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THANK YOU FOR SWALLOWING

THANK YOU FOR SWALLOWING VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 4 OCTOBER 2016



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THANK YOU FOR SWALLOWING is based in Deptford, southeast London, on the same estate where SNIFFIN' GLUE was founded in 1976 by Mark Perry.

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EILEEN MURPHY

First Kill

Dad was in the kitchen when
Mom came home at midnight,
face wan, dumping
her books and car keys
on a kitchen counter.
The kitchen smelled gamey from Dad's
venison spaghetti sauce
still simmering in a pan on the stove.

Since Mom started back to school,
First Brother was wetting the bed again.
Second Brother had shoplifted.
Third Brother was losing his baby teeth,
and I was the only one who remembered
to put a quarter under his pillow
because he cried
when the Tooth Fairy forgot.
And Baby Brother couldn't sleep.

Dad was helping in Dad fashion—
he took the boys hunting,
taught them to shoot rifles,
kill some bucks,
though Baby Brother
wasn't catching on
as quickly as Dad would have liked.

On the kitchen counter
my dad had placed a photo
to show Mom—
Baby Brother leaning
against the tailgate
of Dad's four-wheel-drive,
jaw set,
lifting a bloody stag's head.

Mom studied the photo,
replaced it on the counter
with a click
of her nails.
No spaghetti for me.

Dad snatched a plastic cup
from the sink and
hurled it—hard—
against the cabinet over the stove.
It struck with a thud,
boomeranged onto
the tile floor with a clatter,
and echoed as it bounced,
coming to rest
at the foot of the dining room table.
The two of them stood there,
 chests heaving,
 arms folded,
 facing one another, staring at the cup,

which was the signal
for me in my bedroom with Baby Brother
and my three brothers in the adjoining room
to lie still and close our eyes
pretending to be angels
whose parents wanted them.

Trigger Warning

"I locked the door," you told me.

One of your 8am Composition 101 students
motioned you out into the hall.
Could hardly talk through her crying,
her trying to tell you that the night was rough,
and that he might still be coming after her.
Something about a breakup that he didn't want,
garbled through sobbing and breath caught in the cavern
of a throat that struggled for words.
You listened, trying to decipher her words.

You locked the door.

I bow to your cool professor head,
your solution approach to the moment.
It was appropriate, measured, calming for everyone.
According to protocol. But

I would have blanketed her with my arms,
moved way down the hall so that her sobs weren't so public.
I would have asked if she was safe,
if she felt she could go home
without him lingering in driveways or windows,
without him pressing into places she wanted him gone.

I would have asked about a gun,
whether she had bruises,
whether anything was broken.

I would have asked if he'd ever been violent
before last night.
If he'd ever threatened her,
violated her safe sanctuary.

I would have cancelled class,
taken her to the police station,
helped her file a restraining order.
If her hands were shaking
and she couldn't force pen to paper,
I would write for her.

Composition 101.
Woman in danger.
This essay has been written
far too many times.

Trigger-Loving Blob #2

Was it my fault because of whatever
I was wearing? A life-sized pussy inside a Blob
deserves it. Deserves to be shrunken down.

Life must be contained by The Blob's silent sucking mouth hole
filled with contamination and it's our own fucking fault.
Our outrageous attire must be suctioned into The Blobs feeding tube.

A male audience member told me my poetry reading style really was "WOW!
You were HOT HOT HOT - LEVEL 8 I WOULD SAY
- WITH THE GOLD PANTS MAYBE EVEN A 9!"

I scream, you scream, we all scream
for golden Blob cream. No wait, only all the women scream
inside their own heads. The men's heads are busy
numerically rating all the women's bodies.
Trying to determine what hole they can fit into next.

Wondering how all that ripped off gold would sizzle inside.
Wondering how long it would take to stick it in,
turn the gold into drippy red. Screaming.

THE TITLE OF THIS POEM CAME FROM KELLE GRACE GADDIS AND THE POEM'S
CONTENT WAS PARTLY INSPIRED BY POETIC CONVERSATION SHE AND I HAD ABOUT
TRIGGER WARNINGS. THANK YOU KINDLY TO KELLE FOR HER CREATIVE INSPIRATION.

