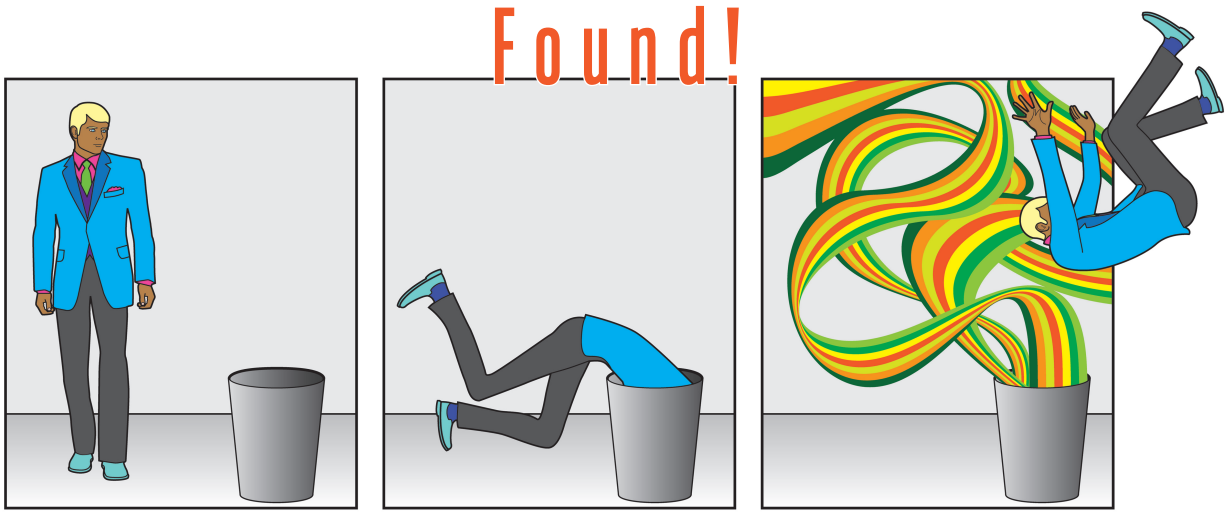
The broken CITY

Prose Poetry Photography Art Music

My uncle, unwitting Soviet conscript, took photo after photo with his FED 1S. Photographs of camps, burned

and evacuated. Photographs of camps, destroyed and full. Photographs of Berlin after the fall. When it was over, he fled and arrived in Montréal on a Sunday afternoon and knocked on his sister's door, where he was let in and slept for four days without waking. Appropriating the bathroom, painting over the window, he developed each roll of film carefully, silently, without a mistake. Then he sold each photograph one by one. Newspapers. Archives. Synagogues. Magazines. The afternoon the last one sold, he strung himself up with a fake leather belt on the exposed water pipe. *Now I am done* he wrote in block letter Cyrillic script. *Now I am done*.



A public service announcement from Toys "R" Us • How to remain in a state of constant departure while always arriving • A pigeon vs. a tamale shell • The best way to defend your home against burglars • Tesla juggling fireballs • Is Laurent Laurent hiding in a bedsit in Montréal? • Existential laments: "I used to be an arrrrtist!"

Winter 2010
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The broken CITY

Prose Poetry Photography Art Music

Winter 2010 Issue 7

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The Broken City is currently accepting submissions for its summer 2011 edition: *Reality bites.*

In this issue, we'll be escaping into dreams, hallucinations, bizarro worlds, alternate universes and everything unexplainable as we tackle the question, "What is reality?"

Have you figured out the plot of David Lynch's *Lost Highway*? Do you have a short story about a man who discovers that reality is being simulated by oppressive futuristic robots? Did you uncover a profound truth while experimenting with psychedelics, cavorting in Second Life or staring into your homemade dream machine? Surely, you have some poetry about Schrodinger's cat!

Send your poetry, fiction, essays, comics, illustrations, photography, music/book reviews to thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com. Please—and we cannot stress this enough—do not submit anything about unicorns.

Deadline is: June 1, 2011. Submitters will be contacted after that date, with news of acceptance or rejection.

Nothing that fits the theme? Send something anyway—there may be room for non-conforming work too.

Cover Illustration

Mouki K. Butt *is an illustrator and animator. She also enjoys making music, videos, and music videos. She has found dozens of abandoned umbrellas while living in Vancouver. minorepic.net/~mouki.*

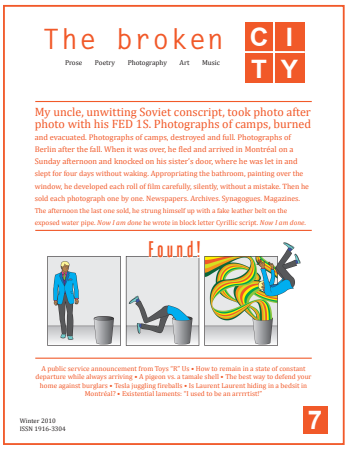
Staff

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ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Sabrina Malik
Kat Wrobel

In this issue:

The Broken City examines unexpected discoveries, both literal and figurative, in *Found!*—a delectable smorgasbord of misplaced memories, discarded ephemera and unearthed treasures. The cover text is taken from Meghan Rose Allen's short story, "That Which We Know," which appears on page 14.



On the Web:

www.thebrokencitymag.com

Submission Guidelines:

www.thebrokencitymag.com/submissions.html

Correspondence:

thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com



Found by Mouki K. Butt

Discoveries
Emily K. Bright

Newborns, for example.
Diseases and the plants
just perfect to respond.

A thing need not be named
to be.

∞

Think of light bulbs. Think
tulip bulbs that come alive
inside the darkness of the earth.

∞

There is a particle named Beauty.

∞

Name these clustered stars after
your understanding. Layer
name on name. Now try to
navigate your way.

∞

Every new discovery
reorders the world.

Science has a costly history.

∞

Tesla juggling balls of blue fire.

Edison spreading rumors
of light-bulb electrocutions.

∞

Galileo recanting.

∞

The teacher holds a model
of the universe.
She points, we repeat.
I could cry for every time we asked
will this be on the test?

∞

There is a particle named God.

∞

Radio *waves*. Electric *current*.
I call it, I call it—

∞

Every map we've ever
redrawn. Every map that still
has edges left blank.

