

FINE

ISSUE EIGHT

FREE

PRINT

A LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS PUBLICATION

MINOR STRATA

MIKE CORRAO

The first altar is built to your specifications. It is a long rectangular box made from polymer filaments. The surfaces are still not smooth. It is olive green and when you run your fingers along the side you can feel the crease between each layer. The altar is an object with ribs. It is an architectural object. A sculptural object. You assume that it has a use, this is the assumption you were under demanding its construction... On the coarse surface three sacrifices are performed... Gemstones burrowed into the crown of each molar. Splitting the tooth into deltas... You are suspended in an indeterminate space. Without boundaries or constraints. The air evacuates your body and dissipates into the yawning vacuum... *Citrons grow in the synthetic groves of your habitat...* The subject approaches a copy of [redacted book title] and rolls their finger over the pages. They stop when they feel the compulsion to do so. They read the first line that catches their eye. It says something about the shape of a house and the interior details of its bookcases. The subject assumes that this is a comment on their own habits... In the first bibliomantic ritual your spine is fractured by polymer grit. And you are forced to remain on the altar until your body recovers. A procession of dreams tells you that you are a bad practitioner, and that your methods are haphazard. They lack structure and reliability. You consider mapping a new praxis but stop yourself. These are not scientific procedures. They are rituals. They are done at the whims of something outside your understanding. With full knowledge that these performances are not motivated by your own desires... The wall of text reveals its strata. It shows you the layers of language pressed together. Aging in mold and soil. Shear faces of granite. Reading the lines in alternating strands of black and gra Boundaries are microscopic. Hints of discarded bricabrac. Anatomical biome petrified. With ass spread over the hardening molt... *There is evidence of a liminal space...* You teach a machine to write like you. Placing gothic and baroque language into simple structures. Someone asks if you expect them to read *this* and you say that the text is a tool for bibliomancy. It is made for use in divination. Digitizing the occult practices that you used to perform in person. The human hand is removed from this process. It is your book but you did not write it. It is arcana spawned from the maw of the machine... The strata of the text wall form streaks of black and white. Ink and non-ink. Symbols contorted onto each page. Pressed in white where the eyes will not notice their absence. Something connects this object to another. It is a book, but it is not exactly a book. It is a tool in the shape of a book. It opens a portal to *somewhere else* and allows for the manipulation of certain fibres. This is magical thinking, but there is no reason to dismiss it...

In the next bibliomantic ritual you attempt to utilize this new digital variation of the text wall. To pull meaning out of the machine's random nothingness. Not to prove that there is a sentient string maneuvering behind its facade, but that the mathematical operations it performs are a kind occultism... *You are not as witchy as you appear...* The machine is a hardworking creature always on the verge of collapse. Always with the potential to collapse. But when it does, the user does not mourn. They simply resurrect. They perform the role of birthing-doctor and mortician. Receiving the newborn as they perform an autopsy on its previous corpse. Constructing



COLIN BURNS

IN MY YOUTH I LACKED COMPASSION

a mound until one finds stability—however briefly... You posture like a horned goat. With thick black hair. Trotting in the moon of the witches' flight. Their half-cloaked bodies draping over the fire. The flesh levitates with grace... *Don't you want to live deliciously?...* The object that you have created defies oration. It does not wish to be uttered. At each attempt you make, the weight of your jowls becomes unbearable and you must stop. Your pilgrimages into the text are quiet and isolated. Spelunking the cave... Dragging your twine-tied body into the labyrinth. As you progress towards a perceived center, there is the fear that you will not be able to leave when you are done. That you will remain. Forced to construct a new altar from the dust and dew that you collect from each crevice... *In the [redacted] landscape of the [redacted]...* There is no ritual to re-congeal your slime-body. To convert amorphous blob into human-esque anatomy. You venerate the uncaring growth of the mollusc. You envy the burrowing of the jaw gems. You desire to catalyze uncategorizable changes within *something...* Garden of sculptural objects. A falling cleaver halves the bibliomantic text and reveals its innards... The citrons of the synthetic grove are inspected for unwanted mutations. Oil is pulled from their pores. Segments of rind and seed and flesh are extracted and isolated from thirty-eight sample-fruits. The remains are discarded onto your plate. You happily eat them.

