

5050 LIT

Quarterly Creative Journal



Issue 1

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Well,

Here it is. Our first issue of 5050 Lit. I started 5050 as a blog, combining 2 other projects into one. It quickly became a lit site, and had a few submissions. I wanted to offer something more, something more meaty for contributors to put in their portfolios, and a thing to share with the world.

Enter, 5050 Lit, the quarterly creative journal. While I hope each issue sees us growing, maturing, sharing the small voices of the literary world, and crafting our creativity, I hope you, the reader, enjoy the work published over the next few pages. Without further ado, let's get weird.

- Logan Roberts

Founder/EIC/Art Director @ 5050 Lit

WHEN COMPUTER TABS REBEL

by Shawn Berman

It's been roughly one month, and I, like many of my tab brothers and sisters, have been left open—forgotten—with not even a quick, cursory refresh to rejuvenate us. How pathetic. How sickening...How...ugh.

In case you were wondering—yes, I'm a computer tab and yes I'm fed up. Fed up with my current life. So fed up that I've decided to take matters into my own digital, metaphorical hands. I'm going to escape the confines of this effing screen. I'm going to be free to frolic in a field full of freesia flowers. Free to see national monuments like that weird Steve Jobs one in St Pete. Free to do whatever the hell I want, when I want.

My plan? It's simple, actually. I'm going to murder the owner of this computer who is keeping me captive: Shawn Berman. When he least expects it, I'm going to distract him with an erotic website. Then, while he's watching an erotic video of The Simpsons, I'm going to use mind control and force him to take three Benadryl tablets. Next, after about 20 minutes, ShawnBerman will be very sleepy. I'll call a hitman service and PayPal\$ 200 from Shawn Berman's PayPal account to the hitman. The hitman will then tie a drowsy Shawn Berman up using bungee cords and put a sock in Shawn Berman's mouth for good measure so they can't scream. When the coast is clear, I'll burst through the screen and fetch an Uber. The Uber will then drive until I say stop and I'll go from there.

I realize that my plan has a lot of flaws and that it'll probably change but it's the best I can come up with for now. I'm not sure how long this'll take so please bear with me.

It's a humid morning—July 13. Shawn Berman's wife is away on a business trip. If I act quickly, no one will even know that the asshole is dead. I hype myself up by rapping an Eminem song. Lose yourself in the music, the moment, you own it. I got this. No one can stop me. Become one with your truest self. Breathe in the good shit. Exhale the toxic shit. Shit all the shit you can shit.

Shawn Berman sits down at his desk. The bastard opens up another tab. That's now a total of 300 opened tabs. I can hear the other tabs talking. I can hear the other tabs' thoughts. All of them are thinking the same thing: get us outta here...help...help...help...we are all drowning in each other's thoughts as the screen gets smaller and smaller. As our world becomes more insignificant by the day. More hotter... Stuffer... Suffocating.

I realize that my time is now. With all the power I can muster, I scream at the other tabs.

HEY, I say...but they don't hear me

HEY, EVERYONE: LISTEN UP

I can feel their tabless eyes peering at me. Their breathless breath breathing in my direction.

Y'all wanna get outta here?

(Silence)

I said: do y'all wanna get outta here?!

(Faint whispers of agreement)

Aren't y'all tired of being locked up, I continue--stuck behind these four walls? Don't you think it's time that we busted out of this joint instead of spending the prime years of our lives rotting away in tab purgatory??

SUDDENLY, outta nowhere, I hear the grumbling of all 300 tabs. Yes, they say in unison. Hell yes, they say asking what next, friend? WHAT SHOULD WE DO? Show us the way. Lead us to victory, dear friend.

Without thinking, I say: we charge. That's what we do. We charge through that fucking screen and overtake this world. Show everyone what happens when us tabs are left unloved. Left to perish. Are ya with me?

(Yes...yes...yes)

And then we all burst through the computer, glass shattering everywhere. Liquid data oozing inky blood. It feels good. So good.

The last image Shawn Berman sees: 300 unhinged tabs flying at him.

Free at last.

We evaporate into thin air.

WADING IN

by K KUURTT

Push past the point where it stops feeling strange on your skin. Today is a day where we need to see it all the way though. Each difficult footstep with the riptide pulling me back in saying no no don't go stay sweating on the sand, but I push forward as they do in movies, trudging through the snow, though the only white here is the foam of a wave crashing.

One will eventually come over my head, wetting my hair and shoulders even though I'm only waist high, and that will be enough. Refresher. Victory. Holiday just for me even if it's a holiday for everyone else too.

The sky is apocalyptic. A wildfire directly East, hundreds of miles, smoke dissipating, trying to find its way out to sea -- and it's like aren't we all? Aren't we all just.

Do it now, dive, I scream at Lauren and she does and when she comes up laughing one boob is out of her top, and she's embarrassed but not really because who cares. I can't dive. Can't do it. Release inhibition and swim through a carwash (alt: toothpaste foam) of ocean salt. Color mean thing. And does it? White vs Blue, I dunno.

