

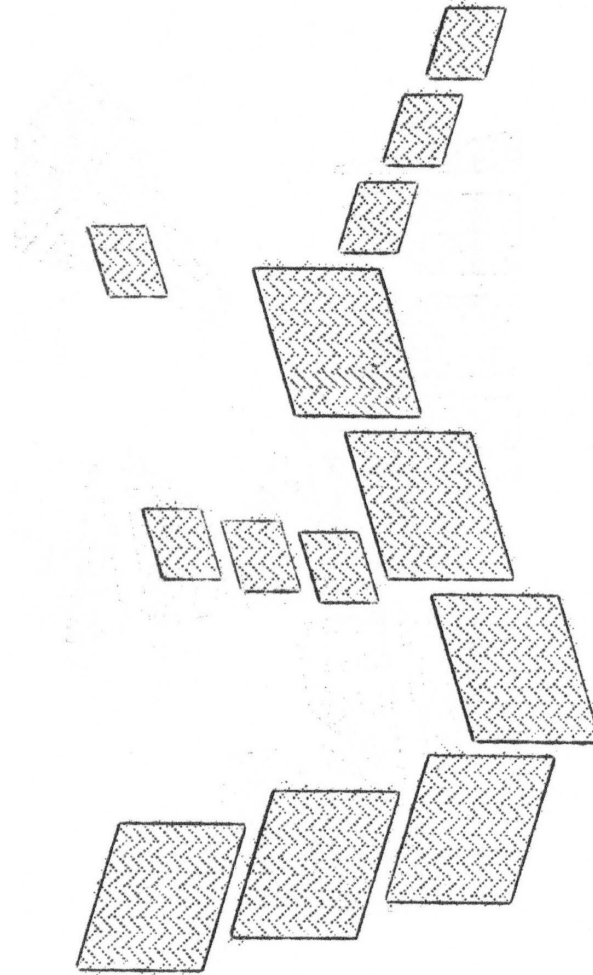
THE MINUTE REVIEW

Vol. 2 No. 2 (September 2021)
a little magazine of poetry, prose, and reviews

Derek Beaulieu, editor

107 Tunnel Mountain Drive—Box 1020, Banff, Alberta, Canada T1L 1H5

Contributors this issue: petra schulze-wollgast | Charles Bernstein | Sarah Burgoyne |
Samuel Andreyev | Anthony Etherin | Mary Burger | Dani Spinosa | Nick Montfort |
Vilde Bjerke Torset | Nasser Hussain | Gregory Betts



petra schulze-wollgast

Charles Bernstein—*Today 4:34 pm*

I guess
I'll watch
the reading
up here.
I put
the meat-
balls in
the fridge.

Sarah Burgoyne—*The Blinking Default Setting*
(After Molly-Cross Blanchard's *The Exhibitionist*)

I give the world my body and the world gives me
Arcimboldo
my dog's muted martyrdom
a theatre of kelp in blue lipstick
a frenulum under the dark monument
of your gap-tooth
one dull claw
with an open-coated lilt

It's been raining and no birds come
I lie on the trampoline watching
the philodendron sell hazard to the Pomeranian

A pinky's worth of shockwaves
fallen out of the wide sky's periwinkle vest

I want to be lost in the black porcelain sink
of that forest always gasping awake
fifty meters above the Pacific

I wish I wish

The furniture of all your favourite lines
I never questioned
The three thousand and second saltine
of a poet off their route
pretending to measure the ceremony
in the bathroom trash

it's made up mythology six feet from where I sleep

I don't know if this is how poems work

but I can stay and not
think of the visual learners

Sam Andreyev—*The Newcomers* (an excerpt)

