



*SELECTIONS FROM:*  
**OXEYE READER**  
— ISSUE I —  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**

# PHOEBE WAYNE

## *NEST*

There's a floor under the floor or a ceiling above the ceiling or a joist sistered to a joist or a wall over the top of a wall or a duct within a duct or a cabinet inside a cabinet or a plant growing on a plant or paint on top of paint on top of paint on top of paint or wiring entwined with wiring or a socket inside a socket or wallpaper on top of wallpaper or cement over cement or a box stored in a box or a bag of bags also a crack in a crack and a chip in a chip and splinters splintering from one another and dirt on dirt crystals

# JAMONDRIA HARRIS

## LOVE STORY I

the caterpillar shit falls in rain and with air, all day  
& all night there is no time where they are not laying  
the history of their beauty in eggs or shit or sleeping  
in a tomb made of their flesh to burst and ride  
color out of the living deluge of what they were  
born to feed upon, and be trod under. what patterns  
laid on your back pull shadow and bark over  
you/towards great heat known dreaming/what did you draw in  
through & on your back/towards light unseen

(the people who left the pots on mount Lico were  
quiet and in their long silent wandering rose with  
the mountain from the plain/they laid in the red soil  
& made vessels of themselves for what they had found/  
their travels having made a tangle of death & dream to bring  
forth children/inextricable from the play of water and shadow  
in any eye/ & only ever witnessed by those who bore them)

(the city seen at dusk between the red earth and canopy is  
wrung through with monumental, mortarless stone laid  
as a serpent has bones to carry itself in and out  
of sight. the pale ridges fall to powder along any edge  
set and reborn/this pigment is holy to the people on the mountain  
it is the only pigment not red as soil or blood and so it is gathered  
each evening in the presence and aftermath of the sun and it  
is at this time you may be able to speak to and see the people  
hands and mouths filled out from shadow by dust until  
they are wound back into their homes that wander the walls )

## DAVID ABEL

from *SWEET*

745

At Loquillo,  
the sand is fine and uniform,  
orange Taino *barro*  
and shell of crab and mollusc  
reduced and mixed  
become the foundation  
of the world underfoot,  
the sensible place  
where, standing, surf tugging at my feet,  
I ponder the sound  
of another surf I cannot see

At Loquillo,  
time is fine and uniform,  
2:01:09 post meridian in any color or material  
seawater and mechanical virtuosity  
ground, reduced, and stopped,  
becoming the sign or namesake  
of the story undertaken,  
vanishing, sparkling experience  
through which, thinking, wind teasing my hair  
I feel the surge  
of a tide that precedes and surpasses me

## ALLISON COBB

### THE LIVES

I wanted to say something about the lives, but I didn't know where to start. Then a gift arrived from the poet Dana Ward. He posted a poem to Facebook by Harris Schiff called "Money."<sup>i</sup> Ok, money. Picture this: oil. It burbles up thick and black, residue of creatures from an ancient ocean, molecules erupting out of lives lived a few hundred million years ago. Then, people. Some arrived in their lives on a spot of earth. They brought machines to cut down trees, tear up plants and scrape bare the dirt. Some brought explosives or a giant truck smashing down a metal plate to send shock waves through the earth. Someone set up a geophone to listen to vibrations in the rock, and some ran a computer program to translate the waves into a picture. Someone studied the 3D map to divine whether pools of crude might ooze beneath rock. Some people in offices made the decisions and paid money to others to do this work in hopes of getting more money back. *the ugliest / strongest / horse /*

Those they paid for their lives brought a drilling rig to the spot and positioned its metal teeth to bite down into dirt. They inserted a pipe, and concrete, and chemicals and forced the viscous remains up out of the earth. Or what broke from the rock looked like nothing, the once-living transmuted to gas, a ghost. To capture it, people labored, sweating and straining. Some bones got smashed, blood ran, bodies breathed hard, sucking tiny particles of soot from the diesel machines deep inside spongy lung tissue. *you can ride / in this pasture / do you want to /*

Some people put the oil or the gas into pipes or in containers on a truck or a ship to a factory. Some others heated it with steam to crack apart the molecules and form new ones — benzene, styrene, propylene, and

at the highest temperature, past 1400 degrees, ethylene. Some others put the ethylene in a machine to compress it with three thousand atmospheres. They mixed in other chemicals to bind the molecules, one to the other to form the single, long chain that makes plastic. In the case of this car part, polyethylene, the most common plastic on the planet. Its molecular structure looks like this: *it will take you / but it might not / obey you /*



