



May 3rd 2020

**QUARANTINE
ISSUE 6**

*~Profound
Experience Of
Staying At Home*



~PROFOUND EXPERIENCE OF STAYING AT HOME
A QUARANZINE
MAY 3rd, 2020
ISSUE 6



Edited by Lucy K Shaw
First Edition
May 3rd, 2020

Cover by **Oscar d'Artois**
(quarantined in Yorkshire, England)

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Hi everyone,

Something interesting happened this week. People started sending me poems. Like, almost exclusively poems. We have now reached the poetics stage of the pandemic. Prose is no longer viable. You heard it here first.

I hope you are all doing okay.

I feel like people have started to think about the future a little bit. Did you notice that too? Somebody... asked me what my plans are... ?

Well, I don't have any, I guess, except to... make a new magazine every week.

Did you expect we would make it to six issues? I don't think I thought about it.

And I think... that's how I'll go on,

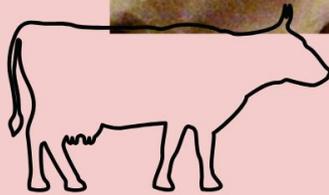
I hope you like this one.

I'm really happy you're here.

Stay Safe.

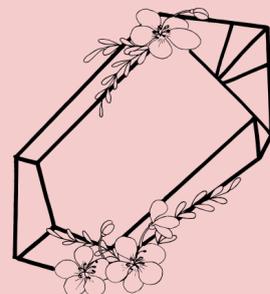
Lucy

Three Poems by Rachel Kass



19th century vibes

pink quartz will save us all
if only we all held it if only
we de-industrialize, churn butter,
gruel for supper, become a welder, a corset maker, a pharmacist with mortar, pestle,
holding his head in a slouch, telling us, spend time with the cows
learn their language, graze among them, stare where they stare.
burn all your leggings and
replace them with some goddam pantaloons
they're good for you



Emily Dickinson, Give me a Sign

my next hundred
poems
will be
crumpled
in a
small
garbage can
i will
carry it
around,
it
is
a
manuscript



April-ish

this is the journal I am keeping during this Historic Time.
my thoughts will surely manifest as projected wishes, a kind of grasping for control.

wasteful is the day we turn off the television. i floss - i stand up every three hours - i spiral
until i can't see the floor, i change into different pajamas, sip a nalgene, lead-laden green
tea, i'm a gremlin and
you're rumpelstiltskin
our house is dusted over
with bedbugs, hoarded minestrone soup and orange juice that speaks-
"you will probably forget to journal during this Historic Time."





**Ghost learning to cook a new recipe:
'Whatever was left at the store' stew**

Sarah Tue-Fee

Don't Call Me Mrs Dalloway

Lucy K Shaw

In this past week, I have hosted three events on Zoom and, for some reason, I feel like telling you about them.

#1

The first one was my Nana's Celebration Of Life, last Sunday.

She died six days before her ninetieth birthday, so it was easy to decide when to have this one. I had originally suggested it hoping that she would still be alive, and that we could have included her, but she didn't make it. Still, I convinced my mum to go ahead with it. She was reluctant because she didn't think everyone in the family would be able to figure out how to get onto Zoom. But after a socially distanced iPad delivery and a few practice sessions with my aunt leading up to it, (talking her through which buttons to press on the iPad, while facetimeing her on the phone), we had everyone ready.

My sister and I wrote a version of our Nana's life story (1,000 words), then she turned it into a presentation with a lot of photos. We decided to write it chronologically, then play a video made up of hundreds of photos with some happy songs (I chose Jackie Wilson's *Your Love Keeps Lifting Me Higher*), and then we included some of our own reflections on her life after that. We rehearsed the script and mastered the Zoom audio settings. I made an invitation and we texted it to everybody.

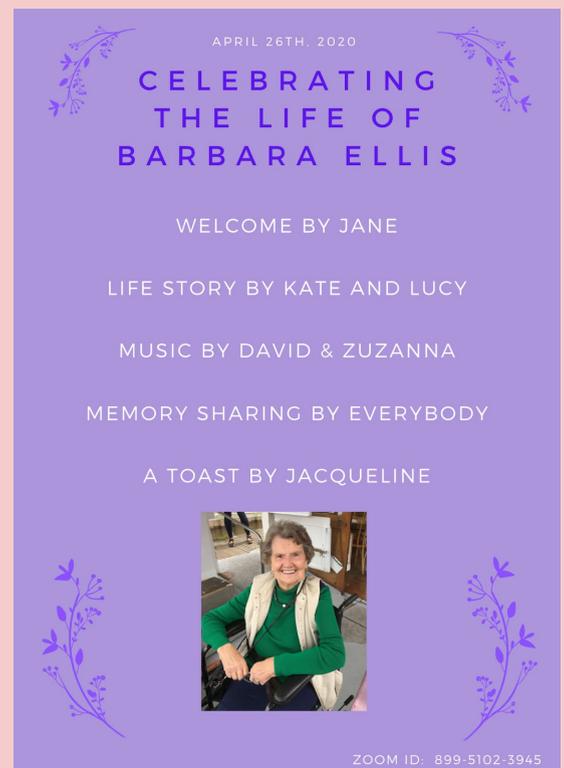
I guess I'm telling you this in case you have to do something like this at short notice. A guide would have been helpful.

We asked our cousin and his wife, who happen to be in the same orchestra, to play the song Nana asked us to listen to when we remember her. They promptly prepared an arrangement.

