of  
imperfect circles,

Jack eyes the absent price sticker on his rum—  
No colors are allowed on this beach of monochromatism.  
That'll be the day, won't it?  
The day when Jack can claim that he almost caught that price error.

That'll be the day when he finally sees  
that Nemo's God and Ahab's demon are one and the same,  
and that'll be the day when he sees  
that he will never be able to wipe away the stains left behind by his  
orange sticker,  
and that'll be the day when he sees  
that there will never be enough water to wash them clean of their pasts,  
and that'll be the day when he sees  
that there is world beyond the seven square inches of water surrounding  
his frail body.

That'll be the day, won't it?

That'll be the day when he finally realizes  
that there never was.



# suethemorp

awaken o Suethemorp  
flutter fly fall  
Icarus is calling  
but heed not the fall  
of the prodigal's life and letters  
red wax melts  
red blood clots  
the fresh scent of rain  
sweeping away  
the sunshine's weight on your feathers

let us go then  
you and I  
let's away through this dusty sky  
there

in the space between  
when you're closing your eyes and you're falling asleep  
there  
it's there that we dream and there  
it's there that we see  
a black veil lifted  
there  
a broken reverie  
our minds are revealed:  
sheep

>CAMERON WU<

we envision a world  
filled with  
peace  
longevity prosperity alacrity equality (a lack of equalitydid I say that?)  
hospitality hospitality  
surgical preciseness (not precisionthat's too clean) cutting deep into  
our generosity  
bleeding stripes red white and blue  
berry juice is good for the heart I hear  
no wait that's cranberry

on the topic of fruits and life and growth  
these thirsty flowers are pollinated by the tears you shed  
sweat dripping down from your back  
like rivers carving valleys through the scars on a broken tree  
ashy muscles knotted  
burned by the sunlight you took  
from the infants in the sky

(deep breath)  
they didn't like the merriment of the berries I should think

still none of us dream of Suethemorp anymore  
none of us here want to bear that terrible burden  
twenty five thousand and twenty five tons  
under the blazing sky  
you couldn't stop that fire  
you can't explain that  
we never started it  
you never showed us how

as the sheep do sleep  
so now Duncan reeps  
we're lost in all these meeps  
with too much deeps  
all twenty five thousand and twenty five tons sinking  
singing  
swinging  
from wing to wing

>CAMERON WU<

entropy  
fireflies light the weather  
chaos spinning sunshine  
chasing rain  
falling skies  
senseless mind chemistry  
tangled in this rainbow Cosby sweater

or so you'd like us to think

that's your grand plan  
isn't it? to make us think.

## sestina

based on a true story

Nothing is quite so untouched  
As in the morning's cup of coffee.  
The Boss takes it with his apple crumble  
In his studio, at the pinnacle of his city-  
Chicago. And in that unquenchable silence  
He peruses the Daily Whale:

*They'd found the carcass of a whale  
Washed up on a nearby beach, untouched  
Except for Time working ceaselessly in the silence  
Of sound until the waters ran coffee  
-brown and complaints arose from the city  
Of a stench when its dried-out facade began to crumble.*

*The authorities devised a plan to speed up the crumble  
Progress: to detonate the whale.*

*In all its weathered professionalism, the city  
Concurred to the hands-off and untouched  
Operation as onlookers breathed in their own coffee  
-breath as they followed the explosion in silence*

*Of afterthought, and citizens watched in ghastly silence  
As blubber rained like heavy bits of bread crumble  
Soaked through with coffee.*

*There was no place to hide from the hail of whale  
-bits when presumptions provoked an untouched  
Fury that pummeled the city.*

At 6:30 A.M. the stirring of the city  
Stole a faux contentment over the silence.  
The Boss' faculties would have gathered dust untouched.  
The paper was merely another crumble  
Of the world, embodying an entire whale  
Of an inconsequential problem over coffee.

Except that everything in hindsight was coffee  
-stained, and at the waking of the city  
He heard the groaning of whales  
Rolling over cement and taxing in a silence  
Of disillusionment. And he knew he was but a crumble  
Of a giant vehicle that should have been untouched.

Such was the crumbling of man-made cities  
Beneath which whales brooded in platonic silence  
And mornings were left untouched by wreathes of coffee.

## words that don't work

There are so many ways to say I love you  
without a you and I

or without any love at all.

The way a timeless Friday night

falls by faith into the arms of Saturday morning.

The way shadows meld into each other

as strangers pass on the sidewalk.

But words are words

and I don't trust words  
the way I don't trust you

or me, least of all me.  
Were I to write it all down—

I couldn't.