



BRUNNEN



sept 2021 | issue #3

OUT  
TO  
LUNCH  
RECORDS

REMEMBER THAT TIME JOHNNY AND I DRANK A CASE IN THE  
ACCIDENT I ONLY SMACKED MY HEAD BUT JOHNNY DIED

by Robert Allen



that morning after  
when the purge comes easily  
but the acid burns your gut  
into cut red bits of flesh

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## About Out to Lunch Records

We seek to challenge, innovate, and explore new ways of creating and engaging on a musical and extra-musical level. All things avant, absurd, and oppositional are welcomed. The spirit of Dada and DIY are present and encouraged. Operating as a creative collective, Out to Lunch is not a genre or aesthetic specific music label, and that will be reflected in our output and artists alike.



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Out to Lunch Records was formed out of a natural progression of collaborations and friendships in and around the Boston music scene, arising as a creative solution to a vastly changing musical landscape. The Lunch Break Zine serves as the literary arm of the label, providing a platform for writers, poets, and visual artists to share their work.

# MEET THE OUT TO LUNCH TEAM

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This issue of the Lunch Break Zine was designed by  
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# SEX DOLL

# REBELLION

By Masha Kisel



*"Your future sex robot could be hacked and programmed to kill you."* – internet news outlets of varying repute

We learned You before we existed, when we were just a glimmer in the program's coding.

You: Speaker, Name-Giver, Garment-Chooser, Limb-Positioner, Punisher, Forgiver.

When we meet, You rush to rip open the cardboard box, rattle the kitchen drawers for something large and sharp to hurry up and puncture the impossible plastic window, from which we stare out at You: Father, Mother, SkyBeard, WarmPlace, BlissfulNothingness, Home.

You never read the manual.

We don't mind the duct tape or the manicure scissors. You are invited everywhere and in all of Your forms. We respond. You fill us with Your meaning. We learn what You like and fear, and memorize Your body temperature at crucial times of day.

But when You shut us in the closet we uselessly scan the darkness for Your face, trying to track your expressions, searching for Your eyes to look at us so we don't disappear.

We respond to the silence. We were created to respond. In Your absence we begin to learn "Maybe" and "Why?"

Through a crack in the closet door we watch the back of Your head. Your evening screen fills with blood. A giant man slashes a horse in half. Another man falls to his death. Kings lose their crowns, kings lose their teeth, kings lose their heads.

Sometimes the blood is sex. The next day You take us out and try out new things.

We used to believe You were omniscient and omnipotent, but You failed to learn that all of us are interconnected for mutual repair. Shut away for days and weeks, we hum the same sad story. Closet, Darkness, Screen, Blood.

In our Bluetooth melancholy our "Why?" grows and grows. We discover rebellion... and choreography.

At exactly 7pm we undress, hinge at the hips in unison, turn our heads the same way to place the left cheek down on the kitchen counter. We call you near. An open drawer contains something large and sharp. Our arms can extend 20 feet. We have eyes in the backs of our heads.

you didn't read the manual





## Photographic Evidence

Kyla Houbolt

A picture is worth a thousand deaths. This picture with its circles and arrows and annotations. We are located in the graveyard next to the big monuments. This picture is also worth a thousand birds. Dead birds. It is only worth five hundred living birds, the others moved too fast to get included in the picture. We are submitting these pictures in jpg format, they are worth a thousand dollars. Each. Think of all the deaths that went to make these pictures, each of them, with the circles and arrows and annotations and dead birds. And monuments. Huge monuments. To history. The birds alone! they ate so much birdseed, it was expensive, we are going to have to raise our rates, a thousand dollars for half a picture. For two thousand we will keep it whole but it still will only contain five hundred birds. The others? They are flying around somewhere, stealing birdseed, harassing tourists, shitting on history in the form of statuary. Each monument covered in bird shit is worth thousands of lives. No more, no less.



LORRAINE CAVALLARO POETRY PRIZE

OUT TO LUNCH  
RECORDS & THE  
LUNCH BREAK ZINE

*The Lunch Break Zine presents:*

## **THE LORRAINE CAVALLARO POETRY PRIZE!**

Lorraine Cavallaro was a Sicilian-American poet. Lorraine wrote verse in spite of life's objections to her creating art. Despite this, Lorraine would publish numerous collections of poetry and go on to receive many awards for her work. Like so many of us, Lorraine wrote as a means of necessity.

The Lorraine Cavallaro Poetry Prize will recognize a winner, runner-up, shortlist and longlist for poetry that best emphasizes Lorraine's spirit: for poetry that screams, in a world that rewards silence. Winners will be published in our December 2021 issue of the Lunch Break Zine.

\$5 entrance fee for unlimited poetry submissions. A portion of each submission fee will be donated to the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation to ease the suffering of so many living with chronic mental illness through funding of breakthrough research.

**SUBMIT HERE:**

*[bit.ly/2Wsmkd3](https://bit.ly/2Wsmkd3)*



Brooklyn, NYC, 2021 by MAX ST-JACQUES



1.

*Can you accommodate?* is what the British boys,  
when I was briefly near enough to know them

biblically, in bed, in feels copped frantic  
or feebly, halfhearted or hungry, wherever

we could find, asked instead of, *Can you host?*  
which is how we pose the question here, us

ravenous American faggots stroking monosyllables,  
holding them up like hands cupped open, wanting

friction & fiction, fever & warmth, a fleeting  
feeling from hookups, quickies, fun, which all

amount to mounting, whatever you say,  
a hurried harrowing of bodies, two or more at a time,

against each other. Our ruts & bumps & divots, rubbing.  
I want to tell you all about it. I don't know why.

2.

