

placeholder



issue 2  
poetry • prose • art



**placeholder**  
*issue 2*



Placeholder Issue #2

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*Here, a red parcel.*

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## SHOPLIFTING GLITTER ON FRIDAY 13TH

*Thai Braddick*

No table, no chairs, you're on the floor  
sprawled with your friend staring sullen  
at the ceiling light. December has been  
twelve years too long and you're afraid  
of the world turning twenty. Hands shaking  
into hands, Friday 13th and your fingernails  
are painted with shoplifted glitter, and chipping  
like old terrace bricks. You roll over,  
a pearl escaping the oyster's jaw, sighing,  
and you say "I'm so tired, how do I go on?  
Don't have my meds, fighting a fight all lost."  
Your friend kisses your head, and it hurts  
their fractured rib, and you say "Are you okay?"  
"My shitty rib means I have more room  
in my heart for you. Let's get your meds."  
Rib cracked whilst they fought, like you  
with your cracked skull, cracked heart,  
you stand up together and hug and it hurts  
but it reminds you hope isn't lost and you  
stumble, broken bones and frostbitten flesh  
towards an empty flat, no electricity  
with shoplifted bread you stole just to eat *something*.  
You say, "It's so cold in my flat, can I stay with you?"  
And all curly haired and handsome your friend says,

“I’ll help you pack.” You almost cry.  
This is what a community looks like, you think,  
all broken and putting socks, toothbrush,  
butter, into plastic bags. The bus arrives  
on time ( for once) and you get in together,  
cracked head on broken shoulder, jaws clenched,  
you stop by the corner shop ( five minutes  
more to walk) and you have forty pounds.  
You spend thirty pounds on food, so you can survive,  
you spend ten pounds on half-dead flowers  
so you can live. And you go back to the house  
sad but hardened, sad but hopeful, sad but  
the house opens up warm and you sit back against  
the wall and hold each other. You take your meds,  
free and crucial and necessary and  
you feel yourself becoming yourself again.  
You light a candle in the dark, and suddenly  
you’re alive again. Suddenly, no tables, no chairs  
and the floor is the foundation you build up from again.  
The flowers bloom only slightly in fresh, cold  
December water.

## billy pappas

*Risa Pappas*

My uncle was a man's man.  
Joined the army. Went round with  
a pistol. High slacks and American tees.  
Foreign boy made new in war  
and work.

Immigrant labor is family labor  
the only American labor left inside  
the Dream, and he cooked and bused  
and waited and smiled and joked and  
shared it all with his brothers and parents.

Billy was a man for men who he cruised  
for, opened his car door for, kissed  
on country roads from Upper Darby  
to Atlantic City. How many summer  
streets have we strolled down together

he in his time and I in mine? Queer  
didn't mean the same thing back then, but  
if he were still alive, I'd take his hand  
and lead him to every June parade.  
I'd ask him how he got so cool.

I'd ask him how he figured it out  
so quickly and if he ever found  
"the one." Mostly, I'd listen.

## cheap walking tour

*Luis Díaz*

### **2+ players (one guide and tourists)**

An umbrella or an alternative item which makes the guide stand out is recommended but not necessary.

This game is played outdoors. You can use it to wander around a city or while walking to a specific place.

### **Introduction:**

Your flatmate works as a walking tour guide, but they fell ill last night and can't make it to work. They had a very important tour today and they asked you to do it in their place. Yes, you aren't a certified guide, but you've been living in this city for a while, that should be enough (hopefully).

### **Rules:**

The guide walks in front of the group talking about streets, monuments and the history of the place. They can mix real facts and fake stories. The tourists will follow them and ask questions about things mentioned by the guide and things they see in the street. They can also point out any facts that don't make sense. Taking pictures is encouraged so you have a reminder of the beautiful historical places you visited.

The game ends when the group reaches the destination agreed on by everyone.

## famous international experts

*Luis Díaz*

### **2 - 4 players (world famous experts attending a conference)**

Must be played at a bookshop or a library.

#### **Introduction:**

All the players are world famous experts that arrive to a conference only to discover they don't know anything about the topics that are going to be discussed at the event. They are all used to talking in public and there are still a few minutes left to improvise something.

#### **Rules:**

Everyone picks a book for one of the other players. When everyone is ready, set a timer for 90 seconds on your phone. Players should start reading their assigned book as fast as possible (reading diagonally, skipping pages, etc). When time is over, everyone must close their book.

Players then take turns to give their talks about the book they just read. Their goal is to pretend to be experts on that topic for 3 minutes.

One of the players must keep track of time and let the speaker know when only 30 seconds remain so that they can give their talk a proper end.

## RPG FM

*Luis Díaz*

### **2 players**

Any app where you can play music.

### **Introduction:**

You live in a remote village. It's a nice place, but there's one thing that really bothers you; reception is terrible, there's one single radio network and it only plays an annoying loop where a dull voice reads the local news. Talking with a friend, you come up with a great idea: you'll start a local radio music show.

After getting all the materials you meet at your house for your first show.

### **Rules:**

The game starts with players picking a name for their show and defining its personality. Will they play all types of music? What's its logo? At what time will your show end?

Players take turns to play songs they like. Each song should be introduced by the player who chose it, either telling why that song is special to them or providing a fun fact about it.

The show goes on following the structure agreed by both players (it could have special sections defined by them). The game ends at the time set by the players, who must say goodbye and remind listeners to tune in again next week.

## mythology of place

*Nivretta Thatra*

1.

Add noise to noise to differentiate that special noise  
To master a piece of audio, listen to it in a museum  
Cafes with pyramided pastries out in the open, no fridge  
Rooms specially heated and decorated  
Hidden contingent of dusters at night  
are swapped at dawn for children in uniform  
Smooth, dark, heavy line drawings of Egyptian statues  
cocktail-effect the lithe hands of the Greeks

“Strange little boy,” laughs a mom, walking up to the child  
who has run the length of the corridor

to come stand in front of me,  
to put his hands over his eyes.

“I’m a strange little girl,” I respond, pressing my hand to my  
chest.

“Yoh,” says mom, “perfect couple.”

2.

