

Epigraph Magazine

SWEET



SIXTEEN

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Invention

Karen Neuberg

An old story has acquired
many overcoats, some plush

beyond the threadbare of others.
Line them along

the tripwire row of years.
Make yourself yearn!

See how they change places,
how they change how

you think about your past.
See how they twist

and cling to each other
as though afraid

to wake you from their dream.
Notice when it is you choose

to wear a particular one
and which one you always keep

directly against your skin
that you never remove.

Borders

Karen Neuberg

Thinking out(side) that line
which then crosses itself
on the way back.

Caught.

Lake soul reflecting sky bone.
Paused, I float, churning, tipped,
almost serene.

handhold into hidden territory

Karen Neuberg

Not an underworld
but the limbed passageway leading
to many doors. No saucer-eyed dog
waits behind one to tear me from myself.
I'm happy to open any. But, where are
my hands? They are vacationing
in old memories. The ones where
they touched you just so. The way
you liked. The way I liked. Oh, the way
we melded into one another. Who was who?
Come back hands, I say. Such unruly
children only wanting to play and feel
the current between bodies.

2015.05

Bradley J. Fest

The realities of breaking (out of the) clutches¹ in the twenty-first century are fairly adult, and the dreary, steel streets of my thirties are ashen superdarkarchival objects. Let the phantoms of tarrying with the negative spin into the

evening walks of summer. Let June 27, 2015 be a kind of volta. Let us move toward the wa@ning sun and another winter in Pittsburgh. But also another world brought into being procedurally, one whose haphazard *poiesis* results from

Their dancing on the wrong songs. Down here in the underarchive, some nights *do* last forever: the *curriculum vitae* parties till dawn. We'll be out there next year, strutting the same paths as last, but at this time really are quite worried about

tomorrow. We're hoping for good news. We're hoping to escape the clutches of adjuntification but we're not counting on it and are preparing otherwise.

¹ Of the metallic deathyp, of neoliberalism.

2015.06

Bradley J. Fest

Of late, the shape of things has been too much nostalgia and broken guitar strings,² too much attention to the ambient digital abjection of a partially disambiguated past dissolving into all these ubiquitous rhizomes. We are left wondering if ideology extends much

further, *if it lives all the way down*.³ Are we traipsing this neverground only to be amazed by *The Club* (1666; repr., 2015; the gaze of the nonfamous other), by some wicked anti-*samizdat* and its epiphanic vantablack ocular implants? Or can our historicity raise enough veils to shield us from the luminous abyss,

trapped as we are on the tail of a future superintelligent necrosun's last nanomicrobial breath?⁴ "Withdraw," some might say. "Stand down."⁵ Let all the wordprocessing and ontology, capital and cyberculture and the future of affective labor, well, *go*. I suppose this sounds nice.

But I also think that perhaps there is no other choice in the technological deathsnarl of the present. We just need to face the fact though we may not "die young,"⁶ perhaps we don't have to pass ancient and withered.

² See The Appleseed Cast, "The Immortal Soul of Mundo Cani" and "Fishing the Sky," *Mare Vitalis* (Maui, HI: Deep Elm Records, 2000), LP.

³ See Taylor Baldwin, *The Interpreter*, mixed media (2010), <http://www.taylorbaldwinstudio.com/interpreter1.html>.

⁴ On the importance of veils, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss, ed. and trans. Ronald Speirs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1–116.

⁵ Start a darkarchival hardcore band called The Scrivener.

⁶ See Ke\$ha, *Die Young* (New York: RCA Records, 2012), CD single.

Fifteen Fish Dreams

Beth Gordon

Sand sculptures without fingerprints.

The highway between Flagstaff and Las Vegas.

Sky-diving over the great wall of China.

The ability to breathe dirt.

Synchronized ice-skating.

Returning to the Galapagos Islands.

Lungs with or without cancer.

Heat-warped wooden shoes.

Sun-crunched sheets shimmering like pirate flags.

A world without boats.

The planet Mars.

Spontaneous shattering of large glass bowls.

Mermaid internment camps.

Large bonfires fueled by the burning of recipe books.

Black banjo strings vibrating in the driest air.

De re coquinaria

Rax King

There is a tarry pot on the flame,
some cheap, overworked thrush

of muscle and cloudy fat starting
to unlatch from bone — you honor

an animal by devoting a day's heat
to its inedible parts — you honor

the godliness in you by devoting
a day's work to some dead thing.

