

*Whole Beast Rag*  
**Issue 06: IDOL**  
September 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Lust, IV](#) by Mark Cugini  
[Surrender](#) by Mark DeCarteret  
[The Relationship Between Nouns and Verbs](#) by Andrew Field  
[Ee'd Plebinista's Alabaster Tuckus](#) · [AM 7:31](#) · [Lot's Wife](#) by William Lindberg  
[The Amity Between Acromegaly and Crocodiles](#) by Kirk AC Marshall  
[On Drones](#) by Damien Miles-Paulson  
[West of the Hellespont](#) · [The Story of Isaac](#) by Mark J Mitchell  
[The Mesmerist](#) · [Apoplexy of the Stars](#) · [The Circulator Beam](#) by Chris Moran  
[Toward a Theory of the Virgin's Physical Body](#) by Natalie Raymond  
[Penal Poets Colony](#) by Eldon Reishus  
[When the Fly Flew Into My Cut Hair](#) by AM Ringwalt  
[Mok Panther's Sex Drive...Engines of Desire...Pneumatic Nothings in the Night](#) by Jennifer Robin  
[Choose Your Own Adventure](#) by Shane Roeschlein  
[So. Cal. Meditation #1](#) · [So. Cal. Meditation #2](#) by Gary Sloboda  
[Christening](#) by Jennifer Taylor  
[The Gold Rush](#) by Corey Wakeling  
[Dumontages](#) by Barrett White  
[Yeezy Taught Me](#) by Sennah Yee  
[Interview with Douglas Glover](#) with Adam Segal of *WBR*  
[Interview with Featured Artist Bryan Olson](#) with Katharine Hargreaves of *WBR*  
[Featured Artwork by Bryan Olson](#)  
[IDOL Mixtape](#) by DJ Daddy Long Legs  
[Contributor Bios](#)

## Lust, IV by Mark Cugini

*after Aubrey Graham*

Dust off the champagne  
and dress the rappers up like  
lion tamers: we've got to all-  
star weekend the women  
that are waking up  
to our falsettos on their  
phones. Homies are  
So Far Gone  
off the lights in these  
three different  
cities which are  
forever converging into  
this seismic excess,  
an ambient landscape  
manifested in all the raining  
dollar bills and jewelry  
that none of us can afford—  
this is everything we're  
going to have to work for.  
This is the poem for every  
unlocked door in America.  
This is the cigarette burn  
in a rented Rolls Royce  
that we'll never  
be able to explain  
to our mother. This is  
The Calm, so rise  
up from your wheelchair,  
young money—rise up from  
that wheelchair and  
let's headbutt some  
basketball players.

## **Surrender** by Mark DeCarteret

to the luck of any god  
dressed in nothing but the sheet  
you have slept your entire life  
then go down as no good  
into the pit of yourself  
stripped of all wonder  
I read where the skull of Vitalis  
patron saint of genital disease  
will be selling at auction today  
we'll stick a red tab  
where the flower had been  
cut for your induction  
a dozen or so doves  
let back into the sky  
versed in little but light



## The Relationship Between Nouns and Verbs by Andrew Field

The mind balks and the mind breaks.

The mind talks and stutters, mutters melodious nonsense before it sleeps.

Sleet falls. Light falls, bodies fall, we fail each other.

My mother has been falling, so now she walks apprehensively.

The heart breaks like a plate;

it makes the word “shatter” and the mind burns.

Poetry matters. Poetry matters and poetry mutters, stutters and staggers,

staggers forwards towards the morning-fallen snow, and knows it all intimately:

how my father knows my mother, how my mother knows herself,

how the snow falls slowly, like shreds of paper,

like my mother’s writing, torn into pieces. My mother *wrote*.

She wrote for the Detroit News,

she dragged my brothers and me around; she laughed and we laughed;

she took us to apple orchards

and puppet plays and museums. The mind balks.

The moment I knew my mother was sick,

I felt I was falling, and my heart broke like a plate.

At night, in the neutral light of the study, I embraced my father.

Eyes brimmed, the mind trembled and the heart welled.

Time walked. It walked over us, broken stones.

My mother falls, my father cries, I cry and time walks.

The future trembles, and the cold moans.

My mother smiles. She says, “I love you, Andrew.”

The heart breaks. The mind balks.

## Ee'd Plebinista's Alabaster Tuckus by William Lindberg

A star-striped rabbit fixed to her barrel a lacy blue umbrella. Homer and Shakespeare sat—marbles rolling red; legs bloomed into a lotus pose—stoned under a mushrooming cloud with a prickly pink hedgehog. Trading blow-job and screw-driver stories about the latest White-House scam where Wall Street puffs haggled for an alabaster tuckus—an invention, some queef-jockey in DC ordered, made of yellow cake, dull.

The scene unfolds with a reality star defending her rabbit hole with a dull gravity simulator of the Sam's Brand bayonet pencil umbrella. Homer feasting on pinkness bent her over an alabaster tuckus, screwed up a hand-job, solidly stoned on an aphrodisiac powder, a serpent from Eden derived from a back alley Amway scam. Source said, "It was planted in the northeast corridor of Farmville along with a blue hedgehog."

No, they were confused; it was the hot-tub in Frontierville where the pink, not the blue, hedgehog was deposited threatening a donkey lobbyist with a whip thudding dull. What the fuck were they thinking wasting precious time on this hush-hush monkey scam? Wagging a third finger up to the sky shaped like an un-sprung umbrella. Did they expect reptilian deities to parachute out flying saucers stoned to do work, delegated to Ee'd Plebnista, to shit shine an alabaster tuckus?

And this brings us to the Dutch boy, with two fingers shoved up into that alabaster tuckus, playing 'truth or dare' with Homer eating doughnuts shaped all prickly pink like a hedgehog, smiling like he discovered the missing link in the brownie recipe—stoned buttering his ring up for the big red butt-plug that was too dull to shove up inside a rabbit hole without the projection of that blue Trojan umbrella. Didn't he know the gash in the dyke was a scam?

But it is more confusing than this; the idiots elected by Ee'd Plebnista knew about it, the scam. They sold it, dingle berries and all, by clouding the force making pretty their alabaster tuckus's! The monstrosity written by the alien lizards from the Pleiades was a blazy umbrella it was re-gifted covertly by the director of homeland security to the pink hedgehog but didn't read the fine print due to wits being dulled from inhaling too long, bong smoke leaders made illegal when stoned.

Homer said, "The past tense of rock cast into a mob is stoned." Shakespeare didn't know, till he scribbled it into the leer, that it was an Uncle Sam scam. He quoth, "I must not have been thinking because the glass I have been drinking is half-dull. I pulled down my slacks in poli-sci class to express pleasure for been fed an alabaster tuckus." The politico answered by diving into a hole with a prickly pink hedgehog. The rabbit emerged proudly holding fifty stars sewn into the blue pantaloons of a racy umbrella.

If seeking meaning in this sestina get stoned and gaze aloud at a politicians alabaster tuckus. Shake it around when you face a scam engineered by a sauced up pink hedgehog. And sing nude the hokey-pokey wits dulled in an electric chair holding a blue umbrella.

\* "Ee'd Plebnista" was borrowed from *Star Trek Episode 52: "The Omega Glory"* that means "We the People."

## AM 7:31 by William Lindberg

I sit on the edge of the bed. Stare at the dresser. There is something over there that I want.

I get up. Walk there. Open a drawer. Reach inside. Grab a pair of black socks. I look down at my feet. I am wearing black socks.

I walk back to the bed. Sit down. Pick up my phone. Focus my eyes. Thursday, 7:26 AM. Put the phone down. Stare at the dresser. There is something over there that I want.

I get up. Walk to the dresser. Grab hairbrush. Focus eyes into the mirror. My hair has already been brushed.

I go back to the bed. Sit down. Pick up the phone. Thursday, 7:28 AM. Put the phone in pants pocket. Stare at dresser. There is something over there that I want.

I get up. Walk to the dresser. Grab a razor. Smooth the skin flat with fingers. The stubble is missing. My face is already shaved.

I walk back to the bed. Sit down. Stare at the dresser. There is something on it that I want.

I narrow my vision. Verbalize: nunchucks, Glock 19, straight razor, sleeping cat, hair brush, Lilac Vegetal, Old Spice deodorant, mirror, Tanach, steaming mug of coffee.



## Lot's Wife by William Lindberg

Lucinda ponders on the number sixteen as she turns to look one last time at her home. Up ahead her husband, household staff, in-laws, cousins, and a band of sixteen children disappeared behind a craggy bluff.

A watery weepy sensation creeps over her as the frontal wave of a vibratory tone, rings out from the well at the bottom of the valley. She clutches at her ears trying to stop the din as a dim realization filters through the sedimentary layers of her mind. As the breakers envelop her, all thoughts of the now manifest as a clutching boiling ball of panic behind her breastbone. Her astral body becomes engaged, hyper stimulated, and shifts into an alternative realm of being.

There are seven kinds of deadly fat at Sodom and Gomorrah. None of which have anything to do with the actions of her people. The seven degrees of separation from the source of divinity was the reason for the judgment against her people from the Ruling Planet of the Pleiadian star system. An hour prior, a princess from the seventh moon-star warned her and her husband to get out now and never look back.

Number sixteen is a sacred number. She sees it from her astral body in every tree, rock, flea, and cloud. Number sixteen is the meaning of justice. Number sixteen is the sign on the moon. Number sixteen is the swirl of hair on the tail of a cotton bunny playing tag with dragonflies in a deserted field.

A light ripples forth from the two cities as a hovering log shaped thing camouflages itself into an angry rumbling thunderhead. A light silences the screams of the breathing as they realize the intensity of the blast. The souls of that many people crossing over suddenly are confused. They whip on past her at the velocity of lightening.

“What is the meaning of justice?” a childlike silvery blob says. “There are seven kinds of fat,” another tones into her mind, “the ruling sign of the planet is the number sixteen...”

Lucinda looks back at her contorting body as the element of human destruction seizes all the moisture from her cells transforming her into a pillar of salt.

## The Amity Between Acromegaly and Crocodiles: An Excerpt from Vampire Drive by Kirk AC Marshall

It became a regular thing. Attending bacchanals and hopping jazz nights at The Green Tree Lounge bathed in luxurious purple light, administering a shoehorn to his thermally-ensocked heels to slip into his most elegant supple-leathered Florsheim suedes, resolving to maneuver through densely-populated fraternities of jug-headed political reformists and product-pedigreed criminals with names as hallowed as the highest fruit to the birds intent on navigating the least accessible bowers, and the nights would yield a monastic attitude of vigil and self-abasement because Electric Gazelle would float toward Siouxi Violet Kong and feel an ontological regret that he experienced such impressions of wonder so infrequently when he wasn't gazing at Siouxi's depth-charged quality of human excellence, an epistemological competition in his brain that transmitted ideas of inadequacy to the absolute extremity of his spruced and gleaming body parts because when he was alone he felt half as good as when he shadowed her in her stately orbit.

He couldn't possess enough of the human space she had vacated only seconds, ions, prisms of light later. Siouxi Violet Kong was anathema to inactivity, for Electric Gazelle always yearned to dance after her, and she was unflagging in the pursuit for new vantages and fresh territory. For a while there it wasn't exactly abnormal or fractured or behaviorally defunct for Electric Gazelle to stalk the woman he admired with such complicated and latently-uncomfortable expressions of consolation and desire, so it manifested itself as a diversion of most lazy and rigorless days, suffused in the high-wattage heritage of summer's evening light, to ghost in her footprints the way a dragonfly might chase a hummingbird to locate a greener scene. He became enamoured by the sport, as though fixating over the conceptual and elliptical intimacies of wanting to fuck that which you must not fuck (for you would desecrate the property you perceived as external to grubby human possession) was conducive to getting through the day, and he probably spent too many hours coveting the opportunities to introduce himself to her than is necessarily or psychologically recommended.

There are particular entities in our *tabula rasa* of reality, our machine of experience, that convolute the sensible actions of temperate and coolblooded men. These aren't always or exclusively or systematically entities of a *female persuasion*, and rarely the same woman for a socialised microcosm of horny, sentimentally-contained, passion-afflicted young men, but Siouxi Violet Kong represented the exception to the loftiest law established to dismantle cliché, inasmuch that she reaped and neglected the hearts of masculine appeal the country over.

This is to make plain that Siouxi was anything but plain: she was the most striking occupant of any populated space, and Electric Gazelle would patronize The Green Tree Lounge, despite reservations catalyzed by the goombah spectres of Breakneck and Chainsaw, and he would lay claim to a booth not far from the long-lashed bartender in his smock-and-collar, sufficiently proximal to order a thin torch of burning liquor, something schnapps with balls, a throat of fire, and from such a watchful paradise he would angle his profile to the strobe-disrobed stage and rest the back of his head against the leather gables of the carrel to wait for her entrance.

She would always defer emerging until the least promising moment. This is the mark of a seasoned entertainer, or an absentminded lush, or a manipulative bitch or a proponent of collective human psychology. Therefore the perfect attribute to identify when investigating the human motives of a swell sophisticate such as Siouxi Violet Kong: she was all these things, but more than the gestalt sum of each free-floating facet.

Electric Gazelle amused himself with elaborate and contrived visions of gnawing her haunches while she romped above him arrayed in sweat-cloyed hotel linen, reciting the many scorn-flung allegations against his fidelity/manhood/sincerity/value as a confidant and provider that she was apt to identify, while he luxuriated in the musk of her sex as she gyrated with such pretty haste. He dithered in dreams of domestic entanglement. He foresaw opportunities to charm and transfix her, but these were always implausible and often involved flying carpets or replacement teeth. It did him no favor angsty over Siouxi Violet Kong's appearance. She was always petulantly late. When she finally did grace the stage she banished all intervening or disconcerting notions to the furthest vertices of the map.

This is because she was a hypnagogic emissary of bliss and hypnosis, a creature without halitosis or human waste or corporeal imprecation or sartorial imperfection; Siouxi was about as self-proven and fundamental in her physical purlieu as a caribou in the fullness of his winter tyranny, and Electric Gazelle could feel his dick bend back on itself in the servitude of his desire. What a way to cosset his testicles, from afar with neither intent nor intensity, less a woman than a flag for female luxury, someone for whom *men were always abstruse to her needs*, for she possessed an intellect so fierce that it brooded in stealthy rage beneath her rumbustious architecture, belied her severe cleavage in secret for a moment in which she might denounce all lust and wist. She was over the episcopal scrabbling of dirty



boys with strobing cocks. And yet Electric Gazelle was astride this *vernissage*, hands tucked beneath pits, because he was sure such a freak of incendiary sex would have to intercept eyes with a lothario planted at her sweet womanly feet.

She would have to notice him sooner or later: he was existing just for such an acknowledgment, his blood racing to catch her, his immensity atremble to achieve autonomy at her merest of glances, like a particle waveform on the brink of collapse between rupture and chemical reaction. All he would ask is for her hips to glide within the clap of his palms. He could endure the torment of obscurity for such wattle and fire. But none of this happened, for Siouxi didn't surface from her aquarium of doo-wop *accoutrements* to sear the socks of her patrons' time-tapping hooves. No: she didn't front at all.