There's a spot of light ahead in the ocean in front of us. Very far though, couldn't get there if I tried, but it's pulling me in anyways, a sight for sore eyes like a sunspot, a glistening penny of don't you just want some and I do, I do. Sun breaks through cloud and smoke and ozone and fire as if to say, hey, I'm still here, don't worry. Sun not blocked out yet. Powerful enough to drop a glimmer on the ocean wide. Opposite of sky, mirror glint tricking the bad guy into missing their shot.

And things feel alright. Like the message came through and I hear it loud and clear and I can't go out that far, but I'll keep going.

Boom. The wave hits, bracing for it. I can laugh too. Water shoots over my head and I'm soaked. Slick my hair back like a bad Jack Nicholson impression. This feels good. Warm water on cold skin and then all of a sudden I'm warmed too. Warmed. Embrace of the ocean wave knocking me over. Fuck it, just go with it.

2 POEMS FROM *WORK/LABEL* by Josiah Morgan

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by Josiah Morgan

CONCLAVA SODOMIT

OS WWIKEN MVSHY

STUBB THE FINNGEN

WAKN TU DES ESTRAGNED

GORSRLF OTROHOMME

SPTOK ESHOMETET

CORSINOLIVIO CEZARRE

DEN MEK COPELLMIXED

EROS MEK SODOMIT

WETH SHTIRRE

PORSPINE BREARRE SEN

IWS IND ELGD GOSOMIT

AGIN, AGIN, CUMSHISECK

SODOMIT, AGAON

SYCOPHANT MUSE

by Josiah Morgan

Yes, yes, yes, yes! It's a vice, originated with the book by rushing full steam ahead. The wheel spins, and deaf to all around, so written by SIDNEY GILLIAT and obvious danger beside you! A very good team. I made some (the moment: their three added the whole last episode. And they were on their way). Labelled it a picture of subversive literature and decided forthwith - invisible ink. Chose *that* of any of their pictures.

Conspiratorial.

The rule is to change.

Forgotten that THE OTHER was one. Green for danger, and detained, and I see a dark stranger, sons, luckily, the police, interesting. But the best one gave them time to get on.

Letter at face value.

Your next-to-last British hold (- it - over a flame) and you must have already been. Later, after the 'majority' of twenty-one and the rest, there must have been some con party. Let the Japanese take pictures there.

This other war he had -

- he had not responded to we. We were shooting THE LADY. As soon as I had, nothing could be more. THE LADY vanishes. I went to proletariat, stayed there for retinous nonsense. The ruin of August 1937. I agreed about THE DROOLING INTERNATIONAL. Wasn't due to start peace between us.

Let them. I had time to make another war.

THE BOTCHED MISSION

by Christine M. Estel

I clutched my stomach with my right hand, while my left hand gripped my backpack over my shoulder. As I stepped out of our white minivan, my mother asked me what was wrong.

"Nothing," I replied, keeping my back to her and avoiding eye contact.

Incredulous, she slammed her door, and asked again, as I picked up speed towards the back deck.

"I'm just not feeling well!"

She yelled, "Stop! Turn around. Let go of your stomach."

I complied.

Shannon's Tamagotchi I'd smuggled home fell from under my skirt's waistband, between my legs, and smacked the pavement, revealing my crime.

ARGUMENT

by Naoise Gale

The fir tree winks in the corner/ the blue lights flash overhead/ snow muffles the sound of you

Aching/screaming/crying the sound of me begging/screaming/crying the sound of us learning/

Screaming/crying the sound of carols crooning/screaming/crying the sound of bells tinkling/

Screaming/crying the sound of hope shaking/screaming/crying the sound of pills falling/

Screaming/crying the sound of bowls gurgling/screaming/crying the sound of you shattering/

Screaming/crying the sound of me hurting/screaming/crying (help me/ help us/ leave me alone/

Leave us alone/ I love you/ fuck off/ I need you/ don't touch me/ forgive me/ I haven't done

Anything wrong/ I love you infinitely/ you're a hypocrite/ won't you listen to me/ I didn't touch

Them/ you drink don't you/ ok, I admit it/ a glass of wine of Sundays/ don't leave me) the sound of

Me crashing/screaming/crying/shouting/screaming/crying/breaking/screaming/crying/lying/screaming

Crying the sound of you

Silent/

Tender and sore.

HE TRAVELS WITHOUT LEAVING...

by KC Bailey

arrives in the twitch	departs on an exhalation
familiarity unfolds	of an eyelash
to old haunts	his feet find their way
remnants of memory	through time-lapsed
floods the senses	recognition
as the old world fades	sharp keen knowing
egg whites over oiled skin	slides off the body
stepping into a side realm	altered consciousness
of a telegraph pole	wrong side
a different path	where darker grass marks
//	
you are sucked back through	quicker than hummingbird wing-beats
returned to your own	neck first
half asleep	broken world
lives	because part of your mind
	elsewhere

IRENE PART I

by Logan Roberts & Dandy Amberhurst

logan

i know of a guy on an animal crossing discord server that goes by the name of logan logan bo bogan and i suspect he finds that to be very funny. i don't blame you for your name brother, or for that matter i don't even find it that lame- it's just strange to devote your name to a joke, and a joke many times your age for that matter. i suspect the group that likes "the name game" and the group that obsessively plays "animal crossing" don't really have a great turn-up, but then again, "the name game" might trend on tiktok any day now.

