

**Please DO NOT  
FEED cats on  
church property**

# EPIGRAPH

Magazine

Issue Nineteen / Winter 2018

[epigraphmagazine.com](http://epigraphmagazine.com)

## IN THIS ISSUE

ASHLEY MIRANDA

every image of myself / 5

{when we last spoke} / 6

WILLIAM LYCHACK

Inversion of Emerson / 7

JENNIFER MACBAIN-STEPHENS

Case # 4167 (c) / 8

RACHEL FRANKLIN WOOD

Invertebrate / 9

NATE LOGAN

Is This Thing On? / 10

I Wear My Sunglasses at Night / 11

JESSICA MOREY-COLLINS

Summoning Mania / 12 - 13

I'll Sleep When I'm Alive / 14

JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS

This is Not an Ekphrastic Poem / 15

HEIKKI HUOTARI

Included / 16

KENDRA OAKES FERGUSON

Unopened Bloom / 17 - 18

Sexual Pollution / 19 - 20

MATTHEW YATES

preserver of life / 21

KRISTIN LAFOLLETTE

Natural Science / 22

Leather / 23

JASON DEAN ARNOLD

Results are Consistent with Other Studies / 24 - 25

VICTORIA HUDSON

I Brought You a Sweatshirt from Charlevoix,  
So for the Love of God Don't Leave Me Today / 26

SAMUEL J FOX

& I've always / 27

PETER J. GRIECO

At The Musarium (33) / 28 - 31

CONTRIBUTORS / 32 - 34

every image of myself / Ashley Miranda

is as whimsical as the bruises on my thighs

what happened to my reflection?          i ate it whole

chewing through negations  
glass shards and all

first i consume the eyes

clawing through the cornea *puncturing through the sclera*  
draining the fluid into my mouth  
a concoction of salt and eye gel  
and fear dripping  
down my chin

then i gnaw at the edges of my face

caving in the skull and muscle, pulling it apart to the edges  
gripping sinew through the holes in my teeth

consumption of reflection  
is not consumption of self

it is triumph over shadows

{when we last spoke} / Ashley Miranda

dear violence masking as wildness,

i use to fantasize of kissing you  
when you were a storm shaped by  
chains

i remember the smog that kept me outside your door  
asking me if i knew how to fuck

i wanted to say yes

you wanted me to feel  
pathetic

so we could be a single string  
fraying delicately.

do you still click and clack  
against craniums  
are you still a lust that collapses  
the lungs?

maybe it's better to clean the echoes left on the wallpaper if  
intimacy is a noxious hazard that bleed from your orifices

Inversion of Emerson / William Lychack

*I dreamed that I floated at will in the great ether, and I saw this world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand and brought it to me and said, "This must thou eat." And I ate the world. [RWE]*

You awoke on the tiny tip of a pin, attached against your will, blind to all but that pinpoint of fire, a vast emptiness beneath these nightmares of a boy. Then a demon took you by the needle and carried you down and said, "Open your mouth." And you opened like a dark void.

Case # 4167 (c) / Jennifer MacBain-Stephens

*Dear Rory,*

*I want to go back to school. I won't make any money. Nothing I was ever interested in made money. But what's the point of anything then? I'm just trying to stay alive and cut one more head off. I'm just buying time. Should I read more headlines, move again?*

*Rory, I'll always keep your ID card in my pocket. I won't forget you. Your fear, your confusion. Your softness when I first saw you. What do we have if not soft eyes at first? I have to kill and be soft at the same time Rory.*

*I'll read you your card: Subject smothered in Tapeatern ally. ink forced down throat. Right arm and anterior pelvic bone severely injured. Lacerations on face. Identification neck tattoo: "Rory."*

*Rory, here are clean white sheets for you to soak up the ink coming out of your eyes.*

Invertebrate / Rachel Franklin Wood

Red ant sorting a pile of severed parts  
by degree of violence in the break,

I wish I weren't compelled to gather  
all these limbs I don't need.

## Is This Thing On? / Nate Logan

Satan's roundabout  
turned out less scary

than the stump speech  
made it sound. I practice

my touchdown dance in  
every hot sauce dispensary.

Again, Steely Dan melts  
like a snow cone over

my skull. Is this thing on?  
Is there room for me in the rowboat

headed for shore? Isobel makes  
the desert their own, unlike me.