The polyethylene flowed from the machine as rice-sized grains, odorless and translucent, warm to the touch. Some people put the grains in containers and carried them over land or over sea to a factory. In the factory some people took the grains, melted them down, and injected the steaming ooze into a mold of this car part, a fender liner — four feet long and curved with a complex, irregular shape to fit the chassis. Someone designed that complicated mold, and someone else built it. In the factory, a person, in the living hours of a life, molded thousands of car parts, dwarfed by the beige machine, vibrating with whirrs, and grrs and squeals. *if you can tame it / you might be in trouble /*

At each step, some molecules escaped, called “waste,” into air or into ground or water. Some breathed these molecules, they burned the lungs and made it hard to get air; others swam through them or swallowed them in clear liquid from the tap, where maybe they changed the person’s cells, causing them to mutate and grow into

tumors. The people who breathed and swam and swallowed these molecules probably have less — less pay, less health, less safety. The people who carry the burden of these molecules in their bodies probably don't look like the people in power, probably they struggle just to keep living, the horses of money hoof beating through them.

Some molecules that didn't enter bodies floated high into the atmosphere and stayed there, soaking up waves of heat, causing them to bend and vibrate, jostling their neighbors who vibrated too, everybody heating up. Some of the molecules will float up there for a few hundred years, some will stay a few hundred thousand, just there, molecules out of creatures from an ancient ocean now in the air, holding in heat, fevering the sphere. *and where / do you want to go from here /*

This car part curves together past and future, not as metaphor. Look: an old ocean, salty and wet, filled with lives feeding off sunlight and one another. One life runs out, it sinks, one, and another, and another, slow sinking to darkness over years, a few hundred million — who can think them — sifting, layering, compressing ever deeper into earth. Ice advances and retreats, more oceans, a few mountains erupt — think of this as film, time lapse, I guess. Then minds come and eyes and ears with instruments to listen underground for residues of lives left over. Then machines come and hands and bodies to draw them back out of the earth. Then trucks and ships and trains and those who load and fuel and drive them over roads and oceans thousands of miles to processing plants and factories. Then the instance of this car part's coming to shape. The place and time and day of that event. The person in a life bringing breath and thought and muscle to bear in its creation.

Here it is, the piece itself, its molecules took so much heat and pressure to make they would never form outside a factory. No living entity has the tools to melt these bonds, so they will last, far outlast the bonds among molecules in the person who formed it, in the

person who attached it to the vehicle, in the person who drove the vehicle and had some mishap, some accident, some swerving that scraped up the surface of the polyethylene and left it tangled against my fence. Its bonds I can't see but can feel their result, stiff but still pliable, folded over, like a wing at my feet. Its bonds will outlast my own and those of everyone I know or can imagine out into the future, hundreds of generations extended, this piece of plastic worn slowly down by sunlight and weather into finer and finer bits dispersed throughout earth, fed to an albatross chick out of oceans rising, ice melting, scorched forests turned to desert, desert turned to ocean, lifeless, this molecule with its shape like lightning or a river, a few hundred years, maybe thousands, I touch it, this car part, the future. The past. *Its brutal hooves / the subject of this sentence is money / cut welts across the weeping world*

<sup>i</sup> Harris Schiff, "Money," *One More Beat* (Accent Editions, 2012). Lines from the poem appear throughout the section.

"The Lives" is an excerpt from the book *Plastic: an autobiography*, due out in 2021 from Nightboat Books, that traces my obsession with a plastic car part that appeared one day against my fence.



## **RODNEY KOENEKE**

### *SOME COMMENTS UPON THE ASTRONOMERS*

Comets need not observe heartbreak  
or bear neglect across a sky  
feeling the same feelings over and over  
but only temporarily each time

Making believers feel stupid  
simply concerned with the burning tail  
otherwise seeing nothing  
outside the withered ambit of their house.

One hope they allot to the fire  
the next to any compact form  
that sears above the earth, a damage  
so remote from human problems

That none of you could love it, be affected.  
Spread out the cold food, burn  
the thin money—there's nothing here connects  
me to my neighbor. The tangled stars can gutter out

Completely, their erratic-looking blazing  
more data for astronomers to think about  
much later: Accident, Necessity, the dime-sized  
stone that leaves behind a crater.