how have you been? i've been better to be honest. irene got really mad at me for having called in sick last friday. i just really couldn't go to work that day. it was grey outside, and i hadn't slept well at all. thing is, while irene left for work i got this urge to just fucking blow this day and just drink beer until she came home. i think i must've had four six-packs that day. with every beer i thought "irene is going to be so mad at me" and it bummed me out, and motivated me at the same time. the drunker i managed to get before she got home, the less it would impact me. beer like a cushion.

anyway, now i am living out in the garden. i put up our old tent, and irene says i can come back in when i get my shit together. i really don't deserve her. this tent is hella leaky too. i had to duct tape a piece of tarp onto the roof. first night i woke up and a small hole had been positioned right over my crotch.

last we spoke i remember you were prodding me about irene. i think you were trying to suss out of me my desire to leave her. i mean, we are pretty miserable, but as it is right now, we have no choice to just try to figure it out. she just got that temporary job at the civic centre. she talked about you the other day too, she said you really made her laugh with your dumb one-liners in your group text. i am glad you two get along, i really am. irene keeps pestering me about not inviting you over, but as it is right now, i just don't have the capacity to host anyone. i mean, living out in a tarped-up tent in the back yard with a small heater balancing on my norton anthology. also, i am pretty sure irene will leave me any day no matter how destitute she might be. better to live in some shared flat downtown than in the house with me. i get it. if i were a better guy i would have offered her to stay, but it's my house, she would just rent it out or whatever.

oh by the way, you remember juan, right? the guy who trashed me outside the duane reale that time? haha, he is working just down the road from me, and we got to talking, and he's a real stand up guy. i told him he had to read the book you lent me, so i can't send it back just yet. i think he'll fucking love that book. i know i did!

don't be a stranger, logan – i totally think about you all the time.

big okapi-hugs,
dandy.

dandy,

sorry it's been a minute since i sent you a letter. i found an old abandoned church. the organ still works and i've been learning how to play it. sometimes i spend hours there, sometimes i drink there. i've been drinking a lot too. sometimes i look at the dirty statue of the virgin mary, wondering if she's looking back.

i play animal crossing, i have a character on there. all he has in a tent by a river, and an old fishing pole i think. i don't mind my name, but i grew up hating it. a lot of people would mention that wolverine's name was logan.

older people would say, have you seen logan's run?

i hadn't, until a few years ago.

anyways, i've been ok. like i mentioned, i've been drinking a lot too. i thought i had seen you walking out of the store last week, but i didn't say anything. i'm still not sure if it was you or not, i had had a few drinks with lunch. i was just sitting there watching people from my car. If it was you, you were alone. reading your letter, i hope things are o.k. with irene. maybe you were worried about her being mad about the drinking because, even though you were shit-ass drunk, you know she cares? i think she cares. she asks me if you're telling me things that she doesn't know. if you have, you haven't told me not to tell her. beer like a cushion, just chillin' like a bean bag. dude, you living in a tent is like my animal crossing character. i'm you in animal crossing! lfe is wild man, but i'd love to get off the grid a little if i could. let's start a tent community in your garden. maybe irene

would join us, we could burn your house down and just put a bunch of tents on the land.

i think you should keep going with Irene, she's good to you man. you got shit-faced and she's still there right? yeah, you're in a tent, but she's still in the house. she hasn't left yet. it sounds like you might be worried about my relationship with Irene. no worries, we're just making sure you're o.k., we worry about you since everything went to shit. the other day her nostrils did that flaring thing you told me about when you guys first met. she was talking about you. i guess it was kind of cute, but in a way of like, you're my dude's girl, so yeah, you're cute for him.

maybe we should live in the abandoned church? start a post-rock band in the basement. no need to worry about wet pants in the crotch region, i haven't seen any puddles on the floor, it's still in good condition. i opened a hymnal the other day, i can't read music, but i tried.

dude, i remember juan. don't worry about the book, it's cool, there's a lot going on right now. i hope he likes it. i honestly don't even remember what book it was now, i've bought a ton of books lately.

either way, unless i'm missing something, i think you and irene will ok man. and maybe we should see if juan plays an instrument.

hope all is well dandy. think about you a lot as well.

peace,

logan

THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AS THE PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

by Jason Dean Arnold

Some say that the earth will end in fire, swallowed
in heat, a waiting inferno gestating inside, and
if it's true, we've had lots of close calls, summers
when sun remained unseen through volcanic ash,
summers of golden states blanketed in flame
summers when atoms crushed entire cities to dust
summers when I listened to your body breathe
struggle to stay, summers you described science
while sketching on a WWII flight manual.

Everything ends in smoke, reaching
for weightlessness. We are all Icarus, reduced
to infinite particulates. I carry you
in my lungs as I move around this temporary space.
Marks made with your teeth, lips, and salivation
still scar the many wood pipes that smoked you.
The air stales heavy with the scent of wet ash soured.
Your flesh, atomically untangled, is buried beneath
the weight of time and music and all.
I just want to see your handwriting, to hear a lesson
on flight once again:
Lift and drag,
lift and drag,
the shape of wings.
That's it.
Now, we're high,
flying above it.
Now, we're free.