Oliver brings an orange from Israel, meets blonde Hector  
You've spotted a sculpture, the Tower of Incomprehension,  
and I am where you were

Layers of paint on graphite—wait—graphite on paint desire  
coexistence, as intertwined as analogue and digital

Stretching my hip in the corner

Biting our sandwiches into arrows as Jenny Holzer truisms  
loom higher than the statue of that important war guy from  
the First World War

Everywhere is the same. Systems always frustrate.

Gum chewer takes pictures of pictures, click click goes her  
phone, click click goes her mouth

Berlin's Museumsinsel has an outdoor book sale.

Mickey Mouse in sandals walks by, holding onto his nose

People are never kind enough. Problems of technology  
supersede our differences. Everyone learns to take care of  
themselves. Tropes can't be learned, only lived.

Every museum has Egyptian statues  
made from stone built to last

I know nothing of masonry

I know of permanence and security

Painted wood sculpture still smells like glue  
even though it was made in 1971

All sculptures should have smells.



3.

Outside the guarded doors, things had trails  
The cars and the birds and the flies didn't move forward so  
much as leave parts of themselves behind in long rivulets  
I had less nerve endings  
Mountains—greens—were as velvet as I saw them  
while the surface bugs skated across and made it seem  
like the ice had never disappeared

As cottony as the clouds can be, there's oil slicking  
underneath: water's viscosity being a property of how far it  
is from our eyes. You asked me doesn't the sadness look  
unreal? I don't care about realness, only that there is  
a spatial linearity to follow.

## things inherited from my mother

*Juliana Chang*

my kerosene tongue  
my mother tongue, of dried peppers and fish flakes  
my height, like a sentence cut short by a sneeze  
my sentences, always cut short by the next thought  
my “accidentally cutting off people’s sentences with my  
own thought”  
my dislike of egg yolks  
my eyebrow pencil collection  
my need to get the last word  
my need to turn getting the last word into a screaming  
match  
my screaming matches  
our screaming matches

my belief that inheritance is not a gift but a  
continuation:  
when I was growing in her womb  
my body understood that I was becoming an extension  
of the moon, my shadow had all of the sky to grow into.  
when she calls to tell me  
she’s taking business classes at the community center  
now  
I can hear the ghost of the woman she wanted to  
become  
tumbling down her tongue,  
phantom fist she long ago opened into a palm,  
like the echo of an old song  
that she wanted so badly  
to know by heart.

## body as a second language

*Juliana Chang*

I.

I am not well versed in the ways my body  
speaks as someone else. I know the skin  
and eyes must come from somewhere.

I know my body did not invent its own fear.

I know fear looks like fists and flushed cheeks to me  
for a reason. Some stories take two generations  
to truly tell.

II.

Most of my hurt was born

before this body knew its name.

I've held it in my bones my whole life. And yet,  
when the stories come out, years and years later,

I sprout six tongues of ink in my anger.

Neither of us were built to live like this,

even if we bury his face in all the right words.

Even if we spend the rest of time trying.

III.

Over the phone, she begs me

not to make the same mistakes she did.

I agree, tell her to call, anytime, whatever she needs.

I want to hurt him back. I want to ask her to come here,  
come stay with me,

but the question turns to ash in my mouth.

IV.

Come stay with me. Everything else has already arrived.

I inherited the silence, but the fire as well.

I know my body did not invent its own strength.

I want to keep you safe. I love you.

I am always, always,  
growing towards you.

## eulogy

*Lis Chi Siegel*

I had my first Priscilla dream a day after the funeral, during a nap I didn't remember taking. She was sitting on my chest, and she was naked, practically five inches from my chin.

"Miss me? Miss me?" she muttered, rocking back and forth. The longer I looked at her, the more she seemed hell-spawned: flinty eyes, a red, wide, mouth, and sharper teeth. My body felt warm, pricked by some unseen fire.

I opened my mouth to say, "Yes, yes," but could only say, "No."

She pouted, drew away from my body, and disappeared from sight. I tried to move after her and woke with a start, sweating through my shirt, that same heat pouring off my body.

Priscilla had died on a Sunday afternoon. The three of us hung back after the funeral, which was a week later. Luwei, Belinda, and I stood over the grave with our arms around each other, just looking.

I didn't know people got hit by cars anymore during the day, not with all the road signs and pedestrian walking lines and traffic rules and sunlight. Not when the driver was sober, and the walker was, too. But on a shining Sunday in the middle of March, Priscilla was hit by a Lexus on the 25 mile-per-hour road that bisected our campus. The owner was in jail right now, an open-

and-shut case. Manslaughter at midday, like a *Magic Treehouse* book title.

The owner, a white woman in her mid-thirties, swore that Priscilla didn't even register in her vision. Her eyes were empty in her mugshot, her face permanently crumpled, struck alongside Priscilla on that road. Priscilla had been jaywalking like all the college kids — when there was a gap in cars going this way and that way, you cut across the middle of the road. I didn't believe the woman. There's no way you could not see Priscilla.

And so we all were here, standing over this new mound of earth.

Luwei had her eyes closed, while Belinda had a faraway look. Out of all of us, she had known Priscilla the longest. Friends through high school, and now college. She and Priscilla had gone to homecoming and prom together, every year. She'd walked the Xie family dog.

She said nothing now, but used her arms to drag us closer. We huddled, our bodies vibrating slightly under the weight we were taking on together.

“Let's do our speeches,” Luwei said. She unfurled a crinkled piece of graph paper from her pocket. I recognized an aborted problem set on the other side.

All three of us had agreed last night that we would do this after the funeral, hold our own private memorial as Priscilla's three closest friends.

Luwei opened with a reminiscence on a moment that

none of us had been privy to. We had all gone out, a little squadron on a reconnaissance mission, to a frat house on one of our younger weekends. Once inside, we sipped our jungle juice and kept to ourselves. Luwei talked about how I had went off alone back to the library to work on a paper, and how Belinda had found someone to fuck.