LINDSAY OLIVER

Confusion

theoretical disorientation: a letter to my uncle

To: Dr Carl R Rogers
CENTER FOR STUDIES OF THE PERSON
1150 Silverado St.
Suite #217
La Jolla, CA. 92037

Dear Uncle Carl,

I have a few questions for you, if you would be so kind, if you wouldn't mind, if you've got the time

If my configurations of self all got together could they beat my internal objects at cricket or ping pong?

Who would come out on top in a pro-wrestling match, my true self or my false self?

Would my internal objects recognise my configurations of self in a mirror crafted by Winnocott, held up by Fairbairn and Klein?

If Winnicott drew a picture of Bion would Mearnes and Thorne see the ineffable O in his eyes or would they be too busy looking for seashells and existential touchstones to notice?

What does it feel like to actualize, does it tickle, does it hurt?
Are potatoes blind like Oedipus despite having eyes?

Oh and that reminds me, if you see Uncle Sigi, if you come across him over a hand of bridge, or while drinking a whiskey sour or a small glass of schnapps, could you ask him for me please

What are fathers for?
But whatever you do, Don't ask Oedipus, he knows

And while you're at it, ask him, ask Uncle Sigi: Why pick on Oedipus?
Why not Pelops? Now there's a man with father issues

And you, Uncle Carl, what's your view from Mount Olympus, can you empathise with Oedipus's bloody lust, maintain unconditional positive regard for Tantalus, who hacked his boy to pieces and served him up as stew, stay congruent in the face of Oenomaus who when faced with his dear daughter's 18 suitors replied with 18 beheadings?

Why are you so silent on the subjects of childhood and sex, when my other uncle has so much to say?

Is nameless dread the same thing as primitive agony?
Containment the same as holding?
Is Klein's view of the pre-verbal child more accurate than Freud's?

Who knows, who cares, how can this help me as I sit opposite a fortress of fear?
And yet it comes to me sometimes, in the quiet of the night, in shreds and snatches

Sometimes I listen in a language not my own and hear not just the words, the sore distress, but the naked truth behind your grand theoretical edifices

I can hear you now and then, the beauty and the pain of your language that speaks of unarticulatable truths

Oh and if you do see Uncle Sigismund please ask after Carl Gustoff, I know they had a bit of a set-to, but he was always kind to me and I've missed him these past three years

Yours affectionately as always, etc, etc

Dear Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature ↗

Your book was so disengaging that I started to really think about what each letter in the alphabet looks like and how each letter deserves its own self-portrait. After reading your book, I can tell that such reaction would delight you. You spent the entire book name dropping people and places that I don't know anything about. You always described women by the color of their hair, blondes, brunettes... Your depth appeared to be based on the intense philosophical idea that you don't know who you are.

That's funny because when I don't know who I am, I walk faster at night and review my choices of clothing. I get dismissed as nonexistent or too sensitive. I mean, I understand, not knowing who you are and how that's universal, but we don't all have the same consequences.

Dear Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature,
 how many women did you dismember to get where you are?
 I know the wind likes you.
 The ghosts like you.
 The ether of the wind and the ghosts likes you.
 You are whisper hush fading.
 You are elusive and therefore important.
 When I am elusive, I am unimportant.
 Covered by your book.
 A flatness,
 misconceived idea of the world.
 Ancient but forgettable.
 Wrong and mysterious.

Dear Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature,
 I made myself read every word in your book
 because I wanted to see how it's done.
 I wanted to make confusion more artful.
 I wanted to be the cover of your book.
 I wanted to write like you, elusively and importantly.

A novel is just an imaginary world
 copied thousands of times,
 but the copy machine of my mind doesn't get you.
 Your trophy is made of erasers.
 You write the word "peace" on the floor using the bodies of guns.
 You only believe the most exaggerated victim,
 the ballet of bullets,
 but even those you craft with your taste for glue.

**The novel that this poem responds to is called *Suspended Sentences* by Patrick Modiano, Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2014.*

Root Vegetables and Cream

I.

Cross-stitched nights
 of slow-sipped rye

reinforced
 the knots. Facts

don't need
 rehashing, or

shouldn't. A child
 there for the taking

doesn't mean cheap,
 like borscht.

