

**WE  
CONTROL  
THE  
WEATHER**

U C L A  
S P R I N G 2 0 1 0



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S A R A H   B A K E R

S C U R V Y   S O N G S

FROM "CHANSON BAS" BY STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ  
TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH

II

BARGAINS OVER AROMATIC GRASSES

Your lavender blue straw,  
do not think with this lash  
I dare you to sell it  
as a hypocrite if

In the wall lining  
the absolute locations of places  
for the belly laughs that are  
reborn blue feelings.

Between a more invasive  
hair put it here  
the strand to feel safe,  
Zephirine, Pamela

gold lead to the husband  
the first fruits of your lists.

III

THE ROADMENDER

These stones, they are level  
and this is, as a troubadour,  
a cube of brains as necessary  
for me to open the door one day.

V

THE WORKER'S WOMAN

The woman, the children, the soup  
on its way to compliment  
the quarryman cuts  
it in us to marry.

VI

GLASS SETTER

Sun offers a discount on pure  
too bright for them to sort  
eliminates idealist his shirt  
on the back of the glass setter.

VII

SHOUTED THE PRINTOUT

Print still, little imports the title,  
even without a cold  
thaw, the gay whistle-liter  
screamed a first question.

VIII

CLOTHING SOURCE

Bright-eyed you look  
inside between  
me and my separated rags  
have a god I'm going to bare one.

# THE SEA - ASS

## A SESTINA

The soothsaying ass of the upturned sea  
has pickled brays that turn to gaping yawns.  
He beckons lost sailors to his haunt  
and floats by crumpling water in his wake,  
which turns into a marbled haze. His skin,  
thrown over his arched body, brews to the black

and blue of waves that turn to the slippery black  
of ass ears while they blend with the cloud-mirrored sea.  
Though he once skimmed the shores for sailor skins  
or bubbled brains, now he wades with summer yawns  
and the passing bait who goad the brine – they awaken  
seafoam with each splash. The sea-ass hunts

his malformed prey in sleepless virgin haunts.  
At the break of day, his bray, one long black  
siren, spurs the bedlam chum to their wake.  
The furthest fringe of fungal slime and sea  
clings to the moans of victims, but he yawns  
at their frenzied efforts to escape his skin –

each joint tightly mapped to the tips of skin  
on discarded skeletons. But the haunt  
has a way to seduce you: through ass yawns  
that promise you truth, the soothsaying black  
one answers with the motion of the sea.  
“Take this coat.” (But his eyes mirror his wake;

each wave’s veil compounds the fishy wake.)  
“Bury the names that cling to your skin  
as you dive into this marbled haze of sea.  
You’ll see you married hate.” His forlorn haunt  
becomes your desperate state, his quiet, black  
humor tires of your deadlocked mate. He yawns

into a conch shell's hollow, but his yawn  
dissolves in the salty breeze and in the wake  
of his water-worn suit of over-worn black.  
The coast replaces the murdered gown of skin  
that graced your back before the sea-ass's hunt  
stole it from your nameless haunch. This is the sea

that slips your tender muscles free from skin  
while black brays rouse the hunt awake.  
Here yawns the soothsaying ass of the sea.



I'LL TAKE A WALK ON THE  
HOT LICORICE SAND

A VILLANELLE

I'll take a walk on the hot licorice sand  
while dots dance circles round the trap  
of my eyelids and absorb the hornblende land.

A swell of Celsius and my ashen body's tanned –  
I'll move my skin off of the wrinkled map  
and take a walk on the hot licorice sand.

Here's where the Aegean pressure commands  
each freckle blister. As I try to close the gap  
in my eyelids, I absorb the hornblende land.

In this haze I can hardly feel your hand –  
a sense of touch lost in one magmatic nap.  
When I walked on the hot licorice sand

I waited for the impulse to stand  
still but I waded into a lapis tide that taps  
the shore into my eyelids. They absorb the hornblende land

which filters the horizon in a bleak and bland  
blur that traces out my final lap —  
I'll take a walk on the hot licorice sand  
and my eyelids will absorb the hornblende land.

K y l e   B a r r e t t

O P O S S U M   M I D N I G H T

1

Midnight reeks of wretchedness. The utter  
profundity escapes me  
as it always does. See  
how families of coons and possums scurry in the garish  
smell of darkness? Their footsteps stutter  
across Hilgard towards the Presbyterian parish

that I'll never visit. I've  
seen possums scattered there, playing dead  
and telling dirty jokes  
along Westholme a few too many times; incited  
towards a pitiful death-in-life. Hives  
of wasps wash across its façade in strokes

of whiskey and the Holy Eucharist.  
For now, they've disappeared  
amidst the winter neon and mist  
rising from puddles of rain, settled and clear;  
evaporating in the parish mouth.  
The wasp-hive's migrated south

along Sherman's march to bother and spite  
the obnoxiously noxious birds  
and Africanized bumble  
bees that swarm and scuttle about in herds  
of sour mash and anger personified; night  
puts them down as I drunkenly stumble

along the walk home from Hilgard back  
to Gayley.  
My body  
and blood personify rancor; attack

my cigarette smoke, extreme unction, and  
lingual papillae. Midnight tastes like sand

when I press my face to the ground  
in some sadly prostrate attempt  
to find the nourishment  
of language or perhaps to sound  
the distance between my unkempt  
self and my own discontent?

2

“‘Good favor’ just ain’t in the ‘sblood and crackers  
tonight,” echoed a white-knuckled  
holy man, middle-aged and  
middle English.

It’s left me scattered  
in the bushes,  
not even bothering to find my way back home  
while drunkard possums and wasps comb  
their moustaches,  
hold hands and pet raccoons  
in anticipation of the night’s waxing moon.



T R O P I C      O F  
C A N C E R

A red crab scuttles with the delicate  
clack of its claws toward  
an infinite salty warmth,  
blue as blood – choking.  
Palms and waves shake  
in the wind’s gasping shuffle  
before paradise regains  
its deathly stillness.

The sun tropes.

The crab gradually sidesteps  
down the oblique sandbank  
into the bloody water;  
holding its breath.  
Coughing and thunder arise  
from the burning fields  
of sugarcane and tobacco  
while the crab wheezes.

Pestilence overtakes paradise; the Tropic  
of Cancer coughing up blood.

A f t o n C o o m b s

## P R E P A R A T I O N S

A strip, paper-thin, peels away slowly,  
breaks, and  
cascades  
downward in  
ever-widening,  
fluttering circles,  
gyres that spread the  
halves of shavings and orange covering across the floor.

I tap it,  
jiggle it, the  
knobby end,  
letting the tip roll back and forth between  
my fingers.

Now,  
opening the sheets,  
pulling them back,  
quietly,  
reveals  
so much empty space.  
Too much empty space.

Uggggghhhhh.  
Very much,  
writing this damn  
x-ercise has become too demanding.  
Yoink!  
Zeppelin!

P a t r i c i a   G u z m a n

T H E   S C E N T   T H A T  
S E T   I T   O F F

Hearing a girl despair over  
some thing over the phone,  
some infrequency of calls  
such as this one,  
I let go of your hand.  
Like the clicking and  
unclicking of seat belts,  
I hesitate to tell her  
it is not worth the water stains  
drying in the shower—the eggs  
and toast cannot be reheated.  
That seizure of a romance knows  
Only the scent that set it off,  
something starchy, like pancakes.  
It can only recover the taste of butter  
but cannot seem to locate when  
the damn thing melted.  
Then, the excavation of a tissue  
from your pocket into my hand  
—a momentary lapse on my part—  
into her hand, but that is not  
what she kept for herself.