We imagined that they would play it live, but they didn't think that the sound quality would be high enough on Zoom, so they made a video and posted it to YouTube. We all clicked on the link at the same time, I muted everybody, and we listened together.

The celebration featured 25 family members (including two babies), in four countries, and I think it lasted just over an hour.

Oh wait, 26, because we called my other Grandma on facetime, and Chris was in charge of 'grandma cam', directing the camera towards wherever the action was happening. (We gave her an old iPad that Only has FaceTime on it, right before the lockdown started. There was no way we could get her set up on Zoom over the phone, but this worked pretty well anyway, she was happy to be included.)



We got dressed up like we were going to a party, drank champagne and ate cake. We rearranged the furniture to ensure the sympathy flowers were in full view.

We told stories, and shared memories. People I hadn't seen in years expressed the same emotions I felt. We cheered to her life. We laughed and cried.

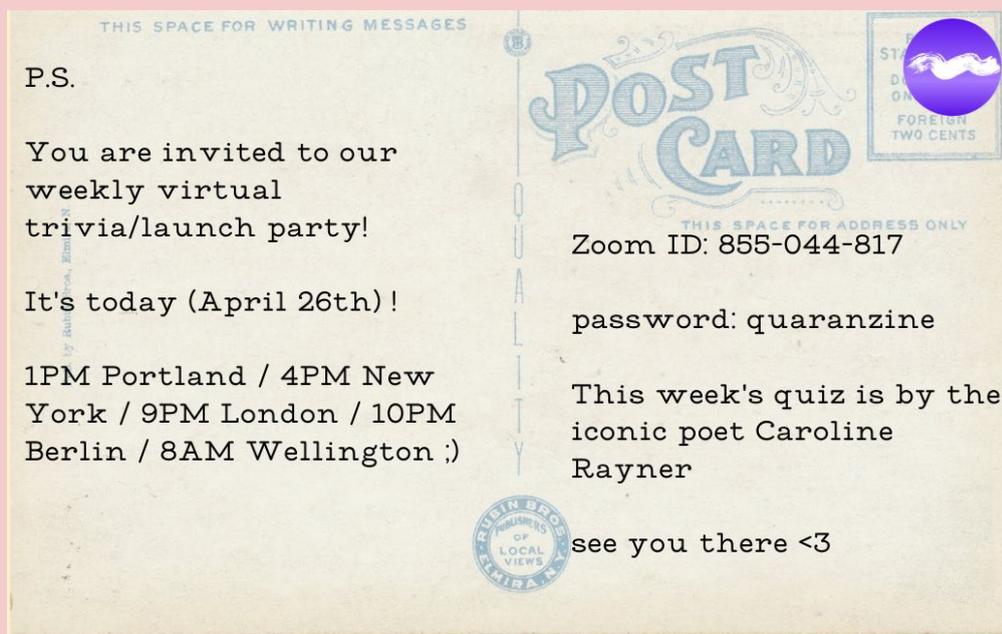
Then when it was over, once the meeting had ended, they were all gone. We moved the furniture back. I guess that was kind of nice, in a way.

The reviews were positive. People enjoyed it. The family who were far away said they needed *something* and we had this. In the days immediately following her death, it was helpful to have a happy occasion to focus on. Something productive to do. It actually felt like having a writer in the family was... useful.

Her real funeral took place a few days later. Yesterday, as I'm writing this. 10 people were allowed to attend. And it lasted for 10 minutes. In a gazebo outside of a crematorium. Chairs 2 metres apart.

You need more than that, to commemorate a life. I think we still need more. But this was a start.

#2



The ~Profound Experience Quiz

Okay well I don't know if this one really counts because we have been doing this every week. I even have the recurring meeting set up on my Zoom account for the same time every Sunday.

Basically when I had the idea to do a quarantine magazine... I told Sarah about it and she said it sounded fun... then I told Chris about it and he said it seemed like a nice idea... then I mentioned it to Crook and May-Lan on a houseparty call – this was the same day that lockdown was officially announced in the UK – and they seemed excited.

During the course of that conversation, I decided that the first issue of the Quaranzine would come out the following Sunday. It was Monday at the time. And we decided that we would have some kind of ‘release party’... but we didn’t really plan any further than that...

The first ‘party’ was fun but it had no objective, and it felt kind of stressful, for me, trying to lead a conversation with a bunch of people who didn’t know each other and could only talk one at a time. Still, everything was new back then and we were learning how to navigate this kind of experience. We talked for ages and everybody asked each other about how they were doing and what they were going through. It was nice. People were like, let’s do this again next week!

But that seemed stressful. So, at some point I decided that I would write a quiz... or trivia as some people call it... 30 questions in 3 rounds on literature, languages and the planet Earth...

Then the next week Chris wrote the quiz... and then Crook... and then last week, Caroline...

Her questions were on nature, astrology and literature... For that last round she read out lines from books and we had to name the author and the title.

Emma Ensley, cover artist from issue 2, essay writer from issue 4, has won the quiz for the last two weeks....

Is there anything she can’t do?!

Anyway, I just wanted to tell you that if you’ve been thinking about coming to the quiz, then you should come. It’s fun and funny and we even learn things. It lasts about an hour and now that there’s a routine, (and other people have been doing all the work), I always leave feeling nourished and happy. So I highly recommend.....

Is this an advert?

This week’s quiz is by New Zealand poet, Stacey Teague. She’s getting up early on Monday morning, her time, to do this so I’m very excited. It’s going to be fun. Come and hang out :)

1PM PST / 4PM EST / 9PM UK / 10PM EUR
Every Sunday.