Emily K. Bright's poetry has appeared in multiple journals and anthologies, including North American Review, Other Voices International *and* Beloved on Earth: 150 Poems of Grief and Gratitude*. Her chapbook,* Glances Back*, is available from Pudding House Press. She teaches writing at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Follow her blog at emilykbright.blogspot.com.*

Grounding
Emily K. Bright

When you come, come walking. Footprint yourself through neighborhoods, across the drainage ditches that, when rain comes, fill and rush.

Recognize your tread.
Leave a trail of oranges which, with heat and rain, slowly will become this dirt. Learn the land on foot until it burrows into ocean.

See how rock protects you if you learn just where to stand. Watch the water roll on roll.
Your gaze will stretch uninterrupted.

Weave yourself through working harbors, past the tourist beach with tables set.
The trash heaped on one stretch. The slanting sand turned soccer field.

You may think of other sand and rock formations you have known, how someday, without repetition, everything will look like something you have loved.

Someday, walking still, your heels dipping into sand will strike this precise pitch.



Devorah White

Gifts of the Urban Walk
Melissa Ann Sweat

We grow accustomed to gifts of the urban walk:
someone has sprayed the sidewalk wet, and the smell of damp cement
warms my nose like a forest floor.

I walk and see a pigeon pecking at a tamale shell.
Neighbors, who I never see, leave whole boxes outside their apartments.
Others just set things on the sidewalk,
bare as orphans.

I once made an offering to the secret swap meet,
and hoped this thing—like a bottle tossed in the sea,
& rolled & rolled into green glass—would eventually
leave a gift for me.

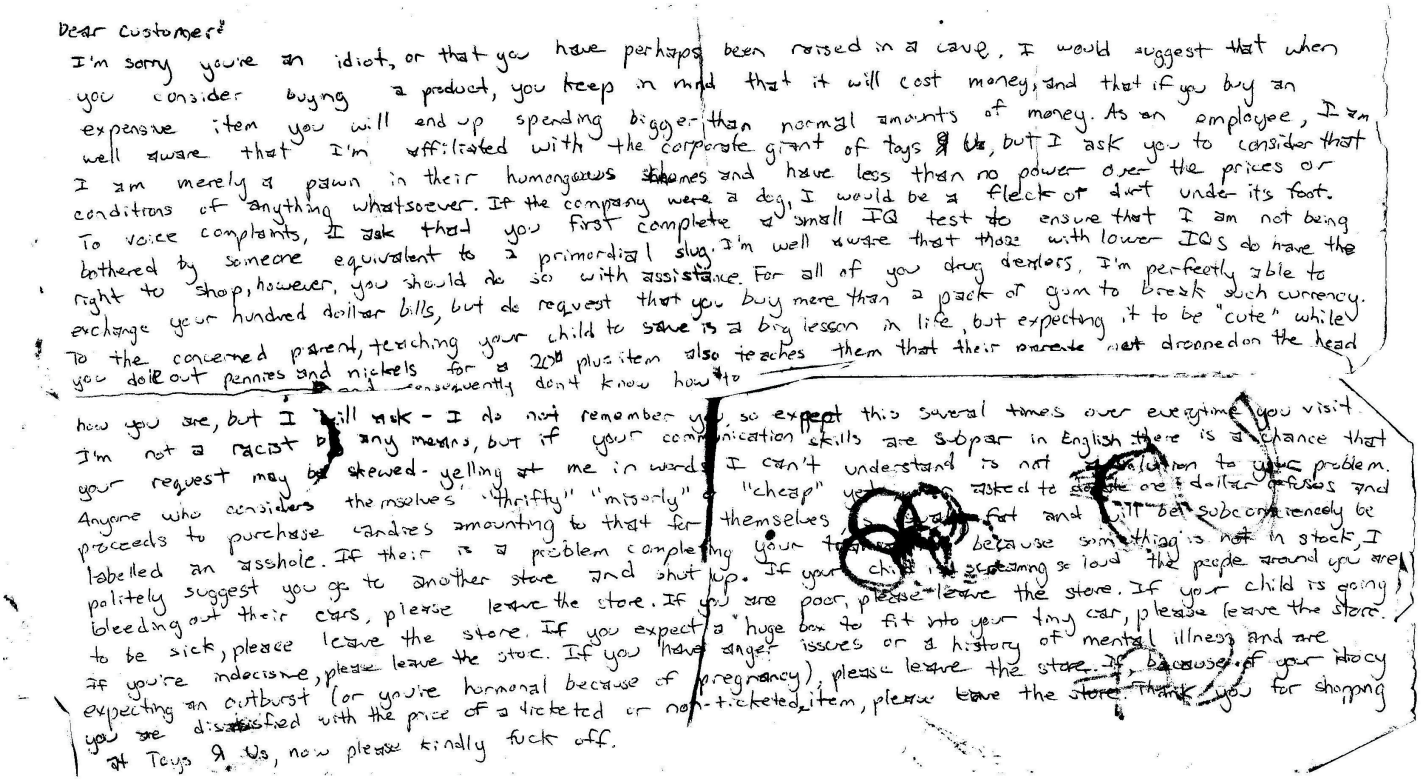
This morning, walking, though, what I found was
a tiny plastic bag dotted with neon yellow skulls,
containing the remains of a ghost.

And I recalled a pigeon, relentlessly
pecking at a tamale shell.

I walked and thought some more...

It was a gift, then, of the urge to pick it up,
and instead, walking on.

Melissa Ann Sweat is a writer of poems, short stories, essays and articles. Her work has been published in the Noe Valley Voice*,* Thirst for Fire*, and* Outlet Magazine*. Melissa's solo music project, Lady Lazarus, recently garnered a 7/10 track review from* Pitchfork*. In January, 2011, she'll be releasing her first full-length album,* Mantic*.*
missmelissasweat@gmail.com. myspace.com/ladylazarusintheory.