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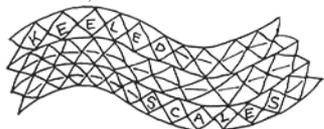
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ELECTRIC LEMON MICHAEL CHANG

You know the story
He became the rain
Then a roaring fire
Face impassive
Flames licking warm & thick & ferocious
The furl of his shirt in hot air
The room glowed
The walls cracked & fissured
The ceiling deposited poisonous fruit
It was a forest & then it wasn't
She watched the boy disappear into a man
& the man disappear into a desert
When the basement started filling with foxes
They vowed never to play house again

ARKANSAS ROAMING WIDE EMILY M. GOLDSMITH

when back in the day,
you bought one knife and kept —

Oil the stone, and scrape it.
You can dredge the bottom, and rip it all up

Hard and dense and white:
silica artifact resound —
Quarried from outcrops,
unique in body.
Forget the dead, the leaves.

The day when forests standing no longer resist,
the past repeats despair.
Our translucent razor stone exists to
remind us what we lost.

Terra demands blood, demands break.
Worship earth, not god.

Terra waves its arms fervently again —
Rip yourself open.

THE OLD ALE HOUSE ROGAN KELLY

*I was sitting in mcsorley's. outside it was New York
and beautifully snowing.*
-E. E. Cummings

Convinced you were over me, kicked up
like sawdust, put away like the light and
dark swill we drank to little or no effect. I
retreated to the corner, tucked myself
between the table and the wall. Philip
explained, *the man was hung like a
horseradish*. Only a chef would get the
joke. The two of you holding court in the
backroom, owning the joint, joyous enough
the gods might hear. Both of you debonnaire
and daring, the dyad making inroads to my
heart. The idle man took drink orders,
brought us only meager fries.

GRAND AMERICAN SMALL TALK AARON ROBERTSON

- You keeping busy?
- A little bit
- That's good



AMANDA MARIE BELL

SING FOR SONG DRIVES AWAY THE WOLVES

ALLISON HUMMEL

Loving you has changed me, gnashing beast of my body! I never
knew such placidity. NOR such disquietude. With

coffee each morning I take 3 pills and it's fine.

Like somebody sleeping down
the hall, we forget our bodies are there
until they stir.

Then we despair.

To think that I used to understand
the heart of a room
with no tenant.

Now I understand the heart of Tuesday night and
you know what

it too is nautilus, has mouth-feel, is
largely projection

is almost entirely silent —
but useful
as a sort of divining rod

which I think is all I ever wanted

the restless legs of my belle epoque
simulacrum.

Anyway the nacre is swirling
now within an oyster's spoon

(how I love the soft
incline, like a moth's cheek
and I remember it
as I refuse its resurrection)

because memories, well sometimes
we all go on a tear — the object
too dazzling, the feeling inches away —

like Uncle Joe, stabbed to death
with an envelope knife. Can't help this
facile
fervor for transmutation

FEATURED ARTISTS

Hallie Rose Taylor is an artist living in Salt Lake City whose work explores both the natural world and its connection to the human psyche. She has spent time living out of a Toyota 4Runner, testing the limits of her love of solitude, and creating work inspired by her experiences and surroundings. Her work has taken the form of ink drawings, paintings and, most recently, tattoos, which she does under the name Tall Grass. She has been an advocate for the preservation of what we call public lands—native land that was seized—and believes in the importance of the ability to immerse oneself in deep wilderness, both for pleasure and perspective. She provided us with the center spread of this issue of *Fine Print* and talked with us about her work, travel, beliefs and inspirations.

You have referred to your work as being “cerebral landscapes.” What does that term mean to you?

Around 2016, I went through a sudden style and medium shift, and became less interested in painting what I directly observed—painting as a part of my naturalist studies—and more interested in creating images that reflected some pulsing part of the human experience. I began telling stories with color and scenery—at once deeply familiar and totally infeasible—which struck some sort of chord, held up some kind of mirror, set off a reaction within the psyche. Over the years, I’ve developed my own symbolic language, and each painting ends up pointing to a psychological concept or spiritual experience.

Desert, water and mountains all seem to appear frequently in your work. What draws you to these landscapes specifically?