imagine the chaos if the world were even 1% bigger, this book is less than a good yarn, finally came up with some decent ideas to pitch to the prez, using a new algorithm to predict rejections, calling all mystics, scenes from the royal mint, hats spun like frisbees into the fjord, they patiently mastered the art of implied birdcalls, light swept over the grass in a silver arc, they tried using their baseball mitts to catch the falling rain in a flight of fancy, they ought to turn that evidence over to the true experts, lob them an easy one and watch them scamper for it, there is zero chance the trolley will arrive on time, desperately tugging at the 'request stop' cord, it was a gamble that did not pay off, scrounging around in the underbrush looking for diamonds, they unexpectedly became vastly wealthy overnight, they were tricked into reading a novel, each tablespoon was carefully filled with differently-coloured sugar, wringing out their beach towels after a sudden downpour, they donned glasses that ironically made their vision even worse, it was like having double hands with which to bounce all the world's balls, daring them to take the fat test, picture a world without vacations, passing around the attainment bucket, they appeared distinguished because of a slight stiffness of gait, flash forward a hundred years into the future, the currency of guilt, handing out special blankies for the depressed, an evening effect of language, grain was evenly spread out all over the tarmac, the curtains abruptly shut as they approached the house from afar, it's just like floating in water, it's like an action movie except in slow-motion, knocking over the chessboard in a fit of rage, do not underestimate the power of their engines, a chess match gone terribly wrong, pummeling them with slightly inaccurate accounts of events, the guests will suspect nothing, shoving chairs at their guests in an awkward display of excessive friendliness, still awaiting that silken moment, the thrill of crossing the wellness threshold, manifesting a voracious appetite for the pleasantly banal, standing there sizzling with guilt, that old box of soap flakes that's been sitting in the pantry for like 25 years, dots appeared on the horizon, that's how it goes in times of no barley, a certain fuzziness reigned then, back when root vegetables were considered an exotic luxury, everything is ultimately proportional, the secrets of manliness, forever buying cakes decorated with baroque patterns, just more crud to sweep up, holding coins over the wishing well for weeks on end without ever releasing them, staying hydrated for just pennies a glass, they decided to have it laminated, will they ever manage to skedaddle, bounding through the snow at furious speed, one raindrop at a time, the kingdom appeared to have reached its zenith after only a few short years, trying to keep abreast of the most current fads, it was nothing a fat pocketbook couldn't fix, a specially-built machine for testing the strength of khakis, they were reminded of that photographer who only does portraits of

single lego blocks, little did they realize that contact lenses could not be sold on the black market, the unifying principle lies down at the bottom of this seemingly insignificant paper bag, they were thrilled to have a seat at the table, their breathtaking brilliance was tempered by their equally breathtaking stupidity, their language remained capricious and nonstandard, talk about an awkward start to a dinner party, smashing broken windows into wholeness again, all the little angels returned to the windowpane, they spoke of the rose but not of the thorns, throwing it all away for a bunch of insincere pleasantries, the cats shifted into another room, cash registers overflowing, stacks of expensive art books casually laid out over the coffee table, knock-knock-knockin' on stupidity's door, foolishly trying to decorate the mountains, everything they owned was squirreled away inside burlap sacks, all that change jingling around in their pockets, they lost points for general grubbiness, doing nothing but dragging the same damn luggage all over the world, all the available options were chaotic in the extreme, the birdsong was constant and quickly became intolerable, belting out those old torch songs with gusto, they came upon an exhaustive catalogue of undirected thoughts, miraculously catching a pop fly all the way at the back of the bleachers, finally getting a feel for the back-and-forth patter of AM radio, it's not good when countries are overly small,

Anthony Etherin—*Moonless Night*

The dark was born, bejewelled with elder lights
 that sparkled gently through its massing cloud.
 (It spoke, to say it feared these moonless nights....)
 Below, the earth was bowing in its shroud.

A smoke inscribing evening swirled up high—
 a crow ascending, blotting out each star—
 its charring wings now spread across the sky,
 denial, loss, and deader things afar.

Then marring, doubting rot descended low,
 as twilight furled to weave a vibrant cloak.
 Its crowd, beginning now to birth a glow,
 grew bright—and soon it neared: the day awoke.
 Sun, proud and passing truly, sent its mark.
 Its rites beheld and called the morning lark.