The smell of good raw meat will tempt.
Look at the prism, vividly red and long,

ridged deep by butcher's twine, you
will want just one bite, oh, you will

want to *slurrrrrp* cow's blood from the
pools gathered in the butcher's paper.

Catch yourself thinking it: *so this here
is what it's like to be some dead thing.*

Inhale deep of the lonely tissue,
and think: *why, this isn't so bad!*

A Jewess' prayer to St. Francis

Rax King

How many ways are there to bear my stigmata?
Which wounds are stigmata? which, just wounds?

A candle for Francis of Assisi who is the only saint I know –
A prayer for the animals who are all his and nobody else's.

I left my passport there one night and all you did to help me
was call me by my given name, one you never knew was mine.

I left my favorite shirt there and you swore that you kept it
for *such* a long time before saying, I'll never see her again,

and chucking it (it hardly needed a corner of a drawer!
the meanest symbolism! the iconography of the end!)

Francis: your middle name. Old Frank Assisi. Now there's a man
to tell me a saint's stigmata from petty sores atop the blood pump.

For what it's worth, you surely were
the dirtiest torturer I've had, ever.

Everything is Not the Same

Max Seifert

The lamp falls and becomes junk.
As does the battery-dead doll, no longer

able to sing electric; it bleaches in the sun
next to the expired heart monitors. While inside

the train car, long whale bones lie still.
And above, passing swans brim with e. coli.

Once, I bisected a cat carefully
under the bio lab's fluorescence.

I found too much inside.

I've kept poems and very little
else close. I'll let myself go

just long enough to watch me wobble

and darken. Just far enough to consider
it: The whole of her—blood, flesh,

moony marrow cells—strained because even

before I had a chest, I was hunger,
without a mouth still,

I was need. What in us
wants a life so desperately?

I was made and soon after, she went away.
The people, with their hands

at their throats, with their loves
and their misdemeanors, in pain, afraid,

are always going away, but try now

to get out of bed. Breathe,
drink water from the faucet.

Remember: there is a man in a suit
by the door, and a cold rain

falling on everything
that's real, like the fern fronds

he's put in a beer bottle
with flowers for someone.

Autobiography

Max Seifert

To learn to sing
by the likelier rhythm, I
stretched out
my windpipe, took
off my beak, unfastened
from my back each
feather, and learned
to be a man. Because

I lived downriver
from the past, I
considered myself
safe. Though I
starved, I cut
to pieces even
the spiders' webs
and would make
no nets. *The tomatoes*

lent such sweetness to
the dish, I told my father
with the results
of his biopsy still
fanned out on the table.

Because I lived
above the dead,
I thought myself
very clean. I set
fire to the mulberry trees
and let the shovel
go to rust. I starved,

and my skin turned
as blue as a buttoned
down shirt. *How cool*
and indifferent, and
respectable is this
sea, said the man
I made in my head.

To remember
 the words of the
song, I changed
 each line to
I understand.

In the end, I was
 a hunger wearing
the mask of a man.
 The world sank
away. The mask
 took me off.

fish killer

Emma Ciereszyński

killed all of the fish in the sea
but they did not sink

(now they bob on the surface
as a piscine meniscus)

Found poem (from an online dictionary builder)

Emma Ciereszyński

It will be far from perfect, but we hope that you will find it to be useful despite its imperfections.

lady jesus

Monica Lewis

i work hard every day and you know nothing of the war
waged all marks bruising more electric than badges born or
formed or handed out by men who know nothing,
nothing but things seen, things measured easy by math
things measured down, these men and their mathematics
these men and by men i mean women, as well
most days kinship is found only in
spirit - the felines know
the wild horses, too

what i mean is i walk through a city i love
a city in veins
a city that pummels and pumps
keeps life at go
i walk through a city i know
an animal in a concrete, adored and yet

most mornings i dread her face

her face, the faces that mirror
the animal back

and so, the fight, and so, a conquistador,
so violent in my will to survive, every morn i kill
i revive both woman and beast

lady lazarus, i am, but lady jesus, as well

my voice to the tomb:
rise, rise
my flesh to the call:
rise, rise

my eyes, called open, set
focused on sky.