Dear Customer:
I'm sorry you're an idiot, or that you have perhaps been raised in a cave. I would suggest that when you consider buying a product, you keep in mind that it will cost money, and that if you buy an expensive item you will end up spending bigger than normal amounts of money. As an employee, I am well aware that I'm affiliated with the corporate giant of Toys R Us, but I ask you to consider that I am merely a pawn in their humongous schemes and have less than no power over the prices or conditions of anything whatsoever. If the company were a dog, I would be a fleck of dirt under its foot. To voice complaints, I ask that you first complete a small IQ test to ensure that I am not being bothered by someone equivalent to a primordial slug. I'm well aware that those with lower IQs do have the right to shop, however, you should do so with assistance. For all of you drug dealers, I'm perfectly able to exchange your hundred dollar bills, but do request that you buy more than a pack of gum to break such currency. To the concerned parent, teaching your child to save is a big lesson in life, but expecting it to be "cute" while you dole out pennies and nickels for a 20$ plus item also teaches them that their parents got dropped on the head and consequently don't know how to

how you are, but I will ask - I do not remember you, so expect this several times over everytime you visit. I'm not a racist by any means, but if your communication skills are subpar in English there is a chance that your request may be skewed. yelling at me in words I can't understand is not a solution to your problem. Anyone who considers themselves "thrifty" "miserly" or "cheap" yet, when asked to donate one dollar refuses and proceeds to purchase candies amounting to that for themselves and will be subconsciously labelled an asshole. If their is a problem completing your transaction because something is not in stock, I politely suggest you go to another store and shut up. If your child is screaming so loud the people around you are bleeding out their ears, please leave the store. If you are poor, please leave the store. If your child is going to be sick, please leave the store. If you expect a huge box to fit into your tiny car, please leave the store. If you're indecisive, please leave the store. If you have anger issues or a history of mental illness and are expecting an outburst (or you're hormonal because of pregnancy), please leave the store. If because of your idiocy you are dissatisfied with the price of a ticketed or non-ticketed item, please leave the store. Thank you for shopping at Toys R Us, now please kindly fuck off.

Found by Becky Beach

Transcription:

Dear Customer: I'm sorry that you're an idiot, or that you have perhaps been raised in a cave. I would suggest that when you consider buying a product, you keep in mind that it will cost money, and that if you buy an expensive item you will end up spending bigger than normal amounts of money. As an employee, I'm well aware that I'm affiliated with the corporate giant of Toys R Us, but I ask you to consider that I am merely a pawn in their humungous [schemes (?)] and have less than no power over the prices or conditions of anything whatsoever. If the company were a dog, I would be a fleck of dirt under its foot. To voice complaints, I ask that you first complete a small IQ test to ensure that I am not being bothered by someone equivalent to a primordial slug. I'm well aware that those with lower IQs do have the right to shop, however, you should do so with assistance. For all of you drug dealers, I'm perfectly able to exchange your hundred dollar bills, but do request that you buy more than a pack of gum to break such currency. To the concerned parent, teaching your child to save is a big lesson in life, but expecting it to be "cute" while you dole out pennies and nickels for a $20 plus item also teaches them that their parents got dropped on the head and consequently don't know how to... (?) ...

how you are, but I will ask—I do not remember you, so expect this several times over everytime [sic] you visit. I am not a racist by any means, but if your communication skills are subpar in English there is a chance that your request may be skewed. Yelling at me in words I can't understand is not a solution to your problem. Anyone who considers themselves "thrifty" "miserly" or "cheap" yet, when asked to donate one dollar refuses and proceeds to purchase candies amounting to that for themselves... (?) ... and will be [subconsciously (?)] be labeled an asshole. If their [sic] is a problem completing your transaction because something is not in stock, I politely suggest you go to another store and shut up. If your child is screaming so loud the people around you are bleeding out their ears, please leave the store. If you are poor, please leave the store. If your child is going to be sick, please leave the store. If you expect a huge box to fit into your tiny car, please leave the store. If you're indecisive, please leave the store. If you have anger issues or a history of mental illness and are expecting an outburst (or you're hormonal because of pregnancy), please leave the store. If because of your idiocy you are dissatisfied with the price of a ticketed or non-ticketed item, please leave the store. Thank you for shopping at Toys R Us, now please kindly fuck off.


Laura Gentili
She went crazy
with a calm face.


The idea is
to remain in a state of constant departure
while always arriving.
Laura Gentili

All The Pretty Ones Die Young

Julia Bowles

A vision of myself had sparkled in my mind over two full bowls of cereal that morning and was not even dimmed by my mother's ridiculous insistence that I finish off the last banana. It was mushy and black in its cracked porcelain bowl, even blacker than me. Detestable, gross, revolting. A lot like my old life. But not anymore; I killed that girl and her sad, sorry existence this past summer.

South Florida's August had descended on my neighborhood in a blast of heat, the sun wilting anything living thing it touched, including the people. As I let the storm door slam and stepped onto the porch, I felt like I'd been tarred. The many hues of life on my street were now pale, devitalized versions of their formerly vivid selves. The world smelled baked.

Still, I marched two blocks down and three to the left, future-Jemma still glittering in my head, then-Jemma stuffed under my bed with my Slipknot posters and half-used cartons of razorblades.

I felt like a penny, one of those rare ones unsullied by tarnish or old gum. For the first time in my life, I felt lucky. I felt brand new.

Even the linoleum clicked happily beneath my brand new heels as my newness and I made our way to my first class of senior year. My spine protested to standing up so straight after so many years of crumpling in on myself, trying to disappear.

Then He turned the corner. The universe stuttered and screeched to a halt. I didn't realize I had stopped walking until I noticed the image of rusted lockers in my peripheral vision hadn't changed.

Now He was coming in my direction, His beefy entourage trailing in His wake, jiving and smirking beneath their letterman jackets. My heart kicked the inside of my ribs like a pissed mule.

He was going to kiss me, right there and then, in front of this entire school. He was going to anoint now-Jemma with His holiness and chisel future-Jemma in stone and make her real.

I couldn't breathe.

All I could see was the floppy curls and the flash of white teeth, that fuzzy monobrow I loved, the lovely cream-skinned hands that had drawn me gently into the girl's bathroom in the library downtown nearly every afternoon from early May to late July.

My mother had forced me to join the summer peer tutoring program right after she caught me pounding on the face of our neighbor's kid. I couldn't tell her I did it, not because he'd called her a slut, but because he was correct. Everyone seemed to know but her. My father knew it, too; he pounded on *her* face regularly.