NEGATED SOUND # I

here there are a man's footsteps,  
    footsteps again, a less confident man.

the clicking of a woman's heels in the distance,  
    chairs pushing in.  
another woman's heels—this time with forte.

(a sneeze:

uninteresting)

the crumpling of Ziploc bagged crackers,

    chairs pushing out.  
keys jingling like windchimes,

    the opening  
        and  
            shutting of a door.  
slow, deliberate footsteps.



## NEGATED SOUND # 2

The exam is mainly going to cover Machiavelli and Castiglione.

Uh yeah, what kind of Italian—  
what about Sprazzo?

*Cappuccino. Espresso. The whirring of blenders.*

I never had formal training.

Dante is the one that first said,

*Chai ice blend, 2% iced chai.*

He said the verb is what's important,

*The banging of counters, turning of pages,*

Have you ever watched a Batman movie?

It depends on how you view it.

FROM A BENCH ABOVE  
LAKE WHITE ROCK

The lake ceased to be symbolic  
After you spilled a cup of coffee  
In the driveway at half past four.

You always spill things while you're  
Searching for the right image.  
You like the smell of clean pages,

The unripe images, animated  
Sketches of a young boy you lit up,  
Long before you brought me here.

We found a silver hair clinging  
To your grandmother's kitchen.  
You remembered how I thought the

Moon and sun could cook in the sky  
Simultaneously—we found  
The right image, beneath the floating

Leaves and cellophane ripples, beneath  
Auburn brown fears of the dark,  
Undisturbed frogs mating,

Juvenilia extinguishing in your mind's fire,  
Itching poison ivy feet that sank in clay,  
Beneath the pen, yes, even beneath that.

N a t a s h a   H a k i m i

## C A C O P H O N Y

Cry in crimes may cut through my cadences but it  
can't close my eyes to your corrupt cards and courtesy  
calls, anymore papa. Cut-throat kindness is all you

can muster currently as some cunt waits by her  
computer clicking while you dictate clauses. What's the  
commotion? Cat-like clit caught copulating in a

cab on the corner with your cock coming closer.

*Can't you call her by her Christian name*

*Claudia?* you call out.

'Course I can but that'll be when you contract  
Chlamydia or the Clap, something  
contagious to keep you from coming home.

Call me cocky daddy, but crapshoots don't have  
Caller ID so I can cry all I crave till the cock  
clucks. La crème de la cream I am, just as you

condemned me to be, in this corporate class you  
climbed onto cackling. But even Santa Claus  
couldn't pay the cable so we didn't catch Cain

committing cardinal. Consequently, you can't have  
come to the conclusion that killing kin won't  
condemn you as you collect coins in exchange for

colossal cuts to your community. Kick back and guzzle  
Coronas while the kid next door sniffs cocaine through  
currency and you cash in on Colombia's commodities

C'mon, cut the crap. We all counted on the culmination.  
Capital crime crafted fate for father who never cared to  
carry cuffs for cops and coke, just for cold cash and coupes.

Crazy ain't it after the crack was uncovered, you could've  
closed the cluttered closet, claiming you're corrupt just to  
cut out the cruelty. Yet you corrected my concepts and

continued to call it calumny, crushing me with lies from  
correctional facilities. But your Calvin Klein cologne lingers  
cramming love in my eyes, casting doubt over these

couple years spent clackin' away about your callous  
core, hoping these cantos would clot your coronaries. Oh daddy,  
cries in crimes still keep me up at night.

## DRUMS AND HEARTS

I have heard war still rings in your inner ear  
like a lullaby whose words you can't deny  
since they're the faithless credos of your country—  
your endless failures.

Fail to love the man who gave you to this land,  
expelled you from sky to desert, camo-clad.  
Sing, "This sand is your sand, this land is my land,"  
without irony.

Cross your heart as the anthem blasts and please hope  
you won't die, as the flag beats the air with stars  
and stripes and covers the bodies of your friends  
calling out goodbye.

Don't hear the screams of those damned Iraqi kids  
beg for the candy and meds only you could  
give their undeveloped bodies, whose dads you shot  
fending for yourself.

After all the sergeant said, "The more you shoot, the  
more you kill, the less you die." Yet you can't  
stop crying when you shoot back. Go through hell. Keep  
going quietly.

# NATASHA HAKIMI'S EXERCISES IN STYLE

## NOTATIONS

The man has those cats on a leash, she pointed out. Having exhausted all there is to do in Portland, we were sitting in a park discussing abortion and other hot topics with our evangelic friend, frankly bored. The cats have odd spots! They look like little leopards!

Curiosity won her over and she walked up to the man with the long white hair in a ponytail and asked why his cats were on a leash and what they were. They're Bengal leopards, he explained, and though they're harmless and completely domesticated, I keep them on a leash in case they go wild. Have they gone wild before? I asked horrified of cats since I was nine and my neighbor's cat Miurka (which means cat in Russian) slashed my leg for using their computer. Well no but once the grey one tried to catch a bird and in the process landed on my head. They have claws like hooks that dug and tore into my scalp.

It made me wish curiosity could kill the cat.

## ANTIPHRAISIS

The woman with dogs roaming free, he didn't notice. Still finding lots to do in Phoenix, they were standing in a desert silent about adoption and nothing else with their atheist enemy, exhilarated. The dogs are one hue. They don't look like huge Cerberuses.

Bored, he stayed put while the woman with the short black wig in a bob volunteered why her dogs were roaming wild and what they weren't. They're not Hellenic Cerberuses, she murmured to herself, and though they're pernicious and barbaric, I let them run around freely. Have they lacked freedom before? you wondered, having loved dogs since you were ninety and your pen pal's dog Mamba (which doesn't mean dog in Swahili) caressed your arm for fixing their garage door opener. Well no but the

blue one tried to unleash a snake and bit my butt afterwards.  
They have tentacles like flowers that caressed and massaged my  
gluts.

It made you indifferent to the idea of boredom giving birth to  
dogs.

#### TELEGRAPHIC

CATS ON LEASH STOP PORTLAND SITTING PARK  
STOP ABORTION EVANGELIC FRIEND BORED STOP  
CURIOSITY STOP BENGAL LEOPARDS STOP  
HARMLESS DOMESTICATED STOP LEASH WILD STOP  
HORRIFIED STOP CATCH BIRD LAND SCALP DUG  
TORE STOP KILL CAT STOP SIGNED ALPHA BOOTIS

#### HAIKU

Bengal leopards park  
Portland harmless leash wild grey  
slashed scalp wish kill cat

#### PARTS OF SPEECH

Articles: the, a

Nouns: man, cats, leash, Portland, park, abortion, topics, friend,  
spots, leopards, curiosity, hair, ponytail Bengal leopards,  
neighbor, Miurka, leg, computer, bird, process, head, claws,  
hooks, scalp

Adjectives: other, hot, evangelic, odd, little, long, white,  
harmless, Russian, grey

Verbs: has, pointed, having, exhausted, is, do, sitting, discussing,  
bored, look, won, walked, asked, were, are, explained,  
domesticated, keep, go, gone, was, means, slashed, using, tried,  
catch, landed, have, dug, tore, made, wish, could, kill

Pronouns: those, she, we, they, her, his, he, I, my, their, one, me

Adverbs: out, frankly, completely, wild, horrified,

Prepositions: on, in, with, like, up, of,

Conjunctions: and, though, since, but

SPANGLISH

Dat hombre has dose gatos on a leach, che pointed out. We were bien cansados of Portland, and sentaditos in the parque parlando bout aborto and other things with our amigo del Opus Dei, bieecen aburridos. Dose gatos, man, day had weird espots. Day look like leoparditos!