Wisconsin

Monica Lewis

would i miss you this much
at this late hour, seven years
and already, our love eclipsed
were you not taken

were you not taken
would i want for
nothing more than
to take you, you, who now belong to
her in matrimony
and other obligations like
her family and your family
mothers and fathers and
a new home fashioned
together, a dog, ruby,
the firstborn of your pack
you named her, i'm certain
with that ruby scar of a mouth
you proposed promises that
would have been mine, while seven years
i have slept, set blind, set
distracted, seven years and
i am the fool made now to suffer
made now to repent
these hands cut you loose
these eyes imagined seven years set ahead with
a better version of you
a mis-imagined version of you and
here, fingers flick through
wedding pictures, her hand in yours
yours that could course
the coasts of my body
inside and out
yours who took me and let me be taken
yours that knew
the secret places

seven years and
here i sit, jealous of
a dairy farm and our
pale children with your name
and my wild hair.

Charles II, An Apology

John Leo

By the time he died the last Hapsburg
could barely lift his head it was so full of water.
His one testicle, a malignant peppercorn.
Chin like two fists. Two wives, no sons.

When it's quiet like this, I avoid imagination.
I was born on a Friday morning.
My mother cries too much.
In a tangle of yellow sheet, two blind men
dream of I Love Lucy and dirty porcelain.
When they wake to the sound of mailtrucks idling
they realize they are relieved to be in a life at all.
One of them knows how to ride a horse, the other
is a vegetarian and was not born blind and so
stays up some nights explaining the stars:
they are like fireflies, no
they are incredible, yes
an incredible white burning, yes
this one always leans north, yes
I have felt alone but not like this.

I regret all of it.
Look sweetly at me, touch my hair.
I can feed myself cracked pepper.
I know the color of Mars in autumn.
Here: swallow this scorpion.
A king is dead.

Admission

Ben Lewellyn-Taylor

I wanted so badly to haunt you

I guess you beat me to it

I guess so long to the m

I guess we both had pr

I guess I had it coming

I guess congratulatio

I guess this is goodb

I guess this wasn't f

I guess delete my n

I guess never trus

I guess I never ca

I guess you prob

I guess I guess I

I guess this is a

I guess now w

I guess red fl

I guess time

I guess not

I guess no

I guess y

I guess

I gues

I gue

I gu

I g

I

I Don't Know How to Hold Myself Together

Maritza De La Peña

I've been a house
longer than a person
my tiles ripped
apart;
carpet stained

the kitchen was remodeled
because the wallpaper peeled
away, maybe new appliances
a marble counter top to match

your fingernails turned black
from scratching at the cigarette burns
in the couch--
your faded floral prints

to keep me company
you left the lamp light on
and the lingering smell of Marlboro Lights

I can't get it off
& if you listen
closely you can hear those roaches
hiding underneath
my skin
on my spine tap tap tap
I guess I'm waiting
you told me to wait

