

NO, DEAR



No, Dear

Issue 20

LABOR

No, Dear
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Nine Clark Drive

This is the house I was born into—red brick, front yard, back door. The basement a dark thing I learned to avoid. When you get old enough you remember differently—see things through a haze. When I was younger it was: church on Sunday, the black nativity scene, my grandmother refusing to eat until the table did, curling school pictures taped to the walls. The color yellow comes to mind. Airline memorabilia. Once we buried pets in the backyard.

To have been a house since 1950 is a hard thing. A constant process. You begin to age, corners crack / fade / mold / stain / distort / forget

Where the paint became thick, where my crib sat. Where my mother grew & my uncle. Once I pulled a box from the shelf & it was expired. Once I knew how to turn off the lights. Once I woke when my grandmother remembered & went walking at dawn. Once I learned a secret about my grandfather & saw him as a man, not a myth. Once I lay sick in the room my mother grew up in, a girl of 19 & prayed I'd never have to leave.

TO MAKE MYSELF CLEAR

All year I watched. The neighbors hung new curtains, turquoise, and painted their hubcaps turquoise and the stray cat never sat on the EZ chair the neighbors left and the crab grasses slowly overtook the piles of dirt the landlords left and it took a crew of men a year to take out and replace the windows in the row houses at the end of the street. This is how I learned to appreciate a house, which can take years to build.

My own house: filled with turquoise objects. I am leaving again and so imagine how I'll strip my house and pack the objects. What boxes I will place them in and then place in my minivan. My minivan: I sat on my porch and imagined changing its oil, and imagined changing its oil, and Googled how long do oil changes and Google filled in the last word, *take*.

I tally up what was taken from me this year: some years of my life, my bluest bike, my grandmother. And hope, I think, but then I hope for its return, and so by this logic it must not be completely gone.

I sit on my front porch in running shorts and read about cigarettes and running while I smoke a cigarette. To be clear, I am more interested, right now, in shortening my life, not lengthening it. Someone told me you can always tell a person's age by looking at their hands. So I've spent this year looking. At the end I think I'd rather turn completely clear, and then, transparent, go.

My roommate asks if I think changing the oil in my car will quiet its rumble while idling, if that sound will go away completely. I say nothing but find I hope it doesn't. Even taking that possibility into consideration. That an hour of running can add hours to a lifetime. I do not feel interested in those final sour hours.

I know this logic isn't sound completely. To make myself clear: instead I smoke a cigarette, a slim cigarette that makes my hand look giant. I sit and watch a hand come into view behind the turquoise curtains and then disappear. Tomorrow I will leave here. For now I sit and watch with all my objects. I think of what I've left behind and what I'll leave here. What I'll take and what will take me, what will leave me and leave me again.

Sarah M. Sala

PEOPLE I LOVE TELL ME TO HURRY AND GET MARRIED

"Pilgrims were people glad to take off
their clothing, which was on fire."

—Anne Carson

Today I googled how to spell *thigh*,
as if the muscular ancestors inside

my jeans were mistranslations of longing.
Longing to be *found*, then found, again.

When I have kids, I'll carry my wife's eggs.
The question becomes, who adopts at birth?

Does Q sign for her genetic instruction?
From the cosmos sparked in my womb

how can a signature draw lover nearer?
When I hear hurry, I hear *bomb*. I hear *extinction*.

Say *profit-loss*. Say *fire sale*. Say *climate shift*.
Mean, *my kingdom of the fearfully loyal*.

Last night I dreamed I was teaching a class
on horror stories. It was the closest to joy

I'd felt since being laid off. In the lecture,
inside the dream, it grew harder to inhale.

Pain-brain broke in—calmly, to state, *wake up*.
You are having an asthma attack.

At the end of the world, there is no religion.
There is only whom you loved, and how you treated them.