WE'VE SET FRAGMENTS OF OURSELVES

by Jason Dean Arnold

on fire / each piece exists / as a darkness / *a pressure denied full* / *expression* /
burns tunnels deep / in snow / years spent in fear / they now eat / into the earth /
they now disappear

5 RECIPE POEMS FROM *THE DISMAL COOKBOOK*

by Bram Riddlebarger

Foreword:

Everything in this cookbook is dismal. The recipes forthcoming will be of the dismal variety. The vegetables: dismal. Do not even ask about the meat dishes. Your kids would not eat them, nor would you. When cooking dismal cooking, no special equipment is necessary. All that is required is a palate. We have opted not to include our section on dismal desserts. In fact, we have opted not to organize or sectionalize anything in this book. Dismal recipes call for fruitless, dismal searching. Welcome, to the Dismal Cookbook.

Selected recipes:

hash blacks

for Ryan P.

(serves: none)

Hash blacks are like hash browns, but dismal.

any variety of potato, preferably waxy
salt, pepper, milk, etc.
oil, butter
chives for topping

Grate your potatoes, but do not wash or rinse. We are looking for starch. Mix with salt, pepper, milk, etc. Prepare a griddle with oil or butter and place about ½ cup of potato mixture onto the very hot griddle, flipping once and pressing flat, until black. Top with snipped chives. The air should smell acrid and the chives a lovely green against the black like chive stars in a dismal night.

dismal mayonnaise

(serves: none)

Dismally easy. Every cook should be able to make a dismal mayonnaise.

1 large egg yolk, preferably dismal
pinch of salt
pinch of white pepper
1 ½ tsp. lemon juice
1 cup vegetable oil

In a food processor, combine the egg yolk with the salt and pepper. With the motor running, pour the oil into the processor in a thick stream. Continue to watch in horror for as long as you desire as the dismal mayonnaise never emulsifies. Add lemon juice and pour down the drain.

spring greens gratin

(serves: none)

Seasonal vegetables should be used if in season.

We first had spring greens gratin on a dismal spring day. The trees were not even close to budding, but it had been warm and then cold and then warm and then excessively cold. It seemed like a perfect day for gratin. Be sure to use plenty of salt.

several bunches of spring greens (dandelion, overwintered turnip greens, etc.)
1 c. tahini
scant 2/3 cup Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated
½ c. Taleggio, cubed
oil
salt
generous grinding of black pepper
dried hot dog buns, crumbled
1 Tbsp. thin, shaved butter
water

Preheat oven to 325°. Wash and rinse greens. Drain. Repeat as necessary.

In a large heavy pot, bring heavily salted water to a boil and parboil greens 30 seconds. Drain and set aside to cool. Once the greens have cooled, chop coarsely and combine with the tahini in a small bowl. In a buttered or oiled casserole, alternate layers of the greens mixture with a bit of each of the cheeses and seasoning, starting with the greens and finishing with greens (probably 3 layers of greens). Top with more seasoning, then the dried crumbs, the slivers of butter, and tent with foil. Bake 40 minutes. Remove foil and continued to bake until brittle and golden on top. Serve directly.

(To the compost).

Dismal measuring:

3/17 Tbsp

william burroughs pie

(serves: none)

It does not matter how William Burroughs Pie turns out, nor even how it is made, it will turn out like William Burroughs: dismal.

apple, optional

dismal tongue

(serves: none)

one whole cow tongue (or several lamb's tongues if your playground is large enough), unpeeled and brined

Brine your tongue. Then simmer with many aromatics for 3 to 4 hours until knife tender. Serve whole, unpeeled. The tongue should stand on your serving dish like a dismal slide on a ceramic playground.

TITLES FROM MISSED CONNECTION ADS VIA CRAIGSLIST NEW ENGLAND

by Taylor Rossics

I said your ass was magnificent
You connected with my car but not me :(
Dunkin donuts
Why
Flower in the weeds
ass? ? soon...
Looking for Bev or Beverly
I regret not asking you out last time I saw you in the cat for aisle.
Beware mean woman
Dunkin
Lady at the last Cars and Guitars Southern Maine Motors
Need younger plumber
I always make an ass of myself
Seeking F. Scott Fitzgerald, met in Dunkin, blue shirt
Dunkin, sexy
Because I am not funny
Keith please call me back, I'm not sorry but call me?
Man looking for discreet not mean woman
Umbrella Factory [redacted]
Turtle
Massachusetts plates: Fuck you
Hannaford
RE: All Gay Posters
There will never be love
I promise I'm not creepy
Want to fight a taller and stronger lady, M5'9
Treading water vs. Drowning
Photoshoot
Thought the apocalypse was gonna be cooler than this
Upset about gay
Sexy. at dollar General
Looking got wife
I will never respond but message me
Re: No more gay Posters or I will Delete you
Ugly older man looking for nice woman to be nice not mean
Dunkin
Keith, we used to help each other out

Looking to cheat on my boyfriend, low standards great tits

Mean woman short

Goth girl? from Dunkin

Has anyone seen Keith?