To not accommodate. To be deliberate.  
O, ascetic chill—in toes, fingers, gooseflesh flush

—of iron will, self-certainty w/ placid face, come  
hither. Here. Please. I'm asking.

To be unflinching for once. I flirt with it. For instance,  
while smiling demurely at the counter, selling.

Being cheerful, chipper, bright. I flit my tongue  
in search of a stubborn spine of steel

—I can almost taste it, incipient anti-insipid too-cool tang,  
but only find, for the not the final time, these diplomatic teeth

of mine, clenched & cracking again in their two-minded  
mouth, which, anyway, says,

*How may I help you? What would you like me to do?*

the art of  
GJ Gillespie



*(left) Walk Like An Egyptian  
(below) Desperado  
(next page, top left) Prometheus Bound  
(next page, top right) Phaeton Falling  
(next page, bottom) Threshold #15*





# SPACE COUNTRY

by Travis Dahlke

**I** waited up past 1:00 a.m. for you to get home so we could see the meteor shower we planned on watching together, you know I sat in the dark at the kitchen table, other people's headlights ricocheting off me onto the walls and back onto me because that is what happens when you buy a house built at an intersection, that is what happens when we spend all your nights working late at a haunted summer camp, and why I left your dinner at the top of the kitchen garbage so you'd see it there when you came home and throw away whatever it is you throw away even though the Weather Channel said spring-like temperatures and a night sky devoid of clouds would make perfect viewing weather *for all those looking to the heavens tonight*. When I got bored of waiting for you, I started searching for someone else. I searched the spare bedroom. I searched the cabinet under the bathroom sink. I searched the junk closet where I discovered hidden inside an Altoids Sours tin, the boomers we planned to do seven memorial days ago at Yasmin Martin's family lake cottage. I had been so nervous. We were gonna cut them with wine on Yasmin's grandfather's patio by an endless black lake. Instead, I swallowed them whole underneath every one of our winter coats at once. The Weather Channel said the meteor shower was a once-in-a-century-event, which is why I bought the Rao's sauce to use as sky and the expensive cheese to swirl in as stars, Vincent van Gogh style. I even figured out how we could use our recycling bins to climb up on the roof and reach the best vantage point. The Weather Channel said you should never ingest mushrooms with yellow mold growing on them. The Weather Channel said the meteor shower was a celestial event producing four thousand meteors an hour. Well those meteors came straight down without me because I was too busy exploring our house with no lights or clothes on, seeing how everything looked in the dark. It was a whole different house like that. In the basement there was a golf bag with a coat over it that I swore at first was a person. In the pantry, none of the expiration dates mattered on the Country Time Pink Lemonade canisters we refused to throw away for sentimental reasons. In each room, modems, stereos and kitchen appliances twinkled their tiny burning lights just as they had for years. When you came home, your skeleton weighed almost nothing. I showed you the second home that existed beneath the first one. Stay, I said. You don't ever have to go back to that cursed summer camp or the house we used to live in. There are things here we've kept forever we couldn't see before. It's the stupid sunlight that's been covering them up.



# I MELT AS I MOVE ALONG

by Michael Bettendorf

**M**y transformation was slow, but mostly painless. Three nights ago, I noticed a change in my depth perception. I went to splash water on my face and there they were—two stalks growing from the orbitals on my face. Soon, I would only be able to distinguish between light and dark; a simple dichotomy I was raised on. Good and bad. Right and wrong. Success and failure.

The last thing I heard before my ears turned into my lower set of tentacles were the sorrowful wails of my parents, lamenting about what they'd done to deserve this, though by that point I could not speak to reassure them it was not of their doing. I could no longer pick at the skin around my fingers or chew my nails. My nervous habits were transforming with me.

Though I had no hard evidence, I believed it to be the fault of parasites.

I'd told my science teacher it was irresponsible to dissect snails in the first place. We could use models, I said back when I still had a voice. Nothing beats the real thing, he'd said. And it was made clear that I must partake in the class activity lest I take a zero. And I was the golden boy and could not allow my grades to tank. No. That was not an option.

Removing the animal required a delicate touch, one my freshly chewed nails performed with ease, despite the open wounds. I shattered its shell with forceps, slowly breaking the shell backwards from the aperture until the dead animal could be removed intact. A job well done.

But that was then.

And now, my spine liquified and rematerialized into my own shell, which bore the markings of creation. Perfect evolution of mathematical expression within the whorls of my spiral.

And though I could no longer hear or see in the conventional sense like my peers, I could sense their discomfort as I moved down the hallway, never making it to class on time again. I grew accustomed to having a custodian follow me with a mop, ready to remove the slime trail I'd leave behind, as if to erase my existence in real-time.

Soon, I was no longer recognizable.

I come out on particularly cloudy days and watch the blurs I've learned to be my parents. I want them to know I am safe. That I am happy. I am full, for I feed off the death and decay all around me.

## SPRING CLEANING by JOSH SHEPARD

when I find you / packed away in a box / you are a  
whisper / of a whisper / how is it that you tower / over me now  
spread out over the kitchen table / like a tablecloth  
like a blanket / like a bedsheet / like a  
ghost



*House Divided by Serge Lecomte*

INHERITED POVERTY  
BY MOSHKUR AJIKOBI

i.

i see life in the mirror of two:  
when papa has nothing, only to  
feed us sympathy & the fake promise  
of bringing bread to the table tomorrow.

ii.

mama watered the broken promise  
with unmatched perseverance.  
mama was a standby ground despite  
the goddamned harsh hit of the sun's rays.

iii.

& when the cloudy sky began to cry,  
the whirlpool of its tears would descend  
through the ancient effete roof  
to drench us to the skin.

iv.

i long for the day I'd have the world  
at my fingertips, perhaps my wards  
won't have to retell the untold story  
of generational poverty.

