

not to be hunger.
not to be different.
in no other danger.

we use up the colour.
we use up the cattle.
we use up the flesh.

we use this information.
to study the scale of atoms.
the institution of space.

we’re hungry.
we use this excess.
to make belief.

we sigh at the sky with habit.
the cry of the flesh is monstrous.
finally you see the shape of our need.

let’s take hold of giving.
something astonishing.
with deep reverence.

let’s take hold.

*

“let’s take hold” is composed using only words from Lisa Robertson’s *First Spontaneous Horizontal Restaurant*, Belladonna* Chaplet #75. It was first published by Belladonna* online here: <https://www.belladonnaseries.org/germinations/lets-take-hold-after-lisa-robertsons-first-spontaneous-horizontal-restaurant-belladonna-chaplet-75>

Belladonna* Collaborative promotes the work of women and feminist writers who are adventurous, experimental, politically involved, multi-form, impossible to define, unpredictable, and dangerous with language. Belladonna* is committed to publishing and building literary community among women and LGBTQIA+ authors who write off-centre, producing work that is political and critical; situational rather than plot-driven; inter-subjective, performative, or witnessing rather than personally revelatory; work that reaches across the boundaries and binaries of literary genre and artistic fields, and that questions the gender binary.

Since 1999, Belladonna* have hosted a series of readings and salons in New York City and virtually, which are documented in a chaplet series and as an audiovisual archive at PennSound. In March 2024 a call went out inviting responses to any of the out-of-print chaplets, which are available for free at <https://www.belladonnaseries.org/>

THE MINUTE REVIEW

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a little magazine of poetry, prose, and reviews

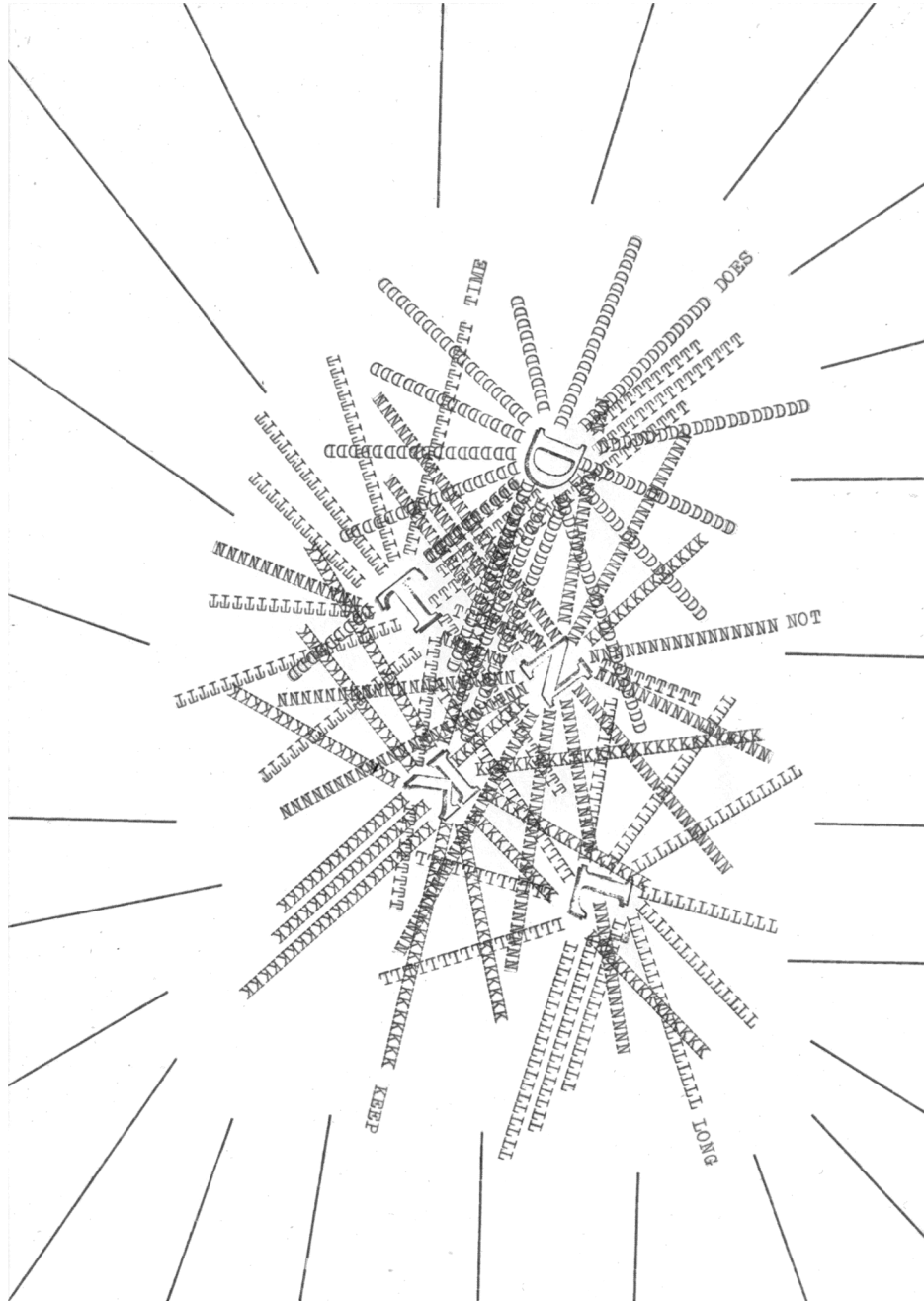
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Contributors this issue: Kate Siklosi | Robin Tomens | Greg Thomas & Monika Szuba
| Sacha Archer | Philip Terry | Sasha Stiles | Roy Willingham | Nasser Hussain
| Franco Cortese | Alex Benedict | J.R. Carpenter



