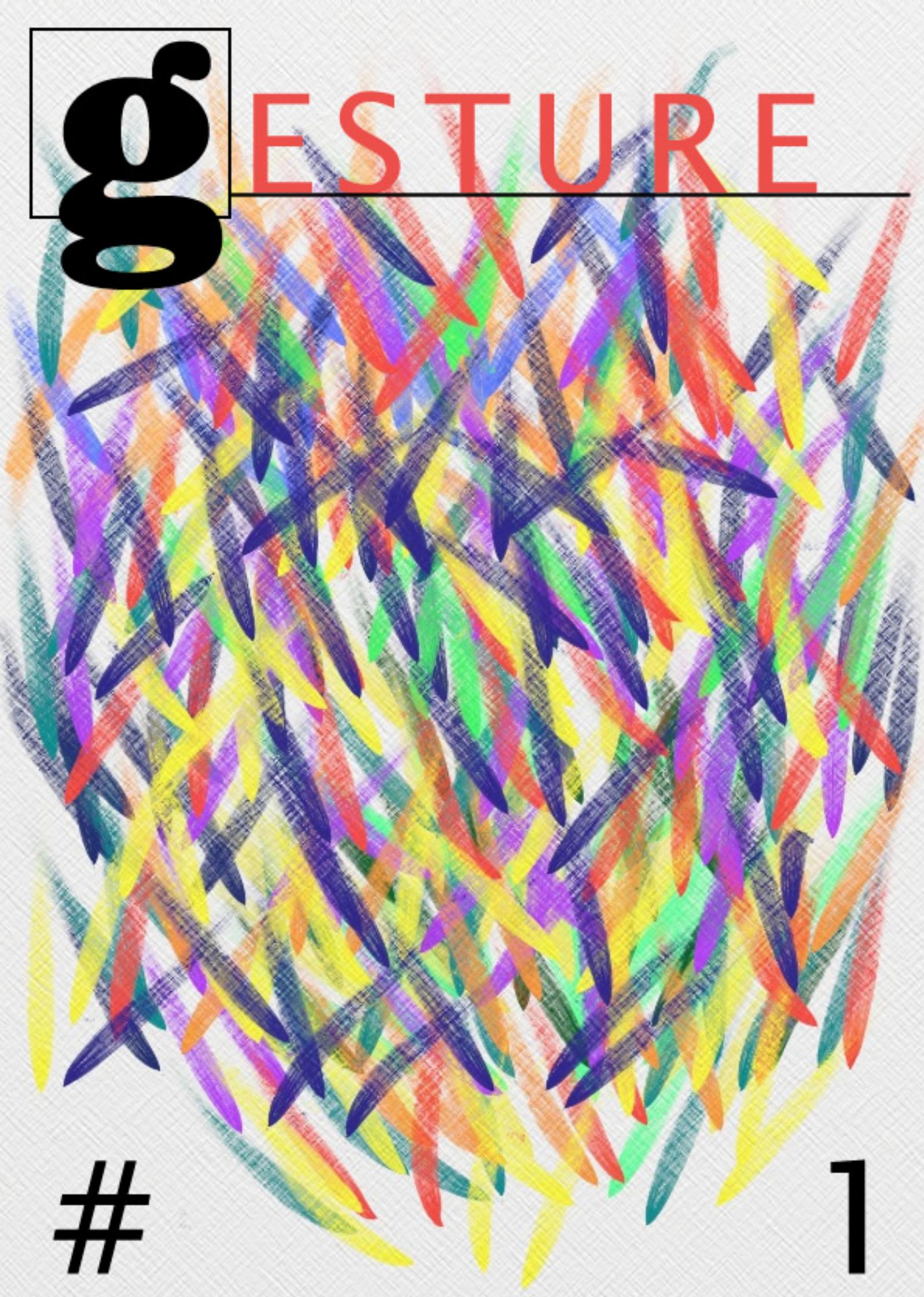


ഗ

ESTURE



#

1

Thanks for reading
gesture.

Matt

g = contributors

Alone here with my thoughts
it seems like snow has fallen
everywhere around them

like skeletal trees in a winterscape.
I feel a little overworked
as though an unknown force

had worn me like a glove
with which it performed
the same magic trick again and again

all day. Can you picture me
slumped towards a window hunched over
a white piece of paper?

I am trying to figure out the secret
of artificial intelligence--
how to make something get up and live

all by itself. For some reason
I believe this is possible. And my beliefs
though flimsy and hollow like yellow

reeds bent low against the wind
down by the black river where dreams
kneel down to die in peace

are the only things that confuse me.
And this is why I love them. This is how
I would like to be remembered--

pulling a rabbit out of the air.
A real rabbit made from paper made
from imaginary snow.