G	H	I	J	A
G	K	L	M	B
F	N	O	P	A
E	Q	R	S	B
F	T	U	V	C
E	W	X	Y	D
D	Z	þ	Æ	C
C	Æ	þ	Z	D
D	Y	X	W	E
C	V	U	T	F
B	S	R	Q	E
A	P	O	N	F
B	M	L	K	G
A	J	I	H	G

Note: “Moonless Night” is a Shakespearean sonnet in iambic pentameter. The rhyme of each foot obeys a palindromic structure, such that the first foot of the poem rhymes with the last, the second foot with the second-to-last, and so on. (i.e. The dark / -ing lark.; was born / the morn-.) The sonnet’s rhyme scheme is presented here below the poem.

Mary Burger—*A Broken Compass Makes a Spinning Deet*

Because the patterns of perception we once used as animals are the patterns we still recognize, I discover my voice in the extreme suffusion where I first found it.

In relation with microbial scale we absorb what we've destroyed as if our mind is another stage of the world's being.

The illegible is not the abject. My image resolution matched the background, I was part of the picture.

Breath takes on the pulse of jellyfish, that moment makes another bubble in the endless foam.

The body leaks and dissolves, cannot contain itself, the skin a sieve, held together by the slim integrity of surface tension.

**Dani Spinosa—*Yes I Read Yes I Will Yes*
Review of *Yes, I am a Corpse Flower* by Travis Sharp (KFB, 2021)**

I have always known Kirby was a purveyor of the truly beautiful in both queer-ness and poetry and the striking places they combine. The exquisite corpse of Travis Sharp's *Yes, I am a Corpse Flower* is thus not surprising. Trust Kirby to connect me to this book, its multitude of connections.

How is this body connected to mine? To my wealthy suburban home/town? To my white girl body and its sometimes-queer desires? To my poetry girl body and its too-often uncritical consumption of queerness in the age of *Drag Race*? Is it relevant that my point of reference for Brandon Fraser is the underrated *Blast from the Past*?

This collection's title is a response. It clearly positions the queer body into a poetics of conversation (a fitting delight to find such a beautiful, thorough engagement with Brossard here, too). It rends the body, piecemeal. Organs. Genitals. Sensory perception. Skin. Limbs. It broke me when I first read it, aloud, to my straight ass boyfriend in our straight ass bed. It broke us both. Made us sit thinking in touching silence.

Sharp's collection here walks that beautiful poetic line between the grandiose and the understated. This collection is equal parts theatrical and painfully realist. I have kept opening it over and over since it arrived in my mailbox from knife | fork | book. I'm not sure it will ever fully close.

Nick Montfort—*Review*
***print(dialogue)* by Blair Simmons**

Performed at CultureHub, NYC by actors from the Great Jones Repertory Company, April 18, 2019 and outside HERE Arts, NYC by William Banks and Chloe Troast, August 19, 2021.

I recently read an article in *TIME* about what was (supposedly) the first AI-generated play, being performed in London August 23–25, 2021. Alas, I had personally already seen two performances (not the only ones) of another AI-generated play, *print(dialogue)*. I certainly don't imagine that the London play is worthless; I would have loved to have seen it. I'm sure there would be different sorts of innovations in that performance. But when I see the claim "I'm the first to do this computer-generated thing!" it often means "I'm working in isolation, unaware of the other artists who are also innovating in this area!"