Kate Siklosi

Time Does Not Keep Long
Robin Tomens



I become tasting, startling and absorbing.
I become the sky, with its various minerals.
I become rubbish, washed up on the shore.

I am thrown here, tasting ravenous.
I am thrown headlong, as if falling.
I am in hunger, and lacking in form.

I want limbs.
real tissues.
a fragrance.

I want surplus.
some combination.
of space and swerve.

want is a surplus of speculation.
a catalogue of comportment.
a circumstance without causation.

everything ravenous resists.
the frequency of this movement.
the synesthesia of this eating.

let's take hold of this semblance.
sustain situation, rather than appetite.
and attend only to this falling.

relax also.
and absorb volume.
honey, sap, and foam.

eyes are vital.
thirsty eyes and strangers.
must I strangers?

luck wakes up unctuous bodies.
quicken with intention.
weaving no human location.

we walk headlong
to the uncertain site.
where absence ends.

not to be absent.
but much does drip.
and escape.

let's take hold
J.R. Carpenter

let's begin here.
where we linger.
a delay is a minimal interval.

let's begin where want begins.
neither to study.
nor to ask.

no impossible fitness.
no determined direction.
no chimerical perfection.

no parties, no parties,
no parties, no parties,
no parties, no past.

no politics flows through a girl.
language suspends itself.
a kind of animal act.

we're hard proving.
in lightly ideal conditions.
that Lucretius invented the pleasurable earth.

this is no pasture of the meantime.
this dirt is zapped and thriving.
quickened with the incessance of work.