It would be foolish to assume
that anything is composed of tiny dots.
That dots make up the universe.
That the universe is a kind of dot.
It would disastrous to assume these dots
cohere by way of an invisible force
which extends from nowhere
into everything everywhere.
When someone dies their soul
looks just like them and floats
above their gurney. If they were 30
years younger, they would tear the dress
off a nurse. It's been this way
in every war ever fought. Souls
hovering over the battlefield.
Nurses completely dressed.
It's impossible for a cube of light
to exist. Impossible for you to carry
that cube of light across a vast plane
of darkness through a forest of pine trees
to a house in the woods. It's impossible
to enter the house and hand the cube
of light to William Butler Yeats.
Time flows up and down and around
the tiny dots. Birds fly out of the trees.
I don't care for perfectly clear weather.
I keep myself busy all day.

A man who for years had been mourning the death of his wife by not coming out of the bedroom he and his wife had shared, and in which his wife had died, died.

They didn't exist until the first
person who

saw them saw them.

“We are the last two men alive,” said one bearded man to another. “Whoever dies first will be buried by the one who himself will never be buried.”

Better they swing a scythe across your belly, stretch
a taut sheet flat over your hips' corners,

split you open and dig out every last finger, every
nail and limb. Better they stuff you full of thorns

before sewing up your stomach's bleeding smile.
Better than hushing you into a room,

your heels hoisted into stirrups, cold metal tongues
agape and toothless. A nurse whispers quietly

as she pats your hand, another clearing
the evidence he was ever in your body,

ever smeared the wet mop of your back
across the ground under clouds of charcoal smoke.

Better that you never look back after you sneak away
with the scraps, slide into his house like a sheet of paper

pushed under the door and leave a jar on his mantle,
tiny arms swimming in yellow brine.

but my thoughts are a broken shower head
& I am forever realizing things too late
so cut their throats w/ a bass solo or
rebuild the image as a long lost puppy
 first: give nothing away
 lie if you have to the image is contingent on a lie
there was never a puppy to begin w/ anyway
A man boards a plane in Portland, Oregon in November of 1971
I have yet to meet my father but I have heard great things
according to an artist's rendering of a phone booth
teenagers are bored many are jobless
the problem is twofold & cannot be solved in this space alone
but at least I tried silence is a story about a boy
& his elephant no forget the boy
I doubt the legitimacy of his elephant
silence is this plate I found in my garden or
the three blank pages at the end of a dime novel
my sources tell me I am too circumspect to be confused for
Abraham Lincoln I tell them to fuck off
however elusive ampersands are necessary lies
silence too is a lie but we are otherwise comforted
by its vague gesture its silhouette
a figure passing by a doorway

Gravity, the mother of all, separated herself
from the strong, weak and magnetic forces.

Her dishwasher stacked perfectly, cups on top
plates below, hair worn in a bun

so it never fell in her face
when she bent to wipe your mouth.

it was in an english class in the eleventh grade third period i sat in the far left row in a classroom in a portable out by the football field i sat in the second to last seat behind a tall guy named rob whose brother years later would be eaten by a shark off the coast of santa cruz to my left was a fat guy named vincent who drove a transam that he could barely fit into its important that i get this right right down to the last detail because it was in the eleventh grade in my third period english class that the teacher mr allen said tuberculosis was on the rise because immigrants were on the rise they spat on sidewalks and during the hot months of april may june july the sun would evaporate spit on the sidewalks and wind would scatter it into the air the stats on tb were on the rise because we were all breathing the same air it is important that i get this right because it was in my third period in an english class in my eleventh grade that he said tb was on the rise and i was sitting in a classroom in a portable out by the football field the tall guy farted and blamed it on the the fat kid sitting in the seat to the left of me the fat kid decided that he was going to blame it on me it was in the far left row in the second to last seat in the english class in the third period of the eleventh grade that i saw snow for the first time it is important that i get this right it was snowing in november in san jose it was beautiful sitting in that seat in the far left row in the third period english class looking out the window i remember saying go fuck yourself its important that i get this right because in my eleventh grade english class i told the tall guy and the fat guy and the guy i referred to as mr. allen to go fuck yourself it was a single sentence stated just loud enough it was meant to be a shared experience in the eleventh grade in the third period of an english class i was kicked out of school for the duration of a week because in the eleventh grade i said go fuck yourself in an English class in the third period i remember walking home it was a fall day and the leaves were changing colors and it snowed that day i remember because it never snows in san jose i remember thinking it was beautiful but strange the changing of the leaves and the falling of the snow it was beautiful that fall day

Shall the door moan behind me with the voice of a cage in a cage
Shall the cage the house once was be gilt by the soot of its owners
and shall that soot coat it all even the words I use to describe it
Shall the latticework balancing grapes from two seasons sag and crack
but never break and shall this promise never be broken