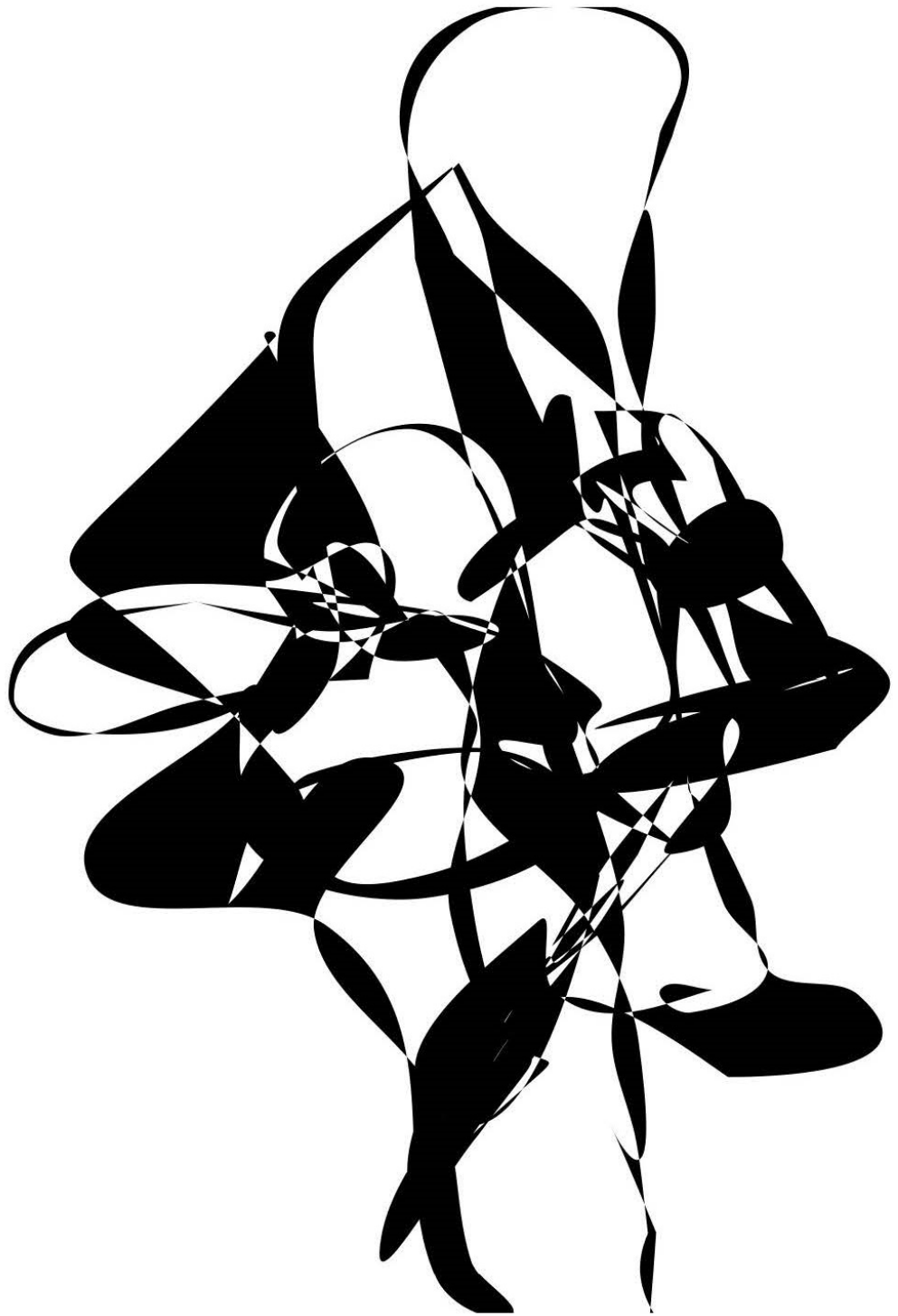
Simmons actually has not claimed to be the first to do this sort of work. She just focuses on making a compelling live experience with computational liveness (the program running during the performance) and live actors—as well as live printing.

The title of Simmons's play is a valid line of Python code, assuming that "dialogue" has been previously declared as a variable. She programmed a system that generates a script for actors to perform, and that generation happens beginning right as the performance begins. Text from the system is sent to a printer which sits on stage—a prop, I suppose, but it also becomes a sort of character itself. The actors take pages off the printer, ones with text that has never been seen before, and immediately deliver those lines, figuring out how to perform at that moment.

As in improv theatre, this is a way to see actors in trouble, and turns out to be comedic. The text ends up being syntactically and semantically sound, bit by bit, but quite limited in its overall coherence, so the actors must scramble to imagine and invent context. At HERE Arts, there was something about wanting to be Spanish, about baldness and shampoo, and about desiring a shower.

