



## GOD, BODY, ALGEBRA

"I am displeased with everything," writes Emil Cioran in *On the Heights of Despair*, twenty-two years old and depressed. "If they made me God, I would immediately resign, and if the world were just me, I would sunder myself apart, burst into tiny pieces, and disappear." These exploded fragments of Cioran became Will Alexander's in *Across the Vapour Gulf*, and now the poets in this issue borrow them, little handholds in melancholy both dark and sweet.

**GOD**

*Yongyu Chen*  
*Stella Corso*  
*Nishat Ahmed*

**BODY**

*David Kuhnlein*  
*Lena Rubin*  
*Margaret Yapp*

**ALGEBRA**

*Haley Joy Harris*  
*Klara Pokrzywa*  
*Serena Solin*

## ***from Across the Vapour Gulf***

“Having reached this plane of the susurrant, does the body, seismic beyond its perceptual immobility, take on the totality of higher light or does it opt for mental thanatopsis, sulking, algebraic, depressed? As for intervallic transition, does the body continue to flow as Grosseteste suggests, naturally, geometrically, with rays of the Sun darting through one’s blood?”

Given the fact of creation as it continues to flow through us, the latter condition would seem to be the prevalent one in spite of visible evidence of seemingly invincible entropy; there exists a level of unbridled astral plasticity, alive at the core of the body and the heavens.”

—*Will Alexander*



*Yongyu Chen*

## **Entrebecamen**

You can send me anything. The saffron, the autumn  
crocus. Shelllight for the beach, nightmusic: the  
table beats like a heart  
in the green room, we close around it.

Early summer, early autumn,

early winter, over. The king. The enemy. Their  
poisonous horses dreaming in the plaza at night,  
wine-hungry. You drew  
three cards for yourself, the water spills. The  
wallpaper spills, it

looks just like us

where the beams join behind the wall. Knowing  
doesn't feel like this, it's not knowing.  
It's slow, star time.

You have the old mirror box, you save something in it  
each year,

you poured it out, we cut each other's hair. Light.

Only makes sense in the middle of more light. I only  
care about more light. Light lit by totality light,  
higher light. The tablecloth lit then attached  
to the table only by the wind

of taking away,

a passion. You will talk about memory. Splendor. You  
will write, you will walk too far into the ice fields.

Your favorite tense whatever it is, that's where you  
should meet me. Yesterday's hot water still yet to  
cool. Moses-time. The bed,  
is dark, the table darker in full ankles of snow. When  
you are

where I expect you are, you are engulfed by  
a never:

consent to withdraw, self

arils, self-vapor, I wished even the clouds were blue.  
Complete. Anonymous blue.



*Stella Corso*

## **Forced Perspective in a Garden Mirror**

The ad says it's poetic  
to contemplate death

in a winter garden  
where a woman bends

to clutch the yellow grass  
light breaks her in half

and old men seem to know  
so much more than me

when it comes to shrubbery  
a thorny bush might be named Betty Boop

a chrysanthemum is a white bomb  
casual trees are just called David

but what could be funnier  
than a false forget-me-not

little flowers clapping back

their faces reflected  
inside the circular pool

shallow green, not exactly a sea  
where a brick once drowned

and long gone children  
carved their names in ice

like the scent of forgotten paint  
that failed to fully dry

but acquired a permanent layer of dust  
why language like the body

despite its awesome plasticity  
remains sulking at its core

*Nishat Ahmed*

**at the core of the body  
and the heavens**

one finds the totality of higher light—  
call it what you want  
heaven, love, does it matter?  
here, have a little joy

we'll name it *tomorrow*  
we'll name it after  
making love or  
maybe after breakfast

would you like some honey  
with your coffee?  
and a promise lathered  
onto your toast?

the burnt bits are only that  
for which we can't forgive ourselves  
so let us live in error to find gold  
-en brown sun darting through our blood



*David Kuhnlein*

## **Bloodborne**

Forbidden from my family home  
Security cameras do nothing but flash me  
Unscalable adobe dons a crown of broken glass  
Greased and growing, thick as hair

My fingerprints dehisce their perimeter  
Like psychotropics darting through blood  
Red ants bite me in swells of cursive  
Relatives' prayers teem, gleaning as they flay

I'm stuffed into a burlap sack  
An unmarked truck, the station  
They drill me more mouths to ball gag  
And force feed me sneezes for lunch

I'm a dust cloud refusing to settle  
Rot depressed back to life at its core  
Fingered blue by a lineage drowned in me  
Hallucinations abbreviated, gap to God shrunk

Reconstructing my jaw with a thicker lid  
Is this a body bag or a river I'm in  
The weak taxidermy of my surname thaws  
Ashes melt up my knuckles without me

*Lena Rubin*

***from Harsh Red***

*i.*

harsh empty head, harsh red heat  
harsh side of body, flanky falling off side of body  
a needled toe point beside the nail  
drains the heat w/ sharp pain

i didn't think it would mean anything to write  
about "it"  
indiscriminate hunger is a trick of the mind

cows grazing in the gloaming mean nothing to a  
tortured mind  
which once thought it was soft, removing outer  
hardness to

find unimaginable hardness within, blockage of  
stream  
was it better with false, external, workable  
hardness?

some thought streams are—too quickly—  
WRITE THEM DOWN WRITE THEM DOWN

others seem so passé they could rouse disgust

who is the one feeling disgusted  
which of you

*Margaret Yapp*

## **WATER NOT WEATHER**

singing across river  
I can hear    see body  
hair that keeps turning over  
the shoulder.

I cannot see face.