#3

10 Minute Surprise Birthday Party

What with all the grieving and mourning going on, I needed to do something to cheer us up. It was my husband’s birthday on Wednesday, and although a 31st birthday is a fairly innocuous occasion, we would usually have done *something*, probably travelled somewhere. Last year we were in Santorini. This year, we enjoyed a walk in the rain.

APRIL 29TH WEDNESDAY

A MINI PARTY TO CELEBRATE CHRIS'S 31ST BIRTHDAY!

10 MINUTE SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY

BYO CAKE | BYO COCKTAIL

ZOOM ID: 816-9944-0650 PASSWORD: 31

1PM PST / 4PM EST / 9PM UK / 10PM EUR

I actually organised an early surprise birthday party for him last year, in New York, so I thought this time I could catch him off guard. I asked the same friends, my accomplices, to casually suggest a Zoom happy hour drink with them. And then I emailed his other friends and family and invited them all to join the call at a specific time.

However, we have all, by now, heard of nightmare Zoom ‘party’ situations, getting stuck in ‘rooms’ with people we don’t know... having no excuse to leave.

So I decided to make the party ten minutes long.

Everyone appeared, he was surprised, my sister brought a cake in, we all sung happy birthday, and joyeux anniversaire, and then we played a game of musical statues.

I asked one friend to DJ and another to judge and then we all danced to some of his favourite songs for a few minutes.

I didn’t tell anybody about this part so I expected them to maybe shuffle a little bit, but instead, people got up and DANCED. It was amazing. There were two screens full of people so we kept switching back and forth to see everybody. I felt elated throughout and for a long time afterwards. Almost like I had been to a real party.

I highly recommend trying this out if you have any kind of occasion coming up. We could never have gotten all of those people in the same room in any other way.



So that was my week.

And now I’m really tired!

Where's The Dog?

Brooke Perkins

I put on mascara to take a walk. After hours of effort my cat finally fit his fat body through the cracked window, only to sit outside my door. Who knows why I'm tired. Too much stuff is still going on, even though my dad is dying. Liza took her fat bike out the other day and I tagged along, eating dust as we traveled by logging road. I should remember more, and better. Where did I put the keys? What year was Beirut? What are Deborah Birx's credentials again? When did my dad and his hairdresser ex-girlfriend break up? Liza is moving back east soon, but when is soon, now? She traded bikes with me when the terrain got too rough—I couldn't handle it. What's a good recipe for gluten-free sourdough? My cat cries suddenly, because he realizes he is lonely. I am constantly trying to picture my mind at twenty-three. I've had two guitars in my life, both from my dad. It doesn't matter whether they sound good—I'm afraid to replace them. Liza tells me she's tired of waiting to do the things she truly wants to do. It's been three years since she said "it's time for a dog." But where's the dog? I want to have a child, or maybe not, but it's not the same thing to name a dog after your dead dad. I need to get a hold of time, somehow. "Did you remember to call unemployment?" I put a bowl of water on the ground. I curl my body. "The weather is warm here, is it warm there?" Mandatory temperature-taking. I wonder about the future, but not really. "I can't get through anyway." My phone is a plague. Dad says his therapist, Mary, told him not to "should." He has a special room in his mind for all of his dead marine friends. The room is round, and there's beer, and he can explain things to these dead men, like why he's still alive, and how he misses them. I text a woman from my old group therapy about her cat, Sprinkles, who was eaten by coyotes (assumed). "I'm so, so sorry. I know you loved her." Maybe I can distract myself for long enough. Biking is a great way to socially distance. I don't use Facebook, but the ex-girlfriend/hairdresser has messaged me, like everything sad belongs to her. I go for a run. I compose three letters in my head: one to Bernie, one to Dad, one to my husband. Why are they all slightly apologetic? I get home, and open Facebook. I once dated a farmer named Pickle—remember? *Self Reliance* means something new each time. Dad visited our apartment in Vermont, barely fit through the door, head against ceiling. "We're having stew again." He fell asleep sitting up on the couch, and I remember having so many memories of the same thing. So many memories that I had to let some go.





Oscar d'Artois

Milk and Medusa

Michael Handrick



When she is out for her daily run, I sit in the corridor facing the front door hoping someone will approach so I can whisper secrets through the letterbox. But no one visits, no one sends letters anymore, and who would believe me? The cream hasn't helped the bruise that has crawled across my cheek like lichen. As she locks the door behind her, she tells me it still isn't safe for me outside and hands me milk and peonies. Lockdown, locked in. While she showers, I tear up some petals and drop them out the window, and hope someone will follow the trail to take me home.

The balcony doors are open, and the wind is warm. The bowl is still on the table and flies flit into the milk's surface. She had ripped off the crusts and dipped the bread in it. Fed me piece by piece. I

wincing every time I chewed. The white dripped down my lips. White as the moon, red as blood. Like the womb that made me, the breast that fed me. The same colours I won't be able to give.

She takes my hand, presses it against hers and closes our fingers together. Strangely, this act seems the most intimate. Not the time she first kissed me, on an unfinished bridge in Avignon with the Mistral blowing around us, and the lingering taste of cherry ChapStick. Not the time she held me, as I cried, and coiled my hair to form little golden whirlpools across my scalp. Not the time she held ice against my cheek the first time it happened.

Our skin sticks together, bodies curled like one big question mark. The question mark that formed whenever we were seen on the street together. It was in this room where that question was solved. Where my body made sense. Outside, it is an alternative fact. Inside, that question mark now grows bigger.