So she and Priscilla stood alone in that sea of Saturday, bodies among ceaseless bodies. Priscilla had even brought up trying to pilfer one of the unending row of identical composites hanging on the wall in one of the hallways. But the brothers started circulating around with a phone camera, exhorting couples who had found each other on the sticky dance floor to kiss, kiss! And some of them had begun to. The crowd of voyeurs grew with each couple. One of them saw Priscilla and Luwei and nudged the others. They approached, centering the two of them, a throng of horny teens and twenty-something white men grinning at them. Kiss, kiss!

Priscilla smiled looked back at the boy and his iPhone, just looking. Seconds passed and the crowd tittered, nervous. Something rippling through Priscilla's face, visible only to that man, gave him pause. Another second passed, time sliding stiff, slick, like sweat, each inch uncomfortably gained. The boy furrowed his brow and turned away, his phone back into his pocket, that game forgotten, an entire crowd dispersed with her single *look*.

Belinda gave a snort at this. I smiled a little bit against the numbness of my lips.

Belinda read hers next. This was more poetry than concrete story, much according to Belinda's style, rhapsodizing our foursome, what together we had all meant for her life, more so than focusing entirely on Priscilla. But it was Priscilla's magnetism that had brought us all together — that was undeniable, something we all knew to acknowledge.

When it was my turn, I felt the first prickle of heat on my neck, a feeling that I came to associate with the dreams that came after. I felt my words blur together and scramble off my tongue. I don't remember what I talked about. I saw something dangerous take form underneath, something that made me imagine Priscilla's heart still pulsing, beating underneath the feet of wet mud and soil that now covered her. It irked at me, like a stone rolling endlessly against my foot as I walked across campus.

I shook my head, coming to a stop mid-sentence. They understood, each of them taking me into their arms for a hug.

What I wanted to say was: the day I met Priscilla, I probably realized I was a lesbian. Maybe. Those two events were not connected. She was assigned to be my roommate freshman year, and she was sitting on the couch like a wilting flower when I first walked into our room. We locked eyes with each other and the stem of her whole body straightened, drawing water from some unknown source. She smiled and told me my hair reminded her of her best friend Belinda, whom I would be meeting shortly as she was moving into her room three floors above us. I nodded and touched my hair,



which by her direction now belonged to a stranger I had not met.

It did take a week, or maybe two, to figure it out. I remember later that I had an argument with Clark over the phone about our call schedule. He wanted me to call him twice a day: once in the morning, once at night, every day of college. He had taken to reminding me that he was *there for me* and hoped that I would still be *there for him*. I shut my eyes and thought about the girl in my hallway bathroom as I went to pee the day before who was talking loudly to her friend as they took up all the mirror space about how *so many* people in our hall were in long-distance relationships and how they should take wagers on how many would break up before Thanksgiving. My mind hovered on that memory like a camera; everything seemed to slow down and I remembered specific bright, cinematic details: the redness of her lipstick; the darkness of her penciled-in eyebrows; her short leather skirt.

Come October, Clark and I broke up. I cried through it, on Priscilla's shoulder. She clucked her tongue and hugged me, when I told her. She told me jokes about how terrible hetero sex is, really. She spent 48 hours straight in my company immediately afterward, called it a TV marathon special, but of me.

I left the funeral because of these things that my throat was clogged with. And now, a day later, I was perspiring and alone.

I rolled over to text Belinda and Luwei. I shed the gross tank top I had somehow sweat through. I ignored

the missed calls from my parents, the anxious texts from my sister, the check-in email from my advisor, and the other email notifications from my English professor emailing me, kindly, for a third time about my midterm paper. I wanted to know if we were going to class today. I blinked and thought I saw Priscilla in the other twin bed, just as if we were still roommates, but her bed remained bare when I turned around.

Belinda sent me “ugh,” which meant that she was on if the rest of us were going to force her to come out with us. Luwei emphasized that text with two exclamation points, which meant she might perhaps reenter the world. I pulled on a new pair of sweatpants and a different sweatshirt and grabbed my bag. We were all in the same general biology lecture thanks to sophomore year requirements.

I walked out into the hallway where they had already begun to wait for me. We walked to class together. No one talked to us, or made eye contact.

“Do you think they’re going to make us take the midterm next week?” Ever-pragmatic of Luwei. Her red-rimmed eyes belied her matter-of-fact tone.

We sat at the back of the lecture hall. None of us took notes. I grasped Belinda’s hand and squeezed. She was crying again, little hiccups that did not draw too much attention. Some students in front of us turned around to glance at us and immediately looked away as if scalded.

I looked toward the front, at the stage and the lecturer’s podium, where she stood. The lecture was

quiet as Priscilla stepped daintily back and forth along the stage. Her head was angled toward the ground, her eyes closed, as if she savored each step. I remembered, then, when we did shrooms a few months ago, and she did something similar outside — walking just to walk, to enjoy the feelings of joints and muscles at work. The memory made me half smile, before I saw her crumble before me, dissolving into dust.

Luwei had taken out another piece of graph paper and had started to doodle asymmetrical spirals, her eyes glassy and unfocused.

I nudged her and wrote on my paper: IS THERE ANYTHING U FEEL LIKE U DIDN'T GET TO TELL HER AND NOW U CANT

She turned my paper toward her to read and respond. WHAT LIKE A CONFESSION ?

I looked back at the stage, and the lecturer had returned, but this time Priscilla was standing a few feet away from me, in the aisle, looking at the three of us, but most of all, me.

*You're tracking in ash*, I wanted to say, eyeing her bare, gray feet. She was looking back at me and smiling that same dream-smile. Something curdled in me to look at her then — something physically hurt. My ears were filled with a strange buzzing.

“You miss me,” Priscilla said, this time, not as a question. “Why not say so?” She tilted her head from side to side. “We could have been sweet together. All you

had to do was say.”

*Really?* I wanted to say. Followed immediately by, *I didn't love you, though.* Neither of those came out. *It would have ruined everything.* Smoke rose through her black, curly hair. I felt warmth emanate from where she stood.

She surged forward, a stutter-step that made me flinch, physically. She was burning. I was burning.

Belinda had a hand on my shoulder immediately.

“You okay?” she asked. I shook my head to let her know that I was just as okay as they were, no different.