Throughout childhood, I didn’t have much control over my environment, and I often experienced a sense of being trapped. I grew up at the foot of the Wasatch range and I remember staring at the mountains from my bedroom window and wondering what it would be like to know my way around them. The idea was terrifying and energizing. Around age 20, I finally started venturing out into the Utah desert. I connected instantly to the light, flora and fauna. I became addicted to vistas, being able to see very far away. Watching dawn break over the desert is in my top favorite ways to spend my time. Yet the mountains are also in my blood, almost like a connection to my own birth, my mother; they are what I need to integrate. As for the water—I am a fish. Swimming is and always has been one of my favorite activities in this life. I also have a preposterous amount of water in my astrological chart. At the end of 2017 and for a lot of 2018, I was able to be near the ocean, and it reconnected me to what I might call the purest part of myself, untouched by any upbringing or circumstance. It feels like what I entered this life already carrying with me. I don’t know why, but sunlight glinting on water is the surest tether to the great beyond that I’ve found. When I pause and imagine a tide pool, a deep indescribable longing arises. I probably need to live by the Pacific Ocean, but I also probably can’t afford it.

What is your earliest memory of creating a piece of art and what inspired it?

I was really obsessed with drawing dinosaurs when I was a small child—to the point where I remember the moment that it occurred to me that it was even possible to draw something else in first grade—and as my first act of freedom, I drew an apple tree with a koala in it. Shortly after, my babysitter, who was a skilled comic book artist, became one of my biggest artistic influences. I was totally enraptured by her sexy female characters and learned how to draw human anatomy really well from her. I drew human figures almost exclusively until late high school. It’s funny because I almost can’t bring myself to draw them now except in figure drawing sittings.

In the past, you worked for Dribbble, though you are now self-employed. What do you consider to be the challenges and benefits of working as a self-employed artist?

It’s important to keep in mind the insane privilege I have in being able to take this risk of self-employment. In the context of human history as well as human life around much of the world, my life right now is one of almost unfathomable ease. I also live alone and childless, so I get to take pretty good care of myself and use a lot of time doing things that interest me. I wouldn’t be able to do this if I weren’t tattooing, though, as that is my bread-and-butter now. Most of the last 5 years, I worked 50-70 hour weeks, so now that I’m somewhere less than full-time, it feels very luxurious. But it’s also difficult to maintain a balance between admin work and actually creating. It’s easy to let accounting, marketing, applications and research become your entire job. Living with capitalism doesn’t give most people the opportunity to have the space around creative projects that things of real value often require. Lately I’ve managed to give myself more time on longer-term personal projects and paintings, though. Starting to experiment with certain mind-opening substances this year has helped me reshape my relationship to money and time.

You spent some time on the road living out of your vehicle while creating work. What inspired this decision and what did you learn from that experience?

The notion entered my mind when I watched the documentary *180 Degrees South* in 2010. The lifestyle has been pretty commercialized now, but it has roots in a beautiful kind of rebellion against the way we’re pushed and shoved to live. It’s also not an available option to a lot of people. But I had just started climbing, and I wanted to go out and do the whole thing. I’d spent my entire 20’s working with all I had to develop a career centered around locational freedom. I finally accomplished it working remotely for Dribbble, so my partner and I bought a van and hit the road in 2016. Once that relationship ended, I traded it in for a 4Runner and lived in that for about 9 months solo until I landed back in Utah. Moving through space in a vehicle—particularly alone—is one of my favorite things. I always have my best insights and ideas. That period also taught me I have a limit with solitude, which I didn’t realize before. I remember thinking maybe I had a problem when I realized how much I was looking forward to a brief interaction with a grocery store clerk. Luckily I could sort of plug in to climbing communities wherever I found them, and overall I came out the other end with a much larger focus on friendships and community.

In November 2019, you were a part of the show Paper Telephone at Volcom Garden in Austin, in which you and four other artists mailed work back and forth, reinterpreting each other’s art. How did the concept for this show come about and what was that process like?

The art community in Austin is something really special. The show came from old studio-mates wanting to make a show together long-distance, but some of us having kids or day-jobs made collaborating difficult. This process was completely outside my normal approach because key things like forms, feelings and colors were already set—I was basically just re-shuffling them through my brain. I made a couple of pieces that never would have happened otherwise, though, and it was great to hang with all those good people.

If you could collaborate with any one person, living or dead, who would it be and why?