Next week, an ice shelf will be  
strapped to my back. At the time

it seemed fair. But here come  
my doubts, loitering across town.

# I Wear My Sunglasses at Night / Nate Logan

The list of side effects in the drug commercial makes me sleepy.  
I never miss any feel-good story about drones.  
Drinking from this inspirational coffee mug is the worst form of dread.

Summoning Mania / Jessica Morey-Collins

Hey bitch

I've dangled organ meats from my skin  
offered my body to the raptors

a captive of piercing  
cries hooked the raw glisten  
to my flesh, bitch, listen—

I've glittered my lips and innards  
flipped entitlement inside out

Have at these greasy drips  
Have at this crimson

Bitch,

I ripped up sleep for you  
scattered it through sieved fingers  
gathered my pleas  
to fling them meekly  
at your feet            Here is your treat of my flesh  
                                 Here is my skull, your receptacle

I know you love me desperate  
I've strung my 'yes' from branches and eaves  
where it blesses the wind and the air-  
conditioning I know you love me  
desperate knee bleeding trailing  
my slug wet  
across the linoleum

I know you love me folded  
limbs dragged through firmament  
best when I come up gasping  
from a pool  
of my own fluids

Remember when you made love  
feel like FunDip? I tongued  
until buds rubbed off  
thought they might not  
grow back Remember

when you muted God and spun  
thoughts like cotton candy  
remember when you

[\*\*CW – suicidal ideation\*\*]

I'll Sleep When I'm Alive / Jessica Morey-Collins

Another year in which I didn't do it—submerge  
in the river of sand, of syrup—unlearn breath  
and vegetables—send space left  
forever blinking. I won't bore you with methods,  
they're plenty, bent light warbling  
    eyes on a dry road  
until I wept for water. I didn't want to be  
born, thorn I dislodge daily, take meds,  
    scrape on (and on). But still, I think  
I might feel it again—grateful to be alive, the cool  
abrasion of heel sand and an unplanned afternoon  
lapping at the nectar of stars. And I'll be armed  
    with love, real love, that I feel and don't  
just know, unmuffled by my body's clench,  
by the deadening of taste and color. Some blooms  
open over night, photoreceptive proteins  
having traveled to the tips of shoots to wait  
    for a portent of light. Who am I  
to lust after stability?—crafting assemblages of what  
I've seen and survived, calling them Meaning,  
Reason to Live, Self-Esteem, only to tear away  
    any petals—why pretend the sum is greater,  
that violence hasn't its knack for accretion. Still,  
I believe the days will sweeten, sleep work free  
from its root tangle and my thoughts will clean  
    themselves, dark-gulping jewels  
and foolishness—so as much as I want  
to be I'm not through yet.

This is Not an Ekphrastic Poem / John Sibley Williams

An orphaned night sky slumps into middle distance  
mountains.

Ours to recover just to lose again, the world  
spins rapidly toward dawn.

If life is the sum of throb & hunger, something sacred  
& final being

held up to the light & shown, naked, for what it is,  
we are ready to surrender

our sovereignty over what was never really ours. Let go  
of that small forever

we've carried cupped in our hands like a dead bird, like a  
silent conch shell. When we lean in close to listen,

there is no ocean, no sky, no clumps of dry paint. No echo.

No canvas.

Included / Heikki Huotari

One or both of *bowling ball* and *ballroom* antiquated, from the ground down you were barely naked. One partition was induced by an equivalence relation then another. Parcel yourself out and find a screamer who agrees. Who gives this man, the messenger of God might ask, And who will be his mother? You were imitating song birds and you thought you had a dialog but they (and you) were sweetly sounding the alarm.

Unopened Bloom / Kendra Oakes Ferguson

pay attention when quiet things happen.