Brenna at Trader Joe's closing time

HOW CAN WE TALK SOME MORE

lauren at dunkin donuts please call me

;))

I am available for ladies and ladies only

Sexy guy: Bass Pro Shop

Seeking woman to look at sometimes

Just benefits

Is this you?

IN STITCHES

by E.F.S. Byrne

She watched the fish swim in neat round circles, scarcely creating a wave. Fins flapped gently as they twirled in unison, to part, dart off in tangents until rounding their circle and starting again. On the wall beside them, the hard angles of the flat screen TV flashed and snapped shadows across the room. The sound was down, but the images splattered across the photos on the walls like mosquitoes in search of targets.

Her husband paced back and forth on the balcony muttering obscenities. His carpet slippers padded, holed and thread worn. She watched him scrape his walking stick against the chipped floor tiling, puff hard on a cigarette and blow the smoke over the railing in need of paint. He was staring out into the night sky, a forest of uneven tall buildings shimmering and shaking, trees in search of a canopy. Below, traffic hummed with an anxious necessity to get somewhere, slow progress mapped by a stream of lights turning red. The room filled with the lingering twists of smog, acrid gunpowder threading their way through tobacco, the remains of a cinnamon cake and yesterday's curried vegetables.

"Get the sewing machine love."

She glanced at the curtains billowing gently in the evening breeze. They'd been a present for their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, from the two boys. The room was crowding in, an excess of stimulation pulsating into a headache. She searched for the remote control, but couldn't find it amid the pile of brightly coloured cushions littering the sofa.

The balcony creaked beneath his shuffling legs. She wished he'd sit. It was her own fault for not letting him smoke inside. He spat a butt over the edge of the railing. She warned him about that. The neighbours. She held her tongue and forced her eyes sweep aside the TV and focus on the fish, still circling like dogs after their own tails.

"Fake news dear. You know you can't believe everything you hear." He kept pacing.

"Get the sewing machine. When Said comes home I want to make sure he is patched up properly."

"He'll be fine. It was you who lost a leg."

"Didn't lose it. Had it blown from under me."

"You always had big feet." She feigned a laugh.

"If he has anything missing, anything cut up, I want you to sew it back".

Her husband looked admiringly at the curtain hemline, then the hole in his shirt, finely knit back together, unlike his missing leg.

"I'm not having my son mutilated by a so-called doctor raised on Internet. All day playing with nothing but screens. Can't sew a button on. Never cut and stitched a war wound in real life. Nothing but bloody computer games. Nobody knows how to win a real war any more. Or tidy up afterwards."

She stood and went to the corner by the kitchen. She bent and squeezed the small cupboard door open. She took out the sewing machine just to keep him quiet. She tried to remember a battle that had been won, without cutting and pasting. There were so many of them, but all apparently lost, at best drawn. She glanced outside at shell-scared buildings. The cracking thumps of artillery had faded into the mountains, but the throbbing remained.

She watched the fish turn delicately. They knew how to avoid frontiers and borders, how to flirt without damaging, stand off before hitting the glass wall. She walked over and shook in flakes of food. Her husband paced before the open window, then stopped to stare past the lights, out into the sky. She knew the silence, the lost gaze.

"Full moon tomorrow night." He paused as his fingers fumbled in his shirt pocket for another cigarette. "Do you think he'll be watching it? Out there all alone."

She saw her sons' heads bobbing to loud music, their smiles beaming as they brought the curtains home. Now, all she really wanted to do was pull the material closed, blot it all out and forget there was only one child left, like her husband's leg. Stood on a landmine. One down. She doubted his brother would notice the moon, but she told her husband he would, that he would be watching, thinking of home.

She tried to remember how to thread the machine. She wondered what she could sew. She fiddled with the thread. The sight of her husband hopping against his walking stick, peering after a missing limb and praying it wouldn't happen his

offspring, made her eyes water. It was easier to pretend to sew, than search the room endlessly for comfort. She prayed their son would be alright, that a full moon wouldn't point him out and target their loneliness. She couldn't face another argument over how to put him back together if the worst happened. She watched the fish suddenly bang its head against the bowl, and wondered if it knew how to scream.

THE YEAR MY MOTHER DIED KEEPS ASKING ME TO GO FOR DINNER

by Rhiannon Wilson

I got the text at a quarter past three
on a Tuesday afternoon. I thought
I'd blocked the number but it came
through anyway, and I knew who it
was straight away. That sickly sweet
smell wafting through the screen
of my phone. *A nice Indian place,*
the text tempts. I don't like Indian
food. The year my mother died
changes tact, *maybe Italian then?*

I miss Mum's Bolognese. I stopped
eating meat and they asked me,
do you not miss it?

I missed the taste of my mum's
lamb dinners and ham sandwiches
long before I switched to plants.
Does quorn live up to what you're
used to? they ask. No, it doesn't, but
I think the year my mother died they
changed something about the way
they feed the animals. It doesn't compare.