for reading snow

J.I. Kleinberg

*for reading
snow,*

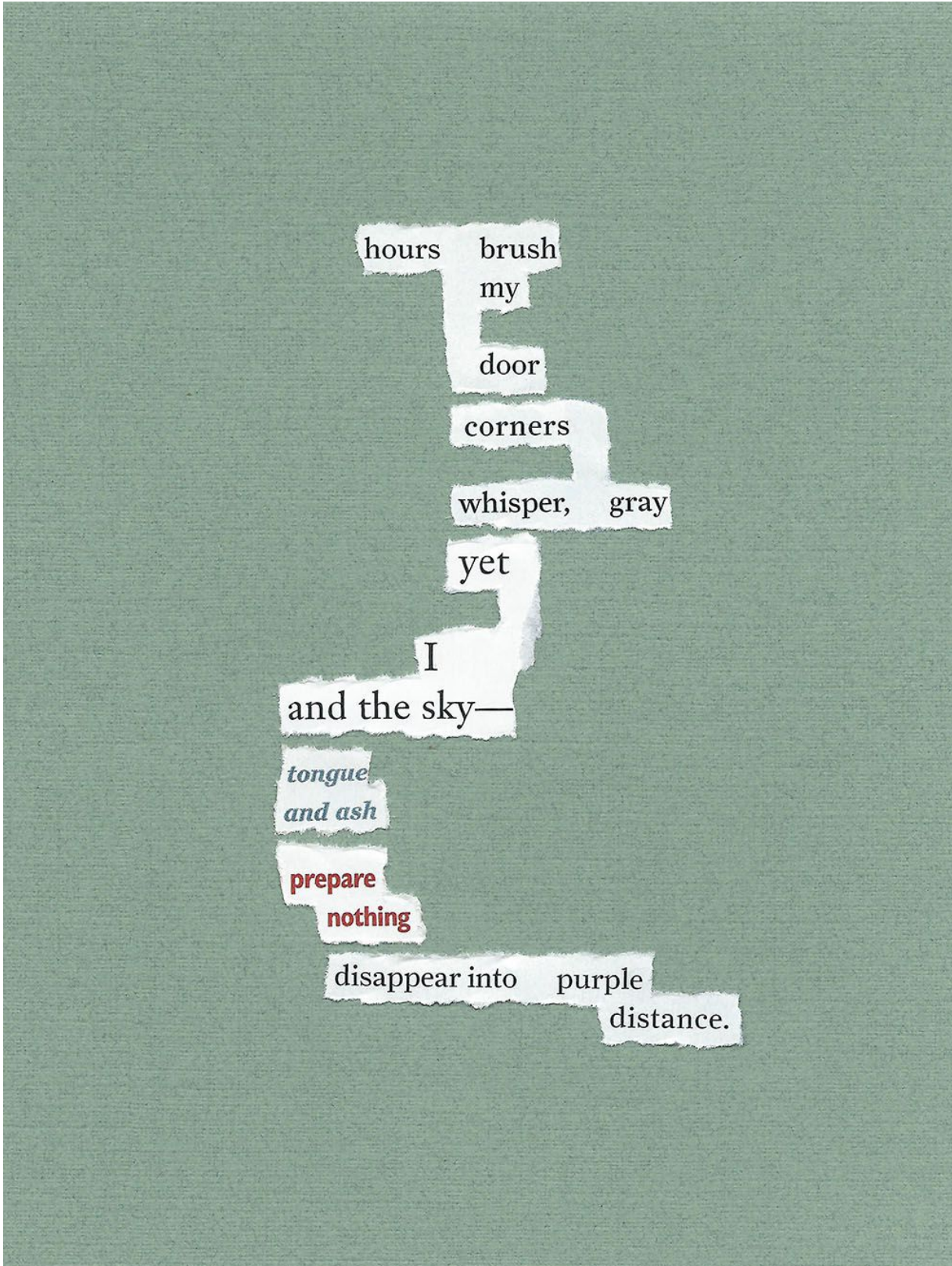