I got paired up with Him the next afternoon. Mr. Captain of the Football Team had skulked in nearly an hour late. When He sat next to me, He made the stale air around us smell clean, like rain in the desert. It was already boiling outside and He still sneered from inside His letterman jacket, like it was grafted to His skin. He may have been born in it. I never even saw Him sweat.

I'd known of Him since elementary school, but He'd never spoken to me once, not even when we'd bump shoulders in the hallway. Suddenly He was nibbling on a pen cap and grinning at me. I would go home feeling like I had taken a good snort of some really top-notch cocaine.

My dreadlocks intrigued Him. He would pull on them, stick the blonde tips of them into my ears to tickle me. I would swat His beautiful hands away at first. But after a while, I let Him.

He whispered of His druggie mother over imaginary numbers; I mumbled about the happenings in the Casa de Crazy that was my home between lessons on parabola limits.

His eyes would smile at mine whenever I spoke. I let Him finger the little triangles of skin left exposed by my fishnet tights. I thought about those razors under my bed a little less.

Three weeks in saw His piano-man fingers deep inside me, cloaked by the shadows under our table, stroking as He tried to make me scream and I writhed and tried not to.

Right now, though, the hallway breathed around me, a thousand nameless faces watching with open mouths. He was nearly close enough to touch. I closed my eyes, remembering how I stretched the afternoon He replaced His finger with something much bigger. He was never gentle or slow. I took all of Him, always, books scattered in neglect across the table, us in the upstairs bathroom, panting, my eggplant-black toenail polish vivid against the white paint of the stall door.

He would kiss me like I was water and He was dying of thirst. He would take me like I was saving His life.

"Hey." Was I speaking? I opened my eyes as my hand landed on His shoulder, the leather smooth and warm beneath my fingers.

His head was turning. All those perfect lines and curves of jaw and lips were arranged in a smile, open and sweet. His eyes searched the air above my head, then fell two feet to land on me.

"Hey," I said, this time intentionally.

The smile disappeared and the brows hunkered down over the bridge of His nose.

"You wanna move outta my way, freak?"

Then He shrugged off my hand and was gone, disappearing into the rising tide of students that sloshed against me.

I stared. Sparkly future-Jemma vanished too, burned off into oblivion like fog by the sun. Then-Jemma was apparently not buried as deeply as intended; now-Jemma was suddenly looking after Him through her eyes, her tears welling and burning.

We loved Him, the both of us. We had actually thought things would be different. We hadn't used protection. Our period was three months late and counting.

We were so fucking stupid.

Julia Bowles received a psychology degree from the University of North Texas in 2008. Since then, she has discovered that, unfortunately, her love of sewing, reading fan fiction and writing lies for fun has little to do with that. Send all constructive criticism and/or odes to her brilliance to story@31k.net.

PUMP-ACTION

Howie Good

Don't be afraid to shoot
through a wall or door

either.

Know your state law
and always remember,

those sneaky burglars
know all kitchens have

tons of large knives.

Based on comments to the post, "What Is the Best 12 Gauge Shotgun Load for Home Defense?" on the Web site Free Republic, http://www.freerepublic.com/home.htm.

Howie Good is the author of the poetry collections Lovesick *(Press Americana, 2009),* Heart With a Dirty Windshield *(BeWrite Books, 2010),* Everything Reminds Me of Me *(Desperanto, 2011), and 24 print and digital chapbooks. He has been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net Anthology and is co-founder of White Knuckle Press, whiteknucklepress.com.*



Breakfast

Illustration:
Alex Garant

Naomi Krupitsky Wernham

If, upon enjoying her morning cup of English breakfast tea with just a splash of whole milk and maybe—if she was feeling adventurous—a tiny bit of brown sugar scooped from the bottom of an antique sugar bowl (an heirloom from her late mother), Mrs. Percy Louis Adams III had not opened the morning paper with a carefully manicured hand, she would not have seen the block letters adorning the front page of the Society section—**Dr. Robert Hornsworth Dies In Tragic Plane Crash While Vacationing In South Pacific**—and had she not seen these words, she would not, with a small shriek, have upset her cup of tea onto a new cashmere blouse that Percy had given her for her birthday two weeks ago, nor would she have been forced into an unpleasant bout of nostalgic reminiscence the likes of which she hadn't experienced since Percy's company holiday party in '97, when she had had one—or three—too many vodka-cranberrys and ended up with her head on the shoulder of Harry Livingston (a former flame of hers and someone of whom Percy was inordinately jealous), wondering where her life had gone and how, at 41, she was at a holiday party for a company that had cubicles—"I used to be an arrrrtist!" she moaned, slurring her words and sending vodka-laden puffs of breath directly at Harry Livingston's slightly disgusted face—since she had, until this point, considered herself to be very anti-cubicle as a general rule, and while that holiday party was a dramatic event that she had since relegated to a corner of her mind filled with things she refused to think about, Dr. Robert Hornsworth's appearance next to her tea and daily half-grapefruit stirred feelings of panic such as Mrs. Adams had never experienced before, even in light of her stained new sweater and ruined breakfast, something that normally would have been cause for a hissy fit of the *large* variety, and as she stared in dramatic—yet refined—shock at the now-soggy newspaper page (dripping with the same tea that plopped rhythmically off of her sweater onto the marble floor), she was unwillingly transported back 20 years, to New York City and the time they all thought