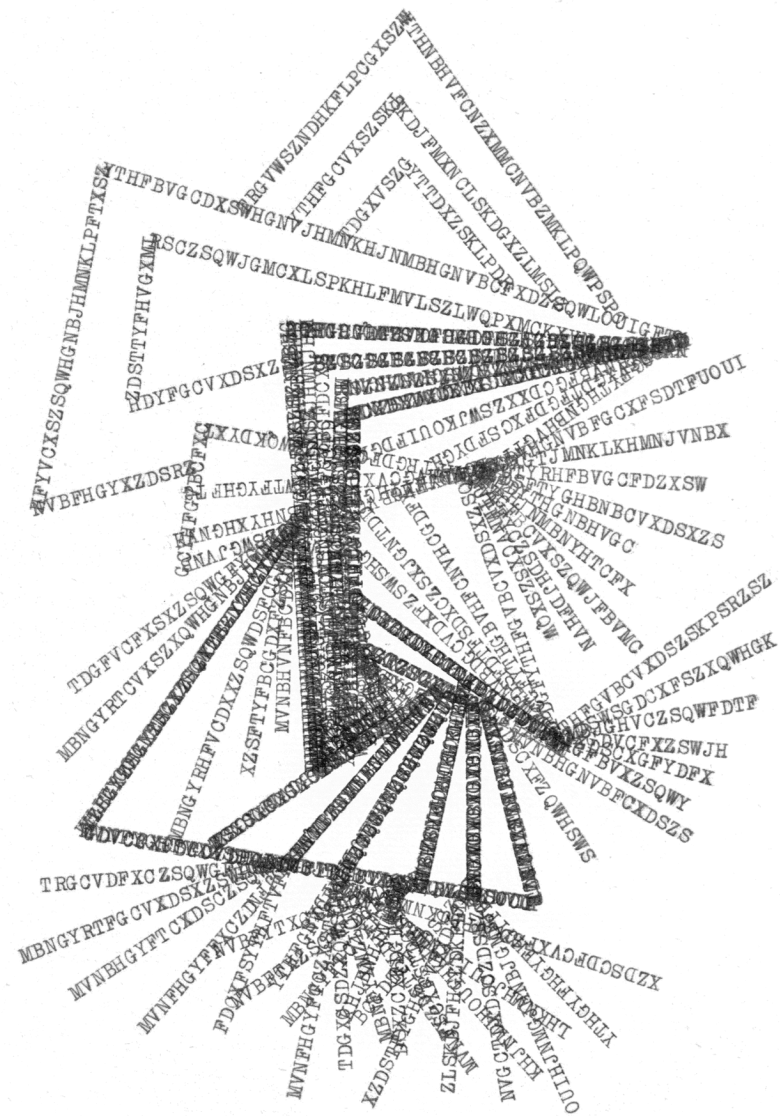
we're still rotating.
receiving dirt.
and flourishing.

thinking flora with ritual again.
with limitless limbs and so forth.