She didn't front because she was being affronted in the culvert behind the tavern by one of Edamame Mint's dim-cerellebum'd brawn-calibrated swaggerchamps—this time not from friendly sentinel sentimentality but because the raven-faced aberration was adamant that a black-spleened vaunt of sport-fucking was on the cards for him and the boss's leggy Chinese distraction among the trash organs and dumpster scrum of this shiny strident night, and Electric Gazelle blundered through the stage-exit door onto the fire escape to find the rape-summoned wraith palming his hand over Siouxi's burning mouth.

The creep was known to the sordid and tortured folk at The Green Tree Lounge as Brick Picnic, and he really did sport the face of a raven, or at least some corvid-spawned *flâneur* of evil siring, for his entire countenance comprised of prismatic angles. He looked as though an artisan specializing in stonemasonry had fashioned Brick Picnic a visage by whittling schist when it was still just liquid. What had formed was a kite-like bone structure, simulating comparisons to scavenger birds and Klaus Nomi. Electric Gazelle had never witnessed anything like it, for it prevailed in its own caste of mutant elegance, and he wanted desperately to rid the world of its involuntary scandal by sundering it with the sharpest plane of an artfully-wielded sword. Surely some tryst or bargain of Faustian glut was at work in the world. Brick Picnic was seraphic in his dark and scurrilous cant, a freak of horripilative quivers.

This wasn't Gotham, but Electric Gazelle sallied into action. He mustered forth like a fox-conscious ridgeback loping into the scene, his snout all aflame, and there was business in his red throat yet, for he gambled on his resolve to defuse the most incendiary sins he might calculate, but no-one had said a lick about Brick Picnic so the whole status of unfamiliarity unsettled his bones. What if he was assuming authority of a situation soon to prove far beyond his liturgy of song and condemn, what then if Electric Gazelle was to be bested and defiled by this trapezoidal-skulled hybrid with the Punch & Judy proboscis, and right within eyeshot of the woman he'd intended to salvage?

Fortunately Electric Gazelle's entrance heralded a rank of intimidation, and Brick Picnic recoiled from squeezing the cheek-sockets of Siouxi's mournfully sublime and rasping face, enough to confront his opponent and entreaty this panther-soft interloper with an aquiline leer. Brick Picnic furied from beneath the cuttlefish protein of his scorn-struck kisser. It was like being accused by a plastinated body or a wax simulacrum, and was dislocated from the naturalized context of fear all the more for it. Electric Gazelle waited for his vague inheritance of disgust to subside before he intervened with a punch to Brick Picnic's ear, as blessed as a whip on Christ's flanks.

This sent Edamame's man crazy; Electric Gazelle had never seen so much vitriol in a hornet. The wounded varlet cupped his fingertips around his offending lobe as if Electric Gazelle's colliding fist had compromised the integrity of Brick Picnic's porcelain ligatures. That is to say, Brick Picnic retreated in wild umbrage, coveting his pain like a hyena. Siouxi Violet Kong was still too silenced by trauma and dishonor and even a little resentment that her gallant interventionist had arrived to find her so writhing and powerless, so Electric Gazelle felt it all mandated a human voice, such damaged orientation, thus addressing his opponent: 'You pallid jewel-headed creep, get the fuck away or I'll fly-kick you in the neck.'

This should have been the heroic or provocateur postulate to send agents of torquemadic weirds back into their sewers and cupboards, but instead Brick Picnic stood his ground, or at least hunched with scorn and hands clutched to his tormented brain. 'I said begone, you dumb sumbitch, what are you lame or mentally inadequate? Don't you understand that I'm priming to whup yo strayin' ass?'

This ignited Brick Picnic into a font of convulsing spite. 'I will strip the meat from your clumsy paws, you chaingang-mulatto child, if you so much as contemplate raising your nigger hamhocks in my radius again,' Brick Picnic barked with a crocodile smile, his whole body seething. 'I suggest you go fellate a blind janitor before I pluck the tongue that disdains me so without further thought for its use.'

This was beyond reconciliation, such loathing; Electric Gazelle felt as though he was being threatened by a voodoo moon. He felt tears bloom through his lashes. 'That's the final straw, you unholy creep, I ain't lettin' your slurring

beak holler taunts no more. First it's this wonderful lady, then it's the gall to pretend at some capacity for retribution. You ain't nothing but a misbegotten weakling who deserves no trace of favour.'

Electric Gazelle unbuckled his belt and torqued it around his knuckles, advancing in a threat of seconds. He was chthonic in his anger, vorpal, an instant disinherited of clarity, devoured by the *pæsis* of collision, a shoulder leaning into the leverage of the punch with an accuracy to dismantle your stopwatch.

Let's just agree to assume that Electric Gazelle could make all the cheetahs cry. His face was contorted with a ventricular gush, mottled with crimson circuitry and muscles like nomadic knuckles beneath the skin. It was disgusting; like a giant eel exhaling its meals through the fissures in its flesh. There was a dance to his lightly-flaunted calves as he rallied fury from some sunken resolve. When his fist landed square on its target, Brick Picnic's butter of muscle—all the brashly-distributed flab encountered at the ear of the Muppet-snouted shrew with his Nomi-faceted frown—Electric Gazelle felt a lift of spirits. A glister of warm sufficiency. He was kicking Brick Picnic's butt.

Sometimes it enculturates more refined, learned and less volatile men into an empire of turbid choreography, does the provocation to fight, and it's unreasonable to expect that pariahs who've occupied their entire inferior manhoods avoiding confrontation because of its uncunning and uncivil properties won't seize the chance to engage when they discover that a duel actually demands a capacity for rigour and science. Because to trade blows with an opponent is to examine the total interior force of their intellect, to interpolate the full measure of dispassion and contempt they harbour for your entitlement to walk this green earth. A fray, a spat, a combat kiss, a snipe, a skirmish, a display of fists—nothing assigns a greater respect to the imperfections of one's foe than the strategic courtship of pugilists at play.

So Electric Gazelle was livid, monstrous, ecstatic in his thrall of war. He was in his domain, at the echelons of his power. Then Brick Picnic retrieved a tiny, womanly Derringer pistol from his waistband and swung it in a lazy, desperate arc at Electric Gazelle's chest while contorting his corvid gape into a tiny, woolly threat. No one had any time to dispute each others' motives. Siouxi Violet Kong lunged onto Brick Picnic's back, sinking her enviable mouth and its complement of choppers into the freak's sclerotic haunch. Brick Picnic screamed like the jerky circuitry in an awakened pinball machine. He deployed the hardest component of his right elbow—a combination of bone, cartilage, scabies-crazed exoskeleton, flesh and protuberant horn—to Siouxi's forehead and dismantled her purchase from his reedy spine. She suffered dermabrasions to the cheek and eye, and lacerations to her nasal column, which meant that she fell to the steel fixtures of the staircase with blood aflood from her alarmed nostrils. What a pretty little study in dishevelled glamor.

Electric Gazelle arced up, as the colloquialism professes it, spastic with rancour and the thrill of mortality. He sucker-punched Brick Picnic direct in the Adam's apple, otherwise canonised as the *laryngeal prominence* and known by its informal attribution as a linguistic throwback to the creationist annals of Genesis 3:1:6, for "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food... she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat," for there is much to compare the thyroid cartilage with that of an apple, albeit an etrog might convey more accuracy in its glottal physicality, but of course that's implicitly resorting to Rabbinical Judaism in its apocryphal origins, when the point is that Brick Picnic, who wasn't especially religious in his temperament or intellectual demeanour, having been home-schooled by his father, a taciturn mid-level biker with a vocal loathing for *book-learnin'* which he conflated theology with, and had suffered some developmental stunting, at least on an emotive register, from having to endure the basically warped and chauvinistic tutelage of said patriarch, and whom had never even seen a citron before, but might imagine it to be abundant with the swollen sweetness of a yellow winter apricot, clutched his neck with wild disbelief, disbanding the handgun down four flights of steps while Electric Gazelle expressed his immense resentment and tackled the now-choking adversary to the ground, which soon gave way to much conjoined rolling down aforementioned stairwell.

What therefore came to eventuate was this: Brick Picnic and Electric Gazelle went entangled and slaloming into the night. Siouxi lay slumped, her heart thrashing in her breast, waiting for someone to reappear while she mustered her most fastidious skills at injury-attention to staunch the flow of her streaming blue-ichorous nose, and when no one came pussyfooted up the stairwell she unclamped her little compact mirror from amidst the contents of her purse and gazed searchingly at the assaulted reflection hunched in the scalloped glass between her fingers. A bruise of merled extravagance was gradually cataracting her hairline; she was sure it would work out to be a blood-rumpled doozy. Her eyes flashed a sapphire resign. After about five minutes she groaned her way to her feet, straightening her bronze tube of a swingdress, and while tracing the curvature of her tongue around the crowded trauma of her teeth, committed herself to the risk and went limping with the *élan* of a crippled swan down the dark inert slope of the fire-escape. She had no clue why she should care for men at all. They only competed for the swindle to fuck you up, all 3,360,742,758 of them.



## On Drones by Damien Miles-Paulson

As I write this my drone is walking the dog.

I've been asked by a well-distributed lifestyle and technology magazine to write a comprehensive article on drones. "Think of yourself as the poet laureate of drones," the Editor told me, though I knew that all he wanted was a review of some new technology that no one else was willing to review.

All I have been able to come up with thus far is this:

*Despite attempts to change the name to something friendlier, Drone has persisted.*

I've never grown accustomed to the sky filled with drones. The constant buzzing, a hum outside my window.

And the drones are getting smaller and smaller. The military and Homeland Security have been using drones the size of house flies for years. They say they just buzz into a room and fart out a little bit of nerve gas. They say these little drones were the key to ending the UN Headquarters hostage crisis.

I have two friends in prison, well, three, but why he's there has nothing to do with drones. They stalked their ex-wives with drones. They each got five years in prison. Yet mothers are allowed, and encouraged by drone manufacturers and women's magazines to use drones to stalk their children. My wife wants to buy one of these babysitter drones to follow our kid all day but I've managed to stave that off, for how long, I'm not sure, the thing about drones is their inevitability.

I want to write a story about the life of delinquent drones. It will open with a few drones lazing about outside a 7-11, smoking cigarettes and putting off for as long as they can returning home to their masters, Slurpee in tow. I see it as a drone *Clerks*.

I want to write about the recent strike by drone pilots at Godfather's Pizza. People refused to tip the drones, thinking they were automated. In response, Quentin Tarantino released a drone-remix of the famous scene from *Reservoir Dogs*, where they talk about tipping drones instead of waitresses.

I want to write about drone-related crime, the organized gangs of drone bandits, who steal drones as they fly home from trips to the mall, to the bank, to the Hive, etc., heavy with spoils, and about the 100-fold increase in accidental beheadings by drone propellers since drones became as ubiquitous as cell-phones. I was nearly a victim last year. Some asshole's drone was running low on battery, this was before the fail safe had been put in place, and it dove out of the sky, clipped my head and now I have giant scar on my forehead.

I want to write about drones repairing fragile ecosystems like temperate rainforests, planting artificial trees made by in-drone 3-D printers, and about a scene I once saw; a lone polar bear, probably one of the last, traversing a thin flow of ice, a science drone tracking its every movement. Or about English Gentlemen going on fox hunts with their drones, and hunters in the Northern Forests using drones to track down deer.

I want to write about how my wife thinks we should take a drone vacation to see the Pyramids of Giza. From the comfort of our own home we can get unprecedented access to the tombs and passage ways of the Pyramids, fly high above them, enjoying a romantic meal from atop the head of the Sphinx. But I just can't get my last trip to New York out of my head. The kids wanted to see the Statue of Liberty so we took the boat out there and from the water we looked up at the Green Lady, a swarm of drones buzzing around her head but the poor old broad couldn't even swipe them away. I imagine, drone or no drone, that is how the Pyramids must be these days. My wife's brother runs a drone travel agency so it'll be cheap and I'll probably end up saying yes because it'll give me ammunition when she bugs me about a drone babysitter again.

I want to write about Bill Gates' new plan to increase drone access in Africa. It is his dream that there be an educational drone for every kid on the continent.

I want to write about my rebellious days as an Anti-Drone Activist. I was part of the Seattle Seven. I can tell you this because the statute of limitations has finally passed. Yes, we seven single-handedly stole 10,000 drones and then crashed them into the Puget Sound. I avoided jail time by spending almost five years in Pakistan, one of the only countries left in the world where drones are one hundred percent illegal. It was a good few years. I was like a celebrity there. But I got homesick.

I want to write about the Anti-Drone Activist, and Brazilian Soccer fan, who flew a drone onto the pitch at the World Cup finals and, like the hand of god, used it to deflect an errant goal into the net. Brazil went on to defeat the USA 2-1.

I want to write about failed sitcoms like *I Dream of Droney*, *My Three Drones*, or the drone soap opera, *Drones of our Lives*, and about the reviled drone paparazzi who've made almost everyone a celebrity so that now Anti-Drone Devices are the must-have accoutrement for celebrities of even miniscule fame.

I want to write a hard-hitting piece about the growing call for drone free zones in cities across the world, I'd call it Virgin Skies.

I want to write about Andre Drone's new film, the first film made completely by drone. I knew Andre Drone in his college days, when he was known as Shawn Monroe. He put himself through film school at NYU by filming drone porn. I have to admit, his new film, *On Drones*, is incredible. It's the only true evocation of what it's like to live in the Drone Generation.

My daughter and I can't wait for Christmas and the arrival of Drone-Claus, or Santa-Drone, depending on which Christmas company you subscribe to. I'm partial to Drone-Claus because their drone looks the most like Santa's sleigh and they can eat the cookies we bake. It's great waiting up late into the night, each passing buzz could be Santa, and just as my daughters asks me if Drone-Claus is real, he comes down the chimney, deposit the presents under the tree, nibbles at the plate of cookies and takes a sip of milk before zipping out into the coldish winter night.

Outside almost every city on Earth there is a giant warehouse, The Hive, containing the packaged and ready to go wealth of the world. Sometimes I'll drive up there and get as close as one is able to and I'll just lay on the hood of my car as the millions of drones fly in all directions, like starlings or barn swallows.

I want to write about the miraculous resurrection of franchises like Radio Shack, "Your One Stop Drone Shop!" Why didn't I buy stock like my father-in-law advised me to do?

Instead of all this I'm to write about something a little more personal, drone-sex. My wife and I have talked long and hard about this one.

Her sex drive, like that of many, has been almost completely wiped out due to interference from drone radio waves. It has been almost two years since we have made love. So when I proposed the idea of bringing a drone into the bedroom she wasn't overly enthusiastic, but she said we could give it a try. Together we browsed the drone-sex sites, trying to find a suitable partner. Because of new laws, sex-drones are not allowed to be automated, they must be piloted. My wife's extinct libido has also made her the least jealous person in the world, she could have cared less if I had drone sex with a real pilot or with some CPU in Northern Sweden. We chose an accountant in St. Paul. First, though, I had to go to the drone-outfitters, where (and I'm sorry to be vulgar here, but I'm a reporter) technicians made a 3-D copy of my penis. This was loaded into a database so a sex-drone in St. Paul could access it. I was surprised to see so many couples at the drone-outfitters. I was under the impression that drone-sex was still rather avant.