rothko pink on pink 1953, 16x32 print

layering our voices on top of each other,

a magnificent jello pie

i'm considering getting getting a tattoo that reads

“UNOPENED” across my forehead

also considering the idea of

not having a good time anymore

---

don't be sorry just be better

i whisper into my mostly-eaten

bag of jalapeño potato chips

from the comfort of my bedroom

everyone who loves you is asleep

the same candle burns for three hours

do you like how it smells

or did you just forget

what more do you want  
than a landscape

brush your teeth drink your milk shave your head  
do everything you're supposed to do  
slip your voice in every pocket  
of every coat you own

and go forth

Sexual Pollution / Kendra Oakes Ferguson

a body is not an ode  
to petty theft  
nor a certain distortion  
to get at the truth  
it tastes of  
flash photography  
on eucalyptus leaves  
it looks like  
or a saltine cracker  
in an old man's mouth  
i forgot my hair clip  
i'm holding in a sneeze  
sometimes my hunger  
feels pornographic  
all my life i've been  
trying to sell unripe tomatoes  
is there a google translate for having sex  
am i in the wrong place  
despite disarming  
confidence  
i am not your baby

but your babylon  
me, and all the beautiful  
women i know  
levitate until we can't  
levitate any more

preserver of life / Matthew Yates

i knew  
i knew

the deluge  
by the way

it talked  
to me

hollow like  
the universe  
full of everything

it's voice was tinny  
flat & fragrant  
when it asked if i were

Utnapishtim  
what could i do

but pretend  
to keep living

There's no magic to  
my body, no  
mystery. I say,

*I feel fine.*  
*I'm still young*

(although the white-grey  
strands that have extended  
from my scalp are a diagnosis  
all their own).

My birthday isn't for another  
two weeks, but we still get  
together for sandwiches  
and soup and  
conversation—

This time of year is usually  
embedded in snow,  
such dry air, but  
we walk under

umbrellas and  
awnings to avoid  
the rain—

This is not what my  
body is used to.  
How can my brain  
signal growth  
in my core without  
proper cold?

I can't explain my biology  
(I'm just passing through).

I don't want to apologize for not  
giving you more than just me.  
I don't want to, but I will, and

I might even  
mean it a little.

Leather / Kristin LaFollette

I smelled it,

leather

(like an airplane seat)

and thought—

A body of water,

(had it been nearby)

could have

helped you?

Flushed your wounds clear

of debris, the cold slowing

the

swelling?

Cleansed

the blood?

Dry weather, but not

quite like winter—

Had the ground been frozen,

your hot skin may have been

able to

take in

the

moisture

from the grass.

Had the ground been frozen,

you would have

died.

Results are Consistent with Other Studies / Jason  
Dean Arnold

Every electrical device in our home needs to be checked  
Again again again again again again again again again  
Again again again again again again again again again  
Again again again again again again again again again  
Again again again again again again again again again  
Again again again again again again again again again  
Again again again again again again again again again  
Again again again again again again again again again

Again.

The light switch doesn't know that it can't be controlled

With my mind; I stare at it, examine

Its resting position.

When I was a child, I would close my eyes to hold the image

As a temporary imprint on the insides of my eyelids.

Pentimento, trace, fleshy abstract, erase.

The beauty is in the longing, the lost.

I am losing everything everyday, in small moments, repeated

Again.

Again.

Again.

Trust the failure of memory.

Hear my heart give into being, my breath

Builds walls of a new home, a prison

Intimate, empty.

Don't leave me here inside myself.

Don't leave me.

I Brought You a Sweatshirt from Charlevoix, So for the  
Love of God Don't Leave Me Today / Victoria Hudson

You've lost your head before. You know how it  
goes: it starts with a lie that you believe.  
Cold fingers and a placid shoreline. Ends

with me, headless. You, drunk in a Greyhound  
station at 3 PM. I don't mean to  
scare you. Swear I don't mean to hold you hostage.

I know you don't need this right now. Here are three  
reasons you can't dump me: tomorrow's your  
birthday, I need you, and I already

bought you this sweatshirt. You know what I mean.  
Forget everything I've just told you.  
I never know how to say it, but

Jesus Christ I love you to pieces. You  
remind me of sand castles by the lake.

& I've always / Samuel J Fox

& I've always wished for pain mingled with the blood-rouse of pleasure but am too afraid that once I have aroused this shadowed lover this ambulated beast thrust hair-pull ass smack ruffian that it will become me spitting after smoking a cigarette or pulverizing conversation with a quick dismissal I want to be leashed I want to be handcuffed to something bigger than myself I want to be mounted into submission broken as though my heart were a wild stallion forced with saddle for the first time I had the chance to be wild and could not was a soft candy coin melted in the palm of my lover's hand instead, I grazed the moonlit field of her belly instead, I ate the fruit in her orchard sluiced with sweetness I entered her like a wind enters the hollow and we both howled and is that not enough? my manliness does not depend on the bestial ruination of another my manliness is soft malleable flexible I can be hard place when necessary and antlers above a flowing river exposing my slender neck to drink and I will not worry about gun retort it will come when it comes I will let my thirsty tongue want what it loves and I know that sex and death share a similarity like the moon reflecting the sun