moon
bits

had never
speckled

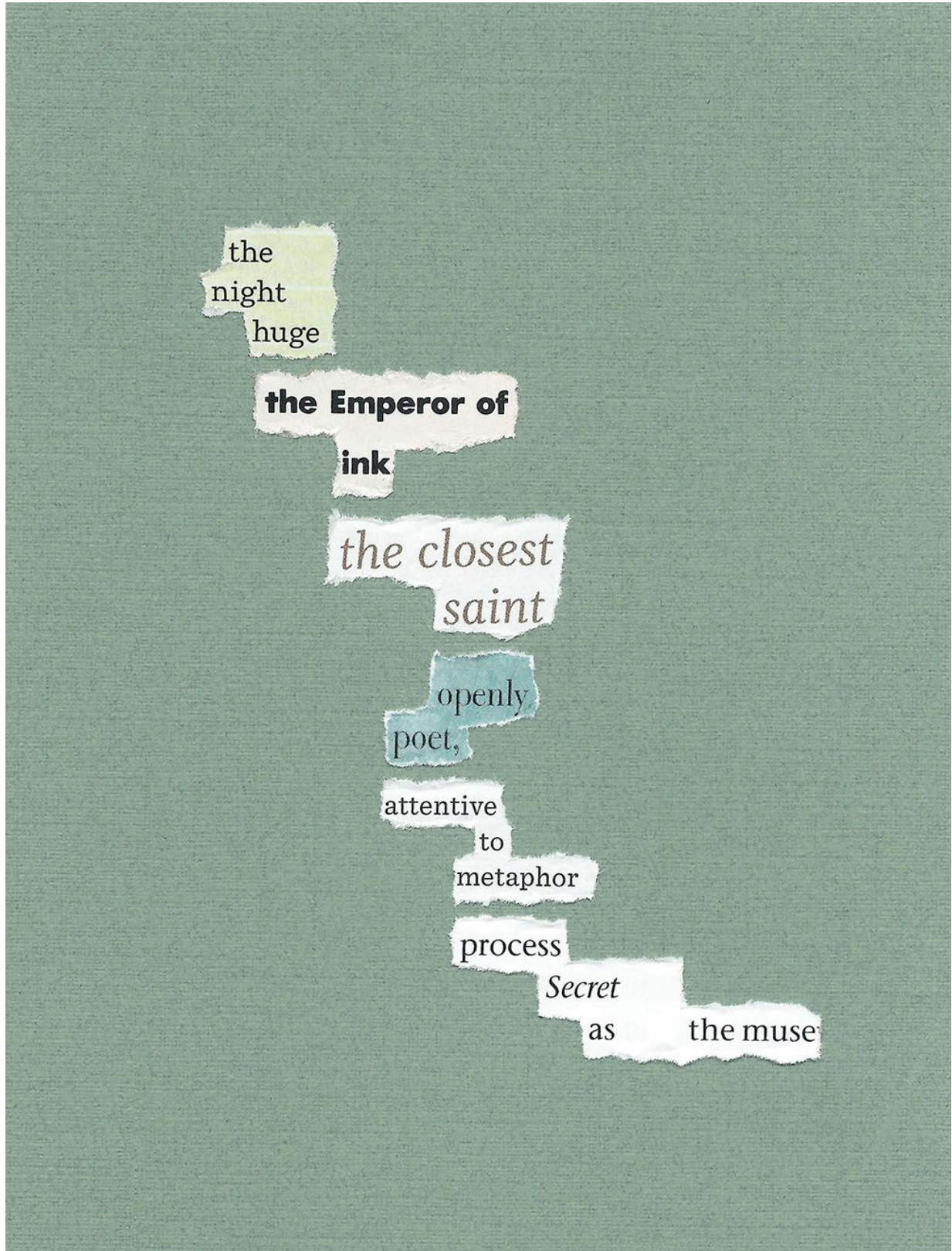
Hemingway
verandas.