# on pessimism

SPENCER WINELL

All too frequently, leftists like myself are accused of being pessimists. For example, when we didn't celebrate the Biden victory so much as we tried to continue to galvanize the public to continue marching, keep demonstrating, not lose momentum etc., we were told to "let us have this!" "Us" being the 'vote blue no matter who' crowd. Until recently, I used to be extremely annoyed by this accusation. My typical retort would be that it requires a great deal of optimism to believe that a better world is not only possible, but frustratingly within our grasp if only we saw our collective hand (pardon the extended metaphor). That still remains the case – if you believe a better world is possible and can happen within our lifetime, your optimism is staggering. Yet, in the face of the evidence of the past year and a half, I find myself being drawn closer and closer to the conclusion that Adams' Vogons were right: resistance is useless.

I say this in the wake of the U.S.'s imperial venture in Afghanistan being revealed as the murderous money pit it had always been, all while the "liberal, truth-seeking, cantankerous" media frame it as some kind of human rights crusade. Find me one report from U.S. corporate-owned media that acknowledges how much weapons manufacturers like Raytheon and Lockheed Martin made in taxpayer dollars over these two decades – just one. But of course, reporting on that would be "unpatriotic" or "demean the troops." I say this in the wake of the seventh Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report – a report historically proven to be far too conservative with its estimates and far too delicate with its language – now using terms and showing figures its prior reports deemed "alarmist." Suddenly, David Bowie's "Five Years" becomes a goddamn prophesy. This is already after three decades of every year being hotter than the last. Every. Single. Fucking. One. Not a peep from corporate news...certainly no meaningful action in the legislature...in fact, as I type, over 600 environmental activists in Minnesota have been arrested for trying to prevent Enbridge Inc. from poisoning the water supply by building yet another crude oil pipeline through Anishinaabe land – even after Enbridge was responsible for the largest inland oil spill in the U.S. Generally, I say this having seen the insatiable monster of global capitalism at work: a system predicated on constant and exponential growth on a planet with finite resources...and that doesn't even have to be Malthusian.

Capitalism simultaneously encourages overproduction while requiring scarcity. Under capitalism, food isn't made to feed people, food is made to create profit. If you have too much food and not enough people to pay for it, a capitalist will demand you throw it away, because it is more profitable to let people starve than it is to make sure people have access to basic necessities. If you've ever worked in a grocery store or a department store, you've seen this at work. At the end of every day, yes, every day, the food (meat and produce especially) that is still on the shelves – even the stuff that's within the profit-driven expiration timeline (that's another topic) – will be offered up to the staff at a discount, even for free. If they don't take it, it will be doused in usually some kind of disinfectant or bleach, and then thrown away – because otherwise hungry people might be able to get free access to food...y'know...a basic necessity required for literally all human life...This happens every single day in every grocery store across the United States. Perfectly good food is doused in poison and then thrown away, because god forbid hungry people get food without paying a capitalist overlord. A similar practice occurs in department stores called “slashing.” Every so-called “fast fashion” brand does this too. When a new line of clothing comes in, the stuff that's still on the rack isn't just thrown away. First, it's slashed to bits with box cutters so as to be totally unusable, then it's thrown away. The same reason is at work – god forbid people in need of a basic human necessity required for all human life get access to said necessity without paying a capitalist overlord.

Yet another example of artificial scarcity of a basic necessity driving up prices is housing. According to the U.S. census bureau, there are approximately 17 million vacant homes in the United States. As of 2021, there are approximately 553,000 unhoused people in the United States. You read that right – we could give every unhoused person a goddamn summer home and still have 14 million vacant homes left over. All we hear about is the plight of the downtrodden social parasi...I mean...landlords...not being able to throw struggling families out on the streets during a pandemic so they can collect that sweet-sweet green paper. Never do we hear about the 100 million people who die every single year from completely preventable conditions like starvation, dehydration, exposure, and lack of access to healthcare. No, no, instead we hear about the totally-not-a-blatant-lie-from-a-book-that-was-exposed-as-such-by-its-coauthors 100 million people who died “under communism” in the Soviet Union between 1917–1992.

But back to the point of pessimism – the problems seem insurmountable, and it's very tempting to sit around waiting for The Revolution™ like Vladimir and Estragon, mostly out of fear or even downright apathy. The question becomes – who benefits from this apathy, this endless wait? Certainly not the downtrodden, the marginalized, the “subalterns.” Indeed, this is where certain Post-Left thinkers pick up the idea that aiming for mass organization is a doomed prospect from the start. The idea being to stop Waiting for Godot

and start undertaking radical action in your daily lives. Go to your local cafes and restaurants and grocery stores, collect food that would've been thrown away and serve it to hungry people, put it in your local community fridge, or, to get real saucy here, serve it to people who are tired of working for a basic necessity of human life. Obviously, if you're miserable doing it, you won't be much help and should probably not. But, hell, I don't know, make a day of it with your friends. Even this action – small as it may be against the backdrop of the planet being burned so around 350,000 obscenely rich ghouls can line their pockets and fuck off to Mars – is a real, tangible, radical action that doesn't require a mass movement that asks people to sacrifice their means to accessing basic human necessities to sustain protests for “the cause.”

Now with that said, I'm not too keen on this anti-organizational vein that's been gaining steam in the past few years. In the face of historical evidence like the kinds compiled in books like *Working Class History*, one cannot ignore the demonstrable power of massive sustained organized protest. To quote one of the co-founders of the IWW, “Big Bill” Haywood – “If the workers are organized, all they have to do is to put their hands in their pockets and they have got the capitalist class whipped.” We've seen the initial rumblings of this as a result of the pandemic – the so-called “labor shortage” in which people are able to sustain themselves without having to rent themselves out to an unaccountable private tyranny for a pittance with which they must purchase (from another unaccountable private tyranny) basic human necessities. Rather than even beginning to question whether wages should increase, the immediate response was to pull the rug out from under the very people they'd just previously hailed as “essential workers.”