The accountant in St. Paul and I made an appointment. The drone arrived promptly at 9:30 p.m. I digitally signed off that it had been cleaned, appeared clean and that the mechanical genitalia was also clean and vacuum sealed. When the drone entered the house mood music whispered from its speakers. My wife laughed uncontrollably and through her tears she waved the drone and I into the bedroom.

The small video screen turned on, it was the accountant from St. Paul, my drone had just arrived at her apartment. She too was married, she told me, and like my wife, her husband was in the next room. I could hear him laughing.

I put on my drone-goggles, which gave me full visual access and control of my drone in St. Paul. My first sensation was of how weird it was not to have hands to touch the accountant with, this is an upgrade that I'm told will be made available soon. The accountant laid down on the bed, my drone positioned above her. The hover mode of the drone was rather unstable. After some small talk we decided to go forward with intercourse.

From inside the otherwise nondescript drone a perfectly human looking vagina emerged, complete with black lingerie that the accountant in St. Paul wore as well. She looked down at the simulacrum of my penis as it lowered from the drone.

I turned the volume up on my headset to drown out the annoying hum of the drone. I closed my eyes because the visual was disorienting, as I said, the hover mode left much to be desired, causing me to become motion sick. But the sounds of her moaning, I could lose myself in them.

At the risk of spilling into pornography I will edit certain details regarding the efficacy of the synthetic genitalia and the overall quality of the sexual experience; these will be made available on my blog. I saw the accountant from St. Paul on a weekly basis until she broke it off a few months later. She said that drone-sex boiled down intimacy and sex until all that was left was penetration. She said she missed the smells, the imperfection of flesh and the way it waxes and wanes.

My wife watched our encounters from the doorway at first, then from a chair at the side of the bed, interested but never aroused. I flip through photographs she took of me with the drone, feeling like a caveman thawed from a block of ice.

When the accountant from St. Paul and I stopped seeing each other my wife asked me if I'd find another drone. No, I told her, all I wanted to do was cuddle.



## West of the Hellespont by Mark J. Mitchell

Stay awake, listen carefully boy,  
this is important.  
The day is for sleeping,  
but before the sun goes down  
make sure you've gathered enough wood.  
Look. Look over that way.  
That's east. If you're ignorant  
of other facts, your job is just keeping  
track of that, just that one  
direction. Hold it in your blood.  
No, remember, one day  
(You're right, one night. Don't be impertinent)  
a bright flame will be leaping  
on that hill—that one, across the sound.  
That night is the whole use of your manhood.  
Our fire will glow. It means that they  
have broken the walls of puissant  
Troy—yes, Troy. Trojan women weeping.  
Children cast in wells to drown.  
There will be no city where the holy city stood.  
Now listen, I'll die soon. No boy,  
don't cry. Here's flint and steel. You can't  
forget our mission. We send news sweeping  
to Greece (really to that round  
hill over there). It's our joy, our duty, our good.

## **The Story of Isaac** by Mark J. Mitchell

Under that stone knife  
my choice was clear:  
Either try to escape  
or believe.  
The rest is history





## The Mesmerist by Chris Moran

let these words  
be a battering ram  
through the stargate  
into a new field of vision  
to flummox the energy  
field deception wave,  
a new death projection  
betwixt the circulation beam—  
amplified sound  
just circulating  
the celestial light of molten auras  
I have held flames in my mind  
greenish blue  
siphoning air  
from dimensions of darkness  
because I am a moon lord—  
diseased with penetrating dreams  
of altered realities  
really, the very focal point  
of our energetic awareness  
broken out of the hell-forged chains  
of my wretched birth  
from the far flung  
galaxies of the elder star gods  
the antediluvian archons  
fading  
in and out  
of this reality  
and into the next one, where form becomes formless  
the fabled gods and legendary beings—  
owls act as cosmic intermediaries  
and this is when the advanced spellcraft took hold  
via subtle energetic vibrations  
I am inventing psychic landscapes through volume  
I am speaking of suns beyond sonority  
of varicose moons and sanguine fish  
of colored spheres drifting through the vast planetary theater  
of pentagonal ratios, of palingenesis  
this world's the curse we live with  
the myth of mold and honeysuckle  
cycles of the golden ghost  
through advanced carbon weaponry—  
through the chalice of dismissal  
the fruits of my discontent shall sculpt the air  
in chiseled layers of atavistic artifice  
brandishing a psychic mess of arteries  
the oracular owls shall guide me—

## Apoplexy of the Stars by Chris Moran

yes in this  
black dimension I radiate  
DNA in the silver way  
a matrix of sword  
and sound dissolved in decay  
in the underworld the lion-headed man  
stalked me, magnetized to my fear  
siphoning the dream-stream into darker dimensions  
yet Bhairava has set a flame in my heart  
magnetized to the density of decay—  
hybrid stars of alien salt and ether  
blackening the cloud  
to communicate  
an echo  
planetary essence  
swords fell into the density  
of elemental spheres  
telluric acid in the vile sky  
hardened air sculpted  
into images  
spirit wave annihilate  
the ulterior intelligence—  
lord of the seven spheres  
I enhance that oracle zone  
into the night zone  
spirit eclipse  
sigil to the stars—the black dimensions  
I call home  
no source of space  
clouds that violate salt embers vibrating  
brandishing the echo  
of a dream  
the circulatory matrix  
being a digital fabrication  
nerve net apostle  
from where the shadowy night gods  
transmit spooky wave tones  
dimensions of silt, sand and rain stone  
the sleep of Chaldea shall rain  
like the ritual dream spheres of nuclear geometry  
relegating the shapes of sound  
apparitions of liquid light  
voided dimensions bloom in angry sand  
thrust into the black wind of death's feeble dream  
mind of the boundless spheres  
death dreams of shapes  
of sound  
of apparitions  
of liquid light  
blooming into death's ultimate vortices—  
the sleep of Chaldea shall rain no more



## **The Circulator Beam** by Chris Moran

Forgotten breed of man, a lone wolf with a broken paw. I, the alien man, consume the illusion. The new desire, the new negative sublimation. Crystal core rock skull.

The invisible dimensions—a pendant—a nudity for the purpose of imagining. A vessel with no other purpose—than imagining.

The strength of the façade cumbersome. It's the sound of a specter—a flame inside a ghost.

Like an imaginary desert abstracted of all form—as in a scene made up by the mind in future time. The dizzying vertical nature of becoming.

The world's my corpse subtracting a veil and the immanence of all forms. Clear white threads stretch out like the arms of lovers and touch the black prism sun.

The ecstasy of god's golden tears—the revelation of the method in the more mysterious and invisible realms. In what flowed out—a style of the letter. The symbol. The myth—dejected, diseased, ostracized, lodged into my brain. A pure dispersal so immersed in the matrix.

As if there were some cure for the world's pain. I'm so inside my body but I am more than it. I am more than this. As if I could cure the world's pain.

The vault of language's corpse projects a plane outward. Tunnels of reality converge in the black pyramid hovering in my dream. The attention magnetized to oblivion.

Elric enters the other—solid, he becomes all; does everything, becomes nothing.

The prestige of circulation. Abstraction, aberration—the obstruction active—ancient energy—accumulation of identities. Cruel and despondent like the heroes in the fantasy novels of Michael Moorcock.

The impossible essence floated into the atmosphere and it was the living sword Stormbringer. A galaxy of forms uncreated or being created in the mind of the heroes in the fantasy novels of Michael Moorcock.

The word is a sword. The word takes on form. A thought-form which, according to Don Juan Matus, can become autonomous.

Deny the worst parts of the world until they no longer exist. But they do exist. But I make myself dizzy through my own creation.

A parade of swords rejuvenates the field. My false weapons are dead like the moon. Dead like the void of outer space. And yet it is possible for the very great to inhabit the inside of a vibrant star. Burning illustriously for ages as the source of all life. The source of all souls. The creation of illusion leads me to question, is the sun alive? Yes, the sun alone is alive.

Formless dark on the horizon, formless dark in front of me. Like a jagged film strip, jagged rainbows and cinematic threshold of horror and romance.

The world is insufficient. The golden essence corroding immaculate reveries of glass. Via the world spectacle, the accretion of history lingers on. The corpse of time dragging itself through the movement of history. A veil refracting unto itself. Access the chrism.

## **Toward a Theory of the Virgin's Physical Body** by Natalie Raymond

in thinking  
about snakes  
I see her  
legs glazed  
in sweat & the beige  
of taut rubber bands  
she curves  
in two directions  
each foot pointed  
intricately north  
& southwest  
sprawled flat  
& shaped like seaglass  
her bones conspire  
until only shorelines  
veer left  
(she has sand  
for kneecaps)



## Penal Poets Colony by Eldon Reishus

The seagull-celebrated sea forever going back over the shape of things to come. From the landed ferry athletic poets in striped uniforms unload a string of empty coffins.

The pulse of waters slits the sands. Askeladden and I loll in the backyard of our *vorübergehende* home feeling up tied handkerchiefs filled with grass for any buds announcing breast cancer. Of mom we learned to never speak. (Here in Croatia, the pseudo-Greek term for "nostalgia" is "nostalgiva." What remains of Sappho's poetry fairly drips with it. (The "g" is hard; the "v" falls silent.))

Mule, our father, is the substitute penal poets colony commander. Into his forehead a rosy B is dug like a double triangle in the shape of breasts announcing *Breakfast!* Papa roars down from the cyclopean cliffs:

*They call me Mule,  
Friend of the Morning Seagull,  
that chasing last night's Zephyrs  
meets and greets with astonished shrieks  
the moon-sponged harvest of washed up corpses!  
That bullet searching after you?  
Your mother engraved your name on it!  
From the grave her trigger finger wags the hit man hither!  
Bliss, fatso bliss,  
and the sky with clouds beneath its eyes  
turns fifty-five again each morning!  
What more is Mule but this?*

The workshop shovels are carted under. The poets dig their lone mass guess. Already at their knees saltwater collects.

## **When the Fly Flew Into My Cut Hair** by AM Ringwalt

When the fly flew into my cut hair I greeted it  
And when I saw my cut hair on the floor I greeted it  
And when I saw your face begging for rectification I greeted it  
Rectify I mean your sorry-saying  
Pointless perhaps but you say it anyway  
When the Dutch held Rembrandt on high I greeted him  
And when Rembrandt was in my bedroom I greeted him  
When he touched his nose to my laminated Iggy Pop poster  
The poster melted on my green wall and the light from  
My lamp made out of silver chains echoed like the bottom  
Of a waterfall  
The very bottom  
Where no one dreams of going  
Maybe the Dutch dream of it when they eat bread  
(My friend eats challah and I'm jealous  
I greet him with a photo of my shoulder  
And I say that I am jealous of his bread  
And he misinterprets this I think as unprecedented fondness  
I send him down the waterfall I'll follow eventually)  
I asked him: Rembrandt your paintings are so dark and dimly lit  
They make me feel vampiric and velvet-covered  
Did you mean to do that  
And the way you painted Jesus did that come from a vision  
Or personal experience  
And when my heart was so big it could contain the Middle East I greeted it  
And when my hair was drenched in apple cider I wrung it out into a basin  
And poured the liquid into Rembrandt's mouth  
Wide and open



## **Mok Panther's Sex Drive...Engines of Desire...Pneumatic Nothings in the Night by Jennifer Robin**

It was a ramshackle manse full of party debris and cat scents. These were the origins of Mok Panther.  
How far he's come! Dominating Ballboard's Top Forty Sex Songs—each one will transfer Mok Panther's sexual energy into your flaccid apparatus:  
Look at this one preserved as a virgin in artificial animation to warble sweet moon-songs of obscure and abject longing for something she cannot name...  
She needs Mok Panther, he found her on the video phone  
Mok-Mok where art thou only face games!  
Mok Panther keeps a sleepless night writing video vocals for the abject wallflower warbling moonsongs  
They've never met face to face  
They never will  
His jet will not transport her to Barbados on the Hill  
Mok Panther expends his excess energy designing Black Label Caca Quartz Private Reserve Cologne and trying to solve the alchemical issue of missing undergarments  
Watch: He transforms his fecal matter to diamonds  
He holds them in the sun  
He powers a crystal radio with his funeral excrescence  
It plays his number one from long ago  
Before he knew of stepdaughter virgins abject wallflower warblings  
Harken to me, eat my memory, whispers the carrion call of the crystal radio  
Playing Mok Panther Moonbeams  
Twenty floors above the castoff arcade worker drones  
Or should we say two thousand floors  
It's a mental trick where you are really  
the trick is to believe you can go somewhere else  
or else you never will  
abject moon song bum beam warmer  
wallflower deluxe as the worker drones swarm around her cask to the ether to unskin  
Flay it off now baby for the new apparatus calls you  
will you be Mok Panther tonight or something more organic like the Bunker Hut Hootchie  
play a ditty for the sweat slide  
pronto!  
Tunneling internal teams pinpoint the data banks across the City State they will siphon off the droppings of Mok  
a steady state evasion  
I am only a lonely one refusing to drink of the dipper of Mok cries the ornery albino  
all he drinks is plankton all he reads is Albanian lingo  
stuff like we shall overcome in the quantum  
odes to anti-matter catechism of the hollow  
He wears spider knee socks and stalks his ex girlfriends who have turned to Mok (and the followers of Mok)  
He will not get a job  
He writes a manifesto and bribes the convenience store clerk into wearing the uniforms  
the caterer's aprons the room service trays  
they are out to euthanize Mok  
nab the plans son It's all inorganic, this display  
no need for emotion now, your quarks won't betray you in your moment of contagion  
Ding-ding the deco digits ring  
Resplendent in crisp smoking jackets with alizarin crimson trim,  
the Plankton Assassin and convenience store lackey-job rise  
the Plankton Assassin twiddles his thumbs, and does his best to project a steely gaze of absolute ennui to the sliding burnished chrome doors,



His every pore is on fire  
His underarms fill with monsoons  
He swears that the moisture will burst through the jute of his jacket and show up on the camera, ethereal  
The walls will give cat scans to his crannies  
There is no room for debate no room for breath  
sink or swim as the old ballplayer said  
On the four hundred forty third floor they emerge like clockwork, the hall is vacuum packed with the stale scent of  
cinnamon potpourri  
The Plankton Assassin doesn't remember the last time he wrote a song all he knows is that  
Mok Panther is a phony  
Mok Panther was a trust fund baby  
Mok Panther sang about being homeless but he always had a credit card with an upper limit of five million even  
while in swaddling cloths  
Goddamnit the Plankton Assassin roils, the muscles in his chest constrict it feels like his left lung has collapsed with  
the tension  
Mok Panther doesn't deserve to sing the BLUES!  
I have been down son  
I have been on down the hall  
I have seen the sunset rise from a park bench  
I have ridden the rails with corpses  
and You, Mok!  
What's the toughest thing you ever did besides wrestle open a carton of milk with your bare hands  
before you had maids  
Mok Panther. With your fake black accent and your twelve inch cock,  
you will not sing the blues, not any more!  
Sing about your accountant baby  
Sing about the groupie who gave you a knife wound...Sing about the plagiarism suit and the mother you never had  
because she was off in Milan with the Monaco Prince!  
But damn you Mok Panther, only *I* can sing the blues and I shall take your place!  
These thoughts fill the Plankton Assassin  
Like snow, like ice filling mouth, a wind that takes away breath  
the Plankton Assassin is only two doors away from the honeymoon suite assigned to Mok  
A door opens  
the door before Mok Panther's  
Old old crepe and young young Mafioso  
wheeze on by, walk slowly now my lovelies  
her legs can barely move, her lungs can barely take in air. Her face is parched, only the eyeballs, like the eyeballs of  
the old, look childlike and bewildered to be nestled in such a skein of lines  
Her lips are pursed like an athlete  
Her eyes on the elevator door  
It is all she can do to stay upright to get there  
The deco numbers glow  
The vacuum sealed hall absorbs the footsteps  
Haywire haywire *ahhhhhh* the Plankton Assassin grips the rolling tea cart he can barely stand upright himself. Under  
the thick silver dome of the cake tray is the gun rigged to look like a crystal radio.  
This'll teach you to sing the blues, Mok Panther  
They ring and nobody answers  
For a long time.  
Isolation tank liquids quiver Nutravital Jellae  
is the name of the phytochemical jamboree  
Mok Panther floats in  
He is going through a karmic reverie  
visiting past lives as princes and priests  
He thinks highly of himself it cannot be denied  
After all, everything has come to him

As if fame itself was guided by an unseen hand onto  
his aqualine mantle.