# ENDI BOGUE HARTIGAN

from *THE SEAWEED SD TREBLE CLEF*

the seaweed sd treble clef

sd leftflip contortspindle inkdrop

read yourself complicit in it  
not fit to be read

not fit to be reading  
exactly what do you call it what do you  
call it said  
seahorseknot&  
leglessstork sd  
babybasket footprintmarred  
are you action  
by reading seahorse&  
embryonic fork&



# THOMAS MOWE

## SHORTHAND EXERCISE NUMBER 8

2 u r ? 6 e. in e  
u ? w , o w l ( u  
d e e = 3  
or u h r j y. z p e  
3 e 6 - e l ) u . r  
d 2 " e o r + ? e u  
h o n  
e . w b f e d u p u e o u  
2 u r u e y q u b u 12 y r  
g m s p r s u  
t u b u u . e y p o u  
• r s o u . u p l e ( )  
2 y s h o . s e l e u  
r p e . y , s r .

While little trouble is experienced in writing the hook alone, there is an inclination to broaden it when followed by a circle vowel as in 'we' or 'wave'.

Another little fox is the hand lifting from the page. Write a novel or play in a couple days and let a steno decipher while you write another. Send everything twice. Of course, postmen might kick.

I was a lousy teacher. On the first day of lessons, I wrote 'Voltaire, in his remarkable life of Charles XII of Sweden, in the preface, discourses about the multitude of kings, emperors, czars, warriors and caliphs that seem immortal and deem themselves immortal and are deemed so by their worshipful contemporaries, and how, tried by the test of time, they shrink and shrivel into nothing,

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then handed my

amanuensis the pen. Confabulation rests my hand over his  
that day, dreamy sex. The covering blows from the roof of  
the half-finished house. The wind is at fault,

tears

travel down the natural routes, diving downward, each  
bearing a double imprint. It is archaic sex, a tongue upon a  
tongue. In the memory, like a burr, I would not vanish. The  
crook in incunabula, the tie in the middle of pairs, the string  
wraps at the end to bind the one to the other. The other, the  
new, cannot end with 'the beach the barrier'. The end too  
has a double imprint. 'The sky unfolds, having folded over the  
night we met.'

We work backward from the end. We are given a landscape.

# CHRIS ASHBY

from *CITY MAKER*

Alluvial	(of)	Constructed
Disaster	Green	(the)
Compromised	(the)	Lamprey
(and)	Archives	Climb
Composed	(of)	(the)
(a)	(a)	Rock
Calamity	Managed	(of)
Devouring	River	(the)
(the)	---	Falls
Archives	Geology	---
---	Suggests	Appropriated
Glacial	Erosion	(the)
Appropriation	Eruption	River
Cities	Pines	Works
Backfill	Hide	Hard
(the)	(the)	(for)
Lakes	Pesticides	(the)
---	---	Management
Waiting	Swimmer	Deleting
(for)	Enters	Silt
Disaster	(via)	(and)
(in)	Sand	Shores
(the)	Navigates	---
Trees	Calamity	
Incredible	---	
Shades		

1.

The river begins in the clouds  
the clouds begin in the sea  
water in the ocean is composed  
the river begins  
the clouds  
the sea  
water in the ocean is composed

The river begins  
the clouds are pushed  
begins inland  
the river begins in the sea  
evaporates  
collects  
the clouds in the sky are composed

The river begins in the mountains  
the clouds are composed in the sky  
the wind pushes inland  
the mountains begin  
angled  
trenched  
the rain in the sky is composed

The river begins in the rain  
gravity pulls down  
the rivers are composed in the core  
in the iron  
in the rotation of the earth  
attraction pulling into channels  
the falling of the rain is composed

The river begins in the falling  
in the wind that leads to angles  
in the rocks that lead to channels  
in the lines that lead to rock  
the angles begin in the channels  
the lines begin in the angles  
the mountains of the river are composed

2.

There is a lake  
A lake made in the mountains  
The river is in the lake  
Made at the base of mountains  
There is a lake  
Lying at the base of mountains  
There is a lake  
Particles in the air bring the water down  
Through the channels  
To the lake  
Through the angles  
To the lake  
The particles in the air bring the water down  
Through the mountains  
To the lake  
Clouds above  
Over land  
Clouds above  
Over mountains  
Over land  
Clouds move  
Over mountains  
Over land

Clouds move  
Through mountains  
Through particles in air  
That bring the water down  
Clouds move  
Through particles of dust  
That bring the water down  
Clouds move  
Through particles of soot  
That bring the water down  
There is a lake made in the mountains  
Beneath the channels  
That bring the water down  
Beneath the angles  
Where water has been brought before



## JEN COLEMAN

from *WRITE ME A POEM, SAYS MOM,  
THAT I WOULD LIKE. ABOUT DEATH.*

1.