II.

There was a fine line
 between a butch look

and a rape victim
 in men's jeans.

She said they fit
 her best. If

nothing else
 she'd had four children.

In another version
 there's no cliché

uncle, and I never wonder
 how often

childbearing
 is just that.

KAREN BARTON

Mistress of the Unnamed Tool

It struck me the other day,
alone, stripping layers
of paint and lacquer
from the grainy oak door,
that most tasks
inevitably
take three tools.

The heat gun, lucent, sears
its path, coveted,
ergonomically sleek
its plastic shaft,
hefted in my hand
protects against burnt fingers,
almost. It is a costly
investment for now
and the future.

The triangle tool scrapes
mess in its wake.
Bubbling hot layers
of noxious paint and varnish rise,
buckling, towards it.
Does it have a name, this trilateral
of sharp-honed metal,
or is it coupled, named by proxy
within the heat gun's title,
intrinsically linked through
symbiotically shared identity,
yet replaced when blunted or broken?

Then there's the extra,
cobbled together,
never-chosen-first tool;
still part of the equation,
picked at random for the cold
forced sloughing
of encrusted layers
dulling the destruction
of the other two.
This 'third' maintains the keen-
edged sharpness of their
triangular relationship.

Perhaps it is a blunt knife,
a remnant of a set
long discarded,
or packaging that something
more cherished
came in,
or any old
expendable
thing.

SHAINDEL BEERS

“Secure Your Mask Before Helping Others”

I.

Because soon you won't have any needs of your own.
They will all be for him. You will be walking to the middle
of the lake, your pockets filled with all the prettiest stones.

Amethyst, quartz, peridot. All the beauty it could ever take
to drown you. The topaz and emerald of the water.
The sapphire and ruby of police lights.

Until you are as beaded as a twenty pound wedding gown.
And aren't you beautiful? You are the prettiest girl
at the Harvest Moon Ball. Why aren't you grateful?

No one has ever been so adorned with abjection.
There are so many women in line for him, each one
a corpse bride in waiting. Any girl would treasure

the feel of his boot on her throat, to pay off the court fines,
to hide him from the police, to say that they were your painkillers.

II.

You wanted to know what it was like to have pearls
on the inside. To wash down five, six, seven—

all good girls go to Heaven—Percocet
with the amber of whiskey. And he knew you would do it—
your drinking was always the problem. He knew it the first time

he saw you. Imagine if you would have tried heroin.
Boy, could he tell you stories.
Graduate school doesn't sound that different from rehab;

don't feel so special. You would be in the same place
no matter where you started out.

III.

Girls like you are so easy
to manipulate. Because the bruise is already there,

he just has to press it. Other names have already been scalped
into your skin. Look how you bleed these pomegranate drops.
Why aren't you crying?

What's wrong with you?
Are you numb to all of this?
Doesn't any of it even matter?

IV.

This is like being married to a fucking baby.
You would probably kill a baby.
You're the abusive one. You're the one with anger issues.

No, what we should do is have a baby.
That will make everything better.
You and me in one person.
I don't know why I didn't think of it before.

We'll name her Pearl. We'll cast her before swine.
She will be our savior. You don't really believe
any of this shit, do you? It's just a game,

but there's no scoring system. Lean down so I can place
the medals around your neck. The medals
will weigh you down until I win—

gold and silver and bronze, and don't take any wooden
nickels though you're lucky I give you anything,
you worthless bitch.

Oh, look, here's the oxygen mask.
Here's your chance to save me.
Put it over my face and let me breathe.