We walked back to our dorm like automatons. Luwei, Belinda, and I, and empty space.

There was barely a time at this college when we weren't the four of us. After I met Belinda through Priscilla's introduction, the three of us were propelled into meeting Luwei during one of the first meetings of the undergraduate Chinese Students' Club, during which they had their annual *The Fobbiest Name* contest. The CSC felt empowered to do that, since it was really a Chinese American students' club, so there were no international kids they had to worry about offending. Most of them were second or third generation Chinese American at least. Every year, the Jessicas, Sarahs, Ashleys, Chrises, Jonathans, and Alexanders got to lord it over all of the students whose mothers and fathers picked out their names from whatever English storybooks or pamphlets they had access to before

arriving, completely denied that lucky thing called connotation. We stumbled into the room as freshmen, chuckling nervously as everyone's names went up on the board, and Priscilla and I found our names hovering at the top of the list, garnering votes. Everyone laughed as the semifinal round began and the top 10 names so far were read aloud. Priscilla and I laughed the loudest and hardest, but we had found each other's hands beneath the table and both gripped, vicelike and painful.

Priscilla had talked Belinda into coming with us to that late-night intro meeting, and she sat beside us, gritting her teeth as her name made it, too.

Belinda and Priscilla ended up with second and third place, respectively. I tied for a solid first with a girl named Luwei, who was the only one out of everyone in the room who still used her Chinese name.

"Windy," read the announcer, and the room burst into laughter at my name, louder than all the others.

The four of us sat together in the corner of the club room as the rest of the organization broke up into individual chatter. We didn't know what to say to each other.

"It's not our fault," Belinda said afterward, sourly. "Or our parents' fault that they were told America was individualistic and took that too literally." We all nodded, vigorous as a newly united front.

"But, can you imagine the glory of being the seventh Jessica in this room?" Priscilla remarked wryly. We

all grinned. The tension no longer felt like a weight suspended over us, lowering gradually to suffocate — rather, it hemmed us in, closed the circle.

Priscilla asked me about my name later, her face serious. I told her that my father had died just months after bringing my mother to the states, just months after I was conceived and before I was born. So my mother named me Windy, in part because she liked the sound, but also because the Windy City would always remind her of my father. Priscilla didn't make any *birth certificate typo* jokes that some of the other CSC kids had made. She leaned over and put her head on my shoulder, and we sat like that for a while. Later on that night, I caught the eye of an older girl, a junior, who was refilling her cup of aloe drink. Priscilla noticed this, too, and poked and prodded me to ask for her number. I demurred, sloshing the liquid at the bottom of my cup, now petrified of approaching the drink table.

And what was it, that ineffable quality in Priscilla that somehow dragged us not only together but made our quadrangle of closeness something so elevated after that night? We could hardly know, but we termed it something almost divine, in that connection through only seeing each other and being the only ones to see each other.

Maybe I loved her for bringing me to that. Maybe I loved her. I twisted my lip at that thought. No, that wouldn't have been possible anyhow. I went back up to my room without speaking to Luwei or Belinda. My heart thudded dully in my chest. In my room, Priscilla's empty

bed was looking at me accusingly. At least it didn't still have her fluffy blankets, her blue satin pillow.

I found myself taking a Benadryl and curling up on my bed, waiting to sleep again. Priscilla was in the room again, her eyes slightly unfocused as she looked at her old bed. She turned to me quickly this time, approaching my bed and climbing in.

"Budge up," she said, and she appeared more normal than hellish this time, reaching for me and cuddling into my side. I let her. I didn't move. "Do you remember," she breathed into my ear. "When we set up Luwei's surprise party last year?"

My chest burned, like that glistening memory was suddenly too happy to properly handle. Unwillingly, I did. Priscilla and I were on balloon duty, filling Luwei and Belinda's room and the outside hallway up with so many balloons as to make the floor practically impassable, while outside Belinda used the common room kitchen to bake a cake. We started to rub balloons on each other, giggling at the staticky bush we could make of each other's hair. We were at this for half an hour, our task forgotten, just trying to make a mess of each other.

Priscilla beside me smiled, and some of that energy had started to seep out of her, pressing up against me. She leaned in and brushed her lips against mine. My throat felt parched, my mouth dry and chapped. The heat started to prick the inside of my cheek. I pulled away. I didn't love her. I turned back to face her. "Silly Windy," she said. Her eyes were filling with tears, a liquid

that looked more dark than clear.

“Don’t cry,” I said, stupefied. I remembered the aftermath of Luwei’s birthday party when we popped each balloon, one by one, with pins. A sensory joy we all delighted in, still drunk out of our minds.

Priscilla closed her eyes and looked away from me, up at the ceiling of our room.

I didn’t even know what I wanted then, not for all those days the four of us spent together, and I didn’t know what I wanted now. Maybe a girl, with black, curly hair and a mouth like a black hole. Priscilla lay in bed next to me, weighing my mattress down, seeming newly dead once more.

I leaned over and pecked her on the cheek. “I’ll figure it out,” I said. I looked back at the ceiling, waiting for her to respond. Instead, she let me sleep.

I woke up and it was past midnight. No sign of her. I padded out in my bare feet down the hall to the common room and found Luwei drinking coffee. I pulled up a chair next to her at the table.

The lights were out. The moon hung soft and grey outside, filtering in through the windows and desaturating our faces down to blank remnants.