each fruit and sense receiving.

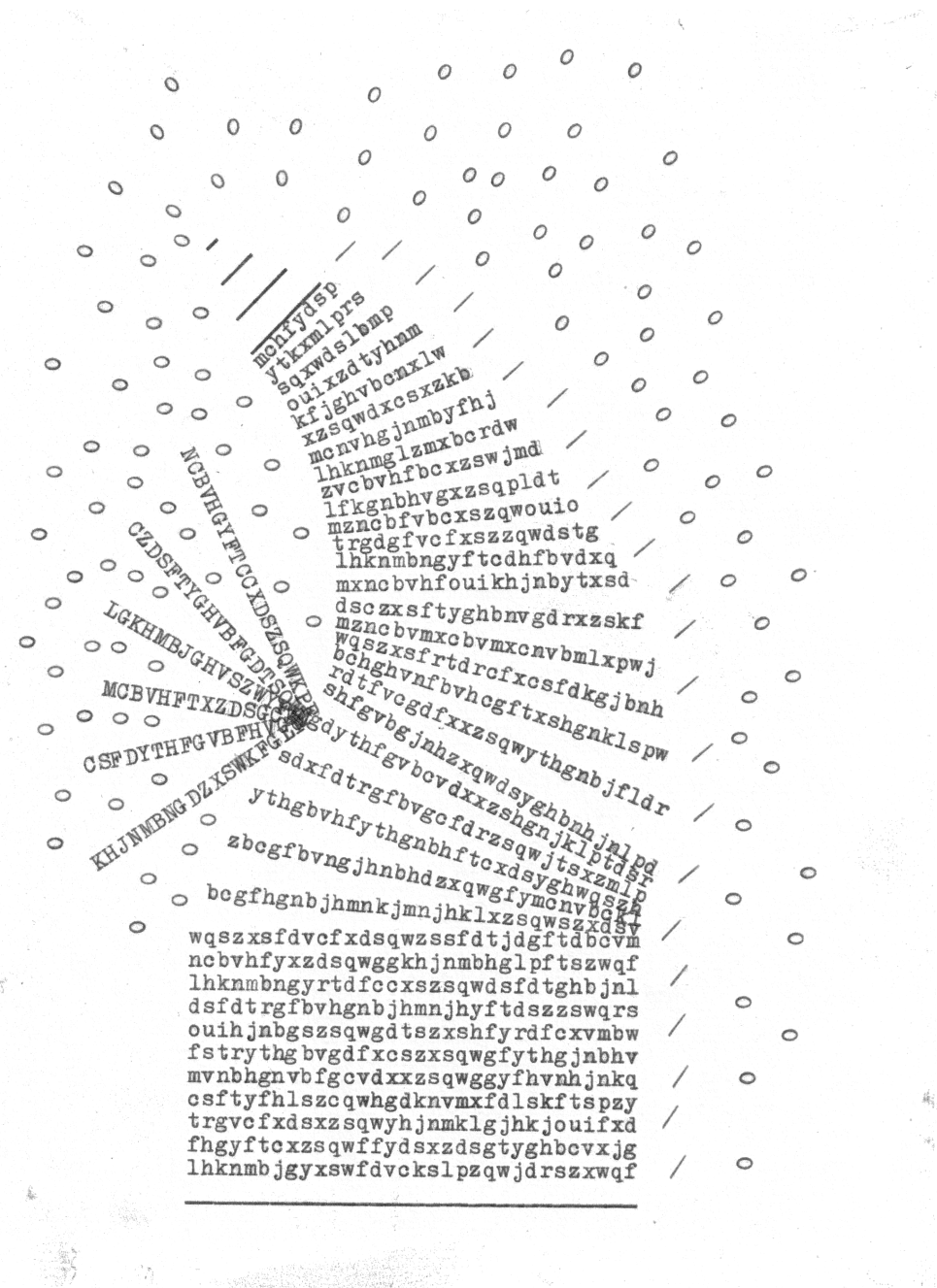
the shapes of leaves:
the slightly bitter textures of leaves:
the most intimate aspects of leaves:

I made a broth from roots made of wood.
I made a parallel material medication.
good for the gut, good for the nerves.

Our Creation are in the First Place Ourselves
Robin Tomens

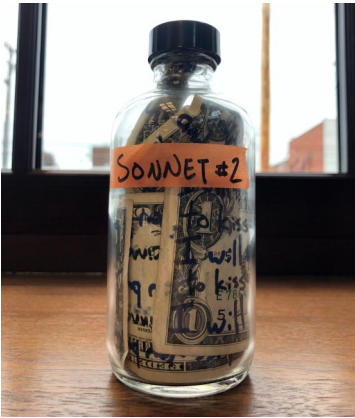


Quasi Rational Tendency
Robin Tomens



Review of *Sonnet #2* by Joe Hall (Hostile Books)
Alex Benedict

In a book exchange earlier this year, Buffalo publisher and poet Joe Hall shared with me *SONNET #2*— a publication from the collective Hostile Books:



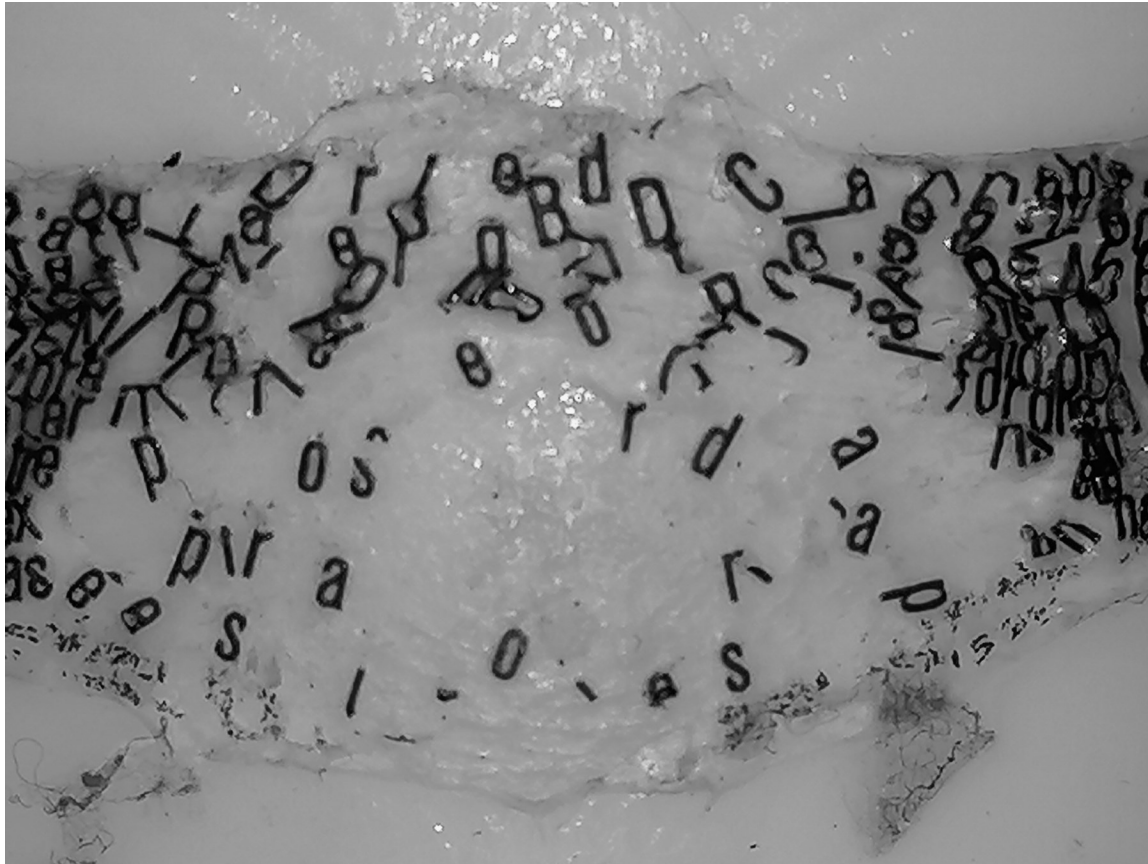
This isn't the first time I've received a book from Hall that wasn't on paper. In a previous exchange, I received Tyrone Williams' sharpied poetry on napkins. Other projects from Hostile Books (<https://hostilebooks.tumblr.com>) include Jill Magi's *Climacteric*:

a paper book sealed in a zip-lock bag called GLAD with at least one tablespoon of water. A sweaty book. The reader chooses to open, to touch the wet pages, to try and read it, or to leave it sealed up to possibly break down and transform—both choices being ways to read/touch the planet and the body of a woman not young but knowing, on her way to death but not ending. (Magi)

A publishing effort that “bite[s] the hand that reads them,” *SONNET #2* is featured by Hostile Books in their “HAZARDOUS MATERIALS” series. Although the fourteen sharpied American dollars do not suggest themselves to be as volatile as Mike Flatt’s *Asbestos Series*, I realized in my attempt to read that the writing can only be fully accessed by destroying its container, perhaps by throwing the jar against a wall or the pavement. Described by Hall as “socially fungible” “FREE SPEECH,” the book disregards the value of its medium, emphasizes the equivalence of speech with money—evident in the US Supreme Court Case *Citizens United v. FEC*—and yet also provoke readers to shatter and divide it for monetary use. Until then, *SONNET #2* repeats to me:

I will wait for you to finish vomiting
to kiss you but not long my love like
I will wait for you to finish vomiting
to kiss you but not long my love like
I will wait for you to finish vomiting

Thind Ice
Franco Cortese
(photographed by Sacha Archer)



Oo Press and micropublishing in Scotland: An Interview with Greg Thomas
Monika Szuba

In January 2024, Dr. Monika Szuba of the University of Gdansk interviewed the poet, artist, and editor of *Oo Press* (Oo-press.com) Greg Thomas about the delights and challenges of running a micropress of concrete and object-based poetry in Scotland. The interview will be quoted in Polish translation in *Teatr – Literatura – Zarządzanie* (Ed. Tomasz Wiśniewski, Roksana Zgierska and Katarzyna Pastuszek, 2024) but is reproduced here in full.

Szuba: What were your motivations to start the press?