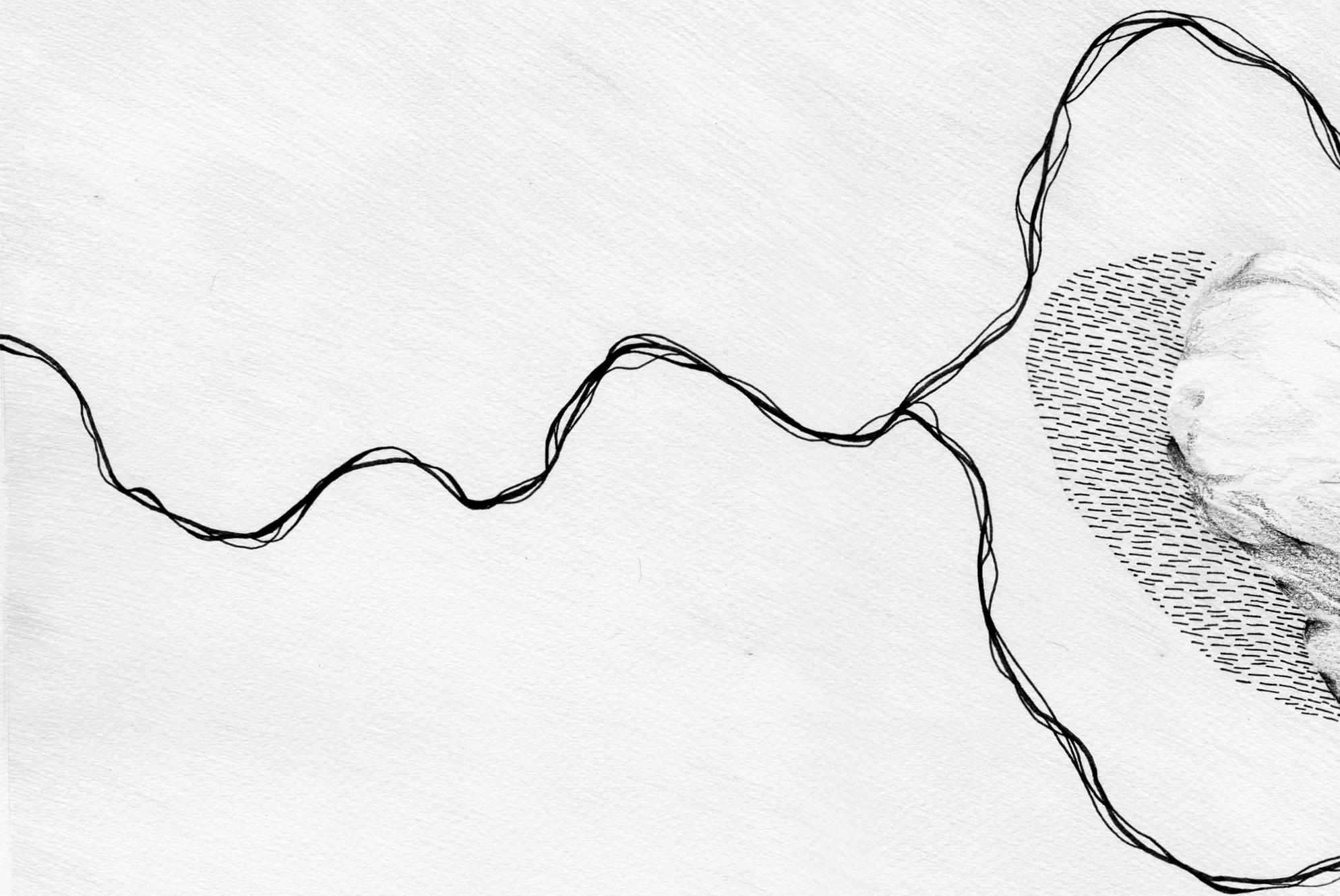
It’s hard because the artists and thinkers I most admire were inherently very solitary—an aloneness permeates their work—so the idea of collaboration feels like a paradox. If my dog, Easy, could communicate with me, I think we’d blow the top off the art world, so she’d probably be my top choice. She’s brilliant. But I think Mary Oliver and I could come up with a pretty beautiful show—maybe. I’m resisting the urge to list 100 people that I would die to work with right now.

You tattoo your work under the name Tall Grass at Everybody Tattoo Studio in Salt Lake City. How did you get into tattooing and how is it different for you than working in other mediums?