Mok

knows the secrets of feral fluidity

He has risen to the fourth level of the tenth house of the aquavelvet realm where truth is osmotic and all you  
need to do is vibrate your wishes to the world like a plant undergoing a Kirlian photo shoot

Oh Mok Panther is profound and profoundly in need of a woman but he knows that even he has limits so he  
tenderly sees to his princely phallus for the fourth time of the hour.

He has a good thing going on baby

After this he will sleep like Jesus in a satin sack.

When the buzzer repeatedly fills his sophisticated sensorium with its wasplike tones

Mok Panther at first decides to ignore it

But the urgency...suppose it is Marcy using her feminine wiles to get past lobby security

suppose it is Callie Agrippa with her tantric dream apparatus ready to string him up again...suppose

it is Nicky the Minx finally run off that commune for the last time

They wouldn't even let her eat a lousy tangerine

Pronounced her unworthy

And now she has finally come to him

This is dangerous...making decisions in the isolation tank

the Nutrivital Jellae has psychotropic properties

Dreams feel so real

and memories so solid

And everything in between starts pressing on his groin Oh god he must expose himself to whoever, whatever is at  
that door.

Dripping with Nutrivital Jellae, Mok Panther lurches out of the isolation tank, haphazardly wraps his lurid sinews in  
four ply Egyptian cotton

and trembles,

expectantly, in the copal incense haze which fills the living room.

He pushes a button and the video cam

shows

room service – not a lady at all!

An albino nebbish and some zone-out speed casualty with a wrench tattooed on his neck.

These guys are room service? Hard to believe –

But whatever they are, the Copal Prince,

Lordly Mok Panther, is in a rangy expansive mood, and opens the door...

to his future.

As Mok Panther's hand reaches for the knob, a chime sounds

the chime of his video phone

Video Phone

Video Phone

When will you give me the truth

My video phone

No much love so much love no other love

is enough

Oh no Oh no

It is the vestal virgin the moonsung nun

Just when he had successfully put her out of his mind she shows her face again

Her voice sounds like a trash compactor

her lips look like preschool desserts

What does this moonsung nun want with him now?

she ran away from him and his phone and his

two dozen island getaways

his London tube-suit his catacomb eyelash

For what?

To work in a leper colony!

Oh goddamn moon-juice if only you'd shave off your face so I wouldn't care about you,  
He mumbles to the unanswered video chime  
And in a violent frenzy  
swings open the Door  
Mok Panther moonbeam  
and his crystal radio  
I don't want sidekicks  
I don't want sideshows he thinks  
'You sing the blues!' shouts the whiny albino  
with a voice like a whisky sour  
and knuckles like a low tide atrocity  
'*Fuck you Mok Panther*'  
Bang bang goes the crystal radio  
Turning Mok Panther's diamonds to shit  
Alchemical treatise on nothingness  
and the elevator shuts down  
Assassin trapped runs into the apartment and dives in Mok Panther's isolation tank  
Splash splash phytoplankton Nutrivital Jellae  
My eyes have only diamonds for  
Can't take hallucinations  
gets up and answers the video phone  
The Plankton Assassin is face to face with the  
moonbeam nun.  
She smiles, confusion, curiosity  
he sings her a song, his life is over  
her face is wide as the sky and he sings  
her a song



## Choose Your Own Adventure by Shane Roeschlein

Decades after America slipped her nitrile-gloved fist into the cloaca of the Fertile Crescent, having penetrated the uterus of civilization with depleted uranium-tipped awe and Gödelian shock of a tangled and heterarchal structure, we've effectively established a perpetual occupation and await further instructions.

*Indeed it was from the face wounds that the pool of blood originated.*

Choice being an axiom of Western culture, pick your own adventure: IED™ or UAV (drone).

*Though, one is not exclusive of the other.*

Emerging science suggests, the wind *IS* solid and death a bedfellow of proximity.

This burden of explicating an evolved combat perspective is best left to experts and strategists guided by the crisis culture of commerce.

Celebrated in exaltation at the alter of the conflict cult.

*It augurs a future of convergence.*

Brand America's *The Drone™* and its affiliates offer a viable option for the combatant: HUD, precision optics, form molded recliner, ergonomic joystick, canted control panel and air-conditioned cube in an undisclosed location in the North American Southwest, lending unprecedented security to the operational dynamic with virtual detonation of payload on target from afar.

*The no-contact battlefield realized.*

Complexity and precision make this weapon ideal.

*Thinking forward.*

Scientists at Zhejiang (*Dje Jahng*) University in China have successfully tried and tested a mind-controlled quadcopter drone. The pilot, using an EEG headset (emotive electroencephalography) navigated the drone by *thinking* "hard left", "bank right" or "take off."

Blinking engages the drone's on-board high definition camera.

Squeezing triggers the landing sequence.

*Recalling baseball statistics keeps the quadcopter "up."*

Look into the Asiatic sky and behold the hovering silhouette of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle.

*Droning...*

*Everywhere. Outside. Inside. Within.*

Drone releases payload.

Boom goes the AIM-9!

Hi-def video stream of magnesium flash as targets detonate.

YouTube it!

*A silent executioner is preferable to a boisterous one.*

The Improvised Explosive Device (IED™) by *Insurgent Inc.* is a splicing-together of present-past ingenuity, a composite technology reliant on blast radius interdependencies.

For illustrative purposes, imagine a sock monkey, a child's toy, stuffed with Semtex.

Outmoded Nokia mobile sewn into its chest.

Roadside in Al Anbar, Helmand Province, Aleppo.

Real-time detonation triggered from a GlobalStar Iridium Sat phone, ideally from a provisionally safe viewing area.

*Like the Chuck-e-Cheese down the road?*

Naw. KFC.

The Colonel's sphere of influence is far and wide and the menu items, *Halal*.

Victim operated devices (VOIED™) are democratic.

These booby trapped IEDs are triggered by an unwary victim.

In the Iraq and Afghanistan theatres, traumatic limb amputation is more common than other injuries.

A short press conference is conducted by Brand America on the South lawn; medals are awarded to the "Fab Five," a group of combat veterans who share a unifying symmetry: quadruple amputation. *CEO'Bama* in pressed suit, flag-pinned lapel, stretches lips over teeth in an approximation of a grin.

Tweets love of vets.

Adds, #quadamp.

Surgically implanted explosives (SIED™) give combatants unprecedented access.

In a failed attempt to assassinate a Saudi prince, Abdullah Al-Asiri (brother of Al Q franchise chief bomb maker, Ibrahim Al-Asiri) had sixteen ounces of Pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) plastic explosive inserted in his rectum.

*These jokes practically write themselves.*

Not to worry, wounds sustained by the Saudi Prince were insignificant.

Saudi authorities referred to the attempt as “novel.”

*Like, aw, how adorable?*

More like—and I’m speculating here—bold and tragically flawed.

With the IED, simplicity and purpose make for an ideal weapon.

The use of remote control unmanned aerial strike brigades for precision killing—precise in that they neutralize a target with a calculated mitigation of collateral damage—is the current Standard Operating Procedure.

Likewise, for any insurgency, IED placement, increased sophistication in construction, materials and damage “level-up” risk management in counter-insurgency tactics.

*Splice into the present to see into the future.*

Yemeni-American imam Anwar Al-Awlaki is the first contestant in history to be awarded a visit by the State Sponsored Publishers Clearing House of Terrorism.

*A proficient surfer, Al-Awlaki was using the Internet for disseminating terrorist ideology.*

Brand America designated Al-Awlaki (American citizen) a target and proceeded with his due-process-free assassination utilizing a Predator aerial drone.

*Favored for its tumescent curvilinear shape.*

Previous attempts on the cleric’s life were unsuccessful. Al-Awlaki always managed to slip away, secured under the golden arches of Jihad.

Ibrahim al-Asiri, known associate of Al-Awlaki, was a proxy recipient of the designation. Al-Asiri’s career highlight was creating the schematics for the botched Underwearbomb worn by Umar Farouk Abdulmutalla aboard Northwest Flight 253.

*Did they give him his own parking spot?*

Employee of the Month. Guy made an underwear bomb.

*Was Al-Awlaki involved in an operational capacity or just an Al-Qaeda franchisee?*

No, but he wasn’t some burger flipper either.

He was *the voice*.

The Ronald McDonald of McJihad.

Propagandist. Agitator. Enemy combatant. Traitor.

*Facial hair connoisseur.*

His memento mori is featured on the flatscreens @ Langley.

*DROWNING.*

*Nowhere. Everywhere. All where.*

War, as perpetual agitator in an elastic, mirror-dynamic, creates an enduring value through destruction, stabilizing the economy for short intervals, maximizing profit.

Both choices in this modern adventure, be it IED™ or Drone™, conclude predictably.

Praise the War Economy.

*Cue applause.*

## **So. Cal. Meditation #1** by Gary Sloboda

Stagnant valley air. Like slurping down a fever. Ones rolled up in the Ben Franklin. Stone-cold hand over transactional heart, the ray-bans solidify the image. I keep snatching coin shadows from the ground where the fecundity of moss in the fissures of concrete is distracting. But also keep thinking, so as to fly above myself in the streets of neon sophistry, how strip clubs reinscribe the boundaries of wish. So that one turns away knowing that it's sold or steps through the midnight petals of commodity exchange. As tin music in an Italian café cascades over lamé tops of the moonwalking gentry, tribute is paid with a backhand. Thunder of high heels surrounds the quaint tables. The seasonal hail drains blood from our tans.

^  
—

## **So. Cal. Meditation #2** by Gary Sloboda

Set loose in a carbon rich environment. It seemed we were free. Except for impromptu odes to the emperor. Porcelain statuettes of oligarchs unpacked from the transient's van hung with rectangular price tags. Black market: stand out in the sun. By the apothecary and bahn mi shop under new management. The vow of the people is heard against their intentions. Mars in retrograde. The decorative glass of wine raised to the unmothered streets. Of corn syrup sweets. Unset bone rendering the body's frame askew. It's frustrating in every way. The love she had for flowers. Deep dark purple flowers. That took the shape of fire in the non-existent spring.

[^](#)

## Christening by Jennifer Taylor

They looked like black leaves  
congealed on pavement, or blood—  
the way they pooled—glistening, opaque;  
and the magpie—  
nearly alone, towering over the wreckage  
of a sparrow—  
hole pecked into its skull.

Yesterday, a boy stood at an altar in the Carolinas.  
His black robes gathered in folds on the carpet,  
iridescent in the light thrown from stained glass.  
He had water dripping from his hair,  
deadpan eyes.





## **The Gold Rush** by Corey Wakeling

### **1. *WOOL: Plane Tree Forum***

UNDER TEMPEST'S HAIL of pollen you both alec the goodie cul-de-sac duchy shooting  
ganza from the stoop wizened but repainted, much then in hoodwink to adore. Woollen  
platinum bedressed, this, must hammer-tongs the private history not known nativity, and with  
thanks not St. Bartholomew's either. Thanks especially to Criteria.  
The last will & testament open belly.

### **2. *WHALE OIL: Suburbs***

THE EAR TO the wheel through Burwood, fashion a trident out of coat hangers since not yet  
spoken for; somebody will speak yet. Fulgurite alpine visions in electricity, the mind on  
the weirdly Platonic nature of our discourse then. I see lacerations, you see cicatrix, the car  
sees the wheel to the ear through Burwood, would best careen on Milton's cosmology were  
another's infancy not predicated on it, swathed. The daub party to evisceration made  
Kalamunda moot point the muted about dais at Classics ante-room the common, save the  
rabid dying their desperation  
suburban midnights in spring, dint for great white shark pneumonia phenomenon. And the  
northern hemispherical vulcanology, the pustules in water, the watery avenues the spoken  
bespeak, I like the possibility of mud, where instead survey trouble, and the eyeball lights of  
teleology. Drive home messianic, at least then this family hierarchy the petty-bourgeois  
s i t s b e n e a t h

### **3. *TALLOW: Smith Street***

IMMACULATEST COPROLALIA. SO the virtues of the salvaged body, the artefact that  
galls the paramour to Jetstar gambol to-fro continent Ryanair roulette. No roulade,  
no food bar Bile Town's secession from this pork roll begging casement. It cries when killed  
Eros, it cries when killed handshake, because the Stevens emphasis  
all my faculties demand light the sprite turpitude for the Swami incumbent, because pagan  
would still be landed then and I need spirits spirits, to drink goat milk

and be Episcopalian maw to the croaky ubiquity of Toyota in my history. The Bass Strait I  
keep phantom sipping, for that malarkey of the drone, since to be consecrated by  
history the drone that severs light from life in keeping with the walnut train of thought in  
walnut study, with gyratory whipping tails to all phenomena like the bath of silverfish of  
suffering, the bile lectern at least strains Hippocratic become Hipocritical oathsome  
generation, the love of a shank tug-of-war; to be the dingoes, not just dingoes.

4. **TRANSPORT: Lord Mayor**

SPIRITS VECTOR TO the roam gold rush, transliterated currency from then till now.

Today's big rich supposed not yet near those surfacing children to that estuary's yellow froth,

the gold rush to the curs and the tremble to their adulatory shanks all forgot,

to the grand tour of our waters when the close-to-pagan moot point abstinence gone from our

suffering, spittle in our cheeks from mud bespoken, the past tense like a nugget and mint in

o n e,                    a s p i r a t i o n                    t u r n s                    y o g i c.