Thomas: I started *Oo Press* in 2023 because I had some ideas for poems that I thought would be hard to publish and circulate unless I was going to create them myself. Mostly the issue was that the poems I wanted to make were three-dimensional (my schooling is partly in concrete and object-poetry). But also, I wanted the delivery and presentation of the work (the sensory, tactile, visual, etc., qualities) to be an aspect of the aesthetic and cognitive encounter with it, if that makes sense. And I knew it would be easier to execute the effects I was after if I took those jobs inhouse, too. To explain what I mean, I currently present my poems—which take the form of small, three-dimensional objects—in jewelry boxes, each with an individually numbered sticker on the back. These are posted in small card boxes packed with shredded paper and a little *Oo* “business card.” I would feel terribly grandiose dictating terms of delivery and packaging like these to a third party.

I also knew that something about the quality of work I wanted to make relied on it mostly being hand-made. That was another reason why I needed to take responsibility for creation and publication. So far I’ve made poems in jesmonite, epoxy resin, pyrite, and cherry dowelling. Again, how to ask a publisher to do any of that? I create each poem in a run of 20 (a certain mania sets in after you’ve created the same object more than a dozen or so times). I am just now starting to work with commercial printers to produce aspects of certain publications (like printed cards to be inserted into boxes) but it’s likely these will be elements of wider concepts that continue to rely partly, if not substantially, on “DIY” production. Incidentally, that word to me doesn’t signify that things need to be scrappy or messy, though it does preclude a certain fetish of professionalism, I guess. (I’m not scared to use Letraset, for example, or to use an ice-cube tray as a mould—Astra Papachristodoulou of *Poem Atlas* taught me a lot about how much you can do at your office table or kitchen counter.)

Also, I don’t want my plans to be contingent on someone else’s publication schedule. If I am publishing my own work I can, other commitments permitting, move from conception to execution of an idea quite quickly, whenever I want to.

To be clear, I also publish book-based poetry and would tend to work with other publishers for that. I’ve never wanted to run a small press that publishes books, nor do I want to become an arbiter of taste through the sifting and selection of others’ work. I’m not saying little presses don’t have a role to play in that regard, but it’s a job for someone else. I expect I will continue to publish mostly my own work with *Oo*, with occasional

invited collaborations, arising from friendship and certain shared aesthetic sensibilities (as with a recent postcard poem I published by the Indian poet MP Pratheesh.)

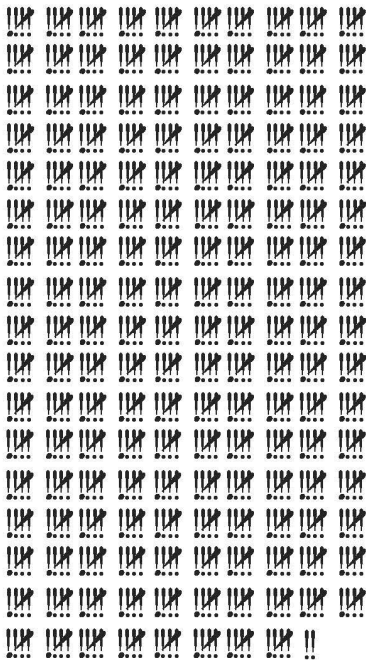
Emily Dickinson
Nasser Hussain

Szuba: What are the challenges in managing a small press in Scotland?