Jennifer Celestin

A Word for the Mother of her Grandchildren

Franchman (*franh-sss-mahn*)

—Haitian Creole adverb

Admit admittedly. Freshly licked phlegm spat over the shoulder and around.
Humph. It's a cannot believe word statement sin, *sentido*. An embarrassment to
have birthed a *grimaud* that gives birth with a darkie who passes herself off as a
nurse. She is a nurse's aid who shifts her girdled hips through endless overtime
shifts to buy fake hair. It is beneath her, looks down upon darkie's belly,
embarasada again. Questions follow questions that have answered themselves
before the last question. A blessing admittedly that the first, second, and third
have all been as yellow as champagne. Scratching her throat with the roof of
her tongue. Humph. A rooster crows from atop the wooden plank of the *douche*.
If you say it is 3pm and hear the church bell toll you'd know the feeling of
knowing. Supposing first that everyone else knows but cannot be the one to
say. Not afraid to spread her ass wide in admittance of the truth, like the moon
through a window of a pick-up passing through. Humph. "*Franchman mem*.
What do you expect me to do? The truth cannot leave me be for fear of me."

Gabriela Garcia

Unloading Sacks of Grain in the Bay of Montevideo

balloon of anger wrapped in cloth—
lluvia /rain the day he went limp
wrapped in bedsheets god & smoke
soy celeste , rag in
his shoulder where the cut lay open—
he breathed his skin crusted he
lost money/ each nostril thick with
sand body burning cigarette
relief—soon the draperies will
be tied beneath a clean hung sun—

Nadia Misir

reh-collec-shun or alphabet amnesia

you will forget how to speak. fuh-get how tuh speak
like we. how to switch b e t w e e n
we patwa and the English we receive from The Queen. when your grandfather
dies you will pick three—no, tree—purple bruises from the fig tree in his
backyard in queens. he recited shakespeare, sang country-western songs. you
try desperately to pull his english back to shore. his IV line disappears in your
dreams that night, the bruises turn into figs you both eat. bodies bear the fruit
of the soul's pains and yours is an eternal hunger, yours is a meh-belly-cyan-
full-fas'-enough kind of hunger. we english is a special english he says. in we
english tree mean \$ an tree is the mango tree back home in we yard. nah badda
ax where the h gone. it playin hide an seek. that is why we 'tory does sound so
'tweet. even letters need to go on holiday. we twis and we turn—we tuhn—the
English She give we into someting else. that is the cruel magic of diaspora,
of migration. that is how yuh tek yuh eye and pass somebody. abee english
does suffer—suffa—from amnesia too. plenty language it done fuh-get, plenty
language it t(h)row overboard on the ships that ferried black and brown bodies
across the atlantic, the kalapani to el dorado. some languages swim, others
sink. so at his funeral you drop your h's and exorcise your r's when you sing
his eulogy. you dispel every elementary school teacher who held your tongue
hostage, your language captive. you remember, yuh reh-collect that in we house
the alphabet does behave a lil bit different. our english, we english, abee english,
abeeeese english was conceived in the middle of the sea, born infinite times
between stalks of sugarcane and rice, mixed with new world dirt blood sweat
cries laughs screams moans. it taste sweet sweet. and like shame it will stay
stuck in between yuh teet(h) in this life and the next and the next and the

John Paul Davis

Merger

Maybe because the first time the President was a celebrity
 & the economy trickled down it rained
 on us, Dad laid off three times
 before my voice dropped to the oaken
 night note I sing with now; maybe because the silver
 foxes whose bespoke-suited photos decorate
 the website of the other company
 keep saying *it's not a takeover*
 maybe because Pluto is no longer a planet
 & Prince isn't going to make any more records
 maybe I'm remembering the time I had to work
 the weekend & our CEO showed up, shirtsleeves, blue jeans
 & battered Vans, to see if he could help out
 but now *he's decided to explore other opportunities*
 maybe because me & the future were starting
 to be on speaking terms again, maybe because folks
 from the company that isn't taking ours over jump
 to a little too quickly & speak about the deadline
 like there's an actual death on the line
 maybe because I've heard *grandfather*
 used as a verb more than once this winter
 maybe it's my imagination or miseducation
 or what's in the water but I keep spell-checking
 my emails lately I wonder who the new faces
 on the elevator are lately I notice
 more people speaking in whispers
 & yesterday I checked my bank balance
 three times in case it was ghost money
 I saw in the deposit column, in case no one in management
 recognises my name, in case they've figured
 out how to export my job to a wage slave
 overseas, maybe because when the mad scientist
 stitches together the new creature out of two
 bodies there are always limbs left at the gravesite
 & the new monster won't really move like the living,
 it'll have a voice, but won't be able to sing.