LEAH MUELLER

Hitchhiker

Sixty-five miles from Baton Rouge
she stood on the interstate with her thumb
in the air, and a Datsun pickup truck
with Louisiana plates pulled to a stop beside her,
then stood idling on the gravel covered shoulder
of the road, while the driver motioned
for her to come inside.
She climbed into the passenger seat,
carefully, holding a duffel bag,
hastily crammed full of sundresses
and underwear, a spare pair of shoes
and seventy dollars, all the money
she owned. Her boyfriend was still asleep
in their third floor walk up apartment
in the lower Garden District, passed out on the futon
in the New Orleans heat, eighty degrees
at nine o'clock in the morning
with three quarts of beer in the refrigerator
and a note waiting for him when he awakened.
He would scream and break the furniture, perhaps
but somehow she doubted this,
he only did these things when he had an audience.
She carefully pulled her skirt over her knees
as she crouched inside the cab,
but the man noticed
and looked away, asked her name
and where she was going: She said Texas
and then a bus to Mexico,
buses were a lot cheaper down there
but until then, she had to hitchhike.
He told her it was dangerous,
and she was lucky he had picked her up
instead of some deranged nut,
and if she wrote down his address,
she could send him a postcard
to let him know she had arrived safely.
She scribbled his name and address
on a torn piece of paper from her purse,
then shoved the purse inside her duffel bag,
and zipped them both securely.
He wanted to know things:
Was she a student? Did she like music?
How long had she lived in the South?
She said hadn't been there long

and certainly didn't intend to stay much longer,
she was fleeing from her boyfriend
to see her mother, who lived the life of a boozy
American ex-patriot in San Miguel Allende
in a large house with lots of rooms
she could wander in, while she figured out
what to do next. She was twenty two
and worked at a waitress job in the Quarter,
when she failed to report for her shift
her boss would just hire someone else.
After an hour, the driver pulled over
and said he had to take a leak,
and would return shortly, and she watched
as he disappeared into a clump of bushes
a few hundred feet from the shoulder
of the road, and a lull fell over everything
except for the anonymous, metallic thumping
of car wheels as everyone headed to Baton Rouge.
Finally the man called her name
and she pushed the door of the truck
against the humid gusts of air
so she could hear him better, and he said
he had found a bird's nest with three eggs,
and she had to see it, because it was perfect.
She moved slowly forward
as he appeared from behind the bushes,
pressed the blade of a pocketknife against her throat
and pushed her to the ground,
not roughly, but firmly, as if she was a dog
and he was making her kneel to do tricks.
He told her that he wanted her,
and that she should suck him
and all of it would be over quickly.
He guided her throat to his penis
with the edge of the knife
and she placed her mouth there in a daze
then stopped, unable to continue.
"Go on" said the man, and he looked around
for a moment, but no one was watching.
The cars continued to hurtle past,
and mostly she was filled with rage
at herself, for wasting her life,
all twenty two years of it,
now she was going to bite it next to a highway
in Louisiana, and it wasn't fair.

It was completely impossible
 for all of it to come to this-
 so without even thinking, she bit his penis
 as hard as she could, brought her teeth down
 on the pulpy flesh, with all the force
 of her jaw, because she had heard
 that rapists kill their victims
 even if they submit, perhaps more often
 that way, but she wasn't completely sure
 if that was true, or if she had only imagined it.
 The amazing thing was, the man didn't
 collapse on the ground afterward-
 he gained more strength instead,
 and stood above her,
 he waved his knife in the air and said
 "I really should kill you now"
 but just as rapidly, he subsided
 and stood absolutely still,
 staring at his member as if it was a sick child
 and he a concerned parent.
 "I'm going now" he said softly,
 "Stay right where you are.
 Remember, I can throw knives."
 He walked cautiously through the brush
 to his vehicle, opened the passenger door
 and hurled the woman's duffel bag
 into the gravel on the side of the road-
 and then, struck by a sudden recollection,
 scooped it back up, slammed it into the cab
 and drove away rapidly with her sundresses
 and her underwear and her seventy bucks.
 She waited until she was certain he was gone
 and he wouldn't return, before she
 finally crawled out of the bushes
 and began to run,
 even though she had nothing to do
 except go back to the highway
 and stick her thumb out again.

A Perfect Wife

my sister wears too much red
 lipstick that leaves streaks on
 her husband's white collar, but
 she does not see how coldness
 trails from wrists to hands that
 shakes awkwardly when he is
 touched,

only his brown eyes are wrung
 wet and alert after long drags
 of drink, saying intoxication
 always patches him up good
 and let him confess to finding
 comfort in the routine things
 like this fine weather is perfect
 for fishing down by the dock,

so fair in a yellow chiffon dress,
 my sister winks away the absence
 of his fingers on her knee under
 the picnic table, and with colored
 nails stealing across his cheeks,
 she gushes over how splendid is
 her homemade bourbon toffee
 crunch cake, for at last, for her
 husband, she would be a perfect
 wife—

Pastor Will's Prayer

(A Sapphic Poem in Which the Power of the Unholy Ellipsis Is Wielded by a Witch.)