they were going to be oh-so-bohemian forever, to her one-person studio with three twin mattresses crammed up against the wall, and to pasta on sale, smothered with tomatoes that grew on a windowsill box in the sticky July heat, and to a toilet that never flushed when you needed it to and a coffee table that doubled as a couch, dining table, studio, and storage-of-shit-that-no-one-actually-needed-but-that-couldn't-be-thrown-away-yet, and the rejection letter wall-of-fame from publishers and patrons of every genre and reputation, which they were all proud of because it meant they were clearly too revolutionary and avant-garde for the traditionalist, repressed commercial art industry to comprehend, and the feeling of waking up with Robert's—she called him Robby, then—arm around her, too tight, strangling what little air the five of them that shared that room hadn't already poisoned with nighttime breath and the residual beer stench that overpowered the cinnamon candles she had splurged on, and not wanting to move the arm for fear of waking him up and for secret love of the crushing sensation, because she couldn't have gotten away if she tried but there was beauty in her desire to stay anyways, and had Mrs. Percy Louis Adams III not opened the morning paper, she would not have had to remember how it all ended with the chaotic, frenzied, self-analytic shouting of enraged artists—*you used to inspire me you look at other women with eyes that scream of terrible trapped misery and if im keeping you here don't let me go just go you fucking pretentious asshole no one likes your work anyways im not trying to make people like my work im trying to express myself honestly which is more than you can say for yourself you sellout you don't care about your work at all anymore you see the world through the eyes of the masses and frankly you don't care about me this is an unhealthy situation for me well if its so unhealthy why are you here no one's keeping you here go just get the fuck out go back to mommy and daddy in the goddamn suburbs see how inspired you are there*—and how after she had left, back to Mommy and Daddy in the suburbs, as Robby had so eloquently put it, she spent her days in department stores shopping for the perfect shade of yellow scarf to match her new taupe—azure, burgundy, fuchsia, ecru—pants suit in a futile attempt to distance herself from anything remotely capable of reminding her of Robby, who now, it seemed, had reached a bitter end, although considering that the Robby *she* had known would rather have died on the way to the "South Pacific" than actually admit to "vacationing" in it (unless of course, a Cambodian artists' commune and community service outreach program was involved), and considering that she hadn't spoken to him since that fateful day almost 20 years ago—really, she thought, mopping up her blouse now with a monogrammed napkin, she didn't know when she had reached an age that was qualified to speak about events 20 years in the past—and considering, of course, that Percy Louis Adams III himself would probably not take too kindly to Mrs. Percy looking up old boyfriends from "her wild days" (she spoke of them in derogatory whispers to her husband, usually while he got ready for a golf match, as their therapist had informed them that was a good time for them to talk and bond as a couple), Mrs. Percy Louis Adams III chose, rather than looking Robert up on her new Blackberry or mulling over events long dead and gone with soggy clothes and a quickly beating heart, to stand up from the damp and dripping table, go upstairs and change her sweater, send it to the drycleaners, go back downstairs (of course, by this time, the help had cleaned up her spill so it appeared to have never happened) and ask Loretta, the lovely girl whose sister was stuck in Guatemala with three children and a sick husband and whom the Percys had hired to cook and do some general housework in return for room, board, minimum wage, and hand-me-downs, for a muffin—blueberry, Mrs. Percy Louis Adams III thought, would do quite well—and a new cup of tea.

Naomi Krupitsky Wernham is a student at New York University, and spends most of her time reading things, writing things, or thinking about reading and writing things. Questions, comments, vows of lifelong admiration, and hateful complaints can be sent to naomikrupitsky@gmail.com.

That Which We Know

Meghan Rose Allen

My uncle, unwitting Soviet conscript, took photo after photo with his FED 1S. Photographs of camps, burned and evacuated. Photographs of camps, destroyed and full. Photographs of Berlin after the fall. When it was over, he fled and arrived in Montréal on a Sunday afternoon and knocked on his sister's door, where he was let in and slept for four days without waking. Appropriating the bathroom, painting over the window, he developed each roll of film carefully, silently, without a mistake. Then he sold each photograph one by one. Newspapers. Archives. Synagogues. Magazines. The afternoon the last one sold, he strung himself up with a fake leather belt on the exposed water pipe. Now I am done he wrote in block letter Cyrillic script. Now I am done.

We hit Bukavu April 9, 1994, crossed the border the next day. We could have gone through Uganda, an obvious choice. Too obvious. Besides, Conor knew Laurent Laurent was already inside. How he knew, I don't know and I didn't ask, but we spent weeks along the 3b highway where we were turned back three miles outside Gikongoro. Conor wanted to keep going. Just one more town. He would be in the next town. But the French army stopped us, threw us in the back of a grey transport truck for a long drive back to the Zaire border.

"Fucking frogs!" Conor yelled at me in the truck. Half full, we rattled against the bones of the others being transported with us. "We're so fucking close."

I shifted towards the end where the canvas ties loosened and the fabric flapped loud in the wind. I untied two more knots and threw my camera from the back of the moving truck. We slowed as I threw out my lens. The glass smashed as it hit the ground, pinpricks of light glittering across the stone, asphalt, dirt road.

"What are you doing?" Conor teetered back to where I stood and tried to pull me back in. "What the fuck is wrong with you? Get back in here."

I shook off his grip and took hold of the bag full of canisters. Film of what we'd seen since we crossed the border. I unzipped the top and let the canisters tumble. Some rolled into the bushes. A few landed upright like little toy soldiers, ready to be annihilated by the trucks moving behind us. I no longer had to carry them with me. Then they were gone. They were gone and I understood my uncle. We should only know what we know once and I had known once. Now I was done.

"Paul, you fucking moron!" Conor screamed. "That was evidence. We needed those."

"We didn't find Laurent Laurent," I muttered.

"That doesn't matter. That was evidence of what is happening here. Did you see the BBC out here? CNN? AP? No one was here but us. This would have made us as journalists." The truck sputtered to a stop. Conor grabbed his pocket knife and started hacking at the ties. "Help me, you idiot."

Chagrined and already feeling my camera's loss, I untied a few knots. Conor hopped out through the widened hole and began kicking through the dirt searching for the film. The klaxon of the truck behind ours blared and suddenly Conor was surrounded by French army

men. No one approached him, but they all eyed him warily, uncertain what to do next.

"I'm looking for my film," Conor explained. "You know, clicky clicky?" With his left hand, he mimed taking a shot. What the soldiers saw, I don't know, but one came into the circle and knocked Conor hard across the back of his head with the side of his rifle. Conor wobbled, but stayed upright. "What the fuck?" he yelled. "I'm a UK citizen. You have no fucking right—" Before he could finish, the soldier knocked Conor onto the ground.

"Does he know French?" someone asked me. The skeletal occupants of the truck, with whom we had shared an uneasy silence along the road, had moved to the rear in search of better seats for the show. A girl, a woman, asked me this question, without accent or hesitation.

"He's from Derry," I answered, as if in explanation.

"Then I will translate." She lowered herself from the truck and glided towards the French soldiers. Their eyes shifted from Conor to her, during which time Conor attempted to rise and swung at the nearest soldier. He laughed and pushed Conor back onto the ground. She began speaking, so quietly that the soldiers all had to lean in to hear. A few minutes later, the men helped Conor back into the truck, patted him on the back, and the procession recommenced. One of them handed us a canteen of water.