When death came and left again with my father  
the moment dried to a desert, waiting  
for cold drops to cut through.

Here in this small space disappearing,  
the ripest part of me softens in the far  
corner where the dark will flower.

Death came and left again, which is  
I mean to say my father became gone,  
not that he left but that he was  
so far more gone than he'd ever been.

And his body was there with me  
in the night, a moment unprotected  
as if a hot very hot landscape I would call dry,  
as in barren, but not without sweetness.

And waiting, only in that I was the one,  
not the moment, but I, waiting  
for the moment to pass along to something,  
to any thing with things in it,  
like creatures in it, like life.

2.

The moment was a desert landscape  
in which I waited not really for rain  
but for something cold to cut through.

And how small that vast  
desert was even as it disappeared. And in  
that small far corner in the corner of space

disappearing, the ripest part of me  
softened into a dark loam in the middle  
of the night in the heat.

It wasn't the dark I was in that will flower  
but the dark in my own far corner,  
where it is ripe and will, probably,

eventually,  
one would think,  
flower.

3.

When I say space disappearing I mean  
the moment of me there, alone  
with the gone-ness of my father

and with his body, and it was not the space  
that disappeared but the alone-with-ness,  
which was disappearing because, in fact,

there in the smallest corner  
of not my own self  
but of the room in which I sat alone

with my father's body, there in the small  
corner was my mother,  
fast asleep.

This is not a poem that my mother would like, after all, about death.

4.

Mom and I take a walk and in the bright  
bright fall day it is hard for her to think  
of what is in one hand (a maple leaf,  
an acorn cap, an oak leaf) when there is

an ash leaf an acorn cap on ahead  
and it is hard to think of what one foot  
might be doing when the other  
is going forward.

The older we get, says Mom,  
the more we think we might fall. And then you look  
at the trees. They are falling, she says. That's all.

Around the block the sidewalk is hard,  
and hard to think too in the bright bright blue  
hard against the bold crude tree branches

which are hard not to think of,  
when the moment is afraid to fall,  
and then you look at the trees, that's all.

# TOM FISHER

## ROSS PEROT

As a sort of pledge to the  
future, we adopted a dog  
that had been lost in the woods;  
this was one form from countless

others that found its way to us.  
To abolish the accidents of such  
a world, we then built a fence and a  
yard and a home. Yet in the night

something else would come and hum,  
conjuring shapes of otherbeing.

\*

In other places, I forget, we  
either rode bikes  
or sold candy. As if  
in an allegory,

a permanent surplus  
of sense circulated, although  
we attempted to restrain  
the plenitude.

Thus we were stranded  
in the shape  
of singularities incapable of  
accounting. So

we disorganized our irregularities and confirmed, *so be it*, a complicity thereby in the violent techniques then emerging.

\*

(When one world comes to be, do not also several others at the same time?)

Even the non-world always takes immediate hold. So there is no assignable end.

The smallest deviation possible brings about the non-identical.)

\*

Later, we arrived where we had been before, this place that had once ordered our own disaster. (*Every place becomes a new place when revisited.*) I still

remember ascending the column of light at the library and turning into you; the metamorphosis was permanent. In this way we learn to become not

who we are and to commit ourselves to individuated otherness, which over time broadens and becomes generic, or so we hope. But then we were still

caught in the glamour of our persons,  
bound to bodies and apartments we thought  
our own, recirculating ceaselessly  
parallelisms without encounter.

\*

(Rome itself cannot find cause  
in the non-durable.

By the unlogic of dispersion,  
encounters between

what is and what might be  
still can take hold

However, the infinity of the forest cannot be  
traversed by the Cartesian walker.)

\*

We then renounced the apparent and attempted to  
occupy absolute conceptions. But clarity,  
we found, always demands a taint, an  
impurity, an impediment, so we regressed

and untied time by going back and forth  
through it. Thus, we thought, we discovered others  
and became unbranded species  
in a marked world, resuscitating

naming and encountering again  
first sensations in a never-ending  
present. Yet the system we inherited  
could not disorganize such feelings.