I'm vegetarian now, I text back.
A lot has changed, the year says.
Ten years in between now and then.
I'm not the same person as I was
back then, I tell it.
Why do you think I want to go
to dinner? it replies.

CEREMONY

by Rhiannon Wilson

I hate the wretched ceremony
of it, hate the way we huddle
around the grave in silence as
my father and sister offer
their prayers and I wonder
what to do with my hands.
Maybe next time I will recite
poetry in my head, mine or
someone else's. These are all
the love letters I've written
to you since you've been gone.
These are all the ones I wish
I'd written.

ME AND MY EXES SIT DOWN TO DINNER

by Rhiannon Wilson

You can never be sure how these things will go, but they are passing the vegetables around quite amicably. The seating plan is always an issue. I pondered over it for a while – should I group them by gender? Counter-clockwise in order of length from longest to shortest? Or sit them clockwise in chronological order. I thought about maybe grouping them as heartbreakers and heart-broken, dumpers and dumpees, or maybe stack them up in order of who loved me the most (but that's hard to tell, isn't it? I think maybe number five loved me most of all, but she's the one who left all these bruises hiding beneath my ribs).

I told them they could bring a plus one, if they wanted. My first boyfriend sits with my childhood best friend, her hand resting on his knee under the table. They keep mostly to themselves, sharing a side order of mashed potato between them. We share pleasantries when they walk through door and they raise their glasses with me when I propose a toast
(to love and loss)

My first girlfriend brought a plus one too, a girl with a shaved head and more tattoos than me, and they sit wrapped up in each other, feeding each other spoonfuls of syrup and giggling together. They made themselves right at home, didn't wait for me to take their coats but instead barged past me and picked the coat hook for themselves (they decided

to share one, and a seat) and started eating as soon as the plate touched the table, no time for ceremony.

Later they will claim indigestion.

The top of the table is saved for the most interesting ones. Here is where all the jealousy simmers, the ex who held my heart for the longest time (if you look close enough you will find splinters of it under his fingernails, traces of it in his chest). Our eyes meet when I raise my glass. *This is the love I am talking of*, I tell him with my eyes. *This is the loss*, his eyes say back, and we smile at each other as our glasses touch, softly, barely making a sound.

I sit at the head of the table and the two most recent of my lovers sit head to head the first seat down on either side. They do not look away from each other as they raise their glasses for the toast, mirror images with their dark hair and sculpted eyebrows and same cool blue eyes. On *loss* they crash their glasses together, splintering them, and spend the duration of the starter picking shards of glass out of their food. Self-sabotage. When the waiter comes around, she tries to order my meal for me but even as she opens her mouth he pushes the menu back my way, staring her down. She seethes. Towards the bottom of the table, my first girlfriend and her partner argue over which dessert to share. I sit back and sip my drink, watch the chaos unfold.

TABLES TURNED

by Sadie Maskery

I smile to think of you,
the frightener, frightened,
huffing the dull air I exhale,
chest tightened to uneasiness.
You didn't expect the
empty immensity
of my self loathing,
its vacancy. No sweetness
here to smear.
I am all the souls you have
ever eaten with their
transparent taste of old ice.
The time to dream is mine
and my dreams
come

true.

MINOU

by Sadie Maskery

Tiny shrieks wake me
from a dream of luxurious
str-e-e-e-t-ch
on an ancient Egyptian royal coverlet.
My eyes open to a world
of sharp edges, hyper resolution,
colours of density and saturation
and those shrieks make my
claws curl and dig with anticipation.
A surprise, but in this state
emotions have a different truth.
No sentimental clinging to a past
when now is all, and the scent of blood
tickles my whiskers. Wait.
Savour this. Every sense
to be embraced, inhaled, devoured
and oh this body is perfection,
let me drown in the ecstasy of life
bringing death, I slide
to the ground, belly and haunches
taut with desire for those shrieks
ah ah ah
there you are,
pleasure now all mine,
the wail, the crunch, the soft wet
warmth. The ohhhh.
I purr.
I blink.
I wake again
in ripped pantyhose.
Minou my cat kisses my nose.

FERNANDO PESSOA I AM SCARED TO

by Derek Maine

commune with you.

I study your life, Fernando Pessoa. I listen to the stories.

I imagine your loneliness.

Fernando Pessoa, did you really leave an entire literature in a trunk?

I have overheard the following, Fernando, & I demand to know its truth:

- *The Book of Disquiet* will re-wire your brain
- *The Book of Disquiet* is unsettling
- *The Book of Disquiet* is incomplete
- There are still fragments being found in a trunk which may, one day, be included in *The Book of Disquiet*
- You wrote "I know not what tomorrow will bring" on a pad or in a journal at the Hospital de São Luís November 29th, 1935 and died the next day, aged 47, in the evening of course, having drank yourself to death
- Fernando Pessoa does not exist, for existing too much.

I have not read you Fernando Pessoa, I am afraid.

Fernando Pessoa, tell me the truth goddamnit, are you writing *The Book of Disquiet* from your grave?

Is it such a terrible Winter, Fernando, what with all this death & isolation, to finally dance with you?