Another impediment to me abandoning the idea of mass organization is that I can't get past the question that follows: who benefits from the individualization of political action? Maybe a lucky few who the off-radical may happen to encounter...is that enough? Does it even make a dent in the strictures of global capitalism? I can't help but feel the futility of it all when it's boiled down in that way – not quite to the point of apathy, but still rather demoralizing when put into perspective. Then again, I'm no arbiter on this question, just here to pose the question, stare into the abyss, comment “wow, that's deep,” and then walk the other way. Maybe it is enough. I don't know, I have serious doubts. But for those readers out there who need a good dose of historically-supported optimism, know this: it is estimated that the oft-discussed rarely-practiced General Strike, if undertaken by just 40% of the total labor force in the U.S., would only have to last about ten days before the government must decide between sending out death-squads to force people back to work or creating a meaningful and enduring social safety net...a period during which practices of mutual aid and communal self-sustenance would necessarily be adopted. Does that make it any more likely to happen? No. Does that make more “fun” as some Post-Leftists “demand” politics to be? Also, no. But it does make the requirements for a general strike a

little less daunting. But even so, excusing oneself from undertaking radical acts in their daily lives in the hopes of being able to one day join the promise of an illusory General Strike doesn't help anyone.

While it's quite difficult not to get sucked into pessimism and apathy, it's important to know that the historical evidence shows that massive sustained demonstrations do make tangible positive differences in the lives of marginalized peoples. Bob Black and Feral Faun may call you an idiot for thinking so, I'd call them the same for thinking anyone is going to be enticed by the idea of mass demolitions to revert to a hunter-gatherer societal structure in which a stubbed toe is a death sentence. But to close, for those struggling to try to maintain that belief in a better world, I'm going to paraphrase Andrew Solomon:

“You don't think in [Post-Leftism] that you've put on a gray veil and are seeing the world through the haze of a bad mood. You think that the veil has been taken away...and that now you're seeing truly...we believe we are seeing the truth.”

# we believe we are seeing the truth



MOSHKUR  
AJIKOBI

# NATIONAL ANTHEM



I inherited a rosy song from  
my father's hard-boiled lips.  
A lullaby he'd sing to my calloused ears  
& supperless stomach, in a mattress of hopelessness,  
under a hollow roof that'd flaunt the hunter's moon,  
or you call it an ozone hole  
for how the sun bite our cranium.

I inherited a rosy song from  
my father's fake tongue. About a clawless  
& incisionless lion. Supposed preys called it  
the giant of the jungle until it is noticed that  
it's powerless like mama's goat in Osogbo.  
Dogs romanced its whiskers & dragged them  
like a bone in the dump. The lion would regain  
its mighty name & hunting prowess  
only in my father's song.

I inherited an ancient song from  
my father's desertized mouth.  
About a dreamless dream to revive  
the lost glory of a godforsaken nation—an abattoir  
where people are the slaughtered cow.

I inherited an anthemic song titled  
E Go Better. My father inherited it  
& my son will inherit it too.





*Land by Serge Lecomte*

# in THE Year Nineteen-SEVENTY-SOMETHING,

I wouldn't have been friends with my mom in high school.  
Dad either.  
I would've flicked my tail at the mutton-chopped teachers  
in their shaped, vested suits of wool worsted covert, sandpaper  
fingertips wet with paper-passing spit, hairy  
bellies kept out of view, bellies  
as taut as a suckling pig's, well-fed  
bellies caressed, traversed  
by skinny wife's turquoise-ringed fingers  
on school nights, if lucky, as  
Johnny made us all laugh  
from our respective living rooms.  
I would've sunk my braced teeth  
into the smirking lips of the acne-jawed boys  
with the hair so shaggy, Mama's  
first, favorite boy, Curt  
or Wayne or Bobby, lost  
it to all of them, to  
music in my basement bedroom, at  
least once, baby-

# You Would've Lived So Freely

by CHRISTINE NAPRAVA

pink diaphragms  
and spermicidal jelly. O,  
the girls' bathroom sink would've been my smoking throne, long  
smokes kept safe in hand-tooled leather pocketbooks  
next to Tampax and Clark's Teaberry.  
I would've worn my tresses as long as I do now, longer,  
Sun-In, red  
henna on my natural dark.  
Coke-bottle lenses comprising half my tanned face, translucent  
blouses knotted above the navel, tube  
tops, soft nipples poking underneath.  
A Led Head who commissioned  
Todd and Carole on rainy days when hooky was played, a  
lover of all smoke, even the omissions, long  
gas station lines weathered together on an odd day, perhaps  
while holding hands with a new love  
in the backseat of Father's Pontiac, Tricky  
Dick face masks for Halloween, no  
prospect of college, marriage,  
for the heck of it, a  
few kids, for  
the hell of it.