We needed other bodies, we thought, and so  
a community was made to emerge. But it made  
in the end  
no difference.

\*

We gasped and despaired when  
Ross Perot was elected President.  
Antennae ceased their humming and bees  
began to die. A wrong future arrived

amid the chaos of quantum time  
as the Texarkana Caesar  
transmuted data and dollar,  
the very stuff of power, into power's

loss, making the center, in  
consummate colonialism, also  
the  
margin.

\*

(As the nonidentical dislodges  
what might be thought of as

what is, the future rephrases itself  
as a method: a calling out to

what is not yet, yet is as barely such a stutter  
of what will maybe be.)

\*And so the regime persists  
that begins with Demosthenes  
coming to the agora from his cave  
lisp corrected stutter horribly unlocked

unleashed speaking fiery fluency  
burning whole worlds  
full with, *I mean of*, transcendent capacities....



# JAMES YEARY

DYLAN LUNG

They thought they saw it  
written in smoke a twisting  
cursive free radical and holy  
communicating deeper than the nucleus  
the limits imposing a sentence

we thought we heard it  
slither out behind the stage  
and ask for a microphone  
Brad fiddled with the knobs  
and turned "Hurricane" into "Mozambique"

I thought I smelled it  
coming from off his tailfeathers  
as it turned and looked  
up from the birch floor  
I thought it was dead

you had ideas about space  
that unfolded at its edge  
and made it seem shapeless  
ideas leaning into the observer  
the observation consuming them both.

## **SAM LOHMANN**

### *QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, A DOCUMENTARY*

What makes me cry? Is it tomorrow? Is that your handiwork? What do you want? Do you think you can help? What's yeast? What's a sugar bean? How do you make oatmeal? Are you daddy? You like sugar beans? Is there anything you'd do differently if you could go in and just rebuild this whole thing from the inside out? Why does it need to be brown around the edges? How did you get here? Do you need a ride home? How long does it take? Is it like this every week? What then becomes of our concept of environment?

I didn't think about that. After dinner comes bedtime. Dreams. More dreams. Yeah. Go ahead. Fine / tense / weird / okay. I'm finding work confusing and trying to push through. It was fine. We'll get it! Leaving now. Doing okay. Everything's good. Sure. Thanks for letting me know. There's blue and every color but we're missing purple. I just wanted to say I'm here to help. I do want to make a puppet. Yeah, that's fine. Fantastic, thank you. Because when you sit down like that you can get the food in your mouth without spilling or falling. Perfect. Not right now.

Who's hiding? Who's crying? Who's hiding? Who's angry? Where do kangaroos live? Where do hippopotamuses live? Is the bear still angry? Who's hiding? Who has horns? Where do bulls live? Who's hiding? Who's backwards? Who's hiding? Who's sleeping? Who's hiding? Who's who? Do you know? Do babies need space? Is it wake-up time? What's a storm? Is that right? Is that okay? We're playing what? Are you still standing around in that box? Do you want to do a parade? Where do you want this? Where should we put this? Here? Here? Here? Where? What time is the party tomorrow?

It totally depends. Say what you mean. Grown up time. It's not that late. I want to put more stamps on. I don't know. I'm going to the dock. To get my baby. The hedgehog. She's worried about death. It'll be okay. She's probably still alive. I'm doing okay, moving slow. Still here. I'd be happy to look. Not off the top of my head. No: although the spiritual world is within us, it is also outside us. They both sound really nice. Only if you bring the beach balls. Nonsense; in the first place, such a conception is impossible.

That which is inert and lifeless has no reason for being at all, but if it is a Form and belongs to the Spirit, whence could it derive its cause except from itself? What is there to understand? How does it feel? How's your mom doing? What has twenty tails and no rear? Did you really have an owie or did you just want to play with puppets? What are you my little love? Why flutter and fly? What do eagles eat? Who's dropping me off at school? Who's picking me up? Who's gonna be there when I get home?

**LORRAINE LUPO & PAUL MAZIAR**  
*GIACOMETTI*

Take these sticks  
They have no life in them  
You've been leaning like a building  
Waiting on a bedtime story  
Flies buzz around the obelisk  
Decaffeinated as they all are  
But you need some stimulation  
A good kick in the panoply  
When the words shower down  
Remember we've all been dumb animals  
Now get into your lab coat  
And slip under the door

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