The silence between us deepens, the mint on her breath fades, the milk on mine sours. I trace the snakes on her Medusa tattoo with my finger and wonder when it will calcify my body.



**Ghost who never left the house before lockdown
suddenly has the urge to go on an adventure.**

Sarah Tue-Fee

TIGERS

Emily Kendal Frey

My personal peak is now
I'm wearing a new costume
That reveals my old
Invisibilities
No one is paying attention
Beyond what's immediately
Relevant and the question
Of what that is
Has already dried
And lifted out into the ether
Scattered its dust
The way meaning does
I sit on the porch
And watch the dogwood tree
Time passes in the bodies
Of my enemies
Like the neighborhood restaurant
With the rotating name
Teriyaki House
Donut House

Grandmother's House

The land is haunted

So nothing sticks

My grandmothers navigated their learned aloofness

Differently, in both

A reluctant inhabitation

Of their assigned gender

I'm grateful to this

Green couch and how

It doesn't need me to be anything



We'll Try Again Tomorrow

for my Bard Microcollege Holyoke students

Ann Ward

Today

I bake bread poorly and spray paint furniture bright colors

I try nostalgia but it's too painful

to think of my young body

when I learned to love it again

now I beg my toddler not to dump my contact lenses on the floor

he says, "Mama, it will be easier if you don't look"

I stare at my students' faces on the screen

I have nothing to say except,

"I just want to stare at all of you,"

I promise we will do better –

that I'll drop donuts on their doorsteps

that somehow

next week

we'll be okay

we'll have some fun

we'll figure it out –

soon, okay?



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Lapsed Librarian

Matt Nelson

At least once every other week I FaceTime my brother in Seattle while we simultaneously watch a movie from our beds. For the most part, I wear the shirt du jour and these wonderful peach colored sweat pants my partner gifted me that one could, depending on their outlook, declare a size too big. These sweats offer though, in their excess, the comfort of total envelopment. I'm not a small person, but I think I could safely tuck my feet into the elastic ankles and still stand flat footed without the waist of the sweats bobbing down an inch. I'm finding I seek comfort in my clothing more so than I used to, and I wonder if friends past would recognize me. Does that make sense? Can you see the scenario? Who needs pants when we Zoom? Well anyway, imagine me (or anyone really) in bed watching *Jay and Silent Bob The Reboot*. How did we get here? My brother and I usually try to sync a horror flick, but after a failed attempt at a cursed-movies documentary, we returned, yet again, to Smith and Mewes. *Clerks* came out in '94. The end of a century seems so decadent now. My students don't know this feeling, seeing as they were all born post-Y2K, post-Facebook--and yet they're watching *Friends*. Back in the actual 90s, *Mallrats* and *Dogma* were definitely my favorite as a pre-teen white boy in the recesses of south West Seattle. Nerdy, comic book obsessed, and henceforth romantic underpinnings of an average day turned lyric, definitely spoke to my undeveloped mostly uncritical brain. Returning to the fold this week, searching for nostalgic whiffs of comfort, what hit me hard while ensconced in my new peach fuzz was the bringback of so many of the characters who swam the rivers of Jersey past. Pulling from 25 years of ecosystem, the cynic in me couldn't tell if the stream of cameos was awarded out of an obligatory sense of evening a score, or each person gladly showed up with actual goodwill extended to and for the community that in many ways sustained, boosted, and or built many of them. Watching Jay and Silent Bob in their familiar garb (wall-leaner aesthetic?) felt like wearing my oldest hoodie, a softly faded black pullover discovered at Value Village when I was in high school, back before my brother could drive, back before my students were born. An object I've worn at some point every year since. What's the oldest item of clothing you have in your closet? Do you still wear it? One of my friends, CS, grew exactly one year older this week. For the occasion, their partner organized a surprise Zoom call with friends internationally pulling wifi to offer their own presence in celebration. Thinking back on the friend, what I remember most of their clothing during our most overlapping era is a particular outfit: 1) an olive green flight jumpsuit, 2) black boots with the mess of shoelaces ambivalently keeping the tongues in check, and of course, 3) some aviators. I thought back on a lot while seeing the collection of other friends from the past, singing and dancing, all their faces boxed cameos sending my mind down nebula paths of clothing and memories. What did they all wear when I knew them? What were they wearing now? How have they changed? In a chapter of the book I'm reading now, the authors list the events precipitating migrational returns and reconnections of people. Birthdays, weddings, deaths--pretty much any kind of anniversary will do. But when we physically cannot reconnect, are prohibited from travel, how do we come together? How do we notice how our friends' wardrobes have changed? What or who do you wish you could feel again embrace your body fully? What do you wear these days? Who do you connect with? Let me know how you keep making the lines: abigwindmattnelson@gmail.com.