hours

J.I. Kleinberg

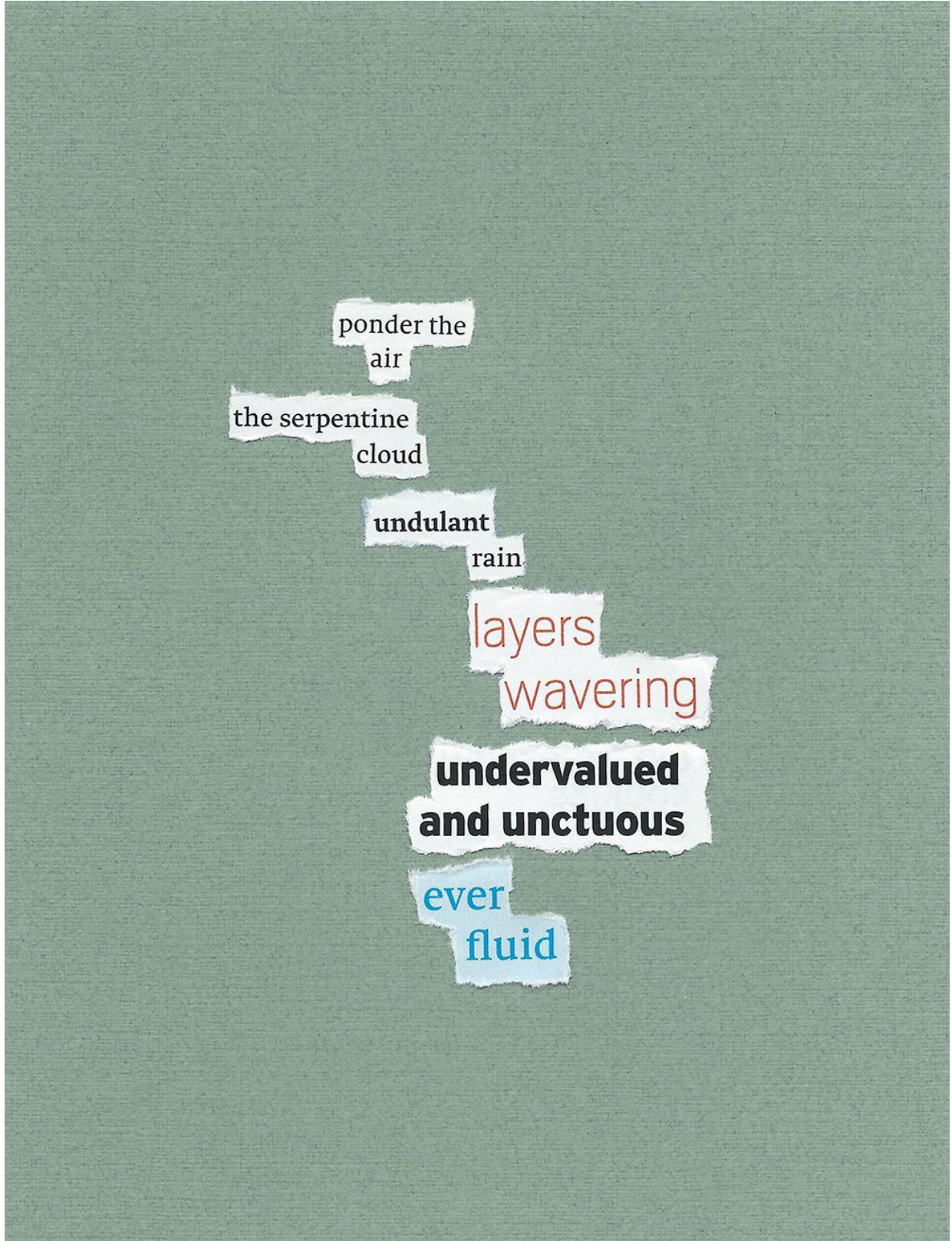


the night huge
J.I. Kleinberg



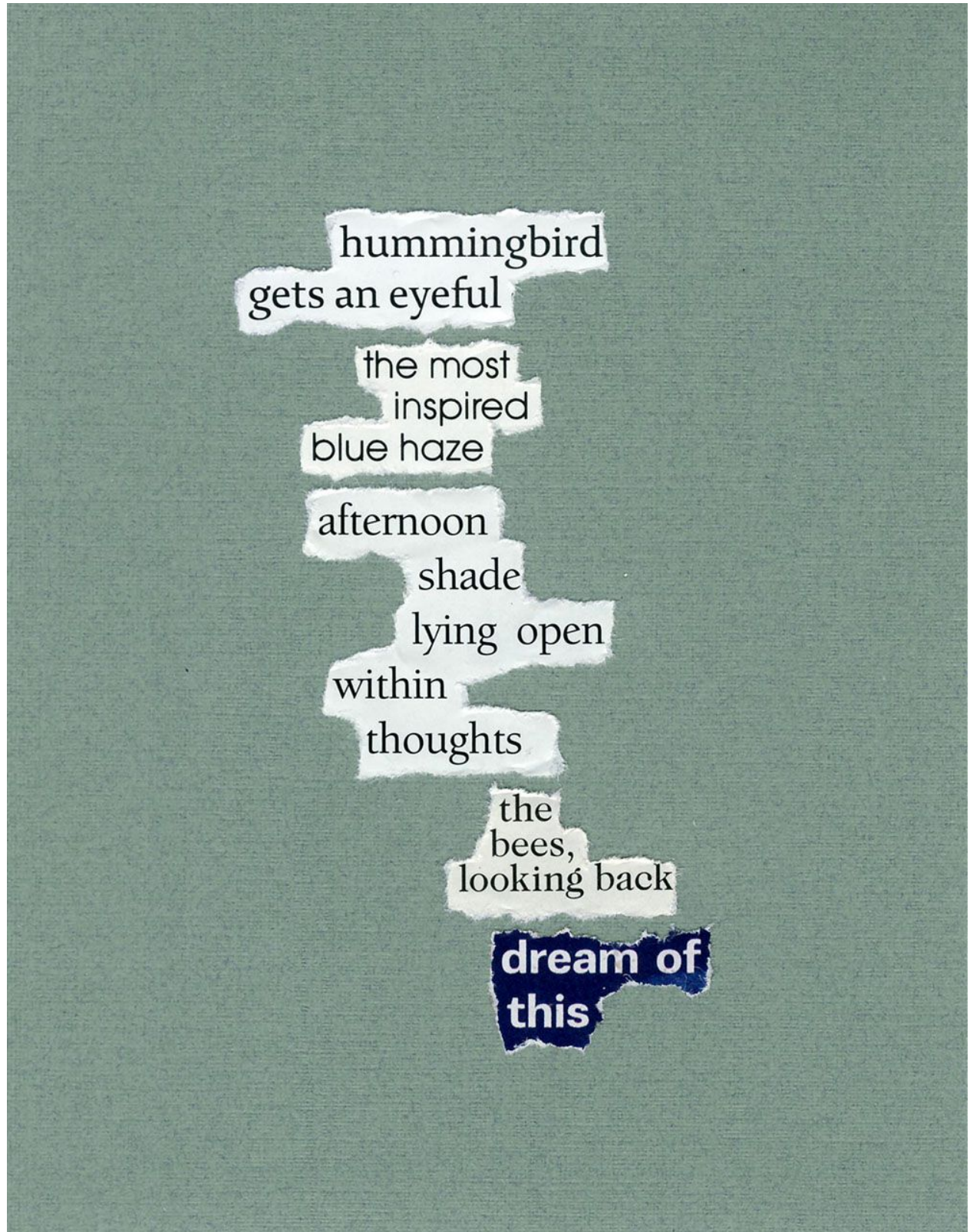
ponder

J.I. Kleinberg



hummingbird

J.I. Kleinberg



hummingbird
gets an eyeful

the most
inspired
blue haze

afternoon

shade

lying open

within

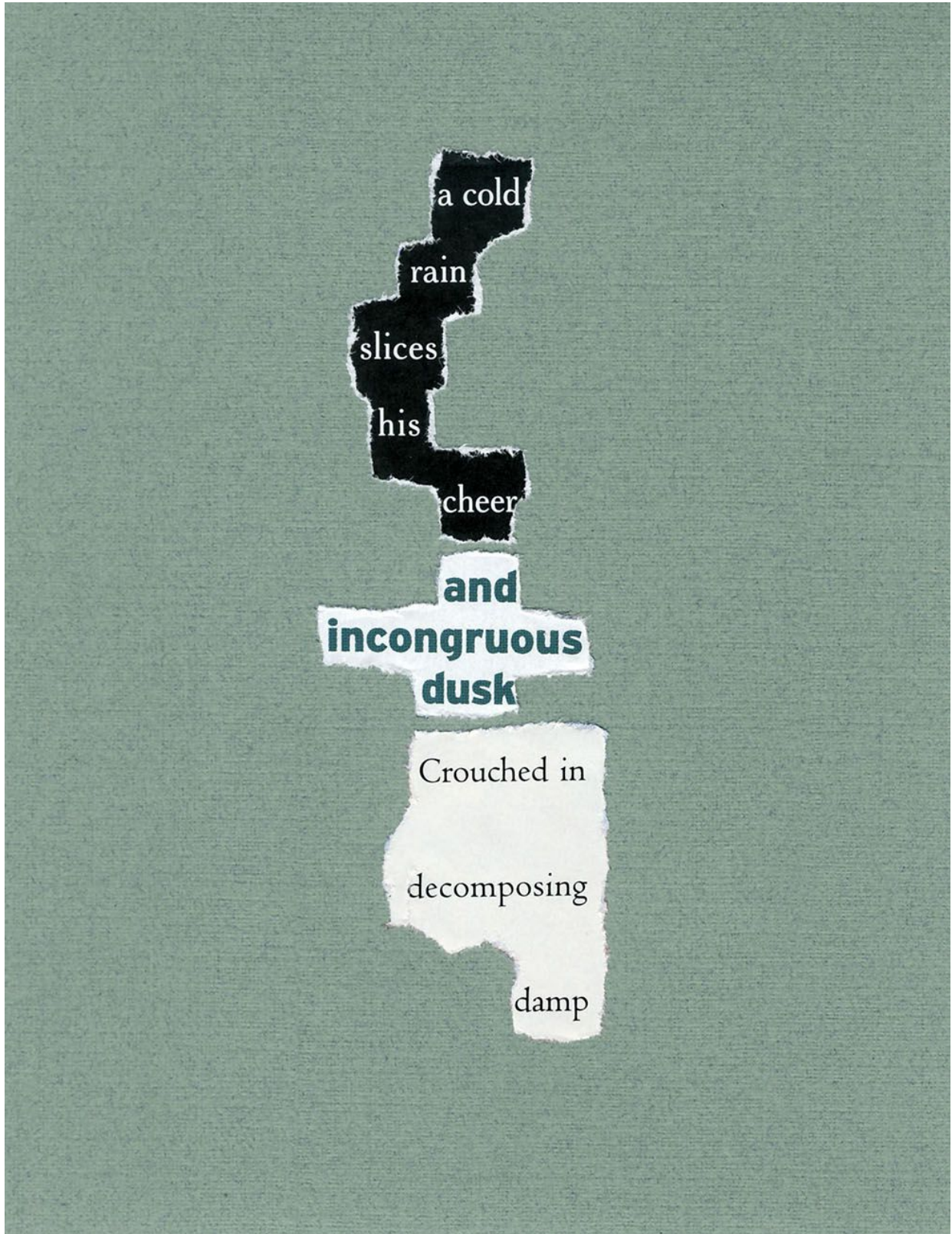
thoughts

the
bees,
looking back

**dream of
this**

a cold rain

J.I. Kleinberg



Contributors

KAREN NEUBERG's recent and poetry and collages appear in *Canary*, *Forage*, *Gyroscope*, *Otoliths*, and *S/tick*, among others. Her chapbook *the elephants are asking* is forthcoming in winter 2017 from Glass Lyre Press. Links to her work can be found at karenneuberg.blogspot.com.

BRADLEY J. FEST is assistant professor of English at Hartwick College. He is the author of two books of poetry, *The Rocking Chair* (Blue Sketch, 2015) and *The Shape of Things* (Salò, 2017), and has published numerous essays on contemporary literature and culture. He blogs at *The Hyperarchival Parallax* (bradfest.wordpress.com).

BETH GORDON is a writer who has been landlocked in St. Louis, Missouri for 16 years but dreams of oceans, daily. Her work has recently appeared in *Quail Bell*, *Into the Void*, *Calamus Journal*, *Five:2:One*, and others. Find her on Twitter [@bethgordonpoet](https://twitter.com/bethgordonpoet).