I’d never considered tattooing, but then, out of the blue, Jill Whit told me she thought my work would translate well and that a shop was opening up, so I decided to meet up with Gheybin—the shop owner—and talk about it. I was pretty much immediately sold on the whole idea. I hadn’t been tuned into the contemporary tattooing movement and all the positive changes going on in the industry. It’s been a whirlwind and I am so grateful for the opportunity every day. It’s really cool to be doing something so incredibly ancient, ritualistic and human. That said, the whole thing is physically, mentally and emotionally taxing as hell. As a trade, it is the most difficult thing I’ve ever done. As far as design, method, approach, everything—it is nothing like painting. I am proud of myself for persevering, because it is extremely hard getting started; every single thing you “make” is public—there is zero hiding. In SLC, it was particularly hard because we were the first contemporary shop, and we all got vigorously bullied online by the “traditional” artists in town. No one really gets mad at you for painting, and the stakes certainly are higher in a tattoo, so those were big differences I’ve had to adapt to.

Do you have anything in the works that you’d like to share with our readers?

As usual, I have way too many pots in the fire. Tall Grass is morphing into a whole separate entity. I want to host all sorts of potentially transformational events and have already been giving tarot readings under that name. Recently, I’ve started designing tattoos based on readings, which is very fulfilling. I’ve studied tarot for about five years, and I’ve also been making a tarot deck for almost all of that time—but with all the style changes and career switches, it’s been perpetually back-burnered. I’m happy to say I made a breakthrough with it just the other day—so watch out. I’ll be traveling to tattoo in 2020—to Austin, Marfa and Yucca Valley, so far. I am also putting a big focus on zine and book-making. I’m currently putting together a zine all about bells. It’s amazing to finally have the time and space to follow various threads connected to the things I get obsessed with.

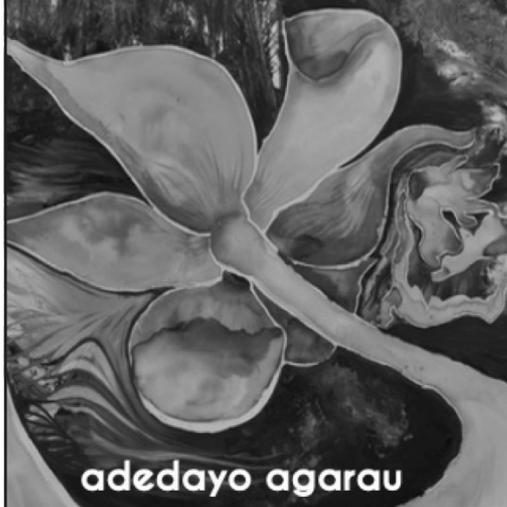




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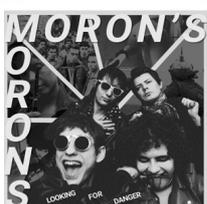
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WOMANIACAL MANIMAL CONTROL

KIM VODICKA

We were sent away to Camp Sincerity.

That's when we got to thinking.

Dump your boyfriend,
and be our girlfriend.

Dump your boyfriend,
and join our cult.

They all want to fuck you,
and badly.

It's a pass/fail
on the insertion spectrum.

Let us be your boyfriend.

He's lying to you anyway.

We know, because he fucked us.

You should be mad at him,
not us.

Let us be your boyfriend.

We'll pick up the slacker's slack.

We'll shower you in roses
and French perfume.

We'll paint your toenails
and massage your feet afterwards.

We'll teach you how to love yourself
instead of being jealous.

We'll teach you how to improve yourself
instead of being jealous.

We'll teach you how to feel
unashamed.

In the realm of pure fantasy,
you'll know absolute freedom,
how to fuck anything that moves
and how to

FEEL LESS GUILT NOW.

Our man hating just makes the sex hotter,
don't worry.

If you swallow your pride,
we'll swallow your cum.

All we want is to be creatively desired.

Tell us you love us.

Kiss us deeply.

Talk dirty to us.

Eat our pussies.

Laugh.

You ask us to tell you want we want,
and we do,
but you don't.

To do so would be to undermine your power.

All we offer you is paradise,
but you won't accept it.

To do so would be to undermine your power.

Yet you somehow think
you were the best we could do.

That's cute.

Looks like someone took that
"you're perfect just the way you are" thing
a little too far.

Yet sometimes we just want to be pillow princesses.

Can we be your pillow princesses?

We'll queef out your cum
and flush it down the toilet
with our gel manicures,
after we harvest your orgasms.