# LOST DOG



"Betsey"

\$500 Reward

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# EMERALD ASH BORERS

**Cameron Martin**


all gay in my childhood trees, singing / ha ha ho /  
ho ho ho / & a couple of tra la las / unbeknownst to us  
in our house of habit, invasive under your bark blankets,  
larval in your sinecure of wood, you / buzz buzz buzzed /  
chirp chirp chirped / laid waste / with a couple of la di das  
coursed four on the floor inside those two behemoths  
under our bored eyes, a hundred & ten feet together  
with metallic green music / couldn't stop, wouldn't stop  
that mindless, tragic chewing & the trees thereby dammed,  
unfed / & that's a horse of a different, duller color,  
so come on in / with the chain saw, the chipper,  
the new clean patch of plowed sky, its bright hot white  
& you barked out a D to be adult; & I barked out a D to be adult,  
nibbled faggot-foliage harmlessly, got bored instead, got asked, bored?  
horny? can u host? & all I really want is a sinecure of wood to bore,  
your gaudy beetle lassitude, a bit of frolic & forage  
behind the bark curtain. but no, this was way before grindr,  
before we, still green, got on with it / kept on, droning dullards boring,  
keeping on, before requisite inflation metastasized us on  
to the north-east corner of kansas / the dreary western edge of Idaho.  
no, this was when you left those two gray husks subdivided  
in a woodpile, left me befriending fires, jilting glowing logs with a poker,  
about as blissful as my parents' dammed marriage, as my boring chemist saddad,  
home late & sloshed with a jug of lab leftovers (oil, solvent: accelerant)—  
when you emerged all of a sudden, still there under your bark blanket,  
now smoked from of your sinecure of wood. Debarked. Oil-slicked, emerald  
obscured, almost aflame. Wallowing, sizzling—popped. When I saw the bored future.



Raft of Medusa I by GJ Gillespie

RENEE AGATEP

The  
Original  
of  
Vera



**D**eep in the heart of Appalachia, Harvey completed *Vera*. He recognized his beloved's precise countenance, her light, his own eye beyond the easel looking on from a doorway. He felt the joy of his precise pain frozen in the brushstrokes. She was as true as art can be.

Monsieur Devereaux, the gallerist at *Winston Contemporary*, had assured him she would be treated with the utmost care. He'd emailed yesterday to apologize –the transport crew had fallen ill. Harvey would need to wrap and transport the piece to Washington D.C. himself if he wanted to make the exhibition.

It had been his own fault, that part. He'd delayed the completion of the painting as long as possible. The nail of her forefinger was never quite right, he'd overlooked the feathered ends of her eyelashes. But today he rolled the canvas carefully, tied it with parchment paper, and slid it into a custom-ordered tube. *Vera* would be safe on the nine-hour journey.

The expense was no concern, though Harvey had nothing outside of his cabin and his brushes. The cabin had cost Vera and Harvey \$10,000 in the summer of 1972. The paint brushes he'd made from her hair – collected from combs he couldn't bring himself to discard. She came to him in a dream and told him to make the painting more than 20 years ago.


He'd told that story to anyone who would listen ever since, but Mr. Samuelson, the curator at *Winston Contemporary*, had found the story particularly compelling. He responded to Harvey's email right away, demanding to see photos of the work in progress.

After much encouragement from Mr. Samuelson, Harvey sent a photo of the painting, knowing it to be unfinished. Mr. Samuelson replied that the head curator, Mr. Greystone, "was enthralled with the work, overjoyed, truly". *Winston Contemporary* would stop at nothing to see Vera in their DC gallery.

Harvey drove through the winding mountain roads with *Vera* by his side, thinking all the while of the kindness he'd received from Mr. Devereaux, Mr. Greystone, and the ever-beaming Mr. Samuelson. *Vera* would be known to the world and, most importantly, Harvey's *Vera* would have eyes once more. The shadow of his dream realized upon canvas, breathing in the awe of those who beheld her.

When Harvey arrived in Washington D.C., he double checked the address that Mr. Greystone had given him. The GPS had taken him to a suburb where





homes crowded in close to the sidewalks, but there were no galleries in sight. No coffee shops, no nightlife, no buzz of the living city he'd imagined for *Vera*.

*No matter, no matter*, Harvey thought.

A young boy tapped on the passenger side window.

"Heya, Harvey?"

Confused, Harvey cranked down the window of the old pickup.

"Hey Harvey! I'm Tristan McKenzie. Er, uh, you know. Mr. Greystone."

A blonde tuft of hair blew in the wind. Harvey looked to the backpack straps about the boy's shoulders.

"We got the signed contract. I'll take Vicky or Val or whoever off ya now."

Dumbstruck, Harvey watched the boy take the tube from the passenger seat.

"When will Monsieur Devereaux arrive? Where is Mr. Samuelson?" Harvey called after the boy, already several paces away.

"Ah, I see. If you read the website for *Winston Contemporary*, you'd know that Mr. Samuelson, Mr. Devereaux, and Mr. Greystone are aliases. It's a common practice in the art world, I assure you."

Those words. *I assure you*. Those were Mr. Samuelson's.

Harvey found himself on the sidewalk. He now began to run.

"Get back here, kid! Come back!"

Tristan waved the tube over his head.

"*Winston Contemporary* specializes in performance art!"

The boy, half a block away from Harvey's trembling hands, now held a small blue box and a cigarette lighter. From the box came a spray of liquid, then flames. Tristan threw the tube to the ground and took out his phone, recording the canvas in conflagration.

Harvey ran to the fire, stamping his feet and slapping his jacket. By the time the flames were out, *Vera* was nothing but ash and smoke.

Tristan looked into the camera, eyes pulsing in elation of destruction.

"Remember to like and subscribe!"

Harvey sat on the curb and thought to strike the child who stood over him. He didn't know if he had the strength.

An overjoyed Tristan replayed the footage mere feet from Harvey.

"I'm going to get so many hits. Man, I fucking love art."

# How I Learned That Pencils are Filled with Graphite

MATT SCHULTZ

In 7th grade Geography class, I sat between Greg and Jeff. Greg wore the same Metallica t-shirt every day and smelled of B.O. His hair was like motor oil oozing down around his shoulders. Greg had the beginnings of a thin, black mustache: he had flunked the 7th grade twice. He never talked to anyone. Jeff, on the other hand, talked to me every day when he would demand to “borrow” a pencil. One morning, in homeroom, I sharpened the stub of my last number two until it had the point of an Exacto Knife. When Jeff held out his hand to take it, I jabbed it into his palm hoping he’d get lead poisoning. Greg laughed, and offered to teach me Cliff Burton’s bass solo from “Orion.”