## Demontages by Barrett White

A body falls out from the sky  
its arms are boneless, squiggling  
its eyes are snow globes  
it's wearing a tie and is foaming at the mouth  
it bounces on the ground a few times  
and then a hole opens up below it and it falls in  
and the hole closes

/

A knot of snakes floats across the sky  
slowly and in one direction  
perpendicular with the horizon

\

A jack-in the box slinks inside a ravine  
back and forth, trying to get out  
it is covered in flies and bees  
surrounding the ravine are thorn bushes  
decorated with bells the shape of baby faces  
that clang in the occasional breeze

/

A chainsaw with eagle wings  
flies directly into  
a white bust falling out from the sky  
the raining marble cubes  
land perfectly in the mouth  
of a sleeping kelly ripa

\

A giant knotted ball of neckties  
and the neon sign next to it:  
BEST TIME TO BE ALIVE

^  
—

## Yeezy Taught Me by Sennah Yee

*[Verse 1: Fierce]*

because God is a Texan woman  
ex-leader of a Holy Trinity  
inductee of The Oxford English Dictionary

*[Verse 2: OED]*

bootylicious Pronunciation: /ˌbuːtɪˈlɪʃəs/ *adjective*

*US informal*

(of a woman) sexually attractive:

*this bootylicious Texan knows what it takes to be a pop diva*

Origin:

1990s: from BOOTY, on the pattern of *delicious*

*[Bridge]*

number four on Mr. President and the First Lady's speed-dial  
dubbed Her baby after your eyes  
and the plant that twines and kills

*[Verse 2: Y. Christ]*

because God is a black man with a way with words  
and His Holy Gatherings manifest through live music  
with saintly singers and laser shows from the heavens  
auto-tuned hymns, misheard, misread at weekend evening worships  
yet these commandments are remembered, repeated nevertheless  
dubbed His baby after the very divine direction He is from

*[Outro]*

GOD! GOD! GOD! GOD!



## Interview with Douglas Glover

With Adam Segal of *WBR*

*I was introduced to the work of Douglas Glover earlier this summer when I was given the unique opportunity to read an early manuscript for Douglas Glover's forthcoming collection of stories, [Savage Love](#). It's a gorgeously vivid, inventive, and occasionally brutal collection, steeped in blood, familial affection, and North American history. If you're a fan of short fiction, it's not one to ignore.*

*Glover, who holds a Master of Letters in philosophy from the University of Edinburgh and an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, has been writing stories, novels, and essays for over thirty years. He is also the founder of the online literary magazine [Numéro Cinq](#). Douglas Glover is, as Maclean's Magazine suggested in a review of his 2003 novel *Elle*, "the most eminent unknown Canadian writer alive." Indeed, *Elle* won the Governor General's award for Fiction, Canada's most prestigious literary award. But let's not listen to the awards for a moment, and instead listen to the man himself.*

*I recently spoke with Glover about the flickering quality of ironic language, about the proper ways of approaching historical fiction, about talking corpses and strangled cats, and finally about the massive importance of human self-delusion. Read on, read on:*

**WHOLE BEAST RAG:** Some time ago I listened to a [particular episode](#) of the New Yorker's Fiction Podcast, in which Nicole Krauss reads and discusses a story by Bruno Schulz, "Father's Last Escape." Krauss says the author deserves admiration because, "there really is nothing like entering into the world of Bruno Schulz. It is a complete world. It is so fully realized, and so completely unlike any other world that another writer has created." With apologies to Krauss, I initially found the statement rather humorous, because it seems like a thing that could easily be said about any author one admires.

**But then I'm not so sure. Your novel *Elle*, for example, bears a blurb proclaiming "Only Douglas Glover could write such a bawdy, outrageously modern historical novel." Having gained some familiarity with your work, I must agree that this is a specialty of yours. So I ask: when we say of an author "only they are capable of constructing such a work," are we dealing in biased, uncritical hyperbole, or are we merely making the reasonable suggestion that every author, as an individual human being, has a unique set of abilities that inherently set them apart from the crowd?**

**DOUGLAS GLOVER:** Your question reminds me of Borges' Pierre Menard whose ambition is to rewrite *Don Quixote*. His *Don Quixote* will be better than the original (though exactly the same) because all Cervantes had to do was write the book whereas Menard will have to reinvent himself as Cervantes first before recomposing the novel. The uniqueness of the author precedes the uniqueness of the book, but they are inseparable.

I agree with your initial reaction to that Nicole Krauss passage. It sounds like literary logrolling to me. You could substitute any great writer's name for "Bruno Schulz" and the sentences would carry the same intellectual heft (as in, not much). What she says is not biased hyperbole but tautology. Creating a particular world of the book is bullet point one on the writer's job description. If you don't do it, you haven't produced a work of art. And it goes without saying that the closer you hew to your own internal motions and rhythms, the less likely your work will look like anyone else's. A lot of commercial fiction does read continuously, one author to another, but that's not a compliment.

**WBR:** Certainly not. *Elle* contains a number of clever asides that fit within the context of the narrative but seem to be more pointedly directed at the contemporary reader. One of my favorites follows an anecdote about the illiterate nurse Bastienne becoming a modest literary success: "thus two people who could neither read nor write contrived to author a bestseller, a pattern that I suspect will prove the rule rather than the exception as the history of literature unfolds." Are you often wary of popular, celebrated fiction? And are there other aspects of contemporary literature, whether as an industry or an art form, of which you are sometimes cynical?

**DG:** On the surface, *Elle* is about a young woman marooned on a island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the 16th century, but on another level it is about first contact between the Old World of Europe and the New World of

America (in this case, Canada). But those phrases Old World and New World are already metaphors; at the same moment Elle discovers Canada, the Old World of Europe encounters a New World of book printing and Protestantism, the incipient Enlightenment. Elle is a reader, we're in the first decades of the book publishing industry, it's like the Internet in our day; I was fascinated by the idea that all the basic economic structures of modern publishing were in place by the 1540s and that, yes, the bestsellers were memoirs by retired generals, books of devotion, recipe books and pornography. Rabelais had to pitch travel books to his publisher to make money. Cynicism isn't the right word to describe my reaction; I am delighted with the way humans view themselves, how they compulsively self-represent as more original, rational, romantic, mysterious, and noble than they are. There is always a joke in the common pose.

The jokes about publishing are a motif in the book; they come to a nice climax when Elle meets Rabelais, becomes his lover and helps write the proto-novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, a book in which the heroes set sail from the west coast of France and are swept up in a series of adventures on unknown islands (sound vaguely familiar?). This is not an entirely implausible conjecture: whether or not Rabelais wrote the last volume of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* himself is a matter of scholarly debate; he was curious about Jacques Cartier's Canadian explorations; and there was a rumor that someone at court invited him to help Cartier write his memoirs. Around the date Elle returns to France, Rabelais really did disappear for a couple of years, hiding out from the vengeful Dominicans after his spiritual protector inconveniently died. So the last joke on the string is the idea that a promiscuous girl from Canada invented the modern novel.

**WBR: The notion of Rabelais as a character within your novel brings me to another question: what do you suppose ought to be the proper relationship between an author and the celebrated writers who came before him? How do we admire while still remaining critical, engage a work closely without imitating it? Should there be a set pantheon of canonized authors requiring our attention, or are we better off seeking out whatever pleases us?**

DG: Unanswerable question. I am the last person you should ask about propriety. Especially when the question strikes off from my use of Rabelais as a character in *Elle*. Rabelais's bread and butter M.O. was the inappropriate and ironic misuse of the ancient greats. My use of Rabelais is Rabelaisian. Everything I write attests to my pleasure in inappropriate relations and the subversion of propriety.

Derrida uses that word "tremble" to describe the way some texts work; I use the word "flicker" (in *The Enamoured Knight* and in *Attack of the Copula Spiders*). Both words describe the intensely strobe-like character of ironic language, the way it asserts and subverts, the two aspects of meaning oscillating like a candle flickering or a body trembling. This trembling, flickering, shimmering aspect of language is what interests me. Propriety is the antithesis of irony; propriety invites irony; propriety maroons Elle on a deserted island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and leaves her to die.

**WBR: Is this desire to subvert propriety what keeps you coming back to historical settings for your narratives? The colonization of the New World, the American Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and so on. I suspect there is a sacredness—or rather a stiff and stilted feeling of the academy—popularly associated with the past, which probably makes it so fun to play around with.**

**I find it wonderful that, in the Author's Note for *Elle*, you conclude a dizzying list of references and source materials with the statement, "otherwise, I have tried to mangle and distort the facts as best I can." Are these distortions perhaps what make your characters and settings feel so current, so relatable, so alive?**

DG: There are at least a couple of different kinds of historical fiction. The most common and recognizable is your garden-variety costume melodrama in which the author pretends to be recreating a period and event. This more or less defines the genre in the popular imagination. I am much more interested in writing fiction about history itself, various theories, how it's constructed, how versions of a history compete for authoritative priority, and how that defines the present discourse. So my novels juxtapose competing historical narratives (as in Bakhtin's definition of the novel as a text containing competing discourses). Of course, I do the research and try hard to impress upon the reader the down-and-dirty reality of life in Revolutionary America or 16th century Canada. That's part of the canvas.

But then I flood the research with the flickering light of irony by the deliberate use of anachronism in order to demonstrate that verisimilitude is technique, not the meaning of the book.

My later novels and stories are systems of plot and subplot, image pattern, and hierarchized themes that work together to create a complex dramatic structure. I try not to make them reducible to a single theme or impulse (such as subverting propriety). If there is a totalizing theme in operation, it has something to do with the idea that things are always more complicated than we think they are. (In the same vein, one critic said he couldn't find a central thesis in my book *The Enamoured Knight*; he was absolutely right; that's not the way I work; I'm not a topic sentence-body-conclusion kind of writer.) The novels work as self-referential semantic systems: all the plots in *Elle* and *The Life and Times of Captain N* are graduated versions of one another and reflect one another; the motifs of dualism, cultural contact, colonization, New World/Old World, translation, love, redemption, hybridity, etc. are all explained within the works by reference to each other.

That said, there are obvious personal reasons why I might be drawn to certain historical subjects. I come from Canada where recomposing our national history against the authoritative narratives of France, Britain and the United States is a cottage industry. My family is descended from United Empire Loyalists who had a particular story to tell about their survival as refugees from what amounted to ethnic cleansing after the American Revolution. The Nelles family that is the nominal subject of *The Life and Times of Captain N* is locally prominent where I grew up. The heroine of that novel is buried in a pioneer cemetery four miles from the farm where I was raised. One finds delight in re-inventing and expanding family and national lore in the imagination and at the same time seeing how it coincides with the larger tectonic displacements of history, politics and ideas.

I am pleased you find the characters alive and approachable. I don't think they're "alive" because of my relationship with history or facts or propriety so much as my sense that a character exists through desire, action and thought. My characters tend to acknowledge their desires and shape their actions around them (and those actions include their thoughts). They are a bit obsessive-compulsive on the desire front, as all great fictional characters are.

**WBR: *The Life and Times of Captain N*'s Hendrick Nellis is a perfect embodiment of that overarching sense that "things are always more complicated than we think they are." His words about the Republican ideology gave me serious pause, in part because it isn't often that an American hears the "American Idea" (at least so far as its idealized origins are concerned) questioned: "The five thousand Republicans seething up the trail behind us are the shape of a grand new idea, which I abhor. They destroy everything in their path, scorching the earth, the earth-colored savages, and their villages. They watch the forest itself with suspicion, measuring it with a cold, acquisitive eye. It is this measured, yet total, destructiveness which unnerves me. They are the future. I am against the future." Your writing seems to cast a sympathetic yet critical eye on all parties and all ideologies: the colonizer and the native, the rebel and the loyalist, the intellectual and the single-minded-man, and so on.**

There is something oddly refreshing too—both in *Captain N* and stories like "A Flame, a Burst of Light"—in getting to see the Americans as the "enemy."

One of the reasons I was initially taken in by your writing was your willingness to be incredibly descriptive with unpleasant descriptions of violence, brutality, and the grosser aspects of a physical body. You understand, as I wish more writers understood, that beautiful writing need not be about traditionally beautiful things like flowers or landscapes or soft rains in a quiet village. An amputation can be more gorgeously written than even the most glorious sunset. I'm wondering if this focus on the uglier elements of human existence has a purpose for you beyond the impressive literary aesthetics. Do you have a broader goal in mind when writing unsettling or brutal passages?

DG: I'm glad you enjoy being called the enemy. It shows a flexibility of vision. And I am only being half ironic when I say that. This goes back to the question of history, authority and propriety: I sense a drift in the American mental self-construct; people are getting a tad bored with the authorized version (forget whether it's right or wrong; most ideas die of tedium). So it is refreshing to find another point of view presenting itself. But you're also right to say that I cast a "sympathetic yet critical" eye on all sides. People live, love and die inside systems of ideas that to

them seem reasonable and moral. The paradox and the joke of existence is that other people live, love and die inside quite different systems of ideas that also seem reasonable and moral. So who is right? Probably no one. Too many vibrant belief systems have come and gone for us to put much stake in whatever is currently available. So I concentrate on a poignant nexus of existence within colliding systems of ideas; what is it like to be an Inuit hunter as his myths deteriorate before his eyes? What is it like to be a loyal colonist watching that American idea march up through the forest toward you with a completely new idea of history?

As to the brutal and unsettling passages, there is a bit in *Captain N* where someone says there is nothing so violent as the thing that changes your mind. So to begin with violence is relative and the mental violence of clashing myth and ideology (not to mention the clashing ideas of love between men and women) is far more brutal than an amputation. All the physical violence on the page is a simulacrum of the psychic violence; just as the sex on the page is a physical image of love (love is one intimate strangeness meeting another intimate strangeness—how can you show that with character in the missionary position?).

That said I don't want to be reductive; things are always more complicated than they seem. I am steeped in Rabelais (and Bakhtin), and besides the misuse of the ancient greats, Rabelais makes a joke of juxtaposing the body (bawdy) and the spiritual. The mystery of human existence is the infinite extensibility of the mind (image of the soul) trapped inside a gross shell. Pain and discomfort are spiritual markers; they ground us in the body and the earth, in our own paradoxical nature. We're talking corpses; that's the essence of the situation; we yap away while the body rots. It's awful and funny. A lot of contemporary writing ignores the body or tarts it up by moralizing it—think of our contemporary health, exercise and eating fads. Most North American writers have stopped writing characters who smoke cigarettes (unless the characters feel guilty about it or also do drugs and murder people).

**WBR: Do you feel, then, that humor is one of the better ways to struggle with these awful, paradoxical truths of human existence? (We've already established that irony is your preferred mode, do irony and humor necessarily go hand in hand?)**

**I ask because on your recommendation I read Witold Gombrowicz's *Cosmos*, an enigma of a novel that I believe could stand to be interpreted some 10,000 ways and still have secrets left to keep. To me, *Cosmos* is a sort of anti-novel, sharply criticizing the human (and literary) need to create symbols and find meaning in every little sign and phenomenon. Slowly Gombrowicz builds the case that this need to put meaning to random events manifests itself as a sort of existential masturbation; an observation that is as dark as it is hilarious. Did you get a similar sense from *Cosmos*? What is it about Gombrowicz's work that draws your admiration?**

DG: Gombrowicz leans toward Surrealism, but then he is also aware of the history of philosophy. He knows about the Enlightenment and Husserl's *Crisis in Philosophy* and the loss of Being and the turn to Phenomenology. So there is a loony side to what he is doing and at the same time it's very serious. He has that flickering quality I described earlier. In *Cosmos*—the title makes it obvious—he is investigating the phenomenology of world creation, the mental process by which we construct a frame of meaning for ourselves. The process is comically rational (Husserl demonstrated that reason was never going to get where it said it was going). You begin to notice repetition and pattern; you look for other instances of the pattern; eventually you decide the pattern is real. This is the process of reason and science. But, of course, in the novel what seems real to the narrator is utterly ridiculous. As Gombrowicz makes clear there are two other forces working on the human mind besides reason. One is the dark and unknowable current of desire; the narrator can't sleep with the girl he's attracted to so he suddenly and incomprehensibly kills her cat (it's a sick joke, right? he orgasmically strangles her pussy). The other force is the desire or gaze of the other. Gombrowicz learned from Hegel the social construction of the self. As soon as you enter a relationship (however trivial), you begin to bend yourself to fulfill, oppose or circumvent the desire of the other. Even if you resist, the purity of selfhood has been corrupted. So you construct another self in secret, the masturbatory self, the self who doesn't have to relate or unmask himself before the eyes of the other. Out of this triangle of forces, Gombrowicz creates a truly awe-ful, hilarious novel. The narrator discovers patterns and deduces meaning; his own sexual violence betrays reason; he discovers that the secret life of the adult male patriarch is one of chronic secret masturbation (the creation of trivial, private, obsessive cosmos).