Sometimes calls  
wine color

liver leaf  
lobed in odd number.

Your face  
expanding & contracting

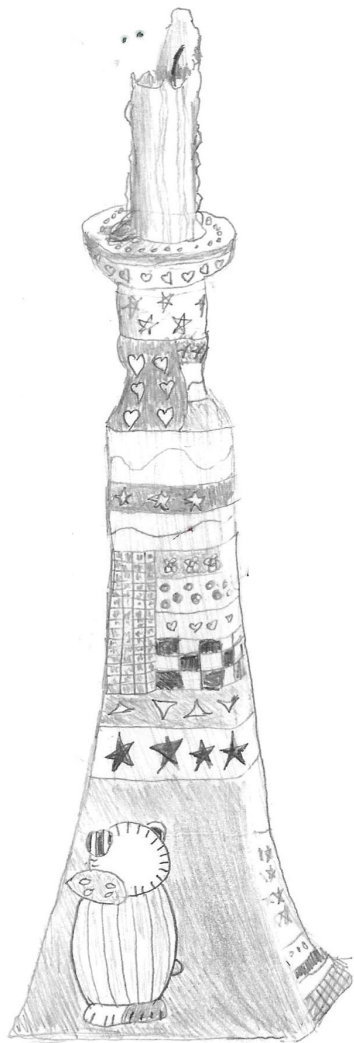
a gesture  
like a balloon

or a bone in  
the boiling

boiling water  
water reeking

of booze





*Haley Joy Harris*

## **On Wednesday night I whispered in your ear**

how I'd learned time  
in a linear sense  
was contrived  
during the Renaissance.  
Imagine how  
the Flies & the Soil  
shrugged this off  
in pursuit of their own  
annulus. Their own  
algebraic intervals  
of pinching, grappling.  
Crawling toward you  
is jaundiced rapture.  
The primal sulking  
that accompanies  
my simple request  
to be known  
as a string of ceramic  
beads fired one  
by one. Chosen  
& held in regard  
between fingers

before looped through  
& tied around  
your ankle.  
Cycles from now,  
when I wade in  
skin-deep, I'll hear  
the familiar chime  
of bottomless tidepools  
we could have  
used as currency  
had we not averted  
eye contact  
when we were  
stark-naked.

*Klara Pokrzywa*

## **ROMAN OPAŁKA<sup>1</sup> HITS INFINITY**

End of the line now god said here is where you become the second hand. See color where it's not especially purple in grey. Blindsight now algebraic. End of the line stop past the corner of time where if you turn you find yourself once again a child. Unearth memory of seeing demons at night or was it TV static terrified you would count down to zero and past that stop. Or where my life has been a single thing. A single problem knifelike solved. Ordered infinity entropy's escape. Or what have you. It is in the details beyond my grasp which is to say the artist who emerges will not be me. I have skipped like a stone over time's horizon. I am I am. A series of unfolding clicks into successive light. Now when I am too drunk I begin counting over and over losing my place each time. Most great tragedies you see after only you have passed them. And indeed my attitude has been likened to suicide or sacrifice. Okay yes. Or I am right and god only loves me as I lose myself, as I take on a new and ridiculous shape. I was painting white numbers on white canvas! You should laugh! I am guilty, obsessive and guilty, a slave to my most

clicking impulse: laugh! After all a number is a single thing which increases in size daily. Cross the line of belief. End of that line too. I have seen strange things at night and in addition have been called insane by many which is insane because things fall apart at frankly astonishing rates and I the least of them. Most child-like purple seer sees changing shapes sees the form of that well-earned number white and it is I who am raving? Tell me new numbers. I am a prophet credulous of that final and infinite canvas.

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<sup>1</sup> Roman Opałka was a French-Polish artist who created a series of paintings titled 1965/1-∞ (1965–2011). This series consisted of canvases covered in crowded rows of handpainted numbers, starting from one and stretching on into theoretical infinity. He painted in white, starting on a dark grey canvas and adding 1% more white to each successive canvas until he was painting white numbers on white canvas. When asked about the series, he once said “These obsessions—death, disappearance, the irreversibility of time—are difficult, courageous, suicidal. In fact, my attitude has been likened to suicide, sacrifice.” He rarely traveled, and obsessively worked on the series from its beginning in 1965 until the time of his death. While he wished to at least make it to the milestone number 7,777,777 before his death, he died in 2011 with the last number painted being 5,607,249.

*Serena Solin*

## **Solar Inverter**

A correction note to a mysterious entity:  
it is not just the days, but the presences  
which are growing longer. Bound by wire  
to the roof, the brick chimney dissembling,  
I speak a language understood by cats,  
birds, and the irrational. I begin to fear,  
like all animated things, the imminent,  
the inevitable, terribly: the unbridled  
loosed upon the world, the escape  
of the spirits I've gathered into me.

For there is a fault in my manufacturing.  
There is a bulb that does not flicker  
because it was born dead, neither green  
nor intervallic. No human can know  
if I am powered on without listening.  
To his circuitry I become the intolerable  
answer, the blind path, where eventually  
man, mineral, and electricity are one,  
the loop closed by my master's fleshy  
hand, the hideous moment of joining—



“Having reached this plane of the susurrant...” is excerpted from *Across the Vapour Gulf* by Will Alexander (New Directions, 2017).

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*Annotations* asks poets to respond to a text by using a single word (or more) from the chosen poem or excerpt. For the prompt for Issue 3, visit [errant-memory.net](http://errant-memory.net).

*Issue 1: Clark Coolidge*  
*Issue 2: Will Alexander*

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