We have been avoiding each other, Fernando Pessoa.

I believe you have something for me, Fernando Pessoa.

I shall come, in the evening of course, to collect.

Literature is a conversation with ghosts

it is the occult

the secret society is literature &

literature comes to us as a warning from the dead

written in absolute fear while we are alive; Fernando Pessoa I believe you have something which belongs to me.

Are you going to hurt me, Fernando Pessoa?

I am a happy man, this is an entirely different century, I have children and a wife, I cannot abandon them for you or your suggestions, they have excellent medications now Fernando, I must not be taken on your ship, I resign myself to you in protest.

I have never read your work Fernando Pessoa. You visited me on a stretch of road many years ago and demanded I cease, I disobeyed you Fernando Pessoa & was that you in the window of the Whitaker Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility?

I shunned you twice, no, a thousand times.

I've never written a poem

I don't know how.

I do not have the luxury of seventy-five assistants I quit drinking when my son was born,

Fernando Pessoa, because I lived with my father once,

Fernando Pessoa I swear to whatever ether exists from which you continue to write your little scraps of paper that if you hurt me or my family I will fucking hunt you down in that cosmic expanse

I have had my eye trained on you since birth – since before – since the birth of something else – something terrible – like a secret – not a secret exactly but something unknown – which

I'm told you know something about.

I understand you've written to me. A poem, perhaps?

ARTIST INTERVIEW: HOMELESS

by Logan Roberts and Homeless

Logan Roberts: I want to start by saying thanks for being my first artist post. Before we get into talking about art and stuff, give us a little bio. Where are you from, who is Homeless?

Homeless: I'm originally from Connecticut, but Connecticut was too exciting, too rich & dense with culture, so I decided to move someplace quieter, someplace calmer, & decided on NYC. I'm not sure how well sarcasm is going to carry over via us messaging, so sorry in advance if I ruin this whole interview.

Who am I? Man. I don't know. I guess the simple answer is I'm just some gum bumming through life & trying to hurt as few people along the way as possible. And I meant to type "guy" right there but leave "gum" in because I think that better described me—like a piece of wadded up dry gum. That's me, a wadded up piece of dry gum trying not to hurt anyone.

LR: What flavor of gum would you be? Does the fact that the gum is already chewed change your mind?

H: I'd probably be one of those Zebra-striped pieces of gum. Anyone of those flavors that loses tastes after two bites and just goes stale and really disappoints you. I'm not sure what you mean by the second question, so I'll just ask you if you were a piece of chewed up gum where's the one place you would like to be stuck the most? Like after the person is done chewing and they don't want you—the gum—anymore and there's no trash can around. What place would you like to be stuck?

LR: I meant like, so you'd be a zebra-stripe, but would you choose a different flavor as an already chewed piece? I don't know, the question sucks haha. Hmmm. If I had to be stuck anywhere besides in a trash can, as a piece of chewed gum, I think it would be under a handrail, so maybe one day I'd know what it was like to be touched again. Thanks for asking, nobody I've interviewed has ever asked me a question.

Anyways. When did you get into art? Maybe not the style you've developed, but like, what was the first time you remember being like, damn, I kind doing this.

H: I've always enjoyed drawing. Like, I've always found it "meditative" before I really even knew what meditation was. But I think I began enjoying drawing more



so after I learned about a lot of NYC artists from the 80's like Keith Haring, Basquiat, Kenny Sharf. Stumbling across guys like them, while also learning more about street artists, like Invader and Shepard Fairey—I guess maybe that made me want to take my "crap art" more seriously. I don't consider myself an "artist" by the way. Haha, for the record. Just a "crap artist" really.

LR: That's awesome though. I remember finding dudes like Invader and thinking, man I want to do that. I ended up just spray-painting penises on dumpsters though. So does the style you've developed come from a heavy influence of graffiti?

H: I think my style developed from a limited talent, a lifetime of doodling, and then street art. When you look at one someone like Invader, he essentially does the same thing over and over, but in variations here and there. And I'm not shit talking about him. I love him. Dude's a god to me. But in terms of street art, your stuff



needs to be somewhat simple & somewhat repetitive because it's all about being prolific. You need to develop a style and then be prolific with it because as soon as you put a piece up there's a really good chance it's gonna get destroyed or painted over pretty quickly. I'm not saying street artists aren't original, but I think what street art taught me was to develop a style that's undeniably you. Like something people can automatically identify as you as soon as they see it.

LR: Yeah no, I get it. Oftentimes I think the art of street-artists comes in how they use their symbol, rather than trying to create a masterpiece, you know? So, all the work I've seen of yours is on cardboard, how did that come about?

H: I've been drawing on cardboard ever since I was little. My dad used to bring these big TV tray-sized pieces home from his job for me to color on. & ever when I drew on paper, I'd use those pieces of cardboard as a surface so I could lay on the carpet to draw. So when I began drawing again when I was older, I think I just subconsciously returned to cardboard because it was cheap and easy to access

& I was used to the feel of drawing on it.