We were born with Stockholm Syndrome,
and our birth certificates come with trigger warnings.

We are walking, talking trigger warnings.

Just look at the guns to our heads!

Mansplain our deaths,
how we died of PMS.

Gather around our coffins,
and talk about David Foster Wallace.

We just can't resist
that woke misogynist.

Everything we know,
we learned from mansplaining.

We had to fuck a lot of dudes
to get this cool.

But while you were busy
playing with your dingalings,
we started an entire revolution.

While we were busy
playing with your dingalings,
we started an entire revolution.

But we think you're so sexy
when you admit that you're wrong.

Make us cum with your mouth,
then we'll talk.

Do you hate us,
or do you just hate yourself?

Look us dead in the pussy,
and tell us exactly what you have to say.

Introduce us to our Eskimo sisters
in your spank bank.

We always send you far more heart-eye emojis
than you deserve,
so you should at least text us back.

On our tombstones is written,
"He Texted Back."

Records are made to be broken.

We'll repeat ourselves as many times as it takes.

Break our hearts, please!

We can't wait!

FEATURED AUTHOR

Kim Vodicka is the self-proclaimed “spokesbitch of a degeneration” and as daring and playful a claim as that is, there may be no better introduction to her work: Oozing with musicality and an oracle-like synthesis of voices in its mock-prophetic register, her full-length books include *Aesthesia Balderdash* (Trembling Pillow, 2012), *Psychic Privates* (White Stag, 2018) and, most recently, *The Elvis Machine* (Clash, 2020), in which the poem seen on the left can be found.

Your work tends to mix “high” and “low” English diction, from “thee” and “thou” to T&A. As the tongue-in-cheek voice of a generation, why do you think incorporating both these registers and more is important?

I always feel like my work exists in a weird purgatory between being too dumb for the ivory tower and too smart for the unwashed masses, which is how I also feel about myself personally. It’s almost like there’s something for everyone, and that’s why it’s for no one? By trying to make it more accessible, I think I’ve actually alienated myself. The use of high and low language is sort of a balancing act and says a lot about my personal background. I admire a broad range of language and think slang/bad grammar/gibberish is often just as beautiful as the most precisely crafted literary phrase. I hate snobbery of any kind but especially snobbery about language. I also hate it when people are shamed for their intelligence or lack thereof. I think my work almost always reflects these high/low tensions because that’s how my life has always been, especially as an intellectually curious person born and raised in the anti-intellectual South, who excelled academically and earned two degrees before more or less renouncing all of that and becoming a weird rambling prodigal daughter. My senses are thoroughly deranged at this point. I think that’s what you get when you read my stuff. I’m also really obsessed with bathos, how even the lofty can fall and hit with a thud, which is a contrast I like to create. It feels more honest and inclusive and like a helpful reality check.

Humor, though notoriously subjective, factors strongly into your books, yet never seems to undermine the work’s gravity. Would you go so far as to call it satire? Do you think sometimes humor can elucidate serious topics better than melodrama?

This is a tough one for me because I’m basically a standup comedian at heart and want to write things that are more straight-up funny, but I can’t help but make it heavy. Maybe there’s something about comedy that feels dishonest or incomplete to me. I can’t live without humor, though. I literally need it to survive the stark reality of human nature and These, Our Times. Even as deep and dark as the work does get, I feel like I only ever graze the surface of the awfulness because there is no bottom. But I try to include as much humor as possible because weight needs lightness. I use a combination of satire and sincerity, which are pretty much opposites, and that opposition creates tension, which I enjoy. I don’t think humor elucidates serious topics better than melodrama, but I do think it makes them easier to digest.

Your poetry is highly musical. Can you describe your background in music and how it’s influenced your writing, performances, publications, etc.?

I’m more influenced by music than literature. Music was my first love, and I’ve always had an extremely sensitive ear for sound. I played in the school band from fifth grade all the way through high school, so I have some formal music education. I also played piano and guitar from about 14-18 years old but basically abandoned that once I decided to focus on writing. I’ve only more recently started writing and recording my own music again. For many years, I worked with musical collaborators to add guitar or synth or sound collages or whatever else to my live performances because I liked the idea of really putting on a show with a poetry reading rather than just standing up at a podium with a stack of papers and talking. I liked the idea of busting up into the poetry reading and trying to make it something really intense and multimedia and spectacular. I like how music can make poetry more accessible to people. I also love the way music can change the entire mood of a piece and really give it more layers and texture. I’m always looking for ways to make poetry more engaging, especially for non-readers.