At the Musarium (33) / Peter J. Grieco

[801 – 900]

Picture Indian Summer in America.  
Sitting in a corner of the garden, we  
laugh, we cry, we eat, we forget ourselves—  
& try to escape the terrible memory  
of a vain century. Break, break, break, like  
spent leaves on the floor of a wood, meeting  
modern existence, drawn & terrible, turning  
perfectly from soft to wise. Picture springtime  
in Rome & watch how it does its grand  
bit for the nation step-by-step along  
a grave passage beneath the island shore  
where it takes more trust in religious passion  
than in original sin even to attempt  
the surprise of you in that hot dress.

[1801 – 1900]

I sang softly & forgot the horror.  
I sang troubled & painted the flower  
of melancholy. I sang of violence  
& murder, frightened of fierce suspicion.  
Ashamed, I sang of household profit. At  
midnight I sang trembling with mystery.  
With my finger down the throat of shining  
fame, I wondered, setting down my gun, how  
refuse, delay, & after pause, proceed?  
How unfortunate regret, that her fatal  
bosom should press mankind to waste  
its estate on the reign of image & reputation.  
Hence I sang, formerly & lately, not  
with wit but with difficulties & thanks.

[2501 – 2600]

Fruits of gloomy contrast sharply crossing  
the lively flow of discourse, the wondering  
masses gazing at the feast, a bride of  
eighteen persuaded by her teacher to  
gather purple passages mingled with  
magic verses, as simplicity of  
motive returns earnestly in ruined  
vanity: Admirable brethren lift  
up thy dragged down charges & examine  
every tendency towards vengeance, what  
Spaniards whisper & what Lincoln condemned,  
in the respectable construction of  
obedience relieved of independence,  
of structure conceived as perfection.

[21701 - 21800]

Unbind a monkey's sophistication—  
& the outflow is moonrise. Leverage  
heartstrings, & vitreous farrier will  
astound even Shiva. Sheared gears  
sag, but the old coot remains  
a fatalist. All-night weaning, Anglo-  
Norman acceding, soporific blackamoor  
disagreeing, taffeta whirligig adverting  
the semi-fireproof exegesis  
of eclogues that rankle a sweaty  
purgation beside some di-symphonic  
merry-go-round of obesity. Never  
inflate what GNP portends, even when  
melodic mosquitoes sprawl seaward.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**ASHLEY MIRANDA** is a latinx poet from Chicago. Their work has been previously featured by *Cotton Xenomorph*, *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Witch Craft Mag*, *MAKE magazine* and other publications. They have a forthcoming chapbook, *dolores in spanish is pain, dolores in lolita is a girl*, from Glass Poetry Press. Ashley tweets far too much and would love to be your friend on Twitter ([@dustwhispers](https://twitter.com/dustwhispers)).

**WILLIAM LYCHACK** is the author of a novel, *The Wasp Eater*, a collection of stories, *The Architect of Flowers*, and a forthcoming novel, *Cargill Falls*. His work has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories*, *The Pushcart Prize*, and on public radio's *This American Life*. He currently teaches at the University of Pittsburgh and has pieces in current or forthcoming issues of *The American Scholar*, *New England Review*, *North American Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Ploughshares*, and others.

**JENNIFER MACBAIN-STEPHENS** lives in Midwest and is the author of four full length poetry collections: *Your Best Asset is a White Lace Dress* (Yellow Chair Press, 2016), *The Messenger is Already Dead* (Stalking Horse Press, 2017), *We're Going to Need a Higher Fence*, tied for first place in the 2017 Lit Fest Book Competition, and *The Vitamix and the Murder of Crows*, recently out from Apocalypse Party. Her work has been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. Recent work can be seen at or is forthcoming from *The Pinch*, *Black Lawrence Press*, *Quiddity*, *Prelude*, *Cleaver*, *Yalobusha Review*, *decomp*, and *Inter/rupture*.