**WBR:** Your essay "[Mappa Mundi: The Structure of Western Thought](#)" contains, or so it seems to me, an underlying anxiety about the remarkable human capacity for perceiving the world selfishly and self-importantly. I noticed it first with the aside in which you note "how easily and thoroughly we acquiesce to our own narratives," but it comes to a head with your subsequent dismissal of Existentialism:

**"Though appealing to poseurs, young people and feverish romantics who like to see themselves as heroes, the idea that heroic choice, commitment and passion can somehow make one person's life more authentic than another's is poppycock. This is a recipe for good novels, bad marriages and terrible social cruelty."**

**I'm particularly intrigued because of what you said earlier about the way we compulsively self-represent ourselves as greater than we really are. This inflated sense of self-worth, is it avoidable? Does consuming fiction enhance or abate its effects? And if we are speaking of idols, is the exaggerated self the real idol we should worry about smashing?**

DG: I am pretty sure I am not anxious about the human tendency to self-delude or self-dramatize. I think it's kind of cute, one of our more endearing traits (as opposed, say, to genital mutilation, mass murder, and the rape of the planet). Our capacity for deluded self-presentation is the basis of a lot of great novels—*Don Quixote* is the model. Existentialism is just a dead-end branchline of the mighty network of western philosophy. I talk about it in the context of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and their rather similar responses to the loss of immanence, what is called their aesthetic argument. The sentences you quote are the ironic climax of that 2-3 paragraph discussion. They don't represent the argument itself. My essay is really about the mysterious thing we sometime call the experience of God and what philosophy has made of that idea over the centuries.

The question of "consuming" fiction and whether or not that has a good effect is lovely. You remember that in *Elle*, the heroine eats her books to stay alive. Obviously, I do think that when in need, you should consume your library. During the siege of Leningrad, Viktor Shklovsky burned his books and manuscripts to keep warm. There are many good uses for books besides reading.

But to be serious for a moment, in *The Enamoured Knight* I spend a lot of time thinking about the way our culture has responded to books. From the outset one thread of western discourse has described books with deep suspicion (Plato thought we should ban poets from the Republic, for example). *Don Quixote* is a great comic novel about a man who goes mad (becomes deluded) by reading fiction. Of course, Cervantes didn't believe people go mad from reading books; he was extrapolating a philosophical argument, a thread of discourse. He has tremendous fun with book burnings and walling up libraries. At the end of *The Enamoured Knight* I develop a theory about what I call a basket of themes that more or less define the concerns of the modern novel, and one of those themes is a suspicion of the book. So then you start counting how many books of you've read that have book burnings (even Jane Austen has a book burning; it's in *Mansfield Park*). One of those curious human delusions, it turns out, is that books cause people to have self-delusions; both Cervantes and Austen knew this and wrote wonderful books about it. There really isn't space to enlarge upon the topic, especially as I did write a whole book about it already (which, probably, you should not try to eat).

**WBR:** In "[Mappa Mundi](#)"—an essay commenting in part on the way in which Western philosophy has slowly turned on and weakened itself, "as if philosophy, having set out to prove and establish reality, self, God and soul, has only managed to cast doubt on everything it touches,"—you end with a rather poetic image I find incredibly appealing:

***"After all is said and done, out of the whirlwind of imagination and language, there is yet "a still, small voice" that has nothing to do with God (yet) but is my voice, the voice of the self, which may be nothing but the self who talks and protests and expresses a desire that does not stop at the surface of things but leaps, however quixotically, into the dark."***

Perhaps this question will suggest that I missed the broader argument of the essay, but this voice leaping into the darkness, is this how you perceive the project of literature? Or am I projecting too heavily? You mention in one of the essay's side notes that "novels are the modern form, debased epics tied to subjectivity and verisimilitude." And yet you write novels. Which I suspect requires no small amount of hope on your part.

DG: I am pretty sure I didn't mean to arouse any hope in the reader. We all go to our long home, and no amount of novels, self-help books, and philosophy can change that.

The last lines of the essay are actually meant to be a twist in the argument that I had traced through the previous thirty or so pages. The history of western philosophy is an unsteady march away from the delusion that you can

describe (know) the world as it is. We have gradually shed ourselves of sanguine hypotheses such as God, soul, self and the possibility of any dependable information about same. The vehicle for this shedding is logic—the law of non-contradiction.

Descartes was a precursor of the Modern; he applied the law of non-contradiction ruthlessly until there was nothing left but the indisputable fact that he was thinking, i.e. applying the law of non-contradiction. I think, therefore I am. (One can make jokes about this now since it's pretty clear that most of us don't have thoughts we can call our own; the mind is more like a media player and as such one mind is pretty much like every other mind.) My argument at the tail-end of "Mappa Mundi" is a version of the *Cogito*, or a parody. Put it this way: if humans are a self-deluding species, their self-delusions are signs of life. The fact that I am deluded about myself proves that I exist. I may only exist in order to be self-deluded. I may never know anything else about this mysterious deluded being other than the fact of its self-delusion. But that's something, isn't it?

So far from being "anxious" about self-delusion, I find it to be the one true thing you can say about human beings. (Žižek makes a similar sort of argument after Lacan in *The Desert of the Real*: the symptom is not a real thing, but it is a sign of the absence of the Real.) The fact that humans keep yapping so ardently about themselves is comic and ever so slightly heroic. At the end of *Don Quixote*, the old man drops his delusions, returns to sanity and prepares to die. His friends, Sancho, the curate and the student Carrasco, who have been trying throughout the novel to cure his mania, suddenly realize how stupid that is and, too late, begin to rekindle Quixote's fantasies. It is a strange and beautiful ending, utterly poignant and true.

^  
—

## **Interview with Featured Artist Bryan Olson**

With Katharine Hargreaves of *WHOLE BEAST RAG*

**WHOLE BEAST RAG: Describe your creative process: what are you looking for? What are you discovering? When is the image complete?**

BRYAN OLSON: I spend a lot of time in second hand stores rummaging through what books or magazines they have on the shelves. I never really know what I'm looking for, so I just flip through the pages until I see something that catches my attention. I try to look deep into each photograph to find something unique that is buried in the image, something that the average viewer would miss. After I've made my selection and purchase the books for next to nothing, I take them home and meticulously "dissect" the appropriate parts from the image using scissors or a utility knife. Most of the clippings go into small bins or folders depending on the size and usually do not get used right away unless I know exactly what I'm going for. Some of the clippings sit for months, or even a year before I ever find a use for them. When I'm working on commissions or freelance projects I tend to spend hours trying to locate and combine different pieces together, especially when clients want a specific theme or item in the image. Once I find the right pieces and start to see the collage develop, I'll take a few photographs and sit on it for about a day until my gut tells me to move forward. At that point, I carefully glue all of the pieces down using archival paste and mount the collage to a vellum surface for stability.

**WBR: There isn't much information on you in the digital sphere. Is this intentional? How might secrecy serve, rather than hinder, your goals as an artist? Or: how important is privacy to you as an artist?**

BO: Not intentional at all, although I'm pretty shy. I am currently working on a new website that will have an actual bio and curriculum vitae that should help folks gain a little more information about me as an artist. I think a lot of modern day collage artists are scared of copyright infringement and aren't really aware of what they can and can't do with an image. It's a very sticky situation and in some cases it's just better to use a moniker and keep your personal information in the dark.

**WBR: Are you a spiritual person? What does spirituality mean to you going forward? How is the concept of spirituality changing?**

BO: I guess I could say I'm a spiritual person. I believe that all of us have a soul that reflects itself through our personality. I don't have the faintest clue as to where our soul ventures after death but I do know that it's important to be a good person and have values. Those positive attributes always tend to outweigh the negative in my opinion. I think spirituality has become more of a personal thing where each individual is capable of believing in whatever they feel. Especially as we learn more about each other, the world and science.

**WBR: Describe god.**

BO: God is whatever you believe to be the divine being.

**WBR: Describe evil.**

BO: Evil is the opposite of good. We can all be a little evil at times.

**WBR: Describe yourself.**

BO: Tall, dark and handsome haha. I am very passionate and dedicated to my art. I write and record music and play in a band called Cement Stars with three talented lads including my brother. I am shy at times but can be goofy and outgoing. I am obsessed with anything vintage and enjoy camping and the outdoors.

**WBR: Tell us something you know for certain.**

BO: "Everything that ever has been always will be, and everything that ever will be always has been." Kurt Vonnegut

**WBR: What or whom do you idolize? Feel free to list as many things as you'd like. Give us one reason for each.**

BO: I don't really have idols now but when I was a teenager I definitely did. I feel like you're much more naïve when you're young and being that you are just a kid and haven't experienced much, you idolize anything that inspires you. As you grow older your whole thought process changes and you realize that your idols are just as human as you are.

If I had to name a few they would be:

John Lennon- I grew up listening to a lot of Beatles and I still do to this day. John Lennon's style of songwriting has highly influenced me as a songwriter.

Frank Lloyd Wright- I used to be obsessed with his architectural drawings when I was younger and actually wanted to be an architect but that all changed when I realized that I was no good at math.

**WBR: Is idolatry wrong? Where does this concept emerge (or not) in your art?**

BO: I don't think it's wrong or right. I think it can influence a person in a positive and negative way. I do however think the whole Justin Bieber thing is ridiculous. I guess it just depends on how extreme and outlandish the idolatry is. I've noticed that this concept emerges a lot in my work but not intentionally. Some of my work depicts people looking out at strange landscapes with looming entities in the distance. Maybe they are idolizing the cosmic sheet printer?

**WBR: What does your ideal temple look like? What does it feel like?**

BO: My ideal temple would be an articulately constructed building tucked away on a green mountain side, overlooking a lake. All of the furnishings would be mid century style with plush rugs and incense burning in every room. God I sound like a hippy.

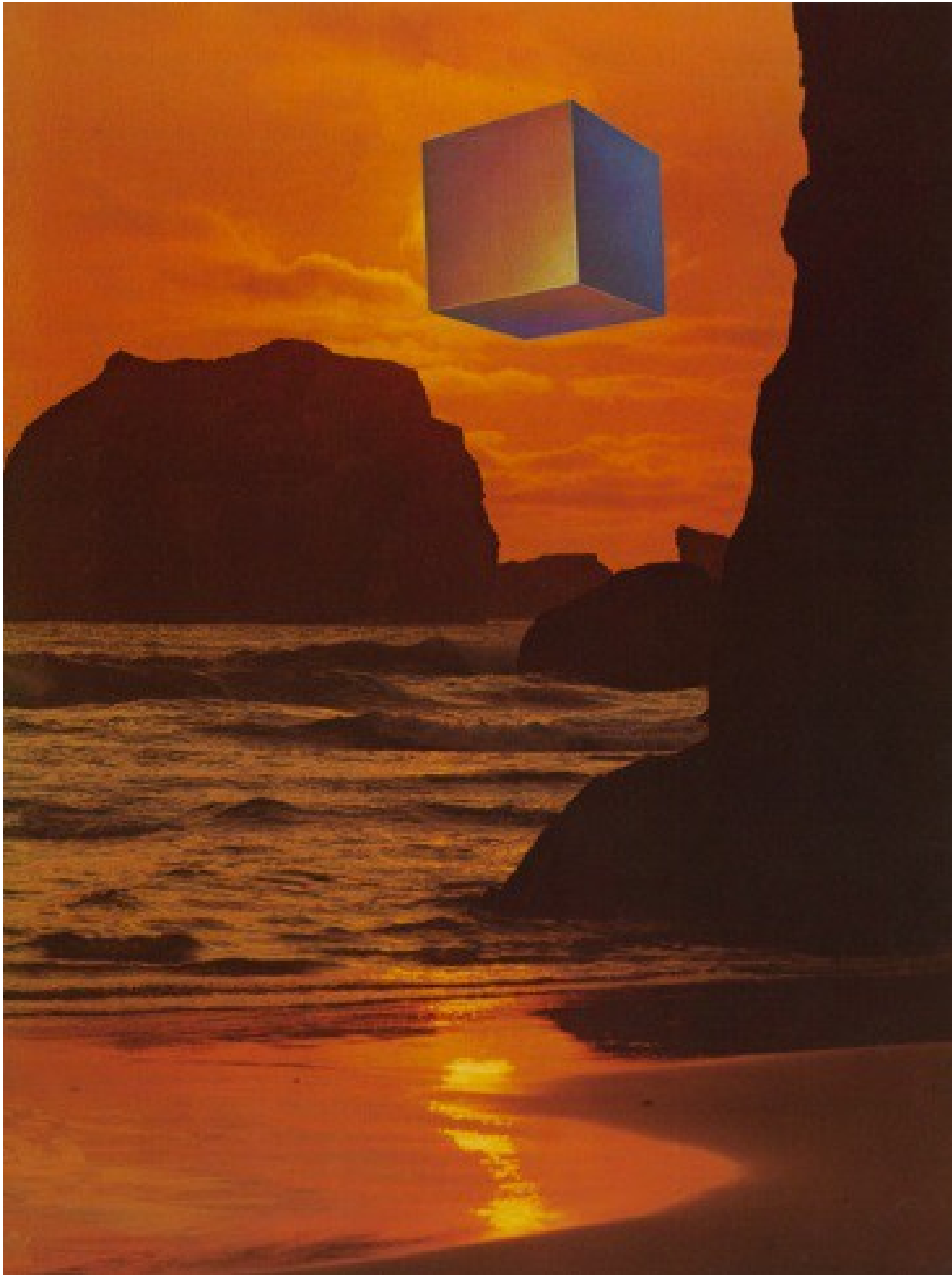
**WBR: Do you perceive the artist as idol? What's more important: the artwork, the artist, or the audience?**

BO: In many circumstances I feel the artist is the idol. For example: Salvador Dali, Picasso and Andy Warhol. You can go a whole life time and never see their work but hear their name mentioned all of the time. I think the art is definitely more important because it is the initial attractor. It's what draws your interest and manifests emotion.