This is what I've been reading, with at least one starred line:

Week 6:

Finished	
<p><u>The Government Lake</u> by James Tate</p> <p>“Jesus? Jesus died breathing the breath of a seahorse?”</p> <p>“It reminded me of before I was born”</p> <p>“We woke up one morning and had our lives/ back.”</p> <p>“Oliver sat in his chair like milk in a bottle.../Oliver sat in his chair like air in the mouth.”</p> <p>“Well maybe you're dead, did you ever think of that?”</p> <p>“That's/ not the sky, that's just a bunny I once knew”</p> <p>“How was I supposed to know where Walnut Street was? I barely knew what/ town I was in.”</p> <p>“What's the ticking?’ he said. “That's the mystery,/ I said.”</p> <p>“We tried to/ have another baby, but it was too late. So we pretended we had another child,/ which confused Joseph all the more.”</p> <p>“And by the end of that/ night, we were definitely in love, like two birds. Or two butterflies caught / in the wind, not knowing where they were going. Just happy to be anywhere/ at all.”</p> <p>“My mother called and I said I was just fine. It was a lie, of course, but/ the truth would hurt her more.”</p> <p>“Hello,/ my name is Mark Smith and I'd like to offer you a job as president of Prudential/ Banks, the largest bank in America. Are you interested?’ ‘Well, yes, but/ why me?’ I said. ‘We want someone with no experience and no idea about/ banking and you seemed ideal,’ he said. ‘Why would you want someone like/ that?’ I said. ‘We want to kill him,’ he said. ‘I don't think I'm interested,/ I said. ‘It's a great salary, nice vacations,’ he said. ‘No thanks,’ I/ said, feeling relieved and very lucky to be just where I am.”</p> <p>“I went into my boss's office and snooped around./ I couldn't find anything on me, no mention of my name anywhere. It was/ strange, as if I never did anything at all. It made me want to quit.”</p>	<p>When James Tate passed, many in the poetry world were impacted. But the group that vibrated closest to my ear and heart were the Western Mass community. Tate taught at UMass Amherst, in their MFA program, establishing the institution and his own reputation overtime. Even if you didn't go in for all that paperwork, say you moseyed into the leaves to attend a workshop at Flying Object or checked out ED's manse, as Seydel calls it, or visited the Watering Hole and then ate flapjacks at Katy's Diner the next morning, chances are you felt Tate's presence like the sounds of a basketball game from the radio on your drive home. This book is, at the moment, as a monument, his last. The first page is a picture of the poem still held in the grip of the typewriter-come-wor(l)d-maker after he left. The poem is called “<i>I sat at my desk and contemplated all that I had accomplished.</i>” What do you think of poems that are titled their first line? “<i>I sat at my desk and contemplated all that I had accomplished</i>” starts with, “I sat at my desk and contemplated all that I had accomplished/ this year.” It goes on to list all the strange, extraordinary events the narrator is thinking up with periodic interludes confessing the lies, but that slowly changes to contextually appropriate exclamatory congrats! It ends with a brief story of being stopped by a cop. Many of these poems include stories within stories. The officer immediately apologizes and says to the narrator who says to us that he, the cop, “was looking for someone who looked just like me.” The next, and last, line is: “What are the chances?” What are the chances? What chance do we have? What is like us, but not us? What time do we have to reflect, but then, when presented with a reflection, deny? Do we want to be the person we think we are? The person others see us as? I read this book aloud with my partner, usually at breakfast or lunch, rarely at dinner. It was a practice we started on a road trip we took last summer to see the Redwoods and Big Sur. Do you remember road trips? I love road trips. Are you a better driver or passenger? Are you a better listener or reader? I can't remember if it was MY or SL (or maybe neither, another), both smiling buds from the river valley, who asked if I could intake more from say, a book on tape, or from good ol' eyes to page, on a road trip. Come to think of it, I passengered with both of them on the same route, from Seattle to Portland, and the question could easily have been asked along the same portion of I-5, maybe just after Olympia</p>

“Well, you’re not my father. Get out of this car”

“I thought about calling/ my mother, but she was in heaven. I called her anyway. ‘Mom, how are/ you doing?’ I said. ‘I’m bored. Don’t come here. There’s nothing to/ do,’ she said. ‘Aren’t there angels?’ I said. ‘Go to hell, it’s/ more exciting,’ she said. I had fallen asleep with my teacup in my/ hand. When I awoke I realized I had thought it was a phone. My/ mother would never be so sarcastic about heaven.”

“I lay on the couch and counted my blessings./ There were none, or so few they slipped through my fingers.”

“‘What’s an Argonaut?’ I said. ‘It’s somebody/ who swims in the deep waters of the ocean in search of treasure,’ she/ said. ‘I found a penny in my bathtub once when I was a kid,’ I said./ ‘Then you’re an Argonaut,’ she said.”

“A man called me today and said he was my father. I said,/ ‘That’s nice, but my father is dead.’ He said, ‘Well, I’m back”

“There were several docks along the shore./ I walked out on one and watched the ducks swimming and diving./ There was something bobbing in the middle of the lake. I stared/ at it for a long time before I realized it was a man’s head./ Then, a moment later, it was a coconut.”

“It was 11:23 a.m. Nobody did much/ at that hour. I don’t know why I said that, just because/ I wasn’t doing anything. Other people were making bombs,/ sending love letters. Or just doing their jobs, whatever/ that might be.”

“‘Heavenly Father, please bring our Robbie safely/ back to us,’ she said. We opened our eyes and there was a/ camel standing there. ‘Oh, no, you’ve made a mistake,’ I/ said. ‘I didn’t make a mistake. God did,’ she said.”