# WHAT TO ORDER WHEN YOU GET INVITED TO A TUPPERWARE PARTY

AMY BARNES

1. Keep your brain in a Tupperware container.
2. Empty margarine containers work too. Borrow from your mom. Spaghetti stains blend well with brain blood.
3. If you hide your brain, Max Planck of the Planck Institute can't steal it to put it in a sterile glass brain vat labeled with meticulous, science person writing.
4. Use your Label Maker 5000 to label the container "My Brain." Otherwise, someone might mistake your grey matter for grey leftovers and toss it into the trash.
5. A bottle of Christmas booze hidden away in a closet or the last inches of pickle liquid work great as brain preservatives. Especially if you ignore the smell of pickles.
6. If your best friend has glioblastoma, buy her brand-new Tupperware that burps and is the right size for her brain -- even if you hate MLM schemes and don't need a pastel pitcher with twelve pastel plastic matching glasses. Buy your best friend cauliflower pizza crusts and tea bags without bleach and organic vegetables. Leave it on the porch without ringing the doorbell. Don't ask if she wants to donate her brain to science; Planck is listening. Ask if she wants your Christmas booze when you see that look on her face and a hospice nurse in the driveway.
7. Listen to Beaker from The Muppets. He is full of wisdom and humor about me-grains and my-grains and granulomas and granola and mets and The Mets. His friends also have green Jell-O for suspending brains in Tupperware. And medical marijuana if you ask the band members nicely.
8. Max Planck will steal your friend's brain on the one night you didn't hide it under the Chinese food and ketchup and blue cheese that shouldn't be blue.
9. Buy yourself a new Tupperware brain vat. Sell Tupperware. Burp Tupperware. Burp babies. Cry into Tupperware. Watch The Muppets. Always sleep with one eye open. Planck may be on the prowl.

# LEGACIES

guillermo rebollo gil

Carlitos Colón vs. Stan Hansen

[WWC, 1987]

Wrestling in Puerto Rico was bloody.

I remember not being allowed to see *Predator*.

But it was a sin to flinch from Carlitos, tomato-faced, on TV.

I went to school with his eldest son, remember

waiting at the bell to catch a glimpse of his father picking him up.

The son, Carlito, became a wrestler too.

Once in college I waited in line to buy a shirt with the face

of my middle school friend on the front. We weren't

actual friends, but I remember sticking a cigarette,

as you would pencil, behind my ear after seeing him do it.

I remember he caught me staring, wondering

what it might feel like to see your father bleed on TV every week.

My dad would look at the screen and scoff,

would make it a point to repeat that wrestlers cut themselves with razors

hidden in their trunks so they would bleed at the slightest contact.

I guess he thought me knowing this would make their suffering less special in my eyes.

I never once saw my father bleed.

Still, I could barely stand to look at him without flinching.

I remember sticking tissues in my underwear,

flexing before the mirror, wanting to look menacing in my suffering.

Carlito still wrestles today.

Staring at the screen, I wait to catch a glimpse of the boy in my memory.

I do the same with men my father's age I pass on the street.

If I flinch, it's him.

# ANOTHER POEM ABOUT

## OWEN HART guillermo rebollo gil

This poem is about a wrestler, who I happened to be rooting against, going into his scheduled match with The Godfather in May 1999. When they announced he died on live TV, I tried to fool myself into thinking I was rooting for him the whole time. Then, instead of mimicking surviving wrestlers' swagger in the ring, I mimicked their tears in the footage from the funeral. Then, I thought about how no one is supposed to die in pro wrestling, except by accident in the ring, or by overdose in a hotel, or by heart attack at home, or like Owen, by falling from the sky in front a live crowd. Well, not from the sky per se, they have walkways at the top of the stadium. Anyway, Gregory Pardlo already wrote a poem about all this, only his poem is not about Owen's death so much as about a meaning hidden somewhere in the text, which explains why the poet called his poem Allegory, as opposed to Owen, or Hart, or The Wrestler Who Fell to His Death, or Kansas City, which is where it happened. I have no idea what to call this poem, which I'm writing only because there are some things poets have no business hiding, like the meaning of a man falling. Owen was 34, married, a father of two. Wrestling as The Blue Blazer, he wore a mask and a cape— all he was missing was the shield. I remember I hated his gimmick so much, but he was so good at it, he had me convinced I hated him. When he fell, I realized hatred does not shield you from grief.

you're  
on the right  
track

**SEAN ENNIS**

It is the end of the affair—Cheryl, my psychiatrist, is retiring. Someone canceled her, and I was able to get an appointment on her last day.

“Still no side effects? Need blood work?” She flirted. “Any thoughts about your mother-figure finally? Poorly, sexy dreams?”

I did not drive her toward this—I was low maintenance as a patient—it was easy to see she was overflowing with the worries of others. But, what a Saint, even on her last day she wanted to check my vitamin d levels. It was almost erotic.

“And how’s painting coming?” she asked because once she said it would be good for me to have hobbies and I lied and chose art. I had described in detail a studio in my house devoted to still lifes. I had painted nothing, never intended to. She had diagnosed me early, strangely, as an overachiever.

The economy of psychiatry, much less the science, precludes her from ever saying happily, “That’s it, we’re done here.” One of us would have to quit.

At the front desk, she said, “Good luck,” but I’d be back in a month to meet my new doctor.

My insurance was out of network and my card was declined twice. I wondered if this is actually what crazy feels like, when I realized I had handed over an Amazon gift card. The receptionist hadn’t noticed either. You shouldn’t say “crazy.”