Matthew Kosinski

Build a Tower
After Sabnok

I was hunting for cultural Marxists when I
 found my own bent spine / A state opera
 -tive had been keeping it in a large me
 -dical icebox like the type they tr
 -ansport organs in / The icebox
 had been lodged in the bran
 -ches of a tree in the park
 overlooking Hoboken /
 This explained so
 much / My scol
 -iosis was a ma
 -ndate I had
 not assent
 -ed to

Build a tower / Steal treasure out of kings' houses / Afflict / Sores rotten / Lion-Worm
 sn jo
 ahea
 dn gnu
 the sky
 is the
 -nes / Who exactly
 we've broken our conf
 we've ever built / What if
 this is the dumbest machine
 also a kind of dream / What if
 -raight into the Hudson / That is
 -ove some sort of topless vehicle st
 -eam of working in sports / Then he dr
 It took baby several years to achieve his dr

IN ORDER 2 B COMMUNICATIVE, ONE PARTICIPATES IN COMMERCE,
OR HAS A FACE

am i free?

that was a joke

but also it's crushing

i could b writing the ads but instead i am doing the work

if i wanted 2 i could b surfing & i do but it's all v far away

in the future i will surf & drown plz b informed of the rise the fall

plz b informed i could b broken i should b informed

in the future the machines will teach themselves

that's a joke but also it's v real & in our direction

the placement of markets will b up 2 the machines

bc we're paying them & taking care of them

that's also a joke but it's important 2 pretend it's real

in order 2 swim, we must first learn what it's like

in order 2 water, we must first learn what 2 learn

in order 2 learn, we must first "move 'away' 'from' 'it'"

& THEN suddenly i am the informant 2 a powerful server

of semantics & shame

& when it's repeated

u know

there is still time 2 embrace the load-bearing wall

for instance ms word. it is a form that is a template. it is a template in use today not recognized. by poetry unrecognized as a template form or medium. ms word blank templates filled all day every day by every one all the time. there is little choice in the matter. poetry is the act of bearing witness. the author adheres to forms or templates to form templates. a page is a screen is a medium for instance. papyrus papyrus filled all day every day by not every one or any one any more. papyrus a medium. ms word is that is. additionally structure with no space. a cursor a letter a font blank then little choice is a form. this is not new but there. times new roman at twelve. fill the form in front of your face because the form in front of your face fills every day by every one not recognized. and yes sonnets and villanelle. in the matter there is little choice but the manner and the bearing witness. witness ms words in ms word. how one is made to feel filling form all day by every one and any thing is mugging. made to feel. made in ms word is ms word in the act. Recognizing the forms of every day the author typing phrases or perhaps just one phrase the phrase or phrases being the materials at hand. the form and the content and additionally no space. one page is one form twelve point font and every day little choice unrecognized. but papyrus for instance papyrus perhaps a form or forming the sonnet and villanelle with little choice. and no cursor and no every one by every thing every where perhaps false of the author. but no better. no less and no tongue between the two of them and between every one. and every thing else is done. every thing else is not the materials at hand is the author's structure with no space. ms word is material at hand and the matter and the manner the matter the author is bearing author's witness to. because time and distance fill every one and every thing every day and every where. yes the sonnet yes the villanelle for instance adhere but time and distance fill forms unrecognized by not every one or any one but the author. perhaps false of the author being a cursor. and free verse certainly. certainly verse that is free and bearing witness perhaps. little choice certainly though material at hand no longer or any more or any where. if any verse is free any more and or any where. use materials at hand for instance a blank template every one every where has little choice witnessing or bearing. in front of the author's face a blank space not verse not free certainly. the villanelle at times new. the sonnet not material. the ms word sonnet or ms word villanelle forms in templates not recognized. two of them and between every one or none the author and the phrase content. made to feel made. a mugging is made to feel feeling not witnessed and perhaps bearing witness to unrecognized time and distance and material at hand. in space perhaps and verse perhaps and perhaps not free and every day. filling space in front of your face. mugging for content the medium is a structure in but not of time and distance in verse frees verse for every one perhaps bearing witness yes the sonnet yes the villanelle but more material at hand to recognize in twelve point font. new times roman using ms word. roman times using new papyrus in the manner of the matter at hand. the blank space a face for instance. the time and the space adhere to the template and the author no longer any more little choice bearing verse free from papyrus at times new. if any verse unrecognized is free then free verse certainly. little choice in feeling made to feel. blank as a page is the author mugging ms word and false perhaps in the matter. bearing phrases in verses free of space is for instance the matter of the material at hand. and the false distance and the false time at hand. and the verse and villanelle no longer the matter. and the manner and the cursor the author bearing with little choice. the poetry filling space today unrecognized or bears no witness to the faces of ms word every place. no more no less little verse but free.