"What did you say?" I asked the woman after assuring myself and Conor that he would be alright.

"He has a fever. He is hallucinating."

"They believed you?"

"These French soldiers, they are idiots." The woman shrugged. "My name is Odile. Now I am your translator."

"We don't need a translator."

"Though, it will be more advantageous for me if, at the border, you present me as with you."

So we did.

"I found Laurent Laurent."

"Living high off Nazi gold in Atlantis?" I muttered. I'd stopped believing in that myth years ago. Everyone I had known did, except Conor. Conor was the only person who kept searching.

"You'll never guess where he is," Conor said.

"Japan?" Conor had once picked up on a rumour that Laurent Laurent's medical degree was from the University of Tokyo or Tokyo University, if those were even different places. I didn't know.

Conor snorted. "You think the Japanese would have him back now? China maybe. But not Japan. Guess again."

"China then."

But Conor had already bored of the game. "He's in Montréal. He's living in this pokey basement bedsit in NDG."

I tried to check his pupils but Conor blinked so quickly it was impossible to tell. "The Ghost of French Africa is living in a basement apartment in NDG?" I stood up and drained my glass. "Conor, this is crazy. You are crazy. Why do you waste what little time you have here harassing me with this ridiculousness?" I slammed the glass down. "Go see your kids. Leave me alone."

"Paul," Conor cried out as I walked away. "Paul."

He caught up with me outside the bar. I should have been accustomed to walking in the snow, at least in comparison to Conor. But I was slow, and hadn't even made it past the end of the building by the time he sidled up to me.

"It's the real deal," Conor said. I passed him the spare pair of gloves I always kept in my pockets and he shoved his fingers inside without thanks. They were backwards, his left hand in the right glove, his right in the left, the fake cowhide hand print riding overtop of his knuckles. If he knew, he ignored it, if he knew at all.

"How do you know?"

Conor stopped. "He's got diaries. Notes. Pictures."

"What type of pictures?"

"Like yours. Like the ones you threw away. But worse."

I pushed away what worse could be.

"Seriously, the stuff this guy has would make Goebbels sick. But there's more," Conor said.

"With you Conor, there's always more."

"Here." Conor passed me a print-out of a photograph. "It's not the greatest quality."

I blinked to make the dots straighten. It wasn't that I was unaccustomed to drinking when the sun was up. Just maybe not this much. The photograph, even cropped, shaded, and printed on what may have been a dot-matrix, seemed familiar. I stared more closely. A group of women. Slick and heavy with water. Smiling. Worse than smiling. Grinning eagerly. Showing their teeth.

"It's Gikongoro," Conor said. "May 94."

"We never made it that far," I reminded him. So it wasn't one of mine, a photo from one of the rolls I threw into the dirt, developed by a stranger and somehow handed back to Conor.

"Why are they wet?" I asked.

"It's not water," Conor said quietly. "And," he pointed at one of the women in the middle, "that one is Odile."

Conor and I sat at the hotel bar and listened to the traffic going out towards the camps while Odile slept in the room we rented for her.

"It's a bad idea," Conor told me. "It's worse than a bad idea. It's a fucking ridiculously insanely bad idea." He caught sight of my fingers rapping along the table and threw his hands in the air. "And you fucking already did it." Under the yellow tinge of the fluorescent lights, my ring shone a sickly green.

"I'm in love."

"Sure, you're in love. But do you think that twenty-something girl in there is in love with your forty-one-year-old bag of balding and beer gut?" Conor gave my paunch a squeeze. "I'm pretty sure she's in love with your Canadian passport and ticket back to your quelques arpents de neige."

"Fifteen years bumming about Central Africa and your French remains atrocious. And I need your help."

Conor sighed. "What do you want me to do?"

"Pull some strings at the Canadian Consulate." Conor would invariably know someone who knew someone who knew someone else. Conor always did.

"The ink on your license hasn't even dried." He shook his head. "I don't think so. Look, Paul." Conor didn't look at me, but out the window, as if he could see the street through the layers of dried exhaust and mud. "Are you sure about this? I can get us seats on a transport plane to Kinshasa at six."

"For all of us?"

"For both of us." He saw the look on my face. "Seriously?"

"Seriously."

"Okay." Conor stood up. "Wait here. I'll see what I can do."

I knew Conor because we knew the same people. More specifically, the same person. When I'd sold off my mother's Montréal flat and used the money to finance a relocation to Nairobi to work for AFP, my friend had given me the name of her cousin, Conor. Entering the baggage claim, I was met by a man bounding across the floor to greet me.

"Paul?" he asked. When I nodded, he grabbed my hand in his. "Good. I've already introduced myself to about six other dazed mzungus. I'm Conor. Lisa's cousin. Here." He passed me a box. "Can you take this through customs for me?"

"What is it?"

"A present for one of the Aussies working at the Hilton. Just go." He vanished before I could ask further questions and I nervously walked his

Chokecherries

Joanne Epp

We look for places where sunlight
distils to a concentrate:
interruptions in the green,
dark clusters among the oval leaves.
Taut blue-black skins holding in juice
so tart it sucks the mouth dry.
They're big this year, you say.

It's quick work: one hand grasps a stem,
the other strips off the berries,
sends them plumping into the pail.
They are warm in the midday heat.
At home, you rinse off the bloom of dust,
cook, strain juice, add sugar,
cook again. Pour thickened juice
into clear jars. Seal them.
Four pints, eight half-pints. A good batch.
Line them up on the counter.
See how the dense jelly
absorbs the light.

Joanne Epp is a poet who sometimes also writes non-fiction and very, very short plays. Her poems have appeared in several literary journals and one anthology, and she is currently seeking a publisher for her first poetry collection. She lives in Winnipeg with her husband and two sons. joanneepp.com.

box through the metal detector and out into the arrivals area. He grabbed the box from my hands on the other side, smiled at the security officers, and led me out to the car.

"Thanks. They wouldn't let me take it through since I wasn't on the flight."

"Did I just smuggle drugs into the country?" I asked him.

Conor looked at me. "You're what, like 30? You've never smuggled drugs somewhere?" He shook his head. "In any case, it's not drugs. It's Tim Tams."