A woman is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many abominations ... which is the root of witchcraft. — Malleus Maleficarum

Pastor Will's a man of sacred conviction,
thumping hard on holy, translated texts, as
clerics do, when living in Helmand Province,
(only he's Texan):

“Modern women. Seems they're having a lot of
dirty fantasies. So God, in his judgment
sent his plagues of cancer, female diseases
promtin' those sluts to

turn from sin. We've seen it happen before, I've
said it from the start, the Lord watches all and
sees it all. You cannot hide from the Lord, keep
anything from Him.

Works of God confusin'? Really it's simple—
reckon that the whole thing's pretty straightforward:
First we had the faggots, runnin' around, He
sent AIDS to plague 'em.

Now we have these strumpets— filthy slut poets—
authors, and the like—they' writin' and thinkin'
impure, lustful thoughts, and women are readin'
sinful novellas.

Women fantasise on sex and kidnappin'
anal . . . penetration, BDSM. Their
dampest dreams involvin' incarceration
For . . . masturbation . . .

Seems I lost my train of thought, for a moment.
Well, that's odd, my mind is normally focused.
(See, oh Lord my God, how whorish-mouthed bitches
test, Lord, Thy servant!)

God is sick of seein' all this perversion—
curse, them Lord! Amen! Send AIDS, and breast cancer!
Judgement sent by God Almighty to smite 'em:
hammer the witches!

Talkin' to those sluts dun't work. Far too stubborn.
Now, can't say I speak from personal conduct
(Think I'd better honour the Constitution
Pleadin' the Fifth) but,

Beatin' livin' daylight, I'd recommend it,
every slut who harbours sinful desires, this
spankin' . . . handcuffs . . . bondage...what was I sayin'?
Flog 'em and thrash 'em!

History has shown (is it in my Bible?),
battery's effective, and if it isn't?
Pile the fire! Build it with books for burnin'
Uppity women!

Gays as well, those perverts who take it up the
ass, assault might work on a good percentage
Some, a number, might find it...therapeutic
(Harder, God, harder!)

Dirty sluts and . . . faggots really disturb me!
When I think of all I've done to promote the
Holy Writ ... and stand against these. . . perversions

...
...
...

Oh God. I'm cummin'”

LOL

Burqas have pockets now
Shiny, sequinned, stitched in
 That carry pens
 Pen-knives
One knows not what more.
 Maulvi saab,
Bring out your *fatwas*
Don't you have morals
 to uphold?

Karen Barton is a neurodiverse poet studying the history of art with creative writing at the Open University. She lives in Wiltshire, close to Stonehenge. Her non-poetic occupations include being a magician's assistant, dancer and tango teacher. She is founder and co-editor of *Matryoshka Poetry* and appears in *Alyss*, *The Goose*, *The Curly Mind*, *Three Drops from a Cauldron*, *I Am Not A Silent Poet*, *Poetry WTF*, *Unlost* and *The Fem Lit*. Her work can be found at: <https://thepapercutpoet.blogspot.co.uk>

Shaindel Beers's poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. She is currently an instructor of English at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, Oregon, and serves as poetry editor of *Contrary*. A *Brief History of Time*, her first full-length poetry collection, was released by Salt Publishing in 2009. Her second collection, *The Children's War and Other Poems*, was released in February of 2013.

Lana Bella is an author of two chapbooks, *Under My Dark* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2016) and *Adagio* (Finishing Line Press, forthcoming), has had poetry and fiction featured with more than 270 journals, including *2River*, *California Quarterly*, *Chiron Review*, *Columbia Journal*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *The Hamilton Stone Review*, *The Writing Disorder*, *Third Wednesday*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Yes Poetry*, among others. A Pushcart nominee, Lana resides in the US and the coastal town of Nha Trang, Vietnam, where she is a mom of two far-too-clever frolicsome imps.