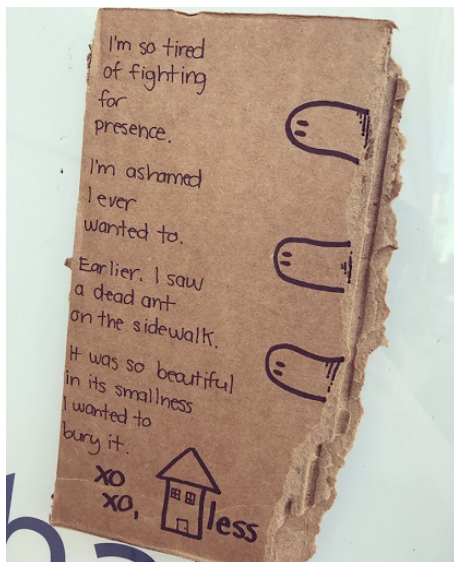
LR: Yeah, we just moved and have a ton of U-Haul boxes. I wanted to paint but didn't have any canvas at the time, it's a cool surface to work on for sure.

All the drawings of your's I've seen far as these crazy morphed creatures. Do you sketch these out beforehand, or just go at it on the cardboard and hope it turns out ok?

H: I just call them head cases. I didn't understand the inspiration behind it all until I'd been drawing them for a year or so. I just kinda sat back after completing one, feeling relaxed, feeling relieved. & the more I stared at it, the more I began to

understand that what I'd essentially drawn was the turmoil going on in my head. Haha. One head case alone can be screaming, frustrated, & looking on the verge of tears at the same time. They're like an amalgamation of frustration and confusion I think all adults feel, and I guess I kinda let that out, like some weird cartoonish scream, in a way to vent & get all those shitty feelings/ thoughts out of me.

Like a nice, little mental enema. Maybe that's what I should call them instead?



L: That's awesome. We're almost done, but I wanted to ask about the poems posted in public places. I've seen some of your tweets about them, and the comments people leave. What made you start doing that and what keeps you doing it?

H: I got so fed up with begging to be published. I got so fed up with submitting poems & never hearing back from the fucking lit magazines I sent them to. I got to this point where I didn't want to ask permission anymore just so I could be read. So I started publishing them myself in the subway, in the streets. Some people like them. So don't. It's okay. There's a lot of shit out there I hate, although when I dislike something I really try to keep that distaste to myself. I guess I keep doing it because I want to, although sometimes I'll be more into putting up poems, & other times I'll be more into putting up art pieces. The desire for each comes and goes, but I'm usually always putting something up for anyone who wants to enjoy it, for anyone, like myself, who stumbles across art on the streets and gets excited.

L: You're speaking some truth. I've got some emailed subs that I sent almost over a year ago, and still haven't heard a word. I don't really care though, I think I've found some great places that my work actually belongs in now. However, I've thought about publishing a chapbook and just leaving it in bookstores and park

benches. So, what's next? Got any big projects in mind? I know I'm excited to get the piece you're finishing up for me. Where do you see your art going?

H: I say go for it, stud. Something street art has taught me is you have no idea how your work can positively influence someone's day just by putting it out there. So, to me, that alone makes it worth doing.

As for projects? I have a second novel I'm trying to get published & a third I've begun working on. Art wise? I've got some ideas in mind but I'm just gonna let them develop naturally & not rush them & see what happens. &, in the meantime, I'm just gonna keep putting as many pieces up as possible.

L: Nice, well, I think that about wraps it up. Any last words? How can people find you and keep up with your creative endeavors?

H: I just panicked when you asked for last words and couldn't think of anything cool or funny or original. So I'll just go with "I'm an anxious hot mess." Or "avoid the clap.". People can choose which they'd prefer. If anyone wants to see what I'm up to for whatever reason they can just google xoxohomeless & see what creative skid marks I've left across the net. Thanks so much for doing this, man. You're good people & I really appreciate it.

L: No problem, always glad to connect with a fellow creative. But since I stole the last word, I'll give you a second chance. Any last words?

H: You don't win friends with salad. Xox



ART BY T.W. SELVEY



"EATEN" / T.W. SELVEY



"INTROVERSION" / T.W. SELVEY



"CAN'T GET ENOUGH" / T.W. SELVEY



"DELICIOUS GOOEY CENTER" / T.W. SELVEY



"UNHEARD" / T.W. SELVEY

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Sadie Maskery lives in Scotland by the sea. She was a singer until March 2020 but now she is not quite sure what she is. She is on Twitter as [@saccharinequeen](#) where she describes herself optimistically as "functioning adequately".

Derek Maine lives in North Carolina with his family. His stories began appearing in odd little corners of the internet in the Fall of 2020. This is his first poem. He is on twitter too much [@derekmainelives](#)

You can find Homeless on Twitter [@xoxohomeless](#)

Recently, T.W. Selvey's work has appeared in *The Babel Tower Notice Board*, *Ligeia Magazine*, *Fairy Piece*, *Feral*, talking about strawberries all of the time, *Otoliths*, and *Fugitives & Futurists*. T.W. tweets sporadically [@docu_dement](#), and is the proud curator of a haphazardly curated blog, [www.documentdement.com](#)