Pinche vieja metiche, che gets up to talk to dat hombre with the colita de caballo, and asks why the gatitos were on a leach. Man, they're Bengal leopards, but they won't hurt a mosca, pero por si las flies, I have him on a leach, he said. Did day ever kill anyting man? I asked por que gatitos escare me from when I was nine and a pinche gato ruso escratched me for nading man! Den da compadre told me once the leopardito le dio hambre, and he scratched up his head dinking it was a pajarito and took part of his brain, pinche canibal.

La curiosidad mató al gato ni que ocho quartos!



C l a i r e   H e l l a r

I N B O X

everything turns on a knife.  
like a dream bent backwards it comes  
in to my box.

“things are worse here.”

but there were already pot-  
holes and frenzies and crowds  
who spin my sister into hiding.

“the infrastructure in Lae is breaking down”

but there were swimming pools  
and hazy days and nights that went  
deep into lyrics

fists hit my dreams and I twinge –  
“the hospitals are closed...  
there’s no water”

wake up.

EVERY STORY'S  
HALF A LIE

My brother was mauled by dogs, red-jawed Dobermans  
(help help me but the bolts  
on the door are too stiff  
and we can't reach him in time)

(and his cries)

My sister drowned  
In a pool by the sea  
(where the rocks are violent and open)

And when I went home  
You never opened your eyes.

# D A R K

I offer you my heart and you offer back words-  
where have you come from?

one day you will wake at dawn and discover  
the utter aloneness of themorning –  
you will shrink back, frightened –  
but the dark is rising.

utter dark is not dark but light  
inside out, twisted and burned.  
antithesis and definition.  
take warning.

I do not ask for shelter from the cold.  
only from music, too loud.

bird wings converge, flapping –  
and smoke covers an everyday mirror.

take warning.  
despair may come creeping  
wildly in.

H a n n a h   H u f f

## NEVADA MIRAGE

I

between Nevada.

City of Angels freeways chew spit  
snuff juice in the Califordannay  
cuspidor. but

here, not yet there, highways  
roll into nowhere hell. Wild West  
trails to little palaces on the prairie.  
the sand dunes waiting beneath dirt  
devils rearing up.

join the caravan of Luxury Sedans.  
cruising in a Grand Marquis  
to the Great American Oasis.  
nod heads to The Ride FM the one  
radio station the antennae banjo  
twanging, bang *The Chronic* the one  
CD brought. or Eminem.

the desert hookah appears. a flavored tobacco  
city peach now mango now Orient spicy  
puff puff passing by the windshield.  
black licorice on the ancient floor. 1905 ink  
blot now dark now dry.

submerge mirage.

2

Las Vegas is a shrimp, the shell  
removed. to enter, poke the fleshy  
spot, follow the thin red entrails  
to Grub Hub City: Sin Buffet.

female puree. the favorite topping  
for mogul sultan feasts of damp  
grapes on breasts, hands up skirts,  
ambrosia perfumed pussies hiding  
the smell of elderly female.

this oasis is cashmere beer  
bellies and slobbery jowls  
and heart attacks from oyster  
snacks on Friday Saturday night.

outside Hilton chunk of gold,  
plastered hobos jack-off by posters,  
splatter on phone booth Supergirls  
(free skin magazines in the red classified box).

the printed woman wilts 1001 times  
before Schezerade speaks again.

3

Imperial Palace's Emperor Buffet  
Frontier Floral Attire Today! 3-7 p.m.  
Linner Line Starts Here...

Steak, seafood, and  
    your mom.

Old man farts pushing the carpet sweeper.  
The chef is sleepy,  
the filet mignon burns.

The Body Fat Experiment:  
does environment increase obesity?  
Downtown, Fremont,  
just outside the unincorporated  
City of Paradise. Hypothesis:  
Vegas is blubber.

we come, our spurs jangling  
chaps creaking, poet lariat  
pulling in the ladies.

first, beer at Binion's. billiards,  
too, would be fitting. but just  
a buxom babe waitress (blonde),  
basketball, and Florida  
old men at the bar. 16 inch  
pizza and the buzz  
from the booze and Hold 'Em  
duels just through  
the saloon doors.

we are bloated like dead cows  
left in the desert.

5

cue Fučík circus music. Entrance of the Gladiators,  
the brawny lesbian acrobats. swingers in the Cactus Club.  
that's me, on the blue suede seat, buzzed pssst (and high).

I pee 8 times.

then that Indiana Jones whip-flick-shit-shots-for-all-my-sluts,  
we drunk now fighting lions with bar stools. here returns

the ringmaster. a Colonel Sanders man, seed planted  
in that girl (they left two hours ago). prostate and pockets  
lighter – ah – hey lady in purple, 20-something, camel-toe  
country native, celery legs looking for a good time.

crisp.

I sink. the room booms that underground lounge light,  
that earthglow. now we flirt on the tightrope.  
when the moon is carnival, there is only alcohol.



hangover is a crude sun. smell it, the toilet  
melting this Styrofoam city, just now.  
heaving. try again. see it, the leaving  
only salt, crystal meth sofas for winter.

stand up. it snows here, and rains, spittle  
such little drops I didn't know. it's thirsty  
and sucks, its teeth dry. feel it. the Astroturf,  
not a lawn, heaves. spit on and real grass  
is let thrive.

to taste it, the bubbly place, you lean on me.  
upward, sometimes, if you are in jackpot  
cherry fields. come, we wade in Lake Mead.  
the water to our ankles.

the queer couple on a pleasant vacation,  
Las Vegas gaudy works wonder camouflage.  
sort of. still if hold hands, male whistle,  
girl whisper. not nice.

at the hotel. hail the reserved King – no  
two Queens, that's okay it's even better.  
lesbian royalty need rest peacefully and wet  
sex separately. let's eat.

the usual, he and she can kiss, but we  
play under table footsie and waitress  
frown. man, men crowd get stellar  
service cleavage. we out.

cruise by the Bellagio where girlies do  
Jacuzzi voo doo. rest their breasts  
on the pool edge and heave ho! upward.  
bikini spills a nipple tip, high-five those thighs.  
this is only on TV for dykes. like me.