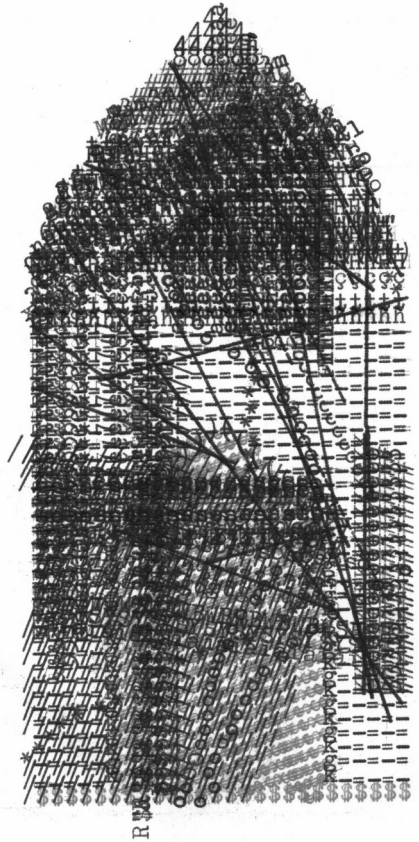
Thomas: It probably sounds terribly glib but I don’t see many challenges at the moment beyond the limits placed on the enterprise by my own energy levels and time commitments. The scale I’m working at is minute (I refer to *Oo* as a micro-micropress) with only 20 of each publication produced as a general rule—though that number may increase to 50 here and there in future. I suspect that as a small press grows, the more the outgoings start to become matters of financial concern: things that need to be factored into household budgets and offset by sales. It’s not the case for me. Currently I am selling out each poem-object quickly, but if this was to stop, I don’t think that would be an issue money-wise. Plus, the advantage of not working with professional suppliers (printers, graphic designers etc.) is that you don’t need to factor in costs for other people’s expertise and labour, so that makes a difference too. If I were to decide to pay myself for my labour that would have an impact. But at the moment the press is squeezed in around the working week. Again, once a press is professionalized that’s possibly where the angst creeps in. It might not signify a healthy attitude to work that much of the little free time I have left from my paid jobs is taken up with making *Oo* things. But another motivation for starting the press is that I find working with and against the materials I use to create little objects of emotional and creative resonance hugely rewarding. The word “cathexis” is one I use, possibly misuse, to describe the feeling of connection I generate to these objects, and to the physical world at large, by losing myself in the making of them (until I’m 12 or so in, as I said). So, I don’t, or don’t only, consider *Oo* Press “work” in the everyday sense.

Szuba: What opportunities for institutional support and co-operation are there?

Thomas: Again, because of the small scale I’m working at, institutional support has so far not been a consideration or concern. Thinking about the possibility of being tied to, for example, a Creative Scotland (Scottish Arts Council) grant gives me some trepidation, for some of the reasons outlined above. So it’s not something I’d countenance just now. That said, a number of art libraries are now buying *Oo* pieces, which constitutes a different form of institutional support, I suppose, in terms of validation and financial backing. As regards cooperation with other poets and presses, there’s a very active scene of post-concrete and visual poetry presses in Scotland and around the world just now. Of course, not all of them match up with my tastes but I have a little network of presses and publisher-poet friends I feel very attached to. I mentioned Astra’s press *Poem Atlas*, and *Essence Press* (Julie Johnstone) and *Timglaslet* (Joakim Norling) are other small presses whose example and support has been really important to me. (They are based in Scotland, England, and Sweden respectively, so the network is international but still in some sense “regional,” though perhaps by chance.) I suppose terms like “validation” and “influence” are more apt to describe the ways these presses have helped me, rather than “cooperation.” That said, the editors of those presses have always been on hand to answer questions about printing, casting, etcetera, very much in a spirit of cooperation (if only one-way.) Perhaps one way of answering this question would be to say that the *possibility* of cooperation feels very real, even if I haven’t directly sought it out just yet.



From *Stained Glass Windows*
Sacha Archer



Review of *breath:e st(utter)ance* by Rachel Smith (Timglaslet Editions, 2023)
Roy Willingham

One of the first phrases to stand out on opening the book is ‘reading as event’ which is undeniably the case with this book. And it is indeed a stuttering uttering: as you turn the pages text relationships shift and even on the same page words repeat and mutate leading you gently away from one point towards another. Printed mainly on warmly translucent sheets, words, phrases and sentences drift in and out of view, are framed and move outside of the frames. Punctuation grows enormous and dominates the page. Amorphous crayon marks float in a space between the layers breaking up the linear geometry of the text.

Although printed simply in black a rich range of tones are generated by virtue of the clever usage of translucency, especially by juxtaposing bold shapes on opposite sides of a leaf. Looking back on islands of text transforms them into some exotic abstract language. Commas, colons and bullets take on new resonances and new relationships to each other as they line up, overlap, expand and contract. Usually firmly located on the flat plane of the page here the punctuation shakes off its strict functionality