Song of S. by Robert Seydel

“my head is a light/ (with nerves)/ it jumps/ like a toad/ into the lake/ then sneezes/ for all it’s worth”

“the mountains bend down/ they bend down the distance”

“& you too/ like a bee, run// into my mouth// everything/ humming now// & prick me, I’m so human”

“No one is a business”

“Sometimes I think, this is it./ But there’s always something more/ Waiting

when, aiming southernly, you push upward into the trees. I think of both of these friends when thinking about Tate. I think of TP, too. WX. GP and EP, particularly. ML was there as well, swimming in the river, laughing. Along the blacktop swifts winding through California, my partner read to me Deshpande and Asghar and Pettit and Brown and Sharif and Olivarez as I drove. Or, when they drove, I read. As a reader/reciter, I felt like I wanted to give the words an extra boost on their journey through the air. An honorable mention. But, I have to admit, as the other agent of the speech act, as a listener, I’m just not all that good when it comes to poems. Maybe it’s the multitasking, changing lanes and what not, that dilutes the passage of words to brains. It feels kind of like those puzzles with the silver balls where you have to balance the grooved topography, shifting this way and that to lead the ball from one end of the maze to the next without having it fall into the contained oblivion. But, specifically when listening to poetry combined with doing anything else, I feel like the anything else is the pathway I tiptoe across and only sporadically a metallic clink will be heard when the poem passes from outside to inside. Which is a long way of saying that you can be sure I was selfishly the reader of most of the Tate so as to offer it the best chance of coming in. The outside cover of this book has not so much a long blurb but a mini-critical reading of the book by Matthew Zapruder which does its part to elevate what is within. “His poems give us the sense that something interesting and important is always waiting around a corner.” Maybe that’s why it’s hard for me to drive and listen to poetry? I’m waiting for something around the corner to pop up and scare me. But what are the chances? What are the chances?

Robert Seydel was brought into the lending library of my youth by my friends CS and JD with a book called *Book of Ruth*. Both of them spoke of this author/teacher as if he were an heirloom coffee pot holder that happened to be a misplaced conceptual piece, this collagist of thoughts and images. The *Book of Ruth* really is something to hold and be seen, more treasure than chapter and verse--definitely not the type of book you’d want to attempt to read aloud to someone while driving along anything described as multi-laned in the heat of early July. You’d want to see the pictures! An old tintype portrait of a woman with a red circle embossment covering her face is the cover.

somewhere. Like in the plants.”

“The light/ is as lotion/ on my body, a/
grease of/ the immoral sky.”

“The space of the city/ isn’t simple.”

“Nothing is real that turns in me/ Nothing of
the real// turns in me/ Turn in me// there
at an edge/ that is an edge to see”

“mind supplanted/ by strawberries in
summer/ in fall fails to find itself/ in
something else”

“In the wind is the sea./ In the sea
somewhere is/ California, sometimes or/
another. It’s floating/ west to east,/ a
hummingbird under/ my shoe.”

“Is it illness god speaks in us,/ so that the
one saying limits/ locates his perch?”

“bend// the self// & bend it thru time// so it
is// no more”

“Sky is an illness/ in my eye. My hand/
raised in the wind/ is like the land/ razed by
the wind.”

“Now what I see is raw./ White fume of the
cooked./ Now what I see is cooked. Time
runs out on the shore.”

“The mtn points/ a fist at me/ gnarly fist/
rocky me”

“A/ mtn/ in the mind// to climb./ A river/
on it// to come down/ on. Boats/ in the
shade// dreaming of it.”

“I sit sometimes// in the thick,// spinning//
out no thought”

“I say what I don’t say, & that/ likewise is
not moral.”

“Time// is not// in the rain”

“The wind is a motor/ in my mouth. Every/
cliche is right.”

“If water/ has its own time,/ so will I, in the
sky”

“How you pitch a/ bird from the peak/ of
your roof does matter”

“He runs up the margin/ of the sun”

“it is here when rain/ falls that i know what I
am”

“one moment/ before I wake will be like/
any other while I slept”

“Nothing pleases like the rareness/ of the
day”

“Great rebours/ twist in space like trains

The circle was a wax stamp seal the first time I touched it, but later, it transformed into a painting inside with the words “f the” and “327” below. *Of the? If the? 327?* Peter Gizzi, another poet of Amherst/Northampton fame, writes a note on the text and the author. He reminisces of their wee-hour talks about visual art versus words, the death-work of these poems and the notebooks Seydel used to house them. There’s an additional insert called *Maybe S.* where you can see Seydel’s drawings and personal scrawl. Small eyed-mountains peer over the songs he penned in black in another person’s name, S. He was making up a poet as well as his poetry. This book object is made via a collaboration between Siglio Press, a beautiful publisher out of LA who made *Book of Ruth*, and Ugly Duckling Presse, a similarly crafty book pusher from the Old American Can Factory in Brooklyn. Seeing the UDP name on the spine tugged at the memory of helping Ugly Duckling move from the basement to the third (?) floor in exchange for lunch and a few chapbooks. Don’t let anyone tell you that making books is a light endeavor. I love a well-made book, and this collection of poems feels right in line with either press’s catalogues. Strange and biting, familiar and gentle, the poems are titled and not titled, standalone and harkening chorus numbers, elegiac and mundane. An image of a hat repeats, as does rain. How does a hat block the rain? Would you wear a hat if it didn’t block the rain? I bought this book from Malvern Books in Austin while I was in town for the wedding of MC and LR and staying with WF and KS. WF was taking me through the Austin must-sees, a late night donut shop next to a *Slacker* mural (do not get the coffee, unless you want to get another coffee somewhere else after), the haunted writers’ house lonely as an outpost across the grand street marking the college’s border close to the 7-11, and the mandatory BBQ with free beer sweating in a cooler. At some point, we made it to the bookstore I’d only seen on Instagram. There have been few book stores where I have not felt at home. Sure, there’s crotchety customer service people everywhere who may intend to pull up the welcome mat from underfoot. I mean, working at Strand, you sometimes had to be during a closing day crunch of old heads trying to buy 50 dollar cart massmarkets. But places that house books have always been my sanctuary, and Malvern was no less heavenly, no less providential in providing *Songs of S.* during a hot weekend seeing friends. But what happens when the books are shelved and shouldered and loved and then, ultimately, displaced? Sometimes I think, (and maybe this is because of another one of *those* weeks) what’s the point? In the Editor’s Note of *Maybe S.*, Richard Kraft says, “I think of Robert’s own great library, abandoned suddenly, which filled his apartment on Gray Street,