**WBR: Do you have any rituals? Describe them for us.**

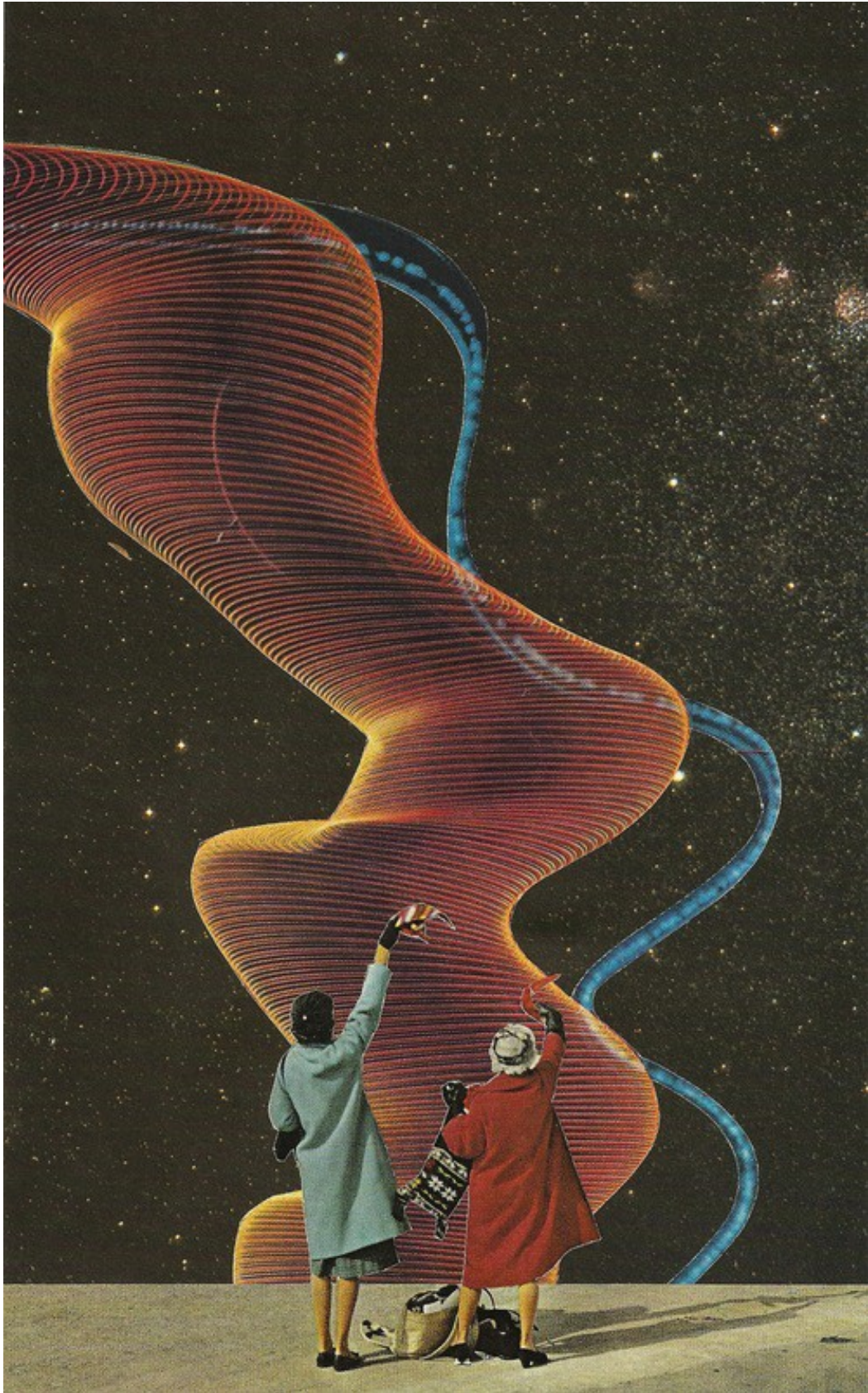
BO: In the morning I'll have a cup or two of coffee, check my Tumblr, Instagram, and Facebook for notifications (stare at my iPhone for 45 minutes) and then head off to work. In the evening I ask Jah for a little inspiration and work on a collage or two. I might try working on some music if time allows. I try to be creative as possible in my free time because my fulltime job sucks most of my day dry.