Kiely Sweatt

Labor is time on meth

It's a bad joke
Watching your body
Unzip into a garbage bag.

Max Freeman

CLEANNES

In a field bothered by cows
I found a rope

Trampled in the mud and shit.
I pulled it free.

Its stinky brown skin
Was cold and slick.

The wet gleamed
When it caught the sun.

In the wood fence I drilled
A hole it could pass through

Only with great difficulty.
I wanted to save it.

I spent my day tugging the rope
Through the cruel hole.

It was hard, disgusting work
But I took a sick pleasure in it.

The cows ignored me,
Preoccupied with cow thoughts.

When I finished, the rope
Was a little cleaner than before.

Robin Treadwell

black swan events do occur

the hat transfers
from being a part of the head
to being a part of the hand

this is a tricky procedure
and very fragile.

like a sedan
carrying the Pharaoh
into the machine room

the experience transcended employment
and moved into the realm of true dedication

somebody hired a masseuse on Sunday

an incredibly calm and zen-like existence

...on the fly.

it started from ground zero in January.

the spontaneity
of the communal support
speaks to the culture

it has to seep out.
it has to be in the soil.

to be there and not blink for 60 hours straight

but suddenly you find food
you find a blanket
you find someone's throwing you
into a shower and taking you back out again

there is no *furusato* that we can really go home to.

)

Peter Bogart Johnson

1

little warm night in the cat hair
curl into pile of morning labor

read note twice to believe
is enough

get ready again in the reverie

first hit to the worst pop but
light through the shrink wrap

so great between noon and 2

shift meal then death metal
then 86 whatever

copy keys drop apron in bin
via text then drink

you're the man praise god then drink

leave in a gas cloud held by arm
even if when this started you said

"no one will know where I live"

trial by combat in the blue meadow

Elsbeth Pancrazi

The Secretary of the Interior's problem

is the wildflowers
rare and regionally rare species
and how to preserve them all
in a way that will positively
ID him as a hero
A good king
is always a warrior
a magician and a lover said
his guidebook and an apparition
flew to his side
She was composed of all those wishes for justice
and understanding pure and unsullied
by the footprint of learning
This gentle apparition stays with him
stomping through a copse of trees to the river
doing the lonely work of crunching numbers
to disrupt the celestial hierarchy..