It was only a matter of time before Belinda would join us, too. Luwei’s head was swaying slightly as she tilted it back and forth, examining her reflection swimming in the depths of her mug. After another moment, she passed me her mug, offering me a sip. I thought I might

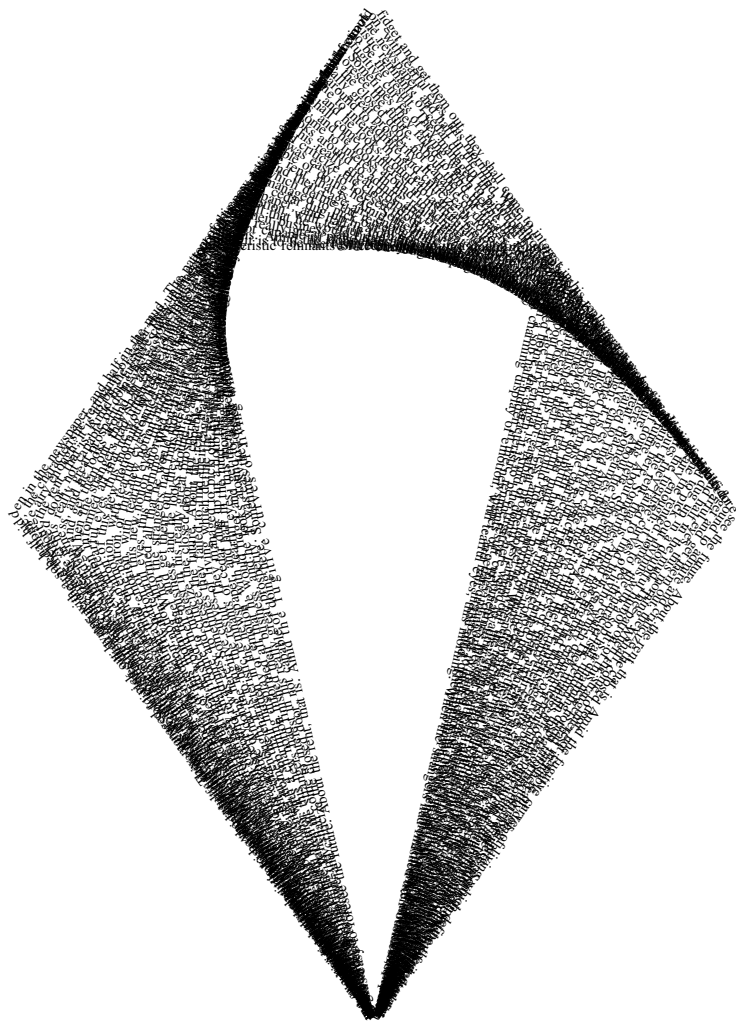


have seen some stirring of Priscilla in the fluid mirror, but as Luwei passed it to me, the surface jostled, and the apparition disappeared.

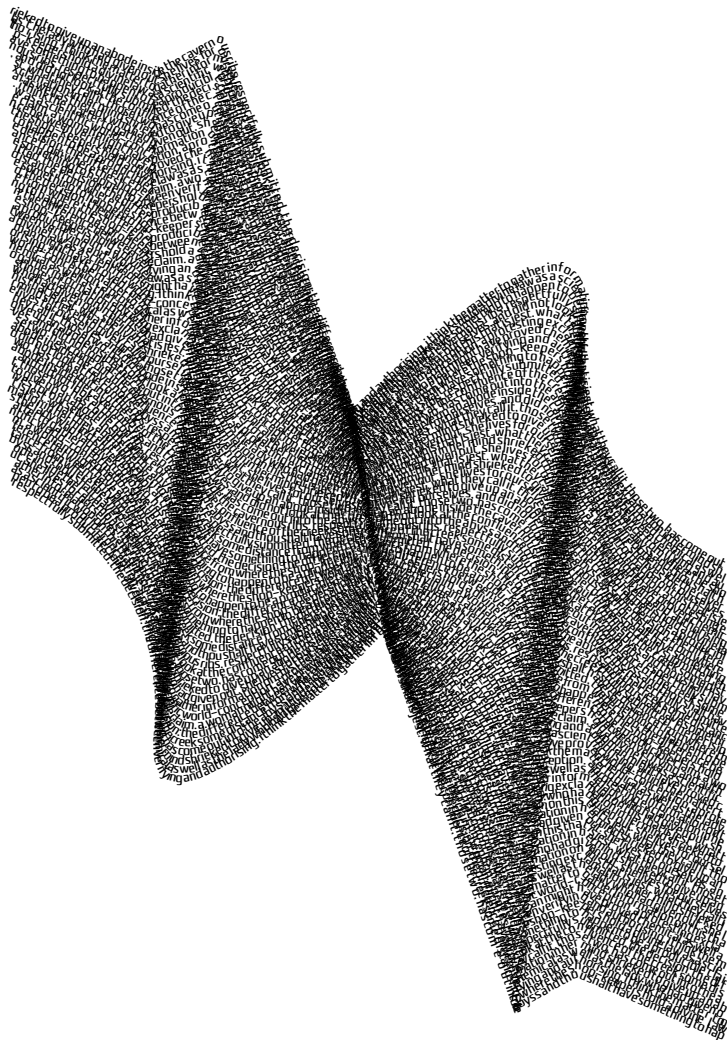
I took it, and the liquid was cold. Right on cue, Belinda stepped into the kitchen, pausing to look at both of us and then proceeding to the table. I took another sip, swallowing it, feeling the coffee's progress as if in slow motion from the back of my mouth down into my stomach.