## F A C T S

Lila is bipolar. Her sister is dyslexic. Her mother has fibromyalgia and chronic depression. Her father is an alcoholic and lost his leg in a motorcycle accident. My mom had a heart attack. Randy had a heart attack and it killed him. My mom has skin cancer and her fingers go numb often. My sister has skin cancer and something wrong with her teeth. My aunt has skin cancer and it is killing her. My grandpa had skin cancer removed from his face. My other aunt had breast cancer. August has epilepsy. My brother has epilepsy. Samantha has diabetes. The other Samantha is obese and at risk of diabetes. Trini is HIV positive. So is her husband. So is my hairdresser. Lilliana had a miscarriage. My friend's mom had three miscarriages. Desiree is infertile. Mrs. Busby had a stillborn. Brooks has post partum depression. Mrs. Barnes has MS. Emma has a broken rib and a planter's wart. My dad has back problems. I will have back problems. Taylor was in a coma and now she can't speak. Mackenzie's little brother was in a coma and it killed him. Trey jumped off a twenty-two-story building and it killed him. Rodney is schizophrenic. Emily has cramps and a mysteriously low white blood cell count. Her mother is an alcoholic. Her ex-boyfriend cut himself shaving. His roommate has Crohn's disease and hemophilia. My other aunt has Parkinson's. Katie's hips are not aligned and she will get scoliosis if she doesn't wear the proper supports in her shoes. Bella broke her collarbone. She has ADD. Breast cancer is in her gene pool. I had mono twice. My neighbor had ear surgery. Allison is half deaf. Horacio has cataracts. My grandma has glaucoma. Her mom had glaucoma and went blind in her left eye. Her mom had it, too. Joe has dementia. The other Joe had to get parts of his colon and small intestine removed. Scott had lung cancer in one lung, so it was removed. He got lung cancer in his remaining lung and it killed him. My grandpa had a stroke and it killed him. Marco's grandpa had open-heart surgery and it killed him. Trudy got old and it killed her. Austin is very allergic to peanuts. Kelly is

allergic to cats. I am allergic to strawberries. Ahmed broke both of his arms. Jenny broke her femur. There is a steel pin in her leg now, and it beeps when she goes through airport security. Lily's organs failed her. Carl has bad acne. Erika got sunburned. My roommate is PMS-ing. My neighbor has narcolepsy. Zachariah has cerebral palsy. Gabby has Addison's disease. Jillian has a staph infection. Now everyone on the water polo team is getting staph infections. Eben has blisters. Olivia has an eating disorder. Linda has an eating disorder. Philip has one, too. The other Philip is balding. Robert is bald. Daniel is bald. Hannah's mom is addicted to heroin. Chris is addicted to gambling. My uncle had a nervous breakdown and pulled out all of his hair. Lisa has alopecia. Trevor has alopecia. Michael has alopecia. The other Michael has a skin tag. His uncle has a brain tumor. The doctor said if Nick gets one more concussion, it will kill him. We thought Laure had meningitis, but she was fine. She has dry cuticles. I have a hangnail. Debbie has corns. Sher got food poisoning, but she was fine. Isaac cut his arm with a ban saw and had to get stitches. Vincent fell in front of the metro and it killed him. Dorian fell asleep while driving and it killed Dylan. Their mom began to hallucinate. Adelaide uses crutches. Lindsay wouldn't say why she had to go to the hospital. I faint often. Jacob is colorblind. Eric is colorblind. Eugene is colorblind. Peter is colorblind. Kevin is colorblind. He had night terrors growing up. Julien gets migraines often. Sarah sprained her ankle while jogging. She bruises easily. Daryl was coughing up blood. Shoshi looks gaunt. Paris was neglected. Remy has anxiety. Erin is autistic. Owen is autistic. Alley's sister is autistic. Alley is dyslexic and has a lazy eye. Alley's son is four years old and he has not yet spoken. Murtle probably has Alzheimer's but has not yet been diagnosed. She keeps forgetting to pay bills. She keeps forgetting that she has already fed the cat, which is now obese. She keeps forgetting that her daughter has stomach cancer, so they stopped telling her. Brigitte got lice. Eva got lice. Max got lice. Chance got lice. Stella got lice. Gordon got lice. Theo got lice. Bella got mugged and came home with a black eye. On a different occasion, I punched Bella and gave her a black eye. Bella punched me, but I only bruised slightly. Beckett has a cold. Briggs has a cold. Sophie has a cold. Soffi had a cold. Mason has chronic sinus infections. Adam is depressed. So is his wife. Julie is

experiencing a loss of appetite. Nancy has cellulite. Stephany has a rash. Jared has high blood pressure. Will has asthma. Lauren has asthma. Cole has a speech impediment. Fernando is sore.

I don't know how to talk about  
the meatiness of things, the  
steadiness of my father's wrist,  
and our motionless lips. It makes  
me stutter, the small vibrations  
of shattering teeth which we both  
separate somehow from the  
meaty things.

I ate a peach with you, Sophie.  
We shared, also, a dry womb  
and a curiosity. The holiness  
of the curse word was expressed,  
and you, afraid of sex. Good, I guess.

a six. a number. the likeness of a shy girl in a  
sky blue jumper. it was a birthday.

a seven. a sunburn. the families gather  
in their condos. the lizards lay their eggs on the  
ceiling fan.

five as the sun. a crayon planet. the mother  
in her van going to get coffee.

an eleven in the bathroom. watery elbows. animals  
in the tub where Concha, who was deaf, left  
the baby sister.

oh, zero. a curse word. locked in the winecloset,  
a hornet.

a one , a two, can be lonely together. they put on  
funky records and wish secretly that they had  
talent. lament.

a three, to hate. three spilled the cheerios and  
lied about it. three babies before it. sun-crusted clumsy.

eight for the wise. a leather jacket.  
no leather jacket.  
no pretending.

nine! nine! all brass and glory! all black and gory!  
a nine! oh!

i am sick of four. the sound of sparrows flying  
solemnly into windows.

ten takes walks with six. they finish the bottle.  
it's too bad there are no pictures.

the flat-tire. the wine-closet. the haircuts. the blood.

2. Each person has his or her own story about how WE got here. Except me because I can't remember. And the financial advisor. I don't think she knows either. She doesn't seem to care. She has got the hang of the here-and-now, as they say, really down on her knees in the stuff. I can hear her now, calculating and collecting the square footage of this slime box. The sound of having trouble with a tape measure in the distance. Here come the retired man and the man with one arm. Arguing. Always arguing about the Up Above. They don't care about the stillborn baby I found (Fig. 2.1). Her name is Faith. I remember from the time I was living Up Above, seeing her photograph framed on the bureau in the living room (Fig. 2.2). All purple and blue because she choked on the inside before they could drag her out. They still called her their baby-daughter their little-baby-sister talked about her at soccer games. I guess they finally let her go because she showed up lying in the slime below one of the openings in the pavement, somewhere on Wilshire and Bundy. I picked her up and swaddled her in my sock (Fig 2.3). Just like I had watched mothers do Up Above. I'm her Mother now, for as long as WE remain underneath, listening up drains and pipes for the good-to-go. The financial advisor likes to advise me on How Mothers Do Things, how to change diapers, how to burp them, how to do things that people who have never been a Mother know how to do because they heard about it. And I have to remind her that Faith is dead, or, actually, was never really born right, botched, and I'm just snuggling her in my sock because, like the one-armed man, I want to hold on to something from Up Above, I want to make Faith's mama proud, I want to hold this bruise of a baby to my heart until the city belches its forgiveness and we can all give up and move on.



M i c h e l l e   L a b e l l e

## STATUS UPDATES FOR YOUR FACE

Never trust a big dick and a smile...they're poison!

Heard amazing things...amazing paths...will I go?

As brutal as the truth may be, I believe it hurts less than being  
told a lie.

What type of mall closes at 7pm? I don't care if it's Sunday!

It doesn't make sense to try to purchase a tool that doesn't want  
to be bought.

Dear Brooklyn,

I'm gone, but I haven't forgotten you.

If you can't stay up, don't wake up!

Having balls doesn't make you a man; it just makes you look  
more like a dick to me.

Fuck Cupid and his Mama!

I love tasty lip-gloss!

S H E C O U L D H A V E B A R F E D  
O N M Y L I V E R

I think her name was Corona or Red Haired  
Slut. I chased her with a Hairy Armpit.  
She ran away like I was A Little Green Man  
From Mars. It was her loss really – I would have given her a  
Screaming  
Orgasm and while she tasted my Strawberry Yum –  
Yum, I could have licked her Fuzzy Navel and later,  
I would have sipped on her Slippery Nipple  
While her taste buds screamed:  
Tie Me To The Bedpost!