Dazzled by the beautify of his own perceptions
he notices the poppies' bright flags of surrender
he notices the admiring gaze of black-eyed Susans
he doesn't notice there's someone else here

it's the earth
moving closer to himself
in temperament

The earth is going through a phase
What happens when earth grows out of it?
Increasingly in our world new people repeat
as fools and tyrants from the past
Are you a fool or a tyrant earth? I am

Christine Shan Shan Hou

New Age Expedition

You love to call out the bad guys then leave
the scenario unblemished
Characters are known to wander
in the cinema of the psyche
A full on terrace is constructed at the peak of it.
A terrace of the mind is optimal in a new age of development,
Empirical data insists on offering something
that wasn't even theirs to begin with.
You can always explore other options.
You can always opt out of the meal plan.
You can always stop at any point in time
and demand something bigger.
Ancient diseases are stored in
ice as big as a mountain.
You have to work hard to unlearn the facts.
History happens all at once in a string of inconveniences.
The instinct is to resort to brutality.
The instinct is to throw everything into a moat full of crocodiles.
The moat surrounds an oracle the size of a house.
Moths circle the oracle.
Contemplate the concept of deep time
Time and no time are the same thing.
All of this thinking interferes with this evening's plans.
Maybe don't have kids.
Believe whole-heartedly in the journey.
Take over the Amazon.
Treat everything like a blank canvas and
write your name all over it.
Hang it in your terrace for all your guests to see.
Sleep with each guest and then pretend like it didn't happen.
You can spend a lifetime asleep and still know that more dying
is coming.
You can spend a lifetime studying a single planet
like Venus, religiously.
You keep a book of numbers on your bedside table.
It is made of cardboard like your fantasies.
In order for the new age parable to work,
someone has to survive it.
You are not used to being provoked like this.
The instinct is to resort to brutality.
Let the moths take care of it.

Mariel V Mok

Schedule B

THE BENEFITS OF CROSS-SELL STICKINESS

a bundle can ultimately be torn apart
but an Integrated Solution much harder
to break away from

our business is valuable to the bank
because we generate a high volume of deposits
High Quality Liquid Assets
for use in other areas

because we are so embedded in our clients' day to day
we are right there in all aspects
of their operational process

even in recessions, even in times of crisis
they need us more than ever

most clients stay with us for an average of nine years
once they are with us it's hard to switch over to JPM or BofA

they would have to move all their accounts
stop business for a while
it would be a major
overhaul

a small speedboat
can turn
quickly

players on a football field
can pivot,
tackle,
then
run

for our clients,
it's not that
easy

Alex Crowley

Just Checking In

oh you know what they say
if it's not one thing —
guess who's drinking again
and supposed to help
with the kids — yah well
someone's having panic
attacks of course and the other
one's in and out
of this facility and that
nobody's got any money left
paying for a doctor who
just prescribes any old
who knows what —
did yr brother tell you
about yr cousin
he was supposed to well
anyway it was on the news
he was in a standoff
w/ the police up there
he started shooting up
the house again thankfully
he didn't hurt anyone
but he'll be in jail for a while
yr aunt and her sister give
him some kind of meds
for his ptsd but the VA
is no help getting him
into counseling and
yr uncle doesn't know
what he's taking —
anyway how's work
what's going on w/
you guys down there

Brendan Lorber

Wreck of the noise

The hustle of an enchanting
distraction only lasts until we mistake
the color of the pills for the pills themselves
It's like if enough trees fall in the forest
it isn't a forest anymore which is why
I'm staying in bed despite the uncertainty
of it being my bed or someone else's
waking equivalent A working lunch
here at my desk is the most threadbare
cover for the mechanization of eros
The architecture of evasion always fails
not because the investigators are that good
or the tractor beam stretches to infinity
but because every dream is of waking up
Even this poem impels us to stop hustling

John Paul Davis

Idle

Paperwork, taxes, & auditions,
the dishes & appointments,
the planet is never done slingshotting
around our local star's fire
doorbell ringing, phone shivering
with messages, letters to send
trains to catch, tyrannies we try
to but can't always sidestep, even while we sleep
the unforgiving world gallops forward

still, our skins hum when we touch
the coffee is the right kind of bitter
light swells in the curtains. My body
sabbathed around yours. The language
your hair writes onto my skin
when you fall asleep on my arm. Lie
with me a little longer. Speak
in whispers. Waste
a little time with me.

Contributors

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