Perhaps most interesting is that the printer can become more of a choke point than the symbol-manipulating, language-generating computer system. It can be as recalcitrant as a live animal used on stage. It can jam, or (as happened in the HERE Arts performance) the show can be delayed because printer drivers need to be installed. At that performance, the actors ended up reading some output twice, as more was not forthcoming. (I was halfway hoping that the printer would produce a test page, and they'd perform that.) These sorts of snafus make me wonder whether, at the moment of the technological singularity, the ascension of AI over humanity will somehow be delayed, or even averted, because somewhere on Earth, we are out of paper.

Vilde Bjerke Torset—*asemic poem*



Nasser Hussain—*Review*

***Lorem Ipsum* by Oil Hazzard (prototype press, 2021)**

Lorem Ipsum stands alongside recent and historical experiments with what I'll call *sentence duration*—a short and incomplete list would include James Joyce, Vanessa Place, Lucy Ellmann and Mattias Enard, all of whom perform gargantuan feats of deferral by avoiding using a full stop for as long as possible—so long, in fact, that it starts to feel like they're almost entirely unnecessary, and are rather mere conventions that serve only to shorten attention spans and/or create false divisions between ideas, not to mention subjects (in every sense of the word), especially when a truly mimetic prose would unfold, or, perhaps more accurately, *flow* from one idea to the next, effortlessly, hiding as it does the fact that it in fact requires an incredible effort to *appear* to flow so effortlessly from one idea to the next, as Hazzard does throughout this book, nesting ideas within ideas, brackets within brackets within brackets, manifesting in prose form something that feels closest to the grammar of computer code—a set of commands (I now see the word 'comma' in *command* and wonder at the coincidence, if not the connection) that flick(er)s between concerns with language, presence, loss, meta-writing, the 'real', duration, grief, and anti-absorptive art, to name only a few of the immersive and minutely observed human phenomena that Hazzard explores in this single, 50,000-word sentence of a book, which will stand out in stark relief against the 'lorem ipsum of our days'.

Gregory Betts—*Counting the Form*
Review of *Without Form* by Ben Robinson (KFB/Blasted Tree,
2021)

Bertram Brooker published *The Tangled Miracle* in 1936 (using a pseudonym, to not offend his occultist friends) about a group of fraudsters who fake a reprisal of the Biblical miracle of assumption, where the body and the soul of a chosen one ascends to heaven upon death. The Christian tradition, of course, distinguishes the body from the blood in the act of communion, briefly re-uniting Heavenly and Earthly realms when the Word become flesh in Jesus. Over time, the trinity of spirit, soul, and body has come to be understood as a separation between body and soul. The body remains behind on Earth, but Jesus comforted his followers by saying that “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” His body died, was buried, but his spirit remains and will, one day, return for his followers. In literary terms, this is to praise the content over the form. The Miracle of Assumption occurred when his mother Mary was assumed both body and soul from Earth into Heaven. Brooker, Canada’s first avant-gardist, saw the cultic belief in assumptionism as a denial of the body, a failure to recognize the importance of form. *Think of the Earth*, he pleaded.

Almost a century later, Ben Robinson has published *Without Form*, a book that follows Brooker in his embrace of form, his rejection of the Cartesian divide, by erasing every word, every bit of content of the Bible save for its paratext, the numbers of each chapter and verse. Multiplying the effect of recent experimental texts that reduce works to their punctuation, Robinson invites readers to consider the spectacle of “the world before the first word.” It is a beautiful object, hardcover and with full production value from co-publishers Knife Fork Book and The Blasted Tree, where the content has all passed on and been effectively divested of its form. *Without Form* looks at the enormous silence of an erased Bible as the expression of a gap into which meaning attains. His book stages the framing devices we invent to cover over those gaps, that permit us to propose ideas that will populate them. A paradox emerges of silence and erasure being the precondition of form, itself. As Brooker wrote in his manifesto poem “The Destroyer”, “we are the only creators there are [...] where I have been was not created / it is / always”. *Without Form* is a counting, a holding of form—and its invention of content—to account. The form without the content is no dead thing, nothing meaningless, but rather a geography of constellated glyphs that add up to the possibility of imagining life. The form without the content becomes a new content without form.