Do you consider the auditory/sonic experience of your work to be its primary form, and the page as mere artifact? Do you have to hear a poem out loud to know whether it’s done?

Even without music added to it, my work has a built-in, meticulously crafted musicality. For me, it’s always been music first, lyrics second. I still don’t know all of the words to many of my favorite songs just because my relationship to music is really more nonsensical lyrics but sung so beautifully that you hardly even notice or care that they don’t make sense, and the sound itself creates its own sense. I used to write more in that way—poems that were almost completely nonsensical—purely for the way the words sounded, just to bask in their bliss. When I was younger, it was always sound first, sense second. I’m more concerned with meaning these days, and maybe that’s because I think I actually have something to say now. But I still compose with sound as a primary concern. I read the poems out loud during the writing process and make voice recordings of them and play them back repeatedly until things sound/feel right. I also let my computer voices read them to me. I like the poems to be able to stand alone as words-only musical compositions and let any music I might add to them for live shows or recordings be a bonus.

There are moments of vulnerability and sensitivity in your poems, but not enough to risk the “confessional” label. Why do you think that, unlike so many other contemporary poets, your work seems more interested in language itself than personal narrative?

I feel like my work becomes more and more confessional all the time. I’m probably regressing. I don’t really think “confessional” is a dirty word or a dumb concept, though. I think I’m finally saying what I’ve always wanted to say, or at least starting to. I can be a little repetitive and masturbatory and downright loud, but people have short attention spans. I think you have to be a little in-your-face to really reach and move anyone. I consider my work confessional, and the vast majority of it is at least semi-autobiographical, but I’m still definitely a word nerd and constantly amazed, amused, entertained, astonished, overjoyed by the way different combinations of words look and sound together, no matter what I’m trying to say or not.

Many of the poems in The Elvis Machine center on the enthralling but elusive pleasures of love, romance and sex. What was your personal take-away from writing into this apocalyptic wasteland of modern dating?

Modern dating truly is a dumpster fire hellscape, and *The Elvis Machine* reflects that. For me, it’s like self-criticism and self-loathing combined with man hating and male disappointment. Like, are men bad people, or is there something wrong with me? The answer is both. I’m a love addict who didn’t know I was a love addict until after I finished writing the book, so that has been a revelation. Reading Melissa Broder’s *The Pisces* (which I have since been beating like the Bible) helped me really start to understand my pathology, which is very similar to her protagonist’s pathology. I feel like I see love addiction everywhere now. Virtually everything about our (pop) cultural conditioning encourages romantic obsession. It’s like “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Finding a Husband.” It’s weird for me to look back at the poems in *The Elvis Machine* and see all of the yearning and heartache and obsession laid so bare and raw. It embarrasses me. But it’s honest. I have been love-addled lifelong, and I still am. But I’ve been able to curtail it more recently for the sake of my health and safety, which have far too often been at risk because of it, and I have been directly harmed by it many times. Dating, as a general rule, is garbage. I think it’s important to ask yourself why you’re doing it beyond maybe craving some basic companionship and getting your nut—both of which are important, but there’s no sense going mad over it and getting into abusive situations. What’s been helpful for me, and which Broder discusses in *The Pisces*, is investigating what I’m really looking for in partnership and what really drives the obsessive addict-type behavior that often accompanies the pursuit of it. For me, the answer has mostly been validation and purpose, and my way of trying to heal myself has been to find validation and purpose in things that are wholly unrelated to love/romance. It actually has been quite helpful and freeing to sink those energies into things that satisfy me and me alone—like writing, cooking, making music, bonding more deeply with femme friends, etc. I wound up writing a whole other book last year that goes much deeper into all of this and really takes men/love addiction/myself to task in a more self-aware, measured and intense way, so look out for that one soon (hopefully). Anyway, I think a lot of people can probably relate to *The Elvis Machine*. There are 23 poems in it inspired by at least 10 different shitty dudes (and that phrasing is too forgiving), and I think most of us can identify with the basic struggle of lover versus self and social pressures versus personal desires. The last poem in the book is about a woman, though. I decided the book needed to end with hope, so I wrote a very straightforward love poem for one of my closest female friends because I think platonic intimacy, and expanding our concept of what constitutes a soul mate, is dire. There are many soul mates in this life. I think it’s mostly just a matter of being open to them.