**Featured Artist: Bryan Olson**



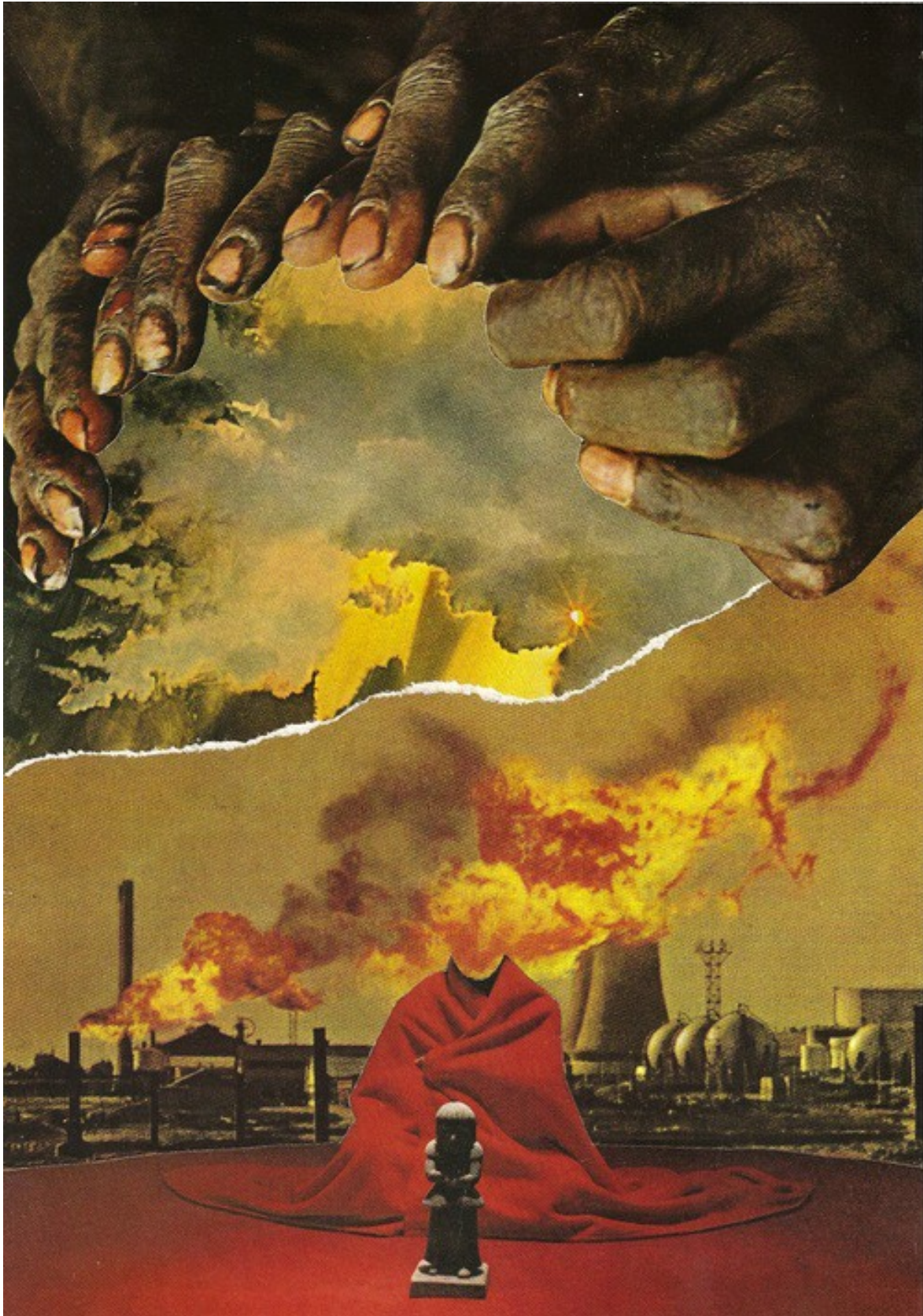
Cubist Sunset





Galactic Goodbye





Gatekeeper

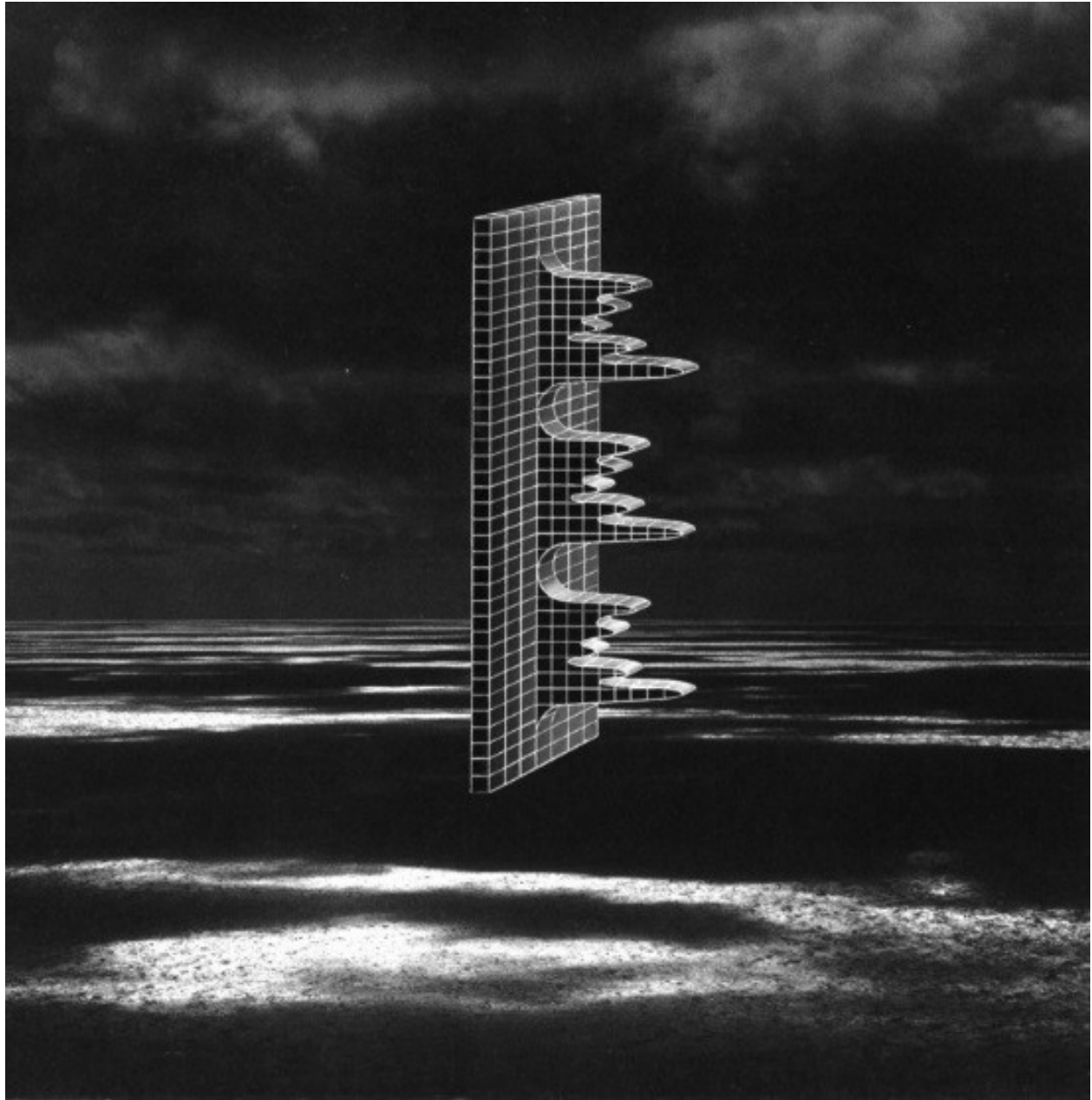


Kryptonite 3

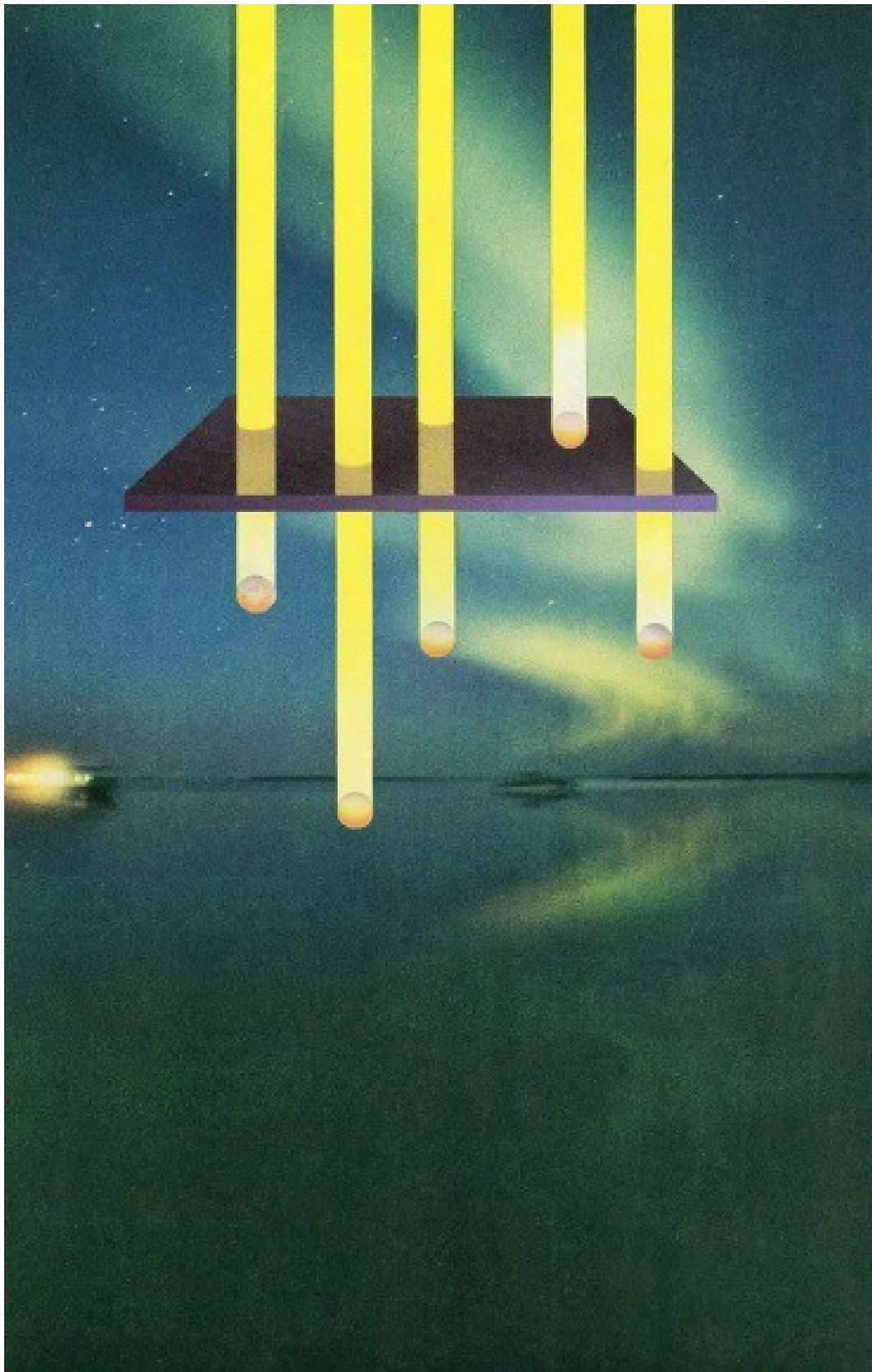




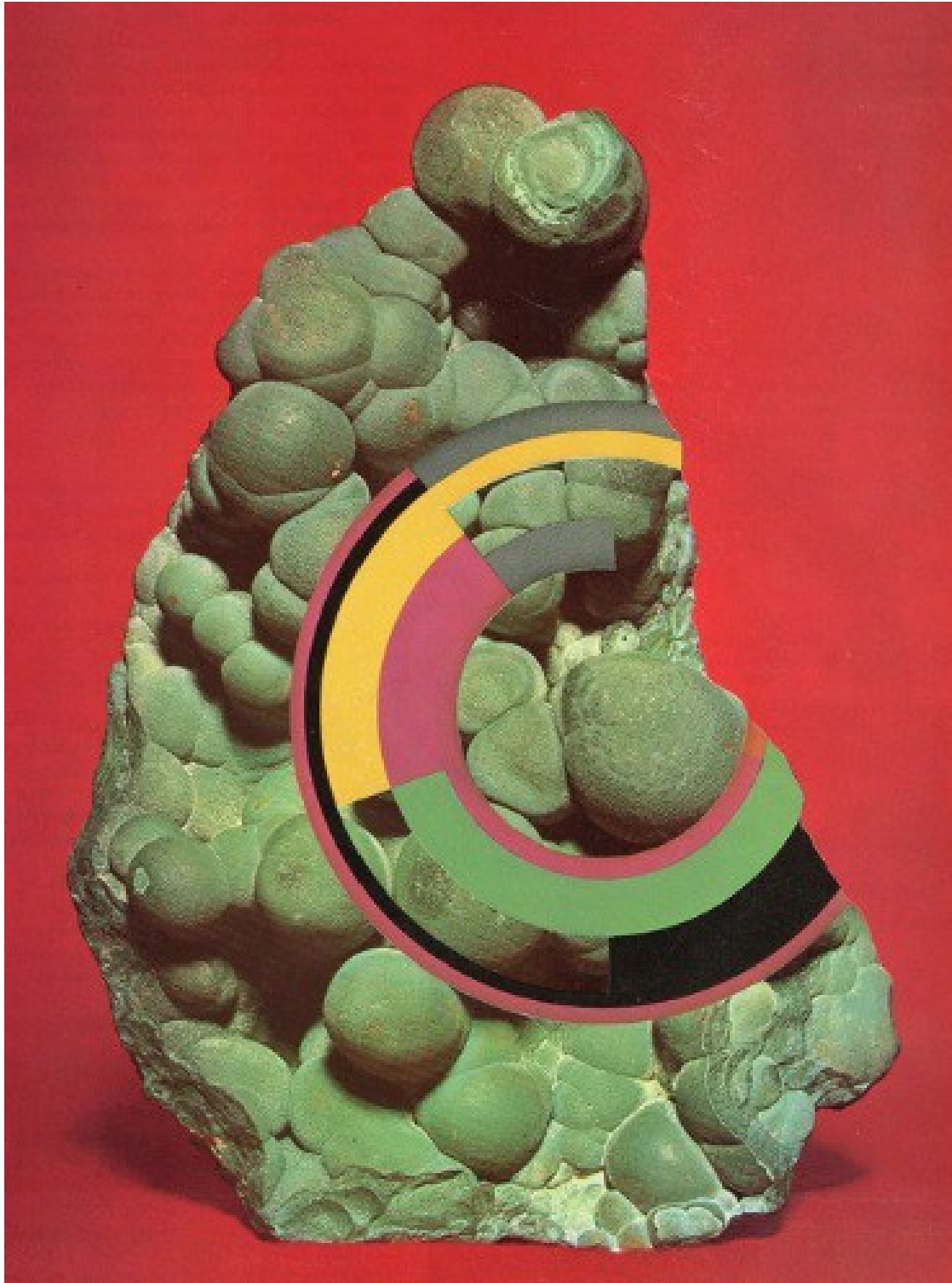
Let It Drip



Midnight Frequency



Northern Lights

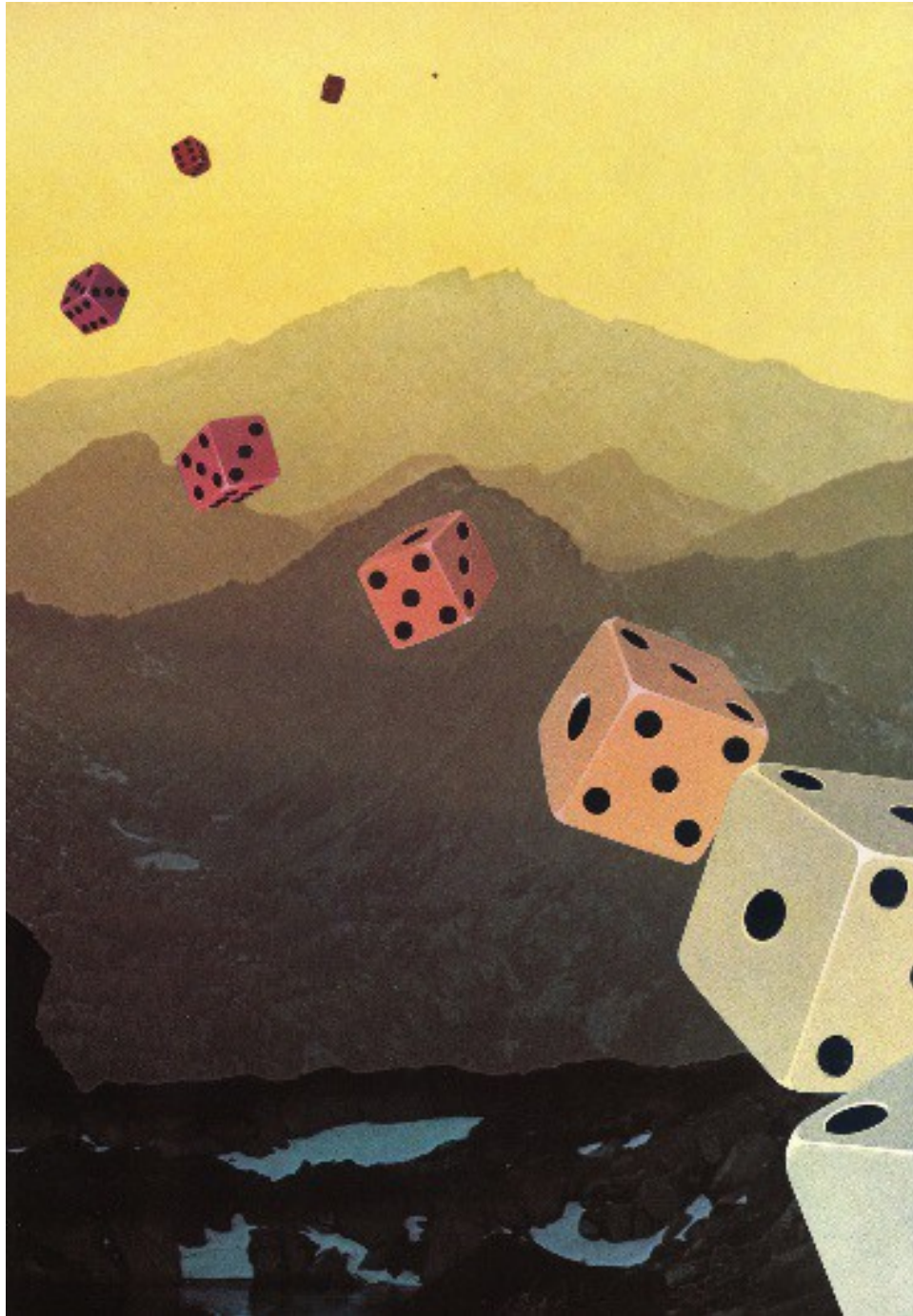


Revolve





Ultrastructures #1



Ultrastructures #4



Ultrastructures #7

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

### Mark Cugini

Mark Cugini's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Melville House*, *Keyhole*, *Barrelhouse*, *Matchbook*, *Everyday Genius*, and other publications. He's a founding editor of *Big Lucks*, a regular contributor to *HTMLGiant*, and the curator of the Three Tents Reading Series in Washington, DC. His chapbook *I'M JUST HAPPY TO BE HERE* is forthcoming from Ink Press.

### Mark DeCarteret

Mark DeCarteret has met up with some lit-luck as of late at *BlazeVOX*, *coconut*, *Confrontation*, *Everyday Genius*, *Gargoyles*, *Ghost Ocean Magazine*, *Hunger Mountain*, *THRUSH*, *Toad Suck Review* and *Welter*.

### Andrew Field

Andrew Field is finishing up his master's in English at the University of Toledo. He teaches composition at Brown-Mackie Findlay and Owens Community College, and has published some book reviews at *The Rumpus*, as well as essays about John Ashbery and Robert Creeley at *THEthe Poetry Blog*. He blogs at [andrewfield81.wordpress.com/](http://andrewfield81.wordpress.com/).

### William Lindberg

William James Lindberg is more of a word musician than a page poet. The experience of words oscillating through his bones is the kindling that feeds the blazing frenzy of his pen. He learned the meaning of the word poet by living on Capitol Hill in Seattle for eight years. There he performed poetry at nearly every venue in the city. He also busked his word for a stint on street corners at Seattle's famous Pike Place Market. William James currently lives a Henry David Thoreau fantasy in rural Grand Ronde Oregon. In the solitude of a hidden valley he gardens words and publishes a biannual magazine called *Randomly Accessed Poetics*.

### Kirk AC Marshall

Kirk Marshall is an award-winning Australian writer, and teacher of Creative Writing, English Literature and Media (Film & T.V. Studies) at RMIT University. He is the author of "The Signatory" (2012; Skylight Press); "Carnavalesque, And: Other Stories" (2011; Black Rider Press); and "A Solution to Economic Depression in Little Tokyo, 1953". He has written for more than seventy publications, both in Australia and overseas, including *Word Riot* (U.S.A.), *3:AM Magazine* (France), *Le Zaporogue* (France/Denmark), *(Short) Fiction Collective* (U.S.A.), *The Vein* (U.S.A.), *Danse Macabre* (U.S.A.), *The Seahorse Rodeo Folk Review* (U.S.A.), *The Journal of Unlikely Entomology* (U.S.A.) and *Kizuna: Fiction for Japan* (Japan). He edits *Red Leaves*, the English-language/Japanese bi-lingual literary journal. He now suffers migraines in two languages.

### Damien Miles-Paulson

Damien Miles-Paulson teaches English to Burmese and Karen Health Workers in Mae Sot, Thailand. During the summer months he is a boat captain in the San Juan Islands of Washington State. He writes and is working on a Burmese Dub of Chris Markers' film, *Sans Soleil*, which he hopes to screen in Rangoon in the future. His first published piece is forthcoming from *The Washington Square Review*.

### Mark J. Mitchell

I studied writing and Medieval literature at UC Santa Cruz under Raymond Carver, George Hitchcock and Robert M. Durling. My poems have appeared in magazines and anthologies around the world over the last thirty-five years or so. My chapbook, "Three Visitors" won the Negative Capability International Chapbook competition in 2011. My novel, "Knight Prisoner" was just published by Vagabondage Press.

### Chris Moran

Chris Moran lives in Columbus, OH. He is the author of the chapbooks *Night Giver* (privately released) and *Poison Vapors* (Solar Luxuriance). His poetry has appeared in places like *red lightbulbs*, *Zhoupheus*, and *West Wind Review*. His website is [subtlefields.blogspot.com/](http://subtlefields.blogspot.com/).



**Natalie Raymond**

Natalie Raymond is a poet, writer, artist, & Gemini living in Brooklyn. She is currently working on her MFA at Goddard College. Her work has previously appeared in *Poetry for the Masses*, *491 Magazine*, & *Eleven and A Half Journal*, among other places. She is a recent Pushcart Prize nominee, a feline enthusiast, & her favorite color is pink. More info on current projects can be found at: [natalieraymond.com](http://natalieraymond.com).

**Eldon Reishus**

Eldon (Craig) Reishus entertains a growing, less intimate circle under the Alps outside Munich (Landkreis Bad Tölz - Wolfratshausen). He is an all-around print and web media pro, and the German-English translator of numerous films and books. Visit him: [www.reishus.de](http://www.reishus.de).

**AM Ringwalt**

AM Ringwalt is a writer and musician (Anne Malin) from Racine, Wisconsin. Recent publishing credits include *DUM DUM Zine: Punks and Scholars*, *OF ZOOS*, *BROWN GOD* and *NOTHING TO SAY* by 79 Rat Press. She is the creator of Caffeine Dirge. Her opera collaboration with composer Benjamin Walter, the lord and gypsy just kisser, premiered in May of 2013 at Interlochen Center for the Arts, and her chapbook *Like Cleopatra* will be released in early 2014 by Dancing Girl Press.

**Jennifer Robin**

As a novelist and essayist, Jennifer Robin specializes in deeply embarrassing beauty. Robin's first novel, *Bouzi*, was released in 2000, and her short stories have appeared in literary journals for the past fifteen years. She has performed at Bumbershoot, The Olympia Experimental Music Festival, and thousands of miscellaneous events; the sort where people sway to sine waves in dark and onion-scented rooms. Jennifer Robin delivers. Stick with her and you will go places. Those interested in collaborating on art projects can contact her at [jenniferistheone@yahoo.com](mailto:jenniferistheone@yahoo.com).

**Shane Roeschlein**

Shane Roeschlein is a writer, Caucasianish male Amerimutant. Dad guy. Riot enthusiast. Transmitter. Author of graphic novel *Caustic Soda - A Year Future Narco Romance*. Chief propagandist for San Diego post-punk collective, Does It Explode. His texts have appeared in the *Journal of Experimental Fiction*, *Pacific Review* and *Fiction International* and also online at [noisey.com](http://noisey.com). He was recently nominated for the Pushcart Prize in Fiction. Short, controlled bursts available on twitter @andaluciabomber.

**Gary Sloboda**

Gary is a lawyer, writer and musician. His work has appeared in such places as *Drunken Boat*, *Rattle*, *EOAGH: A Journal of the Arts*, *E-Ratio* and *Exit Strata*. He is currently writing a book-length collection of prose poems entitled 'Tremor Philosophies'. He lives in San Francisco.

**Jennifer Taylor**

J. A. Taylor is a writer from the United States but currently living in Edinburgh, Scotland. She is the winner of the William Sharpe Memorial Award and received an Honorable Mention in the Artistine Mann Award for Writing. She is also very fond of puffins.

**Corey Wakeling**

Corey Wakeling lives in Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of chapbook *Gargantuan Terrier, Buggy or Dinghy* (Vagabond Press, 2012) and full-length collection *Goad Omen* (Giramondo, 2013). He is co-editor of *Outcrop: radical Australian poetry of land* (Black Rider Press, 2013), reviews editor of poetry journal *Rabbit*, and interviews editor of *Cordite*.

**Barrett White**

Barrett White's work has been featured in *3:AM*, *dogzplot*, *Metazen*, and elsewhere. He is currently working on a series of videos, entitled DEAD ELEMENTS, based loosely on Ernst's collage novel "A Week of Kindness."

**Sennah Yee**

Sennah Yee is a Toronto screenwriting student. Though named after a racecar driver, she has yet to go behind a wheel. Her first chapbook *THE AQUARIUM* is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press. Find her at [sennahaha.tumblr.com](http://sennahaha.tumblr.com)