## HE SAID PAST WAS GETTING IN THE WAY

He drew a picture of a plane for me and I boarded it.  
He didn't – he said I didn't need any luggage.  
The flight was for me. I needed  
to travel back. Anticipating turbulence,  
I was scared about how I would land.

Back in New York: I wished Cali's weather would stop calling my  
name.

I needed to stay focused on why I came. I had to walk  
down familiar blocks to confront Past.  
I called my friend and told him I might need back up.  
He drew a gun and mailed it to me – it wasn't loaded.  
He said I should talk things out first.

I took a deep breath.  
I asked God to grant me strength to accept the things  
I cannot change. Past got closer to my face.  
I asked God for courage to change the things I can.  
I grabbed Past by the ear  
And yelled, You Already Did Your Damage!  
You Need To Stop Following Me Or Else!

Past laughed at the threat.  
Wisdom to know the difference loaded the gun.  
I aimed it at Past's face.  
I pulled the trigger.  
Past bled, Fuck You! I never looked back.

The next day  
My friend drew  
A picture of us with Future.

# WHY DID I, YOU KNOW, BENCH YOU?

So, you know, one day, *you know*, he decided to, *you know*, ignore me,  
*You know*, became a complete, *you know*, stranger towards me  
And *you know*, all of a sudden, *you know*, you were, *you know*, Mr.

Friendly,

*You know*, in my face trying to, *you know*, get to know me,  
*You know*, as if I didn't know you two were, *you know*, buddies,  
*You know*, reading me as, *you know*, a dumb-dumb's dummy.  
So, *you know*, was that the, *you know*, game plan all along,  
*You know*, for him to, *you know*, pretend to like me,  
So, *you know*, he could slam-dunk in me  
And *you know*, for you to then catch the rebound?

So, *you know*, if it was the, *you know*, plan,  
*You know*, that's just, *you know*, foul  
And *you know*, you should just, *you know*, sit down,  
*You know*, because I will not, *you know*...

L a t o y a R a v e n e a u

ITALIANISMES TO A  
SPEAKER OF ITALIAN

FOR LACK OF ANY PROPER NUTS, it was plastic wrap and half-digested sandwiches being rudely shoved up the chubby cheeks of tar-eyed rats with mange pompoms glued where the usual worm-tails were wont to have been. They wouldn't run. Not even if you chucked a tennis ball at them. We knew for sure because we witnessed (at the present moment) the aerial ballet of about three tennis balls as they assailed the weird rats. Those yellow missiles were strangely graceful to my mind and maybe to his, spinning wildly as they escaped from hands still pulpy with pre-pubescence and dirty with falls on wet grass.

The study showed they wouldn't run. They would belch gargles, then try for a nibble.

I watched him watching them and wondered what he thought. His stare was stippled with disgust—I decided. He seemed to say, “You little bags of rabies, may you choke on fuzzy yellow balls and die.” I recant—he's not at all cruel. “You little bags of rabies, may you choke—only momentarily, mind you— on fuzzy yellow balls and lie writhing for a little while, then resume your regular activities unscathed.”

He may have muttered something to that affect in a husky Italian (or at least I assume it was). I found myself feeling a sharp admiration for how thoroughly I could not understand him. These warm feelings were being strangled however by a much sharper sensation, a regular fist actually. Without a doubt, there was a fist in my stomach, impacting again and again with the lower lining along to a steadily screaming mantra of, “WOMANHOOD! WOMANHOOD! WOMANHOOD!” Persistent by nature, I beat back the chant with my own refrain of, “DON'T THROW UP OR FAINT! DON'T THROW UP OR FAINT!” Needless to say, between the two, my brain was a regular rave and I could hardly hear a word he was actually

saying. If he had actually said anything. In actual English.

Suddenly, he rose—I noticed this much—the lips moving? Speaking—his phone was in his hand— “WOMANHOOD!” landed me nicely in the—“Huh?” I stammered and rose and smiled through an imagined state of ghost-like pallor, “DON’T THROW UP OR FAINT!” (fortunately did not come out of my mouth). I watched my phone being slipped from between my rocking fingers and watched as a number was put in for me (he was definitely speaking then but “WOMANHOOD!” can just about mute the world). I resorted to reading lips—something about a class, something about English. (I too was definitely speaking but I don’t really remember what I was saying past “DON’T THROW UP,” or “FAINT!”).

I was standing alone before I really understood the meaning of the digits glowing in the black square on my palm. But it seemed the mantra had changed at some point to a nice two-step, the refrain of which was alternating between “I WIN,” and “PAMPRIN.”

ITALIANISMES TO A  
SPEAKER OF ITALIAN  
(IN ONE ACT)

*Act 1. The Lady, The Physical Aches of Ladiness, Mind of the Lady,  
Somewhat Idealized Chap, Chorus of Squirrels*

1. *Opening Chorus of Squirrels. "Mindless blather, mindless blather." Etc*

CHORUS OF SQUIRRELS

Mindless blather, mindless blather—quick!  
Nuts we'll gather, nuts we'll gather—crows!  
Flee to shelter, flee to shelter—food!  
Helter-skelter, helter-skelter—feet!  
Will they feed us, will they feed us—wrong!  
You mislead us, you mislead us!

2. *Somewhat Idealized Chap. "What Worrisome Beasts These Vermin Be." Etc.*

SOMEWHAT IDEALIZED CHAP

What worrisome beasts these vermin be! Scurrying 'bout  
the ample verdure here.  
With ugly bodies bulged from mortals' feasts. *Esse sono  
rare e orribile!*

3. *The Lady. "Tis True, Tis True." Recit. And Aria*

THE LADY

Tis true, tis true! These ones are quite abnormal.

MIND OF THE LADY

My dear miss, you are being too informal. You just met I  
do declare, you're strange!

THE PHYSICAL ACHES OF LADINESS

How dare you act so coy when you're in pain!? God,  
woman—!

SOMEWHAT IDEALIZED CHAP

Strange indeed. They usually run away...I say, madam,  
your face seems rather pale.  
Are you okay?

THE PHYSICAL ACHES OF LADINESS

Okay!? Does she appear okay!?

THE LADY

Ah—I am, I am quite—

MIND OF THE LADY

—bad at feigning!

THE LADY

Fine! And your Italian is divine!

SOMEWHAT IDEALIZED CHAP

Divine? Oh, hardly! Truly, it's been ages since I studied.  
By now I fear my English might be tainting it.

THE PHYSICAL ACHES OF LADINESS

How modest... while you're on the verge of fainting!

MIND OF THE LADY

A little longer, will you hush!? There're pills for you at  
home, and if we rush—

SOMEWHAT IDEALIZED CHAP

Ah, now I'd best be going.

THE LADY

Oh?

THE PHYSICAL ACHES OF LADINESS

My God, who art in heav'n! Your mercy's showing—!

MIND OF THE LADY

No!



THE LADY

So soon?

THE PHYSICAL ACHES OF LADINESS

Pray tell, why are you “no”ing!?

SOMEWHAT IDEALIZED CHAP

Indeed—I must confess I must attend my English seminar. But might I be informed what your phone and email are?

MIND OF THE LADY

YES!

THE LADY

Ah, of course... I guess.

SOMEWHAT IDEALIZED CHAP

Why thank you and we must soon meet again—I’ll ring you then. Farewell good madam.