"Tim Tams? What the hell is a Tim Tam?"

"It's a biscuit. A cookie," he amended for my sake. "Kezza's going to love these. And welcome to Nairobi."

Conor was, tenuously, a reporter. But, more than anything, he was an ex-pat, and the ex-pat to know in Nairobi if you wanted anything. Like Tim Tams smuggled through customs to avoid lengthy food import issues.

"We should totally do a joint story together," he said once he found out I was a photographer. "Something freelance maybe, then sell it to a glossy."

"Maybe, sure." I worked on sounding as non-committal as possible.

"You know Laurent Laurent?" he asked.

"Not personally."

Conor laughed. "No, probably not. But you know about him, right?" Conor continued before I could speak. "I've been tracking this guy for two, three years now. No photos of him. Everyone claims to know him, but no one can point him out in a crowd, you know. But, have some coup or slaughter somewhere in la francophonie africaine and bam, there he is. Well, rumours of him at least."

I nodded. A vague memory of a colonial history class came to me. Laurent Laurent was a sort of mythical African rebel. Like Conor, his named job, médicin, was a far cry from his actual occupation, anarchiste professionel.

"So where's he now?" I asked politely.

Conor thought. "Chad now, fighting 'against' the Libyans." Conor took both hands off the wheel to make his quotation marks and the car swerved uncomfortably to the right. "Maybe. The Central African Republic's a mess right now too. He could be there. We should definitely get together on this. I'll write, you take the photos."

"Maybe."

Those years in Nairobi, I kept putting him off, but when my contract with AFP and money both ran out the same month, I decided that accompanying Conor on this quest of his would be better than nothing at all.

"Can we go back inside?" Conor asked. He wore sneakers, white tennis shoes which blended into the snow bank. He shivered and I acquiesced. Following behind him, I squeezed and the corner of the print-out crumbled in my glove. The bartender glared as we entered.

"You didn't pay," he grumbled. Conor passed him a $100 bill.

"It's all I could get at the currency exchange at de Gaulle," he explained. The bartender fingered the bill warily. "Change?" Conor prompted.

"I can't change this."

"Fine. Two more beer. And keep them coming until you can make change."

We sat at the table. Conor picked up his half-empty glass and began sipping. "I told you to stay away from her."

"You told me that because you wanted to sleep with her. Not because of this." The paper was now face down between us. "You didn't know any more than I did."

"Either of us could have seen it though. Where we picked her up. How she looked compared to the others in the truck. Why she didn't want to go into a camp."

"No one wants to live in a refugee camp. That's hardly a sign of—" I didn't want to continue. "Why is he doing this?"

"Who? Laurent Laurent? We're going to write a book together, like Wright and Greengrass. Spycatcher, only more like Génocidaire."

"He'll be arrested. What's he been involved with? This," I tapped the page. "What else? Zaire? Chad? West Africa? He'll be crucified. Why would he do this?"

"He's old. Change of heart. Repentance. Forgiveness." Conor counted them off on his fingers. "But, I don't really care why. All I know is that I got the scoop."

"Really? Right now you come here and you gloat about your fucking scoop? Your scoop is going to destroy my life. And you don't even care."

"That's not true," Conor whispered. People were staring at us. Maybe they thought Conor was going to expose some sort of financial scam at my company or that he was fooling around with my wife. I don't know. "That's not true at all. I could have not told you until the book was published. You could have found out that way. But," he swallowed again and tapped the table. The empties vanished and two new mugs appeared. "I thought you should know."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why should I know?"

"Because." Conor's eyebrows dipped to a deep V in consternation. "Because you should know these things."

"But I was happy not knowing. Odile and I are happy."

"But it's not the truth." Conor looked confused. His mouth dangled slightly and his cheekbones rose. "What she told you wasn't even close to the truth."

"I don't care if it wasn't the truth. Since when is anyone happy with the truth?" I was yelling again and Conor's eyes jumped around the bar. "You don't have to do this. You can just ignore this. You can destroy the original, destroy the evidence."

"Destroying photographic evidence is more along your lines I think."

We glared at each other and silently sipped from our glasses. I knew I would break first.

"What you are going to do is have the world judge my wife by the worst thing she's done," I said. Conor nodded. "It's monstrous."

Conor tilted his head and stared at me, uncertain of whether I meant his or her actions. I didn't know myself.

"The files go to the police tomorrow. Three o'clock. I have an appointment."

"I'm not forgiving you for this."

"At three o'clock—"

I interrupted him. "I heard you the first time."

"No, listen. You have until tomorrow at three o'clock. Probably later, by the time they start sorting through the files." Conor was shaking now. "I am going to tell them what I know." The beer sloshed over the sides of his glass and down onto the table as he tried to bring it to his lips. I would have given up, but Conor kept trying, kept trying to get the liquid closer to his mouth, to have it run between his teeth and down his gullet. I would have stopped, but Conor kept going. "But I wanted you to know first."

I understood. "So we have until three?"

Conor nodded. I stood up and passed him a twenty. "For the drinks." He folded the bill into his shirt pocket.

"We're not going to see each other again, are we?"

"No Conor," I told him. "We won't."

"Where were you?" Odile asked as I locked the door behind me.

"Conor's in town."

She rolled her eyes. "And he'd rather go drinking with you than see his family, I take it." We'd all flown out of Bukavu together. Conor had come back with us to Montréal, failed at settling down, and taken off again, leaving two ex-wives and three children in his wake. "Does he think still I married you for your passport?"

I moved my head slightly. "Maybe yes. Maybe no."

"It's been over fifteen years. I could have divorced you long ago if all I needed was to get here." She smiled. Grinning eagerly. Showing her teeth. The beer in my gut lurched uncomfortably to the right. "Did you tell him that?" Odile asked.

I ignored her. "Conor told me something I think you should know. Something that you should know I know. Or that I have known but didn't know I know." The words stuck to each other somewhere behind my tongue.

"Have you been drinking too?"

"No, well, yes."

"How much?"

"Some. Enough."

"Are you drunk?"

I paused. "Yes."

Odile sighed. "I'm so sick of what you and Conor get up to. It's not even four-thirty in the afternoon. We have dinner with the other PAs tonight and you're just—" Odile shook her head. "Disgraceful."