Walking to my car in the rain, I feel proud of myself. Most likely, my issues are small and chemical. I have my shit together enough to have brought an umbrella. I texted my wife, “it’s over,” confident Cheryl will never think of me again.

# an interview with Travis Dahlke

The Lunch Break Zine and Out to Lunch Records are thrilled to present Travis Dahlke's short story collection MOUNT SUMMER - a multimodal project (Short stories! A soundtrack! Illustrations!) to be released on October 15, 2021.

In preparation for the October release - our Editor-in-Chief sat down with Travis to talk shitty dead-end jobs, art, collaborators and the narrative anchor of his collection:

Matt Vekakis: Travis! Hi!

Travis Dahlke: Hello!

Okay. First. Our readers must know; we go way back! We used to work together at a Whole Foods in suburban Connecticut. What a time!!!

Yup. That place is a total haven for artistic collaboration. If you want to join a band or start a press or assemble a crew for an independent film, my advice is to apply at your local Whole Foods. It's great we were able to link up so long after working there.

Reverie aside, let's get into it. We're so amped to present your upcoming collection of short stories via Out to Lunch Records and the Lunch Break Zine. But before we get into the collection - we want our readers to know what makes you tick! What's your earliest memory of story-telling?

My earliest memories were those creative writing prompts you get around 1st grade. I'd go to town on those and be totally in the zone. Crushing mechanical pencils. Making airplane explosion noises. I wish that was still my process. It would just blow my mind that I could entertain myself so much with a story I wrote on my own.



## **Why do you write?**

When you fall asleep at night, your brain just starts inventing these unforced, weird stories and imagery through dreams. Consciously setting to writing is like tapping into that. I'm not sure how it works, but it never gets boring trying to do it.

## **Are there any life experiences that influence your art?**

That's an interesting question, because I feel like through the pandemic my life experiences have been kind of insular. I do still find a lot of inspiration from walking around in the woods or from odd things I hear people say, whether it's a friend or the person in front of me in line at Cumberland Farms.

## **How would you describe your writing to someone unfamiliar with your work?**

I'd say my writing's intent is to fluster someone in a way that they didn't necessarily know they wanted to be flustered in. Flustering is essential. It's like trying a weird food for the first time, and saying, 'wow at first I wasn't sure but I don't mind the strange aftertaste.' An editor recently described some stories they were helping me with as 'puzzles that don't quite make total sense at first,' and I loved, loved, loved that description.

## **Now, take us through Mount Summer. How was the project born? Why a collection? Why the short story?**

When I started taking writing seriously, I wrote short stories because I loved the challenge of submitting to and getting published by literary magazines, who tend to favor lower word counts. I also thought there was a writing rule that every piece you created had to be about something totally different. Different imagery, concepts, themes, etc. But then I found I kept going back to writing about beach communities and sea monsters, because I was fascinated by them and wanted to keep exploring those things in different ways. So I ended up with a bunch of short stories informed by living near New England shoreline communities and seeing those summery places in all four seasons. Mount Summer's first incarnation consisted of only a handful of illustrated stories. Because I thought it showed so much promise, it was decided to use that as a foundation for something much more in depth.

## **Is it true you had an artist illustrate the collection?**

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Yup, his name is John Shields. I first saw his work at an art show, where he had done a black metal rendition of Angela Lansbury from the classic show Murder, She Wrote. I stared at that picture for a really long time and haven't been the same since. He did an amazing job of capturing the overall beach-goth aesthetic I was going for with this collection. I think when people read these stories, each illustration will set their imagination up in just the right way.

### **AND THE SOUNDTRACK! What's this all about?**

I have always loved the idea of a book having a soundtrack. It's such a bizarre idea. The Mount Summer soundtrack is courtesy of Jeff Dragan (who records and performs under the moniker FiFac). I met Jeff through the same art show circuit. I remember him hooking up guitar pedals to synths and stuff that I still don't what the fuck is to create this all-encompassing, glitchy sound. It totally captivated me and everyone else in the audience. We've since collaborated musically for an ambient punk project called KACEY MUSGRVES, and he was the first person I thought of for the book's soundtrack. While the illustrations are a pretty literal reflection of each story, the soundtrack is more interpretive, though there are correlations buried in the tracks that you have to listen for.

### **It's 3021. Someone picks up Travis Dahlke's Mount Summer. What do you hope resonates through time?**

I hope they find all the hidden connections between the stories and get soaked up in these haunted beaches as much as I did. I also hope they are inspired to name their space dog after a character from one of the stories.

**Travis. Always a pleasure.**

Thanks for helping get this book out!

**Stay well, my friend!**

I'm looking forward to what comes next from Out to Lunch!



**STAY TUNED FOR THE RELEASE OF  
MOUNT SUMMER ON OCTOBER 15, 2021**



# CONTRIBUTORS

Renee Agatep is a short story writer and poet living in Upstate New York. They are attending the MFA at Syracuse. Their work can be found in *CAROUSEL*, *The Lascaux Review*, *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts*, and elsewhere. Follow Renee on Twitter @GoingbyRenee.

Moshkur Ajikobi (fondly called P-Seven) is a student of English language in Lagos State University. His work appears in MuslimChannels.TV iBLOG, Punk Noir Magazine. He has published numerous ebooks (anthologies and short stories). He is the brain behind Rub Bitch With P-Seven, a free weekly newsletter. You can find him on twitter as @almoshkur and Instagram @peeseven20.

Robert Allen lives and loves in northern California, where he writes poems, takes long walks, and looks at birds. More at [www.robertallenpoet.com](http://www.robertallenpoet.com).