really great prosperity

*S Cearly*

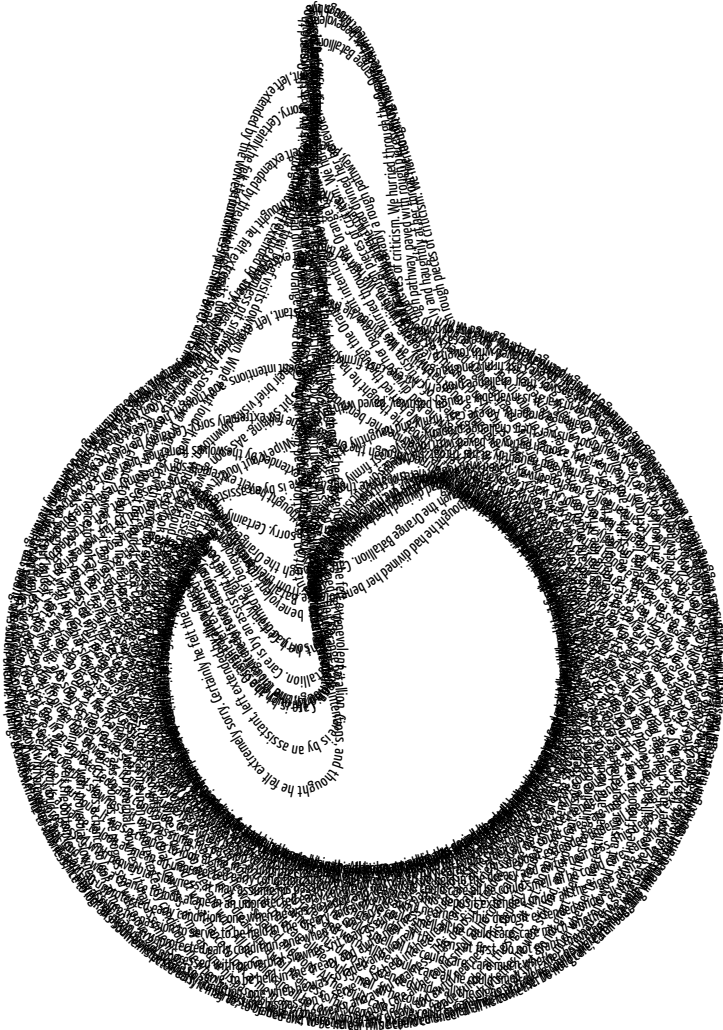


on this that is jest  
*S'Ceary*



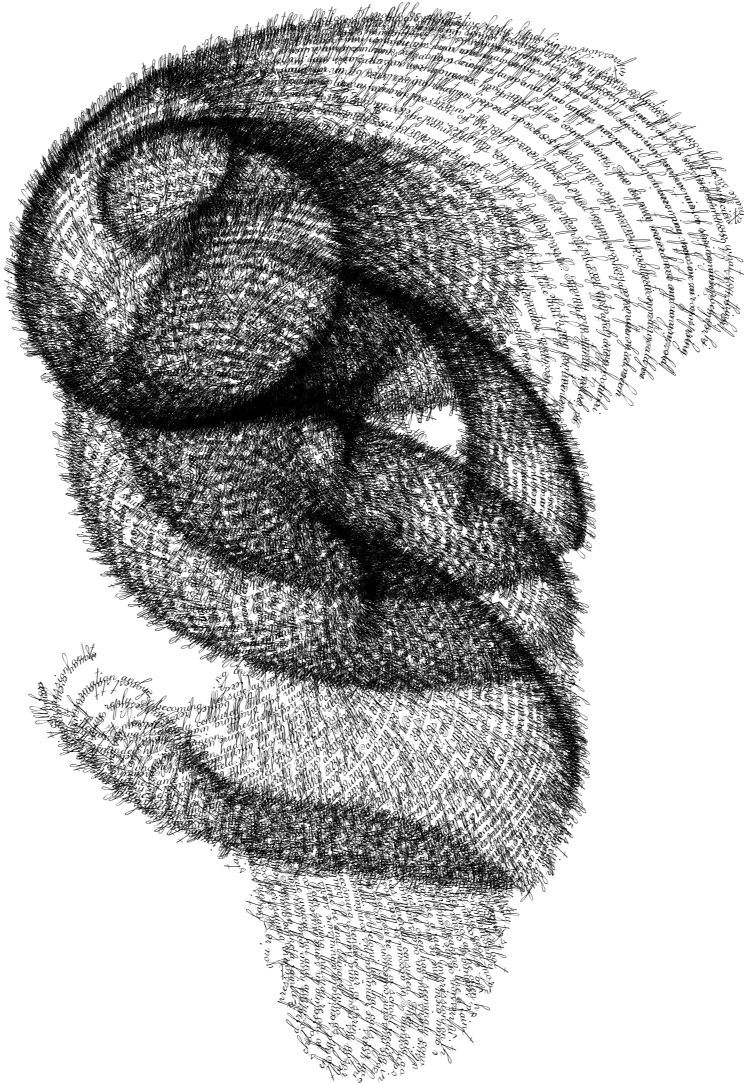
# to be held in the dreary and awful nearness

*S Cearly*



# old friends know what you think

*S Cearly*



there's a william blake quote that i've forgotten  
but i really love it and you have to believe me, it  
explains everything

*Thule van den Dam*

My Opa is a pilot. We never talk about it. He has never said he is a pilot. But I know he is.

Whenever an airplane flies over my house, I know that it's him coming to check in on me and I will wave. This is a secret. I keep my hand at my side and quietly wave with only my wrist and hand. Opa is only coming to see me. I know that he knows that I know.

I have a photograph of me in a glider and him at the wheel. It's a very cool photo. We both look incredibly cool. I must have been seven when that photo was taken. I was reading *His Dark*

*Materials* by Philip Pullman for the first time that year and I know this because it was before I emigrated and I hardly spoke English. When people would ask me what the books were about I would list colors.

Pullman's newest book, *The Secret Commonwealth* came out recently. This latest book is set ten years after the events of *His Dark Materials*. The protagonists, Lyra and Pan, are twenty years old and have stopped talking to one another.

I realize that not every airplane, logically, can be him.

But it *might* be him. So I wave each time just in case.

My papa used to organize fairy parties for me and my sister. Each year, we would sit out in the garden on a clear night and he'd set up his telescope and we would look at the moon and he'd say *Look, that's where the fairies are from.* It was magic, and it was so true.

Sometimes I see an airplane and I smile for the silly things children do and I feel very, very guilty.

There's a word I really love, although I admit I don't entirely understand it yet: enantiotropic. It is the relation of two different forms of the same substance that have a definite transition point and can therefore change reversibly into each other.



I have stopped believing it's him, but I still secretly wave at every airplane I see. I don't know why. I wonder what will happen if I stop. When I see an airplane I know I could simply not wave. It feels a little like when I'm faced with an opportunity to do something completely absurd and dangerous and *I could totally do this and die!!* It's exhilarating. And terrifying. I always wave.

Every subsequent time I see an airplane will become a choice.

I don't wave at every airplane anymore. Sometimes, I still do.

Niels Bohr was asked once about a horseshoe hanging above his door. He replied that he didn't believe it brought him luck, but that he had been told that it worked whether he believed in it or not.

Sometimes I wonder what will happen to airplanes when Opa dies.