That there is but one house for every fear ox-blood red fat as a barn
squatting on the humblest hill
That the hill be named something terrible in Spanish or Hebrew or Russian
That the name be the name of the worse war to pass or the last colony
of lepers or the false smell of cardamom covering the rot of a body
That the name be your name that there be only one name for you my lover my body

And that I should come to the birthplace tonight of your terrible name
o house you tenuous tendril you rake to rake with
And that I should cross the threshold held beholden to the warp of the floor
and rake the naked beams with the sole of my shoe in which have come
tiny gems of you spent so long overlooked
And that I should pass through the gem of the parlor now thick with the mystery of frogs
and yet should never see one not one I swear
And should I send them out into the air the cool night air
And should I send them out

They coat the floor of the shallow pond like a coat, or a dead goat over the smell of itself
which could never be
Which could never be the name of the house I once lived in
Which could never be the same as the name I gave it

I have run from the house and the vineyards crucified on the hillside
I have run from the crucifixion my entire life and sleep and am wakened by the smell of
burning
I have run down the hill so fast I lost count of the bees festering in blisters in trees

I have run down so fast the bees of two seasons dropped their heavy burdens and be
came another
color another blister which is the ground and the fault of the ground
I have run down I have been run down in the house of my making
In whatsoever houses I shall enter shall my entering become the blister of a bee on a
sharpened
spear which is a token of peace and a piece of the cross

It should not alarm you that I despise
something other than myself. I'm not

a feminist for nothing, or else those songs
taught me zilch about owning a vagina.

Sometimes I peruse through the make-up aisle
and think about how nice it would be

to dab that glistening guarantee
of sex on my dry mouth. But then

I remember, when I turn my head too fast,
my hair sometimes sticks to the new

chemical radiance, and I want to return
to skin, to the essentialism of matte lips.

I always loved experimenting with you,
lip gloss—your delicate shine, that love

for contact, the tease. You're first
after a bath, the initial layer of distraction,

but then I wipe you away, forget I don't care.
Truth is, I look forward to liking the thought

of liking myself, becoming a kind of first
woman before the others came along.

of dissidence towards hospitable · · f-stop exactitude · · a scalpel
seemingly on loan from a dispassionate orchestra · · atypical & aquatic · ·
rubbing herbs into the open wound of a symbol · · semiotics, as the word suggests, is
the study of signs · · to wit, a Manitowoc wrecking ball covered in the particulates of
sideswiped flowers · · in circular motifs · · every artist speaks for themselves,
in some reflexive sense of isolation · · w/in the selected surgery of scrivening
· · living through humdrum self-reproach · · you, immediately in a curious
medical chapter · · biopsied on white Eskulan paper · · w/ well-defined words which
are sincerely inexplicable · · yet somehow connect · · through a Hasselblad
500C/M w/ a 50mm lens— · · slightly out of focus · · one starts to fathom · · this lion
is a grandpa w/ the dreams of a sleepwalker for a watch fob · · ribboning the rumina-
tive elements of Aletheia · · but “a drunk man looks at The Complete Poems of Hugh
MacDiarmid” · · isn’t anything like Heidegger · · as the words swerve w/ the accuracy
of engineering · · a looming storm front tumbling · · from the take-up roll on a vener-
able Geo. Hattersley Standard · · slumming antique w/ all the connoisseurs · · the phi-
losophy of solitude is a factory · · the elevator inside is a birdhouse, the ap-
positions become funeral dirges · · the transcripts remain doctors &
nurses · · on strike you were just like everyone else · · wearing this horrifying
hearts-and-flowers gibberish · · so let me introduce myself · · i don’t really
know what i’m supposed to do w/ all this moody ambiguity · · often the ab-
struse delete-key allegory · · makes each primary colour sound like a
prominent component of The Bodyguard soundtrack · · every breath incor-
porating elements · · of contemporary hallucinations, crime fiction & southern gothic-
tension · · it exercises the third-person · · omniscient, · · nonlinear narrative
· · where a handful of Spaulding yachts & Creekmore sailboats anchor · ·
during the yearly charity golf game · · w/ an encore of analytical aes-
thetics where my past contrasts as a houseboat · · set adrift on “Set
Adrift on Memory Bliss”

every dream is a fire drill & i/m [a nude fire extinguisher]
 assimilating nicely—
 & i miss a lot of things
 somewhere, along in there, i think i miss you, samurai self-esteem
 the belvedere moments
 of auto-affection & i think someone just
 aimed a revolver
 at a raindrop ~~thinking abt suicide~~

No—

i/m really leaving this time
 cataloguing references to dismantled dreams in old books
 like it/s the ides of october