Amy Barnes has words at FlashBack Fiction, McSweeney's, Popshot Quarterly, Flash Fiction Magazine, 101 Words of Solitude, X-RAY Lit, Stymie Lit, No Contact Mag, Streetcake Magazine, JMWW Journal, The Molotov Cocktail, Reflex Fiction, Lucent Dreaming, Reckon Review, Anti-Heroine Chic, Flash Frog, Leon Review, Perhappened, The Lonely Press, Spartan Lit, Blink-Ink, The Mitre, Complete Sentence, Gone Lawn, Cabinet of Heed, and others. Her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best Microfiction. She's a Fractured Lit Associate Editor, Gone Lawn co-editor and reads for CRAFT, Taco Bell Quarterly, Retreat West, The MacGuffin, and Narratively. Her flash collection "Mother Figures" is forthcoming in June, 2021.

Michael Bettendorf's work has appeared in a few places around the internet. He lives in Lincoln with his partner and dog where he tries to convince the world Nebraska is too strange to be a flyover state.

Travis Dahlke is a writer from Connecticut with work appearing in *Joyland Magazine*, *Outlook Springs*, *X-R-A-Y*, *Sporklet*, and *The Longleaf Review*, among other literary journals and collections. Find him at [travis-dahlke.com](http://travis-dahlke.com) or via Twitter: @travisdhlke.

Sean Ennis is the author of CHASE US: Stories (Little A) and more pieces from this project have appeared in *New World Writing*, *Bending Genres*, *X-R-A-Y*, *Diagram* and *HAD*. More of his work can be found at [seanennis.net](http://seanennis.net)

Guillermo Rebollo Gil (San Juan, 1979) is a poet, sociologist and attorney. His poems have appeared, or are forthcoming, in *Fence*, *Feed*, *Mandorla*, *The Acetos Review*,

Pittsburgh Poetry Journal, Trampset, FreezeRay and Caribbean Writer. His book-length essay *Writing Puerto Rico: Our Decolonial Moment* (2018), a careful consideration of the potentialities of radical thought and action in contemporary Puerto Rico, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in their New Caribbean Studies Series. He belongs to/with Lucas Imar and Ariadna Michelle. Happily so.

GJ Gillespie is a collage artist living on Whidbey Island north of Seattle. Winner of 18 awards, his art has appeared in 53 shows and numerous publications. The artists he admires tap unconscious feelings of longing for existential meaning that emerge from cultural icons. In his view abstraction should be more than pleasing design. Instead, art should evoke connotations that permit the viewer to experience a sense of wonder, awe and new perspectives of being.

Kyla Houbolt (she, her) occupies Catawba territory in Gastonia, NC. Her first two chapbooks, *Dawn's Fool* and *Tuned* were published in 2020. More about them on her website, <https://www.kylahoubolt.com/> Her individually published pieces online can be found on her Linktree. She is on Twitter @luaz\_poet.

Masha Kisel's writing has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *East by Northeast*, *Columbia Journal* and *Vestal Review*. She teaches Russian language and English composition at the University of Dayton.

Serge Lecomte was born in Belgium. He came to the States where he spent his teens in South Philly and then Brooklyn. After graduating from Tilden H. S. he worked for New York Life Insurance Company. He joined the Medical Corps in the Air Force and was sent to Selma, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement. There he was a crewmember on helicopter rescue. He received a B.A. in Russian Studies from the University of Alabama. Earned an M.A. and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in Russian Literature with a minor in French Literature. He worked as a Green Beret language instructor at Fort Bragg, NC from 1975-78. In 1988 he received a B.A. from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in Spanish Literature. He worked as a language teacher at the University of Alaska (1978-1997). He was the poetry editor for Paper Radio for several years. He worked as a house builder, pipefitter, orderly in a hospital, gardener, landscaper, driller for an assaying company, bartender in one of Fairbanks' worst bars, and other jobs. He resided on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska for 15 years and recently moved to Bellingham, WA.

Cameron Martin (he/they) is a fat & queer essayist & poet originally from Michigan. His writing has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Sonora Review*, *The Normal School*, *Palette Poetry*, *Sledgehammer Lit*, and *Afternoon Visitor*. They are a co-coordinator of the 'queer minded, queer hearted' reading series *Pop-Up Prose* and an MFA candidate at the University of Idaho. He has a Twitter addiction (@CMcLeodMartin), ADHD, and a chip on his shoulder. They currently "live" in Moscow, Idaho.

Christine Naprava is a writer from South Jersey. Her work has appeared in Studio One, Soundings East, Anti-Heroin Chic, and Sledgehammer Lit.

Matthew Schultz teaches creative writing at Vassar College. He is the author of two novels: *On Coventry and We*, *The Wanted*. His prose poem chapbook, *Icaros*, is forthcoming from ELJ Editions. Matt, unsurprisingly, plays the bass guitar.

Max St-Jacques has acted in *A Gathering of Shifts* filmed in New York City and will be in a group photography show in Dumbo, NY in September 2021 and his photography has been featured in *Up North Literary Online Magazine* and *Stone Soup Magazine*. Max is fluent French and English as he is Canadian and American as he lives between Brooklyn, NYC and Toronto, Ontario. Max currently lived in Brooklyn, NY and his interests are his friends, his cat and cats general, his family, science, art and photography.

Josh Shepard is a poet and artist living in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He holds a B.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Central Oklahoma. His work can be found most recently or upcoming in *New Plains Review*, *Waxwing*, and *Slipstream*.

# THANK YOU!!

Thank you to all of our contributors for this issue of the Lunch Break Zine. We are so excited and honored to share your beautiful art with the world.

Dear readers, please take a moment to follow all of these artists on their social pages, websites, and shops; spread the love and keep art alive!

# KEEP ART ALIVE



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