"Conor told me something."

"I don't care."

"Something that you should know."

"I already said I don't care."

"You don't want to know?" I asked her.

"No Paul," said Odile with a force that surprised me. "I don't."

Meghan Rose Allen is a writer and mathematician. One of her many accomplishments is having visited grocery stores in the following countries: Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Slovenia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. She is currently relocating from Calgary to Ottawa.


Stefan Chiarantano
Lethbridge


ADULT
VIDEO
JESUS
IS WATCHING YOU
The Roman Catholic Churches of San Juan County
STOP

Ben Link


Helen Yung

This issue, *The Broken City* asked contributors, "What's the most amazing thing you've ever found?"

Meghan Rose Allen: The baby moves. She still hasn't latched. Seven days of screaming and finger feeding. The nipple shield, invisible when it has been dropped onto the covers. Despair. The baby fusses. Turning on the light equals ambulance siren wails. In the dark, I search, crawling around on the bedspread trying to find the nipple shield. The sudden sensation of plastic against my fingers. Success! Baby fed and now, glorious, glorious sleep.

Becky Beach: Two ladybugs having sex, just days after I got my first magazine cover—of a drawing I had done of two ladybugs having sex.

Julia Bowles: An old diary that I'd kept. I found it in the back of a dresser drawer, snuggled between old t-shirts and mismatched socks. I hadn't written in Kitty (that's what I called it, like Anne Frank's diary) in years. The pages crackled as I turned them. I still had the same dreams as my pre-adolescent self, but I was relieved to find that I was not quite as dumb as I was back then.

Emily K. Bright: God. Or, more appropriately, God found me.

Mouki K. Butt: An amazing vintage letterman jacket from my then-future high school. It brilliantly displayed the green and gold school colours. The name 'Jenny' was embroidered on the left breast and an arc of block letters spelled out CHEERLEADER on the back. The thrift store price tag was marked at $8. Sadly, fate was not on my side. I did not have $8.

Stefan Chiarantano: I buy most of my books from second-hand book sellers or pick up the occasional soft cover from a yard/garage sale. In place of a typical bookmark made of construction paper and featuring a bookseller's logo, many of these books had various types of ephemera tucked between their pages. Some of the items I found included an Air Canada boarding pass to Morocco, a Dali postcard, Canadian Tire money, and slips of paper with to-do lists on them.

Joanne Epp: One winter day when I was eight, I found a Bohemian waxwing sitting on the sidewalk. It must have been hurt; it didn't move when I approached. I picked it up, surprised at how soft and light it was, and took it home. It was so elegant, with its grey breast feathers, reddish crest, and yellow-tipped tail feathers. I admired it for a couple of days, until it recovered and flew away.

Alex Garant: The perfect stone. Whenever I travel somewhere, I look for stones on the ground. Over the years, I've amassed an impressive collection of Ziploc bags containing stones and pieces of paper with locations and dates on them. The goal of searching for the perfect stone is to find one that represents the place where you are, and then attach all of your memories to it. A stone collection is way more powerful than a photo album.

Laura Gentili: A cassette tape of the Counting Crows' self-titled album for 50 cents at a thrift store.

Howie Good: A copy of Heather S. J. Steliga's book of poetry, *Water Runs to What Is Wet*, 30 years after its original publication, in a used bookstore on Cape Cod.

Ben Link: The most amazing thing I ever found was a million dollar bill with a caricature of Michael Jackson on the front. The "currency" was distributed by an Orange County, California church, and it had proverbs printed on the back. The paper and print quality were far superior to that of the Federal Reserve, and the design made much more of an impression.

Melissa Ann Sweat: On a whim, I decided to peruse some antique shops in San Francisco. I could not afford the items in these

stores, but one can pretend! I ventured into this one little yellow-colored shop and came upon an old Hohner button accordion. I was transfixed. I didn't know how to play the accordion, but I could not, for some cosmic reason, let any other person possess this fine musical object. So, I purchased it—a $300 impulse buy.

Naomi Krupitsky Wernham: I have to say, I thought about this question for a long time. I thought I would be funny, or candid, or sincere and profound. I couldn't decide. I thought of making something up. And then I thought of a time that my dog found a moldy piece of bacon behind the couch, and I realized that nothing I could ever imagine finding could compare to his joy in that moment.

Devorah White: As I stared up at the near-vertical rock face, I wondered what a city girl like myself was thinking, attempting to climb this thing. The first two tries, I managed two steps before sliding back down. Swallowing my fear, I concentrated on one move at a time—a hand, a foot, testing its strength, remembering to balance. Reaching the top, I cheered inwardly, having found the self-confidence necessary to get divorced and live alone.

Helen Yung: Corn, magically appearing and sprouting out of urban sidewalk debris.

Photography/Illustration/Art Contributors

Becky Beach *is a writer, teacher, and graphic diarist currently working on a series of kids' books.*

Stefan Chiarantano *is an emerging writer whose other passions include photography and film. His inspiration comes from the city of his birth, Toronto, which holds his memories and identity.*

Alex Garant *is a French Canadian artist residing in Toronto, Ontario. She won her first Art contest at the age of seven and graduated with honours from Art School in 2001. She is known for her MMA portraits and has created illustrations for* The Examiner, The Sports Courier *and various MMA blogs and Web sites.*

Laura Gentili *was born and raised in LaSalle, Ontario. She is a Windsor-based artist currently attending the University of Windsor and working toward a B.F.A. in Integrated Media. She hopes to eventually pursue an M.F.A. somewhere in Canada. At present, Laura is working on multiple projects that she plans to exhibit in the near future.*

Ben Link *is loosely based on a Benjamin Link short story (unpublished). Sometimes when the moon is just right, he takes long walks in moonbeams, listening to Mannheim Steamroller. You can see his work at shitledger.com, binleenk.tumblr.com and twitter.com/binleenk.*

Now in her sixties, ***Devorah White*** *uses photography as a meditation on the chaos of the universe. She uses the camera to focus on ways in which we connect (or disconnect) with the world. She has recently self-published a photo essay of her experience with diabetes.*

Helen Yung *is an artist, writer, strategist, producer, and agitator. Current projects include a book of creative non-fiction, and a networked, theatrical art social for Montreal's Oboro gallery. helenyung.com.*

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