<p>gone fugitive/ We sail on roads that no one laid out”</p> <p>“Everything is electric but me”</p> <p>“a wind no less cruel for/ breathing.”</p>	<p>around the corner from Emily Dickinson’s house.” If you fill a house with people (think PARTY), eventually they have to trickle out. I am glad that some of Seydel’s thoughts are collected here, a mini party with his multiple aliases. Books, if they’re in a bookstore, or lost on someone’s shelves, hold people, even if they’re made up.</p>
<p>Soft Science by Franny Choi</p> <p>“yes/ i can speak/ your language/ i broke that horse/ myself”</p> <p>“but some of us are born/ in orbit/ so learn/ to commune with miles of darkness/ patterns of dead gods/ & quiet/ o quiet like you/ wouldn’t believe”</p> <p>“a man barges through the screen/ to hook his fingers in my mouth”</p> <p>“Thank you, woman clutching a scrap of my hair, saying <i>friend/ friend friend</i> until my lips rust in place. (The brown dust falls/ and I lick it up, embarrassed.)”</p> <p>“An audience of smiles invites me,/ one mouthful at a time, a hundred tiny reverse T-shirt guns,/ everyone’s a winner”</p> <p>“Gosh. I’m licking all/ the doorframes”</p> <p>“on the news/ stations I never watch because/ everyone talks too loud/ and doesn’t seem all that/ bothered by the state/ of things, everyone/ was giving up/ hope of a brand I’d/ never cared much for/ anyway, wanting/ to be cold-/ blooded and over it, wanting/ not to believe in/ a broken thing,/ broken/ on purpose,/ I know, to keep/ my loved ones drowning/ or dead.”</p> <p>“is there anything that works/ that isn’t a machine for killing,/ or doomed to collapse, or stolen/ from the sweat of the hungry?”</p> <p>“but my clit/ that night was playing the part/ of another wall, another sky/ to trace and trace with no/ response, another blank/ beast whose name we’ve/ long forgotten, or who dies/ in a day.”</p> <p>“Once, a scientist in Britain asked: <i>Can machines think?</i> He built a machine,/ taught it to read ghosts, and a new kind of ghost was born.”</p> <p>“Everyone clapped, and/ the clapping too, was a technology”</p> <p>“At Disneyland, I watched lights move across a screen and, for a moment, forgot/ the names of my rotting parts. In this way, I became somewhat more like a light,/ or a screen for lights.”</p> <p>“Even blood, when it comes down to it, is only a series of rules.”</p>	<p>This book is cool. It’s slick. I was really looking forward to it, and bought it right when it came out, even brought it on the road trip along the coast. Welp, we know what happened next. I didn’t get to it. So then I brought it to school, kept it in my bookcase for students or for myself on a prep--I’ve found that they’ll pick up poetry and essays and even short story collections faster than novels or non-fict. Then, when my school called it a day, I loaded up my backpack with all the poetry and some other select titles for what I didn’t realize then would be the long haul. Fast forward to this past week (what is TIME?), and I finally got to dip in. The first poem, “Glossary of Terms,” is a table linguistically expanding the terms <i>Star</i>, <i>Ghost</i>, <i>Mouth</i>, and <i>Sea</i> through the rows of <i>Meaning</i>, <i>See also</i>, <i>Antonym</i>, and <i>Dreams of being</i>. This sets up the machinery at hand for the rest of the book. Choi’s <i>Soft Science</i> is all about cyborgs and Turing Tests, emotional obliteration and digital rebirth. Are we machines? Actually, that’s not right. There’s definitely poems in here that don’t all deal with genetic engineering. But I’ll keep going as if for now. Perhaps there’s a hint of the microprocessor’s whirl in the triangulation of <i>Ghost</i> and <i>Dreams of being</i> within the table: “filled or flesh.” Do we, anthropocene denizens, exist in the flesh? Especially now, can you feel alive outside of the cloud? Are we destined to become the 1-and-0 rain of the cloud? Maybe it would be beneficial for society to identify a cop’s reaction time to a script built into their mainframe rather than as a willful human event wherein one person purposefully kills another based on a systematic bias. Or maybe it would be nice in the morning for the brain to have a program in Java that we could /run after a drunken one-night stand instead of short circuiting on a compendium of ambiguous moral issues. To continue in the bedroom, there’s a lot in here about the sine+cosine lines of sex and technology. “I Swiped Right on the Borg,” “Chatroulette,” “It’s All Fun and Games Until Someone Gains Consciousness,” all find ways to ask about the distancing of intimacy beyond steel and screens. But like I said before, not all the poems are about the loss of humanity in our pursuit of deus ex macarina (yes I did that on purpose, no it doesn’t make a lot of sense). I just looked up a review of this book and have you ever noticed (IN MY BEST CHUCK VOICE) how poetry reviews tend to look for some passage that exemplifies</p>

“the nurse missed/ my vein/ & dug for it/ it was a white light/ a tin flame in/ the forearm”

“She runs headless through the mall and everyone shouts, *Hey legs!*/ No one mentions the girls gnawing each ankle to its core.”