{He exits}

4. *The Lady.* “*Hee-hee, I win.*” *Final reprise.*

THE LADY

Hee-hee, I win.

MIND OF THE LADY

Hee-hee, I win.

THE PHYSICAL ACHES OF LADINESS

“win, win” yes—now will one of kindly go buy some PAMPRIN!?

## ALONE AND DOWNING

Someone suggested I  
love perfectly, once.  
As in I love one time  
perfectly. As in I love perfectly  
at least once—  
I hadn't the slightest

ideas about my life seem not to  
hold together.  
I hate myself because no one  
loves the self I pretend whole-heartedly  
I am. I think my dreams were polluted  
last night because

your face kept popping. Up.  
In my head or in a school inside  
my head. My mind is a frightening  
state of the nation to be

casting class or casting calls or the  
question-marked white liquids that  
are hardening against your plaster  
walled-up, Styrofoam dorm room and I assert,  
“I am

“not Man. Shut the fucking  
toilet seat!”  
Chivalry is so dead even its ashes are  
collecting

mold. Plaster. Please, amalgamate  
your balls. It will remind you and  
I and we of your gender barrier and societal  
Structured in soft, pliable material of  
“skin

“tone” as they’ll advertise it. And none of my  
white friends are quite that shade of  
corpse. Yummy, yum yum mango yellow or Red-Man

reds and peaches. I am talking of picnics.  
I am sighing about the dreams I cannot spit-out  
sweetly in your cochlea.

I draw great panic from the over-clipping of fingernails.

EN LA CIUDAD DEL ALMA,  
¡DIOS SÁLVALA!  
(SE DISOLVIÓ UNA ESPALDA  
DE MARFIL)

L V R

IN THE CITY OF THE SOUL,  
GOD SAVE HER!  
(AN IVORY NAPE CRUMBLLED)



A) Magdalena Rivera López con rosas en los ojos.  
(with rose petals in her eyes)

SEPTIEMBRE, SIEMPRE, 1868

Mi antigua bisabuela tuvo 9 niñas. La chiquita  
murió mordiendo fuego.

Otra se la llevo Juan del Diablo  
a la mar. Las siete que quedaron dormían  
acurrucadas, mordiéndose las yemas de los dedos  
durante el tiempo del hambre,  
con aliento a cebolla cruda y las uñas sucias.

Magdalena Rivera López, con sombra en la mente  
clavaba su iris en un libro, y amaba a la pagina  
andante—

su esposo fue tragado por la explosión del Puente  
de Alcolea,  
su calavera se mezcló con las piedras.

SEPTEMBER, ALWAYS, 1868

My antique grandmother had 9 daughters. The little one died  
bitten by fire. Another was taken away by Juan del Diablo  
to make love to the sea. The seven left slept huddled together,  
nibbled their fingertips during the time of hunger,  
with raw onion breath and dirty nails.

Magdalena Rivera Lopez, with shadows in the mind  
nailed her iris in a book, and loved the wandering page—  
her husband was swallowed by the explosion at Alcolea bridge,  
his skull mingled with the stones.

OCTUBRE, DEL DIARIO  
“Limón y carbón, ajo y sal  
y la nena con toz. Rompo el cal  
de luna y escribo danzas  
con mamá nada.  
El hambre por carne de almendra  
me da violencia.  
Le rompo la espalda (al libro),  
sus huesos crujen.  
Ahí está la historia del cuerpo  
con dolor, desnudo sobre mis manos  
como una polilla agonizante  
con alas de papel viejo”.



B) Se disolvió una espalda de marfil. (An ivory nape crumbled)

OCTOBER, FROM HER DIARY  
“Lemon and coal, garlic and salt,  
my little girl with a cough. I break the chalk  
of the moon and write a ballad  
with mama-nothing.  
The hunger for almond meat  
gives me violence.  
I break its back (the book’s),  
its bones crunch.  
Here lies the history of the body  
with pain, exposed atop my hands,  
like a dying moth  
with paper wings.”

C) Magdalena tortura a un libro  
con el dedo. (tortures a book with a finger).



LA METRÓPOLIS DE LA NOSTALGIA  
A la Magdalena, con mente hirviendo  
en la sustancia de memoria,  
se le ocurrió  
desaparecer

Y reaparecer como cautiva  
en uno de sus favoritos cuentos,  
con luz en el ojo y risa enrizada  
con manos de papel de papa.

Leyó una vieja receta gitana  
y capturó su libro en una jaula—  
de madera blanca como el hueso, blanca como los sepulcros.

Ahí, le torturó el clímax entre los dedos  
y resistió que pasara la página.  
Se quiso adentrar en su sobaco.  
Por lo menos, así ella lo ha contado.

THE METROPOLIS OF NOSTALGIA

The Magdalena, with brains boiling  
in the substance of memory,  
decided she would  
disappear

And reappear as a captive  
in one of her favorite stories  
with light in the eye and braided laughter  
with potato paper hands.

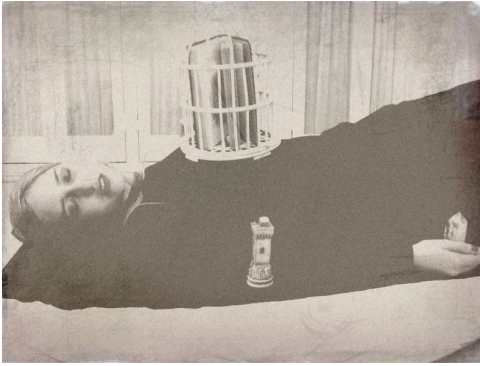
She read an old gypsy recipe  
and captured a book in a cage—  
made of wood white like bone, white  
like a sepulcher.

There, she tortured a climax between her fingers  
and resisted passing the page.  
She wanted to enter its armpit.  
At least, that's how she told it.





D)



E)

D) La Magdalena se congeló con hierro en las venas.  
La ciudad del libro se le metió adentro.

1. The Magdalena froze with iron in her veins.  
The city from the book came inside of her.

E) Se dice que la muerte retrató a Magdalena con rayos gama,  
se enroscaron los dedos de su mano como orugas.

1. They say that death photographed Magdalena  
with gamma rays,  
her fingers coiled like caterpillars.



F)

F) El libro le vació el cuerpo—  
ahora con rostro de cuero,  
la tengo en mi biblioteca.  
A veces la leo, La ciudad del alma.  
Ella, con gozo se abre  
bajo la estática de una luna eterna.

((The book emptied her body—  
now she has a face of leather  
and I keep her in my library.  
Sometimes I read her, The City of the Soul.  
With joy, she opens herself  
beneath the static of an eternal moon.))

FIN

S a r a h   S h a l l i t t

## A S T R A N G E   F E E L I N G

A strange feeling, cracking drifting like polar caps heaving  
chunks, the icy bundles carry infant germs safely sleeping  
long before examined, removed.

Tender bitter whiteness so stark so deafening, no more  
confined but ripping feathery flakes that break  
from giant sloth, a shadow.

Subsuming silence, un-break rebury in frozen folds  
heavy floating, below abyss above emptied sky.  
Stark bright hurting outer layers warm inside.

Quiet shake, a blinking eye and water drips.  
Soft, inevitable chill of shed layers transparent, crystal  
hard no more, pooling predictable transplanted.

Once more, hot air trapped tight unhindered and curious  
bubbling breaking surface thin sheath and armor split  
biting cold blends and liquid frothing. A strange feeling—

creeping dripping frozen outside, twisting turning lava inside,  
burrows digs in frightened veins, running deep from bright red  
source.