K. I. Billey's debut poetry collection *Vulgar Mechanics* is a finalist for Fordham Lincoln Center's Poets Out Loud Prize and being rendered into Spanish by poet Soledad Marambio. Originally from rural Alberta, Canada, Billey won *Vallum's* 2015 Poetry Prize and her poems have appeared in *CutBank*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The New Orleans Review*, and *Prelude*. An assistant editor for *Asymptote*, her translations from Spanish and Icelandic have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Harvard Review*, *Circumference*, the Council for European Studies' *CritCom*, and *Palabras Errantes*. See more at ktbilley.com.

Juliet Cook is a grotesque glitter witch medusa hybrid brimming with black, grey, silver, purple, and dark red explosions. Her poetry has appeared in a peculiar multitude of literary publications. You can find out more at www.JulietCook.weebly.com.

Rachaita Hore is a university-going loner, worrywart and part-time storyteller from Kolkata, India. She maintains an ill-managed blog at literaryfreaktion.wordpress.com.

Liusaidh is a Forward Prize-nominated poet, lyricist, author and critic from the west of Scotland. Prior to sliding to the bottom of society, she worked the law. Her work appeared in *Poets & War*, *The Ghazal Page* and *Eastern Structures*. As LJ McDowall she writes speculative fiction and edits *The Quarterday Review*, a quarterly literary journal dedicated to classical forms. "Pastor Will's Prayer" was first published in *Matryoshka Poetry* and appears in her collection *Filthy Dirty Hymns* (Quarterday, 2016). She can be found online at her website ljmcdowall.com, on Twitter @ljmcdowall and Facebook at @ljmcdowallwrites.

Leah Mueller is an independent writer from Tacoma, Washington. She is the author of one chapbook, *Queen of Dorksville* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2012), and two full-length books, *Allergic to Everything* (Writing Knights Press, 2015) and *The Underside of the Snake* (Red Ferret Press, 2015). Her work has been published in *Blunderbuss*, *Sadie Girl Press*, *Origins Journal*, *Talking Soup*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Cultured Vultures*, and many other publications. She is a regular contributor to *Quail Bell* magazine, and was a featured poet at the 2015 New York Poetry Festival. Leah was also a runner-up in the 2012 Wergle Flop Humor Poetry contest.

Eileen Murphy lives on semi-rural property located 30 miles from Tampa, surrounded by the wild animals of Central Florida, most of them mosquitoes. She received her masters degree from Columbia College, Chicago. She teaches literature and English at Polk State College and has recently published poetry in *Thirteen Myna Birds*, *Uppagus*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Quarterday Review*, *Straight Forward*, *The Thought Erotic*, *Rogue Agent*, and a number of other journals. She is a participating national poet in the Pittsburgh Poetry House Project.

Lindsay Oliver lives in Leith. After losing her job due to illness and disability, she took a writing course at the local community centre and fell in love with writing. She writes poetry, short stories, and longer fiction. She regularly takes part in open mic nights. Her writing has appeared in two anthologies, and an online journal. She recently had a poem in the Doric dialect accepted for publication in *Lallans*, the Scots Language Society's Journal.

Marianne Peel taught English at middle and high school for 32 years. She is now retired, doing Field Instructor work for Michigan State University. She recently won 1st prize for poetry in the Spring 2016 Edition of the Gadfly Literary Magazine. She also won the Pete Edmonds Poetry Prize. In addition, Marianne has been published in *Encodings: A Feminist Literary Journal*, *Write to Heal*, *Writing for Our Lives: Our Bodies—Hurts, Hungers, Healing*, *Mother Voices*, *Metropolitan Woman Magazine*, *Ophelia's Mom*, *Jellyfish Whispers*, *Remembered Arts Journal*, *Muddy River Review* and *EastLit Journal*.

April Penn's work explores topics such as gender, sexuality, identity, imperialism, and capitalism. Her poetry is published in *The Offing*, *The Fem*, *Maps for Teeth*, *Provocateur*, *Hoax Zine*, and *Amethyst Arsenic*. She has featured at the Cantab Poetry Lounge, Out of the Blue Gallery, Occupy Boston and UMASS Amherst.