[sorry, i cdn/t find synonyms for “April is the cruellest month”]

but, you are a dreamboat,
 Anne, estranged

but i/m, alas, [do geese see god]
 a made-for-TV special
 abt Dexter, or ~~high school athletes~~

maybe my only source is
 what if Abraham Lincoln were a confessional poet#—

[the absurdity is an affirmation]

w/ the historical potential of a forest fire
 [we can meet again] near a deciduous tree pining to be coniferous
 & maybe we can stay awake & say
 “i don/t sleep anymore” to each other

[or]

~~fuck it~~ i/ll stay i/m taking a walk
 to dash myself against
 the petrous origins
 of love songs

there was a gallery of motives or motivations
 leit-motifs for a Baedeker to the Alcatraz
 of this harbingering elegy
 to the runways & doorways toward an executioner/s garden

a plastic flower
 still burns in my [complicated] hand
 [dear Anne:]

an art just subtle enough to dream
under, the cursive stitch, the prostrate hem,
the mountains carved from textile, the dreams
you had of your mother too. Down, cotton,
wool, she is blending her trapezoids, paisley stripes,
silver filigree patchwork into something warm that says
you'll never be alone. The sharp dullness
of that first quilt, recall, the little television
on the corner table recording the arias of soap
operas and the soaps they pitched
at low, low prices. The coverlets
piled in corners, closets stuffed with generic sweat-
shirts (my name embroidered at their hearts), little epaulets
for little generals on Halloweens. Tonight,
in concrete sweat, I dream of my mother sewing
in the basement, next to the water heater.

Affection is merciless: the wind, the excluder.
So much ruptured attention, so much pillaged from the stalk.
Even the nerves stray from precision, announcing
Their stunned subject. Merciless: a field of snow
Flying like jargon, sweeping the issue away
In a halo of cold, its purpose
Lifted from the flat climate, from its nub or throb,
Lifted on impossible wings we are generous, we dare.
But affection is merciless: **the dead** in their thin garb
Walking the ruined streets, inventing us in stride and envy.
It is said they will make their way
Back to us, as what rises **saves** itself, falls.
What is the speed of **this doctrine**, what dividends,
What annual yield?
When will he give it back,
When will I laugh in the untidy yard
And when will her eyes, staring at me
Because she sees only her departure **from me**,
See me left here. Further adventure is further delay.
I used to count the days. I do not want to count the days.

I am not a painter, I am a poet.
Why? I think I would rather be
a painter, but I am not. Well,

for instance, Mike Goldberg
is starting a painting. I drop in.
“Sit down and have a drink” he
says. **I drink; we drink.** I look
up. “You have SARDINES in it.”
“Yes, it needed something there.”
“Oh.” I go and the days go by
and I drop in again. The painting
is going on, and I go, and the days
go by. I drop in. **“The painting is
finished. “Where’s SARDINES?”**
All that’s left is just
letters, **“It was too much,”** Mike says.

But me? One day I am thinking of
a color: orange. I write a line
about orange. Pretty soon it is a
whole page of words, not lines.
Then another page. There should be
so much more, not of orange, of
words, of how terrible orange is
and life. Days go by. It is even in
prose, I am a real poet. My poem
is finished and I haven’t mentioned
orange yet. It’s twelve poems, I call
it ORANGES. And one day in a gallery
I see Mike’s painting, called SARDINES.

We waken next
to strangers we
pretend to know
intimately
eat a normal
breakfast

In the evening
over supper
we find our old
expressions
smile inwardly
restored

help
each other dress
(yellow blouse
navy blazer)
head off to work
with kisses.

and kiss
as usual
before sleep
happily uncertain
whose lips
we meet.

33 years of watching a mountain
in between 33 waves of weather
and the stone is watching me back.
I return
at last
to the ground.

every day takes me further
away from you and i
think i'm finally
ok with that

the ocean is bitchslapping
the shore and seagulls run
away from the water

there's this girl i sleep with
and when we sleep
i don't have dreams
it's like i die
for a few hours

lately i've been feeling my heart
do this weird thing in my chest

like it wants to bust out
and send drunk texts
to all my lovers

dan lau [A Tuesday]
for Jane Wong

I saw a dead starling at the side
of the road and thought of you.
How you'd examine the discarded
parts of animals as we walked. Like
on the beach, how you simulated a battle
starring your hand as a legless crab
and your other hand as an ornery fish
now reduced to just a long white spine
curved into a shallow arch. The crab,
a simple broken star.

I know now the logic in the macabre.
I see the beauty in the symmetry stilled
by death. Perfection in the small body
of a mouse before it bloats and reanimates
with fly larvae, before the skin collapses
into a loose suit on the child that body
becomes. Each feather on that crumpled bird
stood up on end to greet that brutal grit-filled
wind, and curled into iridescent pearls.

from their boats
fishermen discard
the heads and innards
of freshly caught fish
onto white sand
attracting flocks of
seagulls that peck
through the remains
turning their
yellow beaks red

chief editor // cover art: **matthew sherling**

layout editor: **jason schenheit**