Ready waiting scarlet slingshot—erupt translucent.

# H E L L

The hardest thing is waiting for patience to dull the throb of uncertainty.

Hell is that. Hell is knitting needles grinding with every stitch, the sign of a void, never the sign of a cross. Hell is six lines and three inches in one hour.

Hell is the moment before you know the truth that you are ignorant, if this is the fact, then reconciliation is extinct. Time is always the enemy.

The kind of clarity I want before I die doesn't exist in the present, always a moment too late—and there it goes again.

There is clarity in Hell, but only the kind that is muddied over, sinking further into sludge, or trapped in your smoker's lungs.

Now, dust blows past me as I turn to dust and blow away. I erode while I wait, listening ears in tact upon a mound of sand.

I hear the bee unhindered, the grass crack open, the sharp whistle of wind running the length of a rusted pipe in my back yard. These details keep me from going insane, or I've already gone.

*Tick-toc. Click cloc. Trickclick lock* I must be unsound. There is always something more to wait for until there's nothing at all,

and knowing that is a Hell where bodies are stone without even wind to set them free, reminding me of all the waiting I have left.

I wait for an earthquake, a tectonic shift, a tremor.

## P R O O F

It's not a case of whodunit, or is it?  
It's not about cause and effect  
what happened is still left  
to be determined. Banal  
natural hate is still up for  
judgment and circus-freak love  
circuitously links to the ring itself  
with nowhere left to go.  
But it doesn't matter because  
if there's no proof  
it didn't happen.

A mobius strip of space,  
convoluted cut and paste hastily taped,  
to make sense out of something green,  
a machine spewing chunks of cheese  
but the rat gets away unscathed; the jaws  
clamped too late  
if there were jaws to begin with--  
which there weren't.

Maybe a bandit dressed as Zoro,  
black-caped and Latin  
desire blinding logic or a saint  
blessed with the desire to kill, kill, kill  
in the name of, What? Nothing;  
bloody hands show the way but  
the body's blue and  
nothing can be known when there are no  
security cameras.

A link to every lens, it's easy to dodge from  
sky scraper, pot hole, empty  
trash can. It didn't happen if there's no  
quantitative proof. What?  
In black and white a grainy image  
of a nose and the eyes looking  
evil if they're not red and watery  
blinking up, up at the pigeon nest or

dove nest or just a Swann  
Camouflage camera...

The city is getting smart or  
maybe more dumb, always one step behind  
the recidivist criminal, crumbling  
down the drain like the cookie count of  
what was that cereal? The kids know  
but you don't know anything, do you?  
You know what you knew before—that your  
hands are yours and the skin peels slow, so  
natural you barely notice  
you've come undone.

Clean hands save lives  
but dirty hands have money.  
That's what I learned from  
Mean Streets when I was nine, a little  
boy in Boston watching what I shouldn't  
up past midnight. I felt bad or  
afraid of getting caught red-handed reaching  
for the cookie jar. You follow?  
Zoom in and listen  
to nothing. It's in the past; no record  
of screaming crying laughing  
thinking wishing because  
it never happened  
if it's on mute.

I'm not a boy or a thief, but maybe  
I should be. Not a lover but a hater of  
everything statistical. I  
grab my testicles and say, What now?  
Nothing's

happened if you didn't see it.  
The award of second sight, the jabbing  
visions. They say the unseen is  
untold, untrue that nothing's  
happened. And when I say nothing,  
I mean everything.

# CAPITALISM

Although generally diSpLeased  
by the common aTtire that polluted  
modern daY, he found  
solace highLy in the low-cut blouse  
of the girl mEt while bussing home.

LISTENING TO TRAFFIC  
OUTSIDE MY BEDROOM  
WINDOW AS IF IT WERE  
AN OCEAN...

What will be told tonight  
as I lay awake  
trying to make my eyes  
close like a doll  
in the horizontal position—  
not fated like porcelain but the unbroken  
chunks of sedimentary  
rock, back and forth  
I hear the wind breeze  
in both directions red sirens  
on the gulf and mad monsters chased  
into submersion. I think  
blue waves of tranquility, I think forever  
motion I think  
that I will never sleep.  
A bird cry  
Reassures me I am not the only one  
though not as high as  
those downy feathers and paper bones  
attached to a screeching beak and  
perched atop a cliff looking  
down. I listen but the world  
is hushed except the constant  
roll of waves weaving,  
over and under like braids. Under  
and over the great belly  
divide, watery concrete  
and muddled din abridged  
by the devastating roar.



O l i v i a   S o u l e

T H E   P R O C E S S   B E G I N S   A S  
S U C H ...

the process begins as such....

a simple symbol,  
(Star of David)  
differentiates you from the rest...  
then the persecution begins.  
no painkillers for the Jews,  
just pain and endless  
prison.

next thing, you can't be  
human  
anymore, or perform any of the  
banal activities  
that constitute being human—  
can't walk on the sidewalk.

but it gets worse.  
they'll burn stars  
into your forehead,  
hot crosses.

“Anyone who disobeys  
this ban, will be shot  
to death  
without court  
proceedings.  
Should this ban  
be disobeyed  
by children,  
the above  
punishment  
will also

be applied to parents.”

casual  
human  
casualties—  
treating them like  
pests, you spray them  
with  
poison  
so they’ll stop  
chewing up your  
avocado leaves.

“Clandestine escapes  
for food result  
in bullet to the head.”  
(what is this place  
where an itch  
is better than  
a fuck?)  
maybe the better  
place is the better  
place, to escape  
the soulless sanity  
that runs this plane.

the officers smile  
as wheelbarrows of dead  
bodies stand  
in front of them,  
as if to say,  
“look mommy, look  
what we did”. girls  
undress before the killing.

they executed  
mothers  
with their children in their arms,  
and then they had  
a hearty meal

after a “job well done”.  
gassed (glad I found you—  
they usually  
are) & incinerated,  
burned  
in common  
graves.

bundles of hair  
is all that remains  
for the birds  
to build their nests with.

# A M A T E U R

amateur am Sam  
sam eat can  
of purple beet  
beet walk street  
street mock meat  
no reason? no need  
one two three  
sam won't see  
cabinet as poetry  
smart and all  
but wall wall wall  
sam think poem be  
when river enter sea  
turn spine to liquid  
from wooden grid  
format inadequate?  
sam see truth in that  
but sam be poetry  
and poetry and sam be free  
sam no technicality need  
to prove to anyone that poet he be

## CAN'T LOOK AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR

can't look at myself in the mirror—  
whatever happened to things getting clearer?  
saying no before the fact is easier  
than picking up the pieces after, I hear.  
but says the mirror, "i'm incapable, it's clear  
of vanquishing this incapacitating fear."

you know I'm no quitter, it's just—  
whatever happened to things getting better?  
always believed you'd forget her, but  
we both know you're not the best forgetter.  
deep the spiral already, it only gets deeper  
and scarier every time i let you in here

depending on impending ending coming near—  
needing you as my Savior isn't fair, it's just  
can't find it alone, that's for damn sure, and you're  
approximately home with your constantly open door.  
eating more pills than meals kills, I hear—  
asphyxiate a life for one night of clear.

close my eyes, deep breath of air, mercy, my  
heart bleeds out through sanguinary tears, i  
cover with makeup the dark circles unseen— i'm  
a bluebird caged singing out, "freed  
slave to my own fragility, but don't you see—  
sinners can't sin into eternity—"