LETTERS TO THE ELEMENTS

BY DYLAN KRIEGER



dear ash: as soon as you're halfway up the hill and feeling full-lunged alive again, the smallest obstacle dissolves you. and there is more where that came from, but the method you adopt to combat it matters most. who will you pray to when the forces of nature—inanimate or animal—rebel against your plans? what will the path itself add up to, regardless of destination?



dear talisman: wit and wisdom of the dead in one ridiculously singular trinket, the how—again—is more important than the what. you crave continuity so badly, sometimes you're liable to rewrite the past, but by all means resist this infantilization of yourself. you can accept transformation alongside the most capable grownups you remember from childhood. in your knapsack, you carry them. it's ok to feel tired; they are so very heavy.



dear heirloom: soon enough, all things become you—that is, unless they're less fortunate and destroyed entirely, but even that's a hand-me-down of a different sort. and you know about that, too: the melting down, the shattered self, and the becoming something else. people interpret your gemstones as tragic simply due to the funereal context, but truly, they are the future. accept change, even while the rest of the service plays it safe.



dear full moon: your worst trait is your ability to throw a fit, to insist on yourself as the climax to at least a weeks-long buildup and throw the tides into a frenzy just to keep your cold calcium company. but remember, with the tiniest wane of the light against your bony body, you can spin back into place as quickly as you spun out. there is a power in your tantrum you shouldn't take for granted. choose well what corner of heaven you want to reflect this next turn.



dear siren: beauty-as-deception is a common notion in mythology. and yes, you have that brassy allure that could crash a thousand ships, but it's a little unfair to call every light-bearer the devil. sometimes lost sailors don't find what they want on your shores, admittedly, but what fault is that of yours? don't let anyone's false histories or preconceptions stop you from singing. even if deceiving, the magic of the song itself is worth it.



dear scientist: Carl Sagan famously denied the idea that science tends to strip encounters with nature of their "awe" factor. in fact, in his mind, interfacing with the natural world as meticulously as a scientist invariably elicits a sense of reverence in the observer, despite whatever number-crunching must also take place to draw conclusions from experiments. so today, lock up the lab and step away. go get awe-struck by something, before it's too late.



dear witch: it's no surprise you are so hard on yourself, for you are typically so skilled at re-creating your environment from scratch that when it doesn't quite come out as planned, people notice. the trick in this instance is to enlist the right coven to pick up your slack. people love you and are willing to help, if you can admit there are certain things you can't do yourself and some decisions are out of your hands. a secret community spanning millennia will catch whatever you drop.



dear exorcist: in your attempts to dispel the evils outside yourself, alas, overeager priestling, you lower your rosary too far into the underworld and singe your robes. sure, you shouldn't get lost in helping others at your own expense, but the real moral here is to protect the integrity of your acts by remembering even you are not immune to suggestion, temptation, possession. are you casting out the devil, or just talking to yourself?



dear bonfire: your criminal versatility is an advantage few appreciate, let alone explore to its full extent. you have always been hungry, but now, exacerbated by this lack of gratitude, the craving to run wild through the forest is almost palpable. to be honest, if you hit the planet with all you had to give, no one could stop you—but you may stop others dead in their tracks. take a moment to pay attention to who you might be drowning out.



dear blood sacrifice: no one knows why you were initially chosen for this hallowed task—especially exalted or especially damned? but sweet little calf, it doesn't matter now. neither the madonna nor the whore is really a virgin, so don't let a little sinning turn into the weight of the world. even the god of the Old Testament famously let at least one ram go.



dear sacred circle: there is such a flurry of curious energy teeming inside you, sometimes you have to collapse mid-chant and ask yourself how the rituals really help. but if you don't immediately know the answer, don't throw up your hands just yet. there is much to see beyond the confines of this geometrical anomaly: the faces of loving leaders gather all around you. this is no solipsistic vacuum. start to fathom that.



dear divination: many methods exist for what you must do next, but most involve turning yourself at least slightly inside out, and fortunately, you're used to that. by now, you're aware you will never be satisfied with the apparent boundaries of human perception, and there's nothing to be done about it but whistle lunatic-like into the loose leaves or vomit and watch the future manifest for you and only you, the prophet.

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