“You can’t buy/ a thunderstorm”

“or a breaking-in/ [shoe leather; horses in january, did you think it]”

“what did you expect/ [suckling a knife]”

“did you/ [walk right in, choose/ a terrible seat, smile when/ the floor rushed up/ to kiss you]”

“Nothing is more frightening than looking//and loving what you see”

“staying up to watch the sun re-hinge the balcony’s angles”

“as if i could rot/ as if they didn’t make us/ to last & last”

“remember/ all humans/ are cyborgs/ all cyborgs/ are sharp shards of sky/ wrapped in meat”

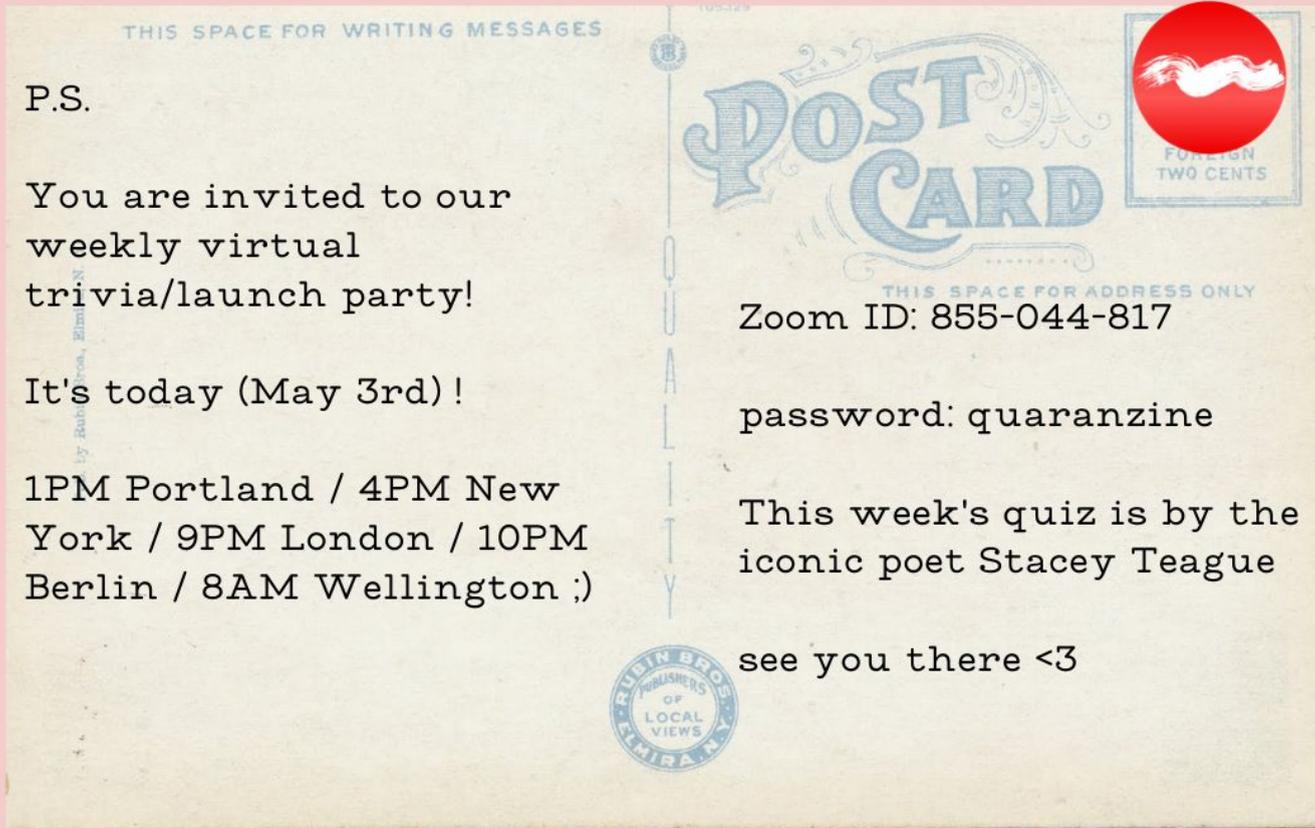
the poet’s essence? Have you? I don’t know. That’s why I’m asking. I still think criticism can be super creative in the patterns that are generated/“found”. But, I guess I’d rather just say that these poems are speculative and slick and cool. Maybe blood will be replaced with oil and maybe we’ll miss it when we could break in ways other than 404-ishly. We already are electric. We have already lived the loop. The end of the “Chatroulette” poem goes a little something like this:

To be a girl untouched, alive,
who sees, and comes. Who brings herself online.

We are untouched, yes, and we are online, but is this really life? Yes this is really life. And to bring back once more that this book isn’t all about human-made “progress,” in the poem, “Afterlife,” the narrator talks about their first sexual experience with a boy who is now dead, returned to the earth, and then, to the sea, and to fish and moths and “the bellies of flies.” I liked this one because it’s sad and mad and a little jealous of the integration of this dead boy with the natural world who “kissed the insides of my knees”. Is that area called *back knee*? Patiently waiting for your response.

That's all for this week!

Thank you so much for reading!!



We'll be back next Sunday with a new issue.

Don't forget to
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if you want to!

And if you want to contribute something to a forthcoming issue...
Email me: lkshowbiz@gmail.com

Stay safe!!!