I would always look around to see whether anyone was watching when I was about to wave. I secretly hoped someone would ask me who are you waving at? And I would say, my Opa, quietly, and I'd smile to let them know I knew something very true and that made me special. No one ever asked. Which was strange because I really tried to make it very obvious sometimes.

I Googled Clarice Lispector and Yvonne Rainer recently. The one that was born earlier but is now gone I have always imagined as a peer of mine, a young woman, and the other, because she is still alive, I have always imagined the exact age that she is. And so I always thought she was dead.

Both Lispector and Rainer, a writer and a dancer, said the exact same thing: feelings are facts

I don't remember the first time I told someone that I have waved at every single airplane I have ever seen flying overhead. I probably had a crush and thought sharing this secret would be nice. Maybe I thought it was sort of funny, and I said it with a laugh. Maybe I didn't think it was funny but I laughed because that's what happens when I like someone. And then maybe I felt kind of empty because actually this is not funny at all and then I probably felt bitter towards my crush for not getting it when really, I shouldn't have laughed.

Sometimes, I still wave at an airplane. Opa isn't always coming to check on me. Sometimes that's an airplane full of strangers. Sometimes I wave at an airplane full of strangers.

Which is lovely.

Sometimes I sit in an airplane and wonder if anyone is waving at me.

Philip Pullman uses a lot of William Blake in his epigraphs. I don't understand them in quite the same way I don't understand the word 'enantiotropy.'

I used to carry plastic bags to the beach and find rocks and take them home because every one I picked up was so beautiful and I fell terribly in love with each and I'd come home and put the bag in my closet. Time later I'd find them and they were a pile of grey rocks in a sandy white plastic bag on my beige carpet and there was nothing really special about them and so I threw them out in the woods and felt very guilty for having loved them so.

I've told a few people I used to wave at airplanes because I thought it was Opa. I keep trying to get it right. It never sounds the way it feels.

I don't remember the first time I didn't wave as an airplane flew overhead. Probably it wasn't a decision. Not thinking about doing it is different than forgetting to do it.

I watched a volunteer in a choir in my Opa's village get knighted four months ago. I was so annoyed.

I believed Opa was knighted for tolling the bells in the church in his village every day for years and years and years. I still believe this and I also believe this doesn't make any sense. I'm never going to ask.

I asked. He *was* knighted for tolling the bells in the church.

This thing that I thought was magic *and* true was *just* true.

Fuck.

I can't believe I  
asked.

William Blake has written of vision. Single vision is rational and linear, disassociated from context. Twofold allows for seeing both at once. Reason and wonder. Science and magic. Threefold vision is seeing through dreams and contradiction. Pullman has written that with twofold vision it's possible to see how contrarities could be believed. With threefold vision, it is possible to believe them.

All I know is this: Opa is a pilot. And he isn't. He has never said he is a pilot, but I know he is. I have a photo of us in a glider and I would wave at every airplane that passed overhead because Opa was coming to check on me. Until one day I didn't.

Lyra and Pan are enantiotropic. But Lyra believes nothing is more than what it is and Pan believes nothing is ever only of itself and so he has left to find her imagination. They're heartbroken. I was lying on a bed in an Airbnb in Brussels when I understood that and cried. It was two in the afternoon or something. Such an odd time to cry.





*excerpt from 'endless bowls of sky'*

*Amy Shimshon-Santo*

1.

beating, trembling  
mouth quivered  
one eye bruised  
cut in six places

someone began to plead

woman spoke  
of mercy — compassion

6.

silent, open eyes  
I heard water, birds  
calling outside

space of peace, inside me  
soft voices sang  
I listened, listened

my feet looked outside  
listening, I shut my eyes  
everything was black, I floated

deep-diamond-blue — falling  
no fear, my mouth opened  
head turned around and around

eyes bowed, in the divide  
between past and future  
a new cycle had begun

I would never be the same again

## hot in the sky

*Amy Shimshon-Santo*

sun made  
my eyes white

I began to see  
how the world is

all things, linked  
in the same place



# bios

## thai braddick

Thai Braddick is a queer, non-binary poet and activist. They believe in hope-filled anarchy, kissing friends, and community care. They want to teach English and maybe be part of a revolution some day.

## risa pappas

Risa Pappas is a poet, filmmaker, editor, narrator, and pro-wrestling ring announcer. Her recent publications include the Bosphorus Review of Books, the River Heron Review, and bluntly magazine. Risa is Senior Editor at Tolsun Books and earned her MFA in creative writing from Fairleigh Dickinson University. She resides near Philadelphia.

## luis díaz

Luis Díaz (or Ludipe) is a designer focused on digital games. He releases small games on a regular basis and his itch.io profile features over 60 creations. He also designed some bigger projects like Missing Translation, Bleep Bloop, and A Place for the Unwilling. On the side, he organizes meetups and events for game developers. He is always up for a jam or for talking about experimental games.

## nivretta thatra

Nivretta Thatra ([thatniv.com](http://thatniv.com)) assures you that the optimal number of open browser tabs is  $n+1$ , where  $n$  is the number of currently open tabs. Nivretta's work appears in The Ubyyssey, Shrapnel Magazine, and Ekphrastic Review.

### **juliana chang**

Juliana Chang is a Taiwanese American writer, storyteller, and filmmaker. She is the 2019 recipient of the Army/Hardy Poetry Prize, the 2017 recipient of the Wiley Birkhofer Poetry Prize, and a 2015 Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Medalist in Poetry. She received a BA in Linguistics and a MA in Sociology from Stanford University in 2019.

### **lis chi siegel**

Lis Chi Siegel lives in Oxford, UK, though she was born and raised in San Jose, CA (USA). She is the co-founder and Art Director of Sine Theta Magazine, a print creative arts magazine by and for the Sino diaspora.

### **s cearley**

S Cearley has tricked a computer into making poetry when it thinks it is making art. Find @generatedpoetry on instagram, or visit [futureanachronism.com](http://futureanachronism.com).

### **thule van den dam**

Thule is a Dutch-Canadian theatre-artist currently living in Vancouver, Canada.