RAX KING is a queer Virgo poet who has the great fortune to work with dogs. She can be found on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) as [@raxkingisdead](https://twitter.com/raxkingisdead), where she tells a lot of jokes that don't really land and also some that do. She's been recently published in *Voicemail Poems*, *Be About It*, and *Zoomozophone Review* but her most important publication credit came in the second grade when she wrote a poem about farting for her elementary school newsletter.

MAX SEIFERT is a poet, editor, and power forward working in Chicago, Illinois. His writing has previously been published by *The Adroit Journal*, *b[OINK] Zine*, *The National Federation of State Poetry Societies*, and *plain china*. He works in educational publishing.

EMMA CIERSZYŃSKI seems really fun. She can be found on Twitter [@gothcompost](https://twitter.com/gothcompost).

MONICA LEWIS lives in Brooklyn, New York and holds an MFA from Columbia University. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Rust + Moth*, *The Boiler Journal*, *PUBLIC POOL*, *Yes, Poetry*, among others among others. Her full collection of poetry, *Sexting the Dead*, will be published November 2017 by Unknown Press.

JOHN LEO's writing has appeared in *Tinderbox*, *Breakwater Review*, and the bathroom stalls of several Indianapolis dive bars. He is a teacher and activist with an MFA from Butler University. Find him on twitter [@_johnleo](https://twitter.com/johnleo).