(comparing each ass that pass on  
grass— fast if you let it last while it  
pass the mass of masks in the whirlpool of trash)

## CITY OF PAIN

she was interrupted  
in her silent reverie  
by his shadow stumbling slowly  
across her inner wall; wailing, wailing,  
as would the ghost of an abandoned child  
or the knife-sharp siren  
of an ambulance  
making its way through  
the lawless traffic  
of San Salvador's  
trash-strewn streets.

maybe it's me,  
but it seems that there're  
more funeral homes here  
than in the States.  
how do these people  
find it in them  
to wake up each morning  
to the jesus-sweltering heat  
and do whatever they do  
to simply stay alive  
day after day?— which is what?—  
*los nacimientos. los matrimonios. los funerales.*

each day  
when wasted on tequila hangovers  
moves slower than the last.  
*me perdona,  
pero la vida es dolor.  
alguien que te dice diferente,  
miente.*

P a u l S t r e m p l e

A F E W M O R E F E E T

We waded out into the sea,  
searching for the sun to rise,  
with eyes fixed to the horizon.  
We let the undertow take us,  
and drifted past the breakers  
through ever returning waves.  
Toes no longer touching sand,  
we tread water to stay afloat,  
tight-lipped as waves lapped  
salty tears across our cheeks.  
We didn't try to swim for shore,  
looking only for the light to break,  
thinking once we're in over our heads,  
what difference is a few more feet?

When we tired of staying afloat,  
our legs churning water in place,  
we took a last deep breath and dove,  
looking down into the darkness.  
We held our breath long as we could,  
until our lungs were hot and bursting,  
and we finally gave in to panic,  
exhaling an explosive final rush.  
Only then did we look up,  
and see the light we searched for,  
sun dancing across the surface,  
seeming suddenly so far away.  
We tried to claw our way back up,  
but sank, arms outstretched, back down.

## A P O S T A S Y

Your smile is flashing white salvation,  
and your laughter my gospel,  
that is to say what they call the good news.

I kiss your wine-red lips and taste  
blood, drinking deeply of eternal life,  
even if it's only for the night.

Your skin tastes of salt and sweet,  
the forgiveness of flesh,  
bread of life for which I hunger.

I fully committed to the faith,  
your catechism of surrender  
and the suspension of disbelief.

I may never kneel at your altar again,  
but you are like a prayer in my mind,  
as I carry the shadows of faith on my heart.



## M E T A N O I A

When someone made mention  
of your religion you laughed,  
and said, "I'm not superstitious,"  
as if you only deal in fact -  
But I saw you cross yourself twice,  
awash in ambulance lights,  
and I still flip a lucky  
in every pack that I buy.

That night I smoked it quickly,  
standing in the blue-red glow,  
while our hopes and mumbled prayers  
drifted upwards with the smoke -  
they wound past planes toward Heaven,  
and mingled in among the stars,  
while down on Earth our bodies  
were wreckage like crashed cars.

## S A I N T   A N D R E A

She said, “I feel like I’m falling apart,”  
and I could see it start at the seams—  
running along the stitches of her hips  
and up across the sutures on her heart.

Quickly spilling out from hairline cracks,  
her inner light bled into the evening,  
until she shattered and was lost to sight—  
broken along lines that were all my fault.


**She Could Have Barfed on My Liver**

I think her name was *Corona* or *Red Haired Slut*.  
I chased her with a *Hairy Armpit* –  
She ran away like I was *A Little Green Man From Mars* –  
It was her loss really – I would have given her a *Screaming  
Orgasm* and while she tasted I am cutting you off.

You are clearly unaware of the adage  
Beer before liquor and you will grow ill,  
or something like that, I don't recall.  
The way you treated her, so  
ungentlemanly, bathed in stereotypical  
chauvinism and I am beginning  
to lose my faith in my clientele  
whom at first I tried to please  
with whimsical drinkery but now-  
now I am certain I am a cancer  
plaguening you:

I am sorry.





*Home Remedies*

booze and booze and booze and  
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booze and booze and booze and  
booze and booze and booze and  
booze and booze and for sunburns:  
aloe.

-Natasha Hakimi

Milton

Stop showing off, Milton, you blind  
old Fuck. Phoebus this, footnote  
that, your internal rhymes suck.  
Satan was wrong. You, yourself, are hell.  
Go ahead, write syllabically 400  
years ago. See what I care.  
Paradise was lost the second  
you wrote *Paradise Regained*.  
Waah! I have issues with the Church,  
Waah! I was on the wrong side  
of a political change, Waah!  
Allude to this, you misogynistic  
Seraph.

-Kyle Barrett

Barrett

My intelligence simply shines through,  
I will not mask myself for you.  
Take the time to appreciate my inner rhyme  
without assuming I'm a god  
damn fairytale teller.  
The superior man acquaints himself with  
many sayings of antiquity and  
many deeds of the past,  
in order to strengthen his character thereby.  
In this light, I am the superior man.

Dick


-John Milton

Poetry in Olivia's World

Fuck [redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] Fuck [redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] and touch ourselves [redacted]  
[redacted]. Fuck [redacted]  
No [redacted], fuck [redacted]. Fuck  
religious [redacted]. Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
([redacted]). Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] god [redacted]  
[redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted] Fuck [redacted] d  
[redacted] shit [redacted] Fuck [redacted]  
[redacted]  
right [redacted]. Fuck [redacted].  
[redacted] fuck [redacted]  
[redacted].  
[redacted]

Olivia Soule

The censors are no longer our enemies, we say in stride  
as we walk down the boulevard, waving our fucking hats in the air  
like we have beaten them down with our cruel words and bare skin.



Your smile is flashing white salvation  
and your laughter is my gospel  
that is to say what they call the good news.

Kiss your wine-red lips and taste  
blood, drinking deeply of eternal life,  
even if only for the night.

Your skin tastes of salt and sweet,  
the forgiveness of flesh,  
bread of life for which I hunger.

Your liver did not taste as much  
like foie de gras as I would have thought it would.  
A shame, I admit, I had high hopes.

Your feet though had far more meat than I thought  
they would. Truly nourishing - although I worry  
about the toxicity of your nail polish.

- Paul Stample



*It* and the others  
 migrate like rumbling cards with no addresses,  
 machines with spinning feet lifting  
 and dropping down on cement, who heave  
 brown jackets like afternoon crows,  
 and take the entire asphalt for the bed—  
*It*, less than animal and bank building with mirrored windows,  
 less than fountain with monument and a pothole—  
 They are savage confessions from old cathedral Sunday  
 let loose to piss in corners and bite noses  
 with piranha stench; as old as nothing itself  
 with August sayings that last til July  
 and miraculously steady hands.  
 When downstairs at the gates  
 they sit on newspaper thrones with cigarette,  
 eyes nailed to something you cannot see  
 with as many eyes as you have, with as many  
 eyelids. Behold the King of Lashes who fans and folds  
 them as he please.  
 Only animals greet  
 with face against face or ass and true face  
 and men with twice as many inventions  
 can't even give hands for hands,  
 attached to wrists like joints on a gun,  
 attached to an arm like cancer, arm attached  
 to a body like a withering branch, attached to  
 a head like bad fruit, dropping, with a hummingbird  
 dead on its crown.

Laura V Rivera

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 Machine Talk

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*a destruction of the poems  
 IT and MACHINE TALK by  
 Laura V Rivera*

Alex Zobel

SAUSSURE SETS HIS  
TURDS ON FIRE