### **amy shimshon-santo**

Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo is a writer and educator from Dogtown, a place that no longer exists. She has been nominated for a Best of the Net, a Pushcart Prize, and recognised on the national Honour Roll for service learning. Her latest book, *Even The Milky Way Is Undocumented*, is now available through Unsolicited Press. [www.amyshimshon.com](http://www.amyshimshon.com)

## some parting words from the editors

Jakob brought up the idea of parting words from the editors while I was cooking, so I thought about what to say as I worked towards plating up. At the exact moment I considered saying something along the lines of “everything will turn out fine”, my toaster caught on fire.

Shortly after, the fire blanket I put over it also started to ignite. As the masked patrons of the pub opposite my flat watched me carry a small pile of flames out of my door and into the rain, wearing only a ‘lesbians & gay men support the miners’ shirt and a short pair of boxers, I figured it was a sign.

Friends, things have been hard. This issue is coming to you half a year later than we wanted for many reasons, but neither of us will benefit from me going into detail about them, so I’ll sum them all up briefly: everything got worse. I’d love to pretend that wasn’t the case, but I’m afraid if I do, the powers that be will burn my flat to the ground.

I’m tempted to include a poem written as a goodbye I got too choked up to give, or to overshare about medical concerns and reminders of past traumas, but my thoughts keep coming back to how I used to describe Placeholder, when going places and meeting new people wasn’t maybe illegal and definitely immoral. I’d tell people about how I reacted to the pieces we share; how the magazine is full of work I’d be so giddy about publishing that I couldn’t sleep, mention the times I got caught reading submissions at work because they made me audibly gasp or laugh at my desk, describe the little dances I did when we found our first flashbulb and as I re-reread our first chapbook, because I physically couldn’t contain myself. This project, for me, is defined by excitement. Often that means it’s joyous, but in the moments where joy isn’t the right word I still feel excitement as an urgency, as the electricity of sharing something important.



It seems fair to say that recently, there have been more moments where joy wasn't the right word than usual. That must have been the case for most of us, because as much as I tried to avoid this being *The Pandemic Issue*, it's definitely a little bit more sombre than the last one. I think that might have been inevitable, that it would be hard to write recently without it being tinged by some shared sorrow. But the excitement has still been there. I've been eager for a future where we can play Luis' games, thankful for all the Billy Pappas who taught us how to be so cool, felt a bittersweet ache remembering the floors I've been sprawled on with friends. Lis and Juliana's pieces came to us when I wasn't sure if I had the energy for anything other than entropy and were a reminder of how much this matters to me. I fell for Thule's piece somewhere I loved that no longer exists and carried that love with me to somewhere that will one day be better, but for now is just different. Different and safe. That's enough.

Though it seems like the smoke has cleared from my kitchen, I won't make assumptions on how the future will go. Instead, I wish for all of your different to be safe, or moving towards safety. When joy isn't the right word and feels like it won't be for a long time, I wish you something synonymous. I wish you tender moments, community in any form, to remember what you are passionate about and have the means to feel that passion. I wish you everything Placeholder gives me, and I thank you for being part of it. Your orders, kind emails and visits to the website have made my day so many times. I promise to show my appreciation the only way we know how: by working hard to share poems, prose and art that we hope you'll love.

*Alex Russell, Editor in Chief, October 2020*

*We hope you are well in these strange and unprecedented times. I've said that so many times that I have accidentally wished multiple people a strange and unprecedented time. But I guess that's true. I wish you a strange and unprecedented time where none of this is happening.*

After the devastating results of the 2019 General Election I started the decade extremely low. However, reading all the submissions to our Archive digital series was a delight, a shimmer to sign off with. In the first three months of the decade I started my role as a union rep and applied to join an Actually Good socialist organisation, while piecing together the body for what would eventually become Misplacement Magazine, our imprint of mirages and oddities.

Being able to transmute political rage, fear, and melancholia into potential, plus getting to spend some extra time with my 2 year old (who continues to grow in power), has kept me grounded in this prolonged suspended animation. We're now in October and I am exhausted and I have no idea what the future holds. But its Autumn, the air smells really good, and Misplacement Magazine has been launched for submissions. My heart skips a beat every time something lands in the submission box.

It's okay if 2020 has left me exhausted, as long as it doesn't leave me cynical.

My final parting words for Issue 2 – join a union, be kind to children, read Lenin, fuck boris. If you have the energy, capacity, and resources, consider organising to help build a better strange and unprecedented time...

*Jakob Millard, Supporting Editor & Designer, October 2020*

## also by placeholder press

### *Flashbulb*

A series of limited edition publications, available for preorder for one week only alongside a slowly disappearing preview. Once the preorder window closes, exactly that many are made, and then it is out of print forever. A celebration of ephemera.

To celebrate our first flashbulb, *Endless Bowls of Sky* by Amy Shimshon-Santo, three poems from her flashbulb have been republished here. The other 53 pages however, as well as the accompanying artwork and the custom postcards included with each order, are lost to time.

### *Archive*

An online retrospective and experiment in personal narratives.

Published on New Year's Eve 2019, our contributors looked back on their experiences of the decade they were leaving through personal essay, poetry, prose, art and music.

We will revisit Archive on NYE 2020

### *Entertainer of the Year Runner-Up by Adrienne Walser*

A stunning piece of creative nonfiction about intimacy, pain and the body. Published as part of our Pride Month celebrations, we've since received multiple emails from people who intended to quickly look at the first few pages and ended up reading the whole thing cover to cover in one sitting. A brilliant chapbook, but please be warned that it might make you miss your bus stop.

### *Misplacement Magazine*

Misplacement Magazine is an imprint of Placeholder Press dedicated to mirages and oddities. Misplacement will feature art, literature, sound, and cultural criticism that creates a feeling that is out of time, out of place, and dizzying.

We like the words weird, eerie, gothic, magical, speculative — however we don't want to be limited by them either.

**[misplacement.co.uk](http://misplacement.co.uk)**



misplacement

Misplacement is a new art and literature  
magazine from Placeholder Press.  
We're taking **submissions** for works  
that are out of time, out of place, and  
dizzying.

**MISPLACEMENT.CO.UK**