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MARITZA DE LA PEÑA is from Austin, Texas where she earned her B.A. in English Literature. In 2016, she moved to a tiny village in Western Ukraine where she co-founded an annual youth camp focused on creative writing, photography, journalism, and technical/workplace writing, with a specific focus on gender equality and women empowerment. When she returns to the U.S., she plans to continue to do live readings, publish her work, and encourage others through creative writing. You can find her here: subcultureblog.com.

J.I. KLEINBERG is artist, poet, freelance writer, and co-editor of *Noisy Water: Poetry from Whatcom County, Washington* (Other Mind Press, 2015). A Pushcart nominee and winner of the 2016 Ken Warfel Fellowship, her found poems have appeared recently in *Diagram*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Rise Up Review*, *The Tishman Review*, *Hedgerow*, *Otoliths*, and elsewhere. She lives in Bellingham, WA, and blogs most days at thepoetrydepartment.wordpress.com.

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Check out our debut chapbook, *Number Among* by Tom Snarsky, here: epigraphmagazine.com/tom-snarsky.html



Epigraph Magazine publishes three times per year. We love experimental poetry. We love poems that make us question what poems are. We love the internet. We love immediacy. We love distance. Guidelines for submissions can be found at epigraphmagazine.com/journal-submissions.html.

Send us your poems.

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