Visit: [jennifermacbainstephens.wordpress.com](http://jennifermacbainstephens.wordpress.com)

**RACHEL FRANKLIN WOOD** is a trans poet and interviewer from Laramie, Wyoming, but she hasn't lived there for a while. Recent poems and interviews with poets have appeared or are forthcoming in *the Adroit Journal*, *the Fort Collins Courier*, *Anomaly*, *Susan / The Journal*, and others. A chapbook, *Every Spring Underneath*, is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press. She is 1/5 of Pulpmouth.

**NATE LOGAN** is the author of *Inside the Golden Days of Missing You*, forthcoming from Magic Helicopter Press. He's editor and publisher of Spooky Girlfriend Press.

**JESSICA MOREY-COLLINS** is a poet and resilience planner. She received her MFA from the University of New Orleans, where she worked as associate poetry editor for *Bayou Magazine*. Her poems can be found or are forthcoming in *Pleiades*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Sycamore Review*, and elsewhere. She studies natural hazards in the University of Oregon's Masters of Community and Regional Planning program. Find her at [jessicamoreycollins.com](http://jessicamoreycollins.com).

**JOHN SIBLEY WILLIAMS** is the author of three collections, including the Orison Poetry Prize winning *As One Fire Consumes Another*. An eleven-time Pushcart nominee and winner of various awards, John serves as editor of *The Inflectionist Review*. Publications include: *Yale Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Sycamore Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Columbia*, and *Third Coast*.

In a past century **HEIKKI HUOTARI** attended a one-room school and spent summers on a forest-fire lookout tower. Now a retired math professor, Heikki has published three chapbooks, one of which won the Gambling The Aisle prize, and one collection, *Fractal Idyll* (A..P Press). Another collection is in press.

**KENDRA OAKES FERGUSON** is a poet from Portland, Oregon. Previously published in *Alien Mouth* and *Ghost City Review*, she is the curator for WORD SALAD SERIES, a monthly reading series for writers outside the realm of normalcy. She can often be found making bad jokes and going on long walks on anything but the beach, or on instagram and twitter [@internetkendra](https://www.instagram.com/internetkendra).

**MATTHEW YATES** is a poet and artist from Kentucky. His work can be found in or forthcoming in *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Barren Magazine*, *Rhythm & Bones Lit*, and *awkward mermaid lit*.

**KRISTIN LAFOLLETTE** is a PhD candidate at Bowling Green State University and is a writer, artist, and photographer. Her work was recently featured in the anthology *Ohio's Best Emerging Poets* (Z Publishing, 2017), and she is the author of the chapbook, *Body Parts* (GFT Press, 2018). She currently lives in northwest Ohio. You can visit her on Twitter at [@k\\_lafollette03](https://twitter.com/k_lafollette03) or on her website at [kristinlafollette.com](http://kristinlafollette.com).

**JASON DEAN ARNOLD**'s entire career has been devoted to the importance of education, from teaching in the K-12 setting to designing and teaching online courses for post secondary. He currently serves as the director for E-Learning, Technology, and Communications at the University of Florida's College of Education. His writing has been published online and in print. Jason has no ability to compartmentalize. As a result, his writing, visual artwork, and music (and other creative output) are all extensions of his love for learning. Find him online at [TemporaryTranslation.com](http://TemporaryTranslation.com) and on Twitter [@jasondeanarnold](https://twitter.com/jasondeanarnold).

**VICTORIA HUDSON** is an MFA candidate and Lily Peters Fellow at the University of Arkansas. She reads poetry for the *Arkansas International*. Her work has appeared in *Fogged Clarity*.

**SAMUEL J FOX** is a queer essayist/poet living in the Southern US: he is poetry editor for *Bending Genres* and a columnist/reviewer for *Five 2 One Magazine*. He likes coffee shops, graveyards, and dilapidated places, depending. Find him on Twitter ([@samueljfox](https://twitter.com/samueljfox)).

**PETER J. GRIECO** is a native of Buffalo, NY and a Ph. D. graduate of SUNY Buffalo where he wrote his dissertation on working-class poetry. He is a prolific song writer as well as a poet. His work has appeared widely online and in print. "At the Musarium" is his series of semi-procedural verse based on 100-word sequences from word frequency lists.

Epigraph Magazine loves experimental poetry. We love poems that make us question what poetry is. We love the internet. We love immediacy. We love distance.

[epigraphmagazine.com/journal-submissions](http://epigraphmagazine.com/journal-submissions)

Epigraph Magazine  
Issue Nineteen / Winter 2018  
© 2018  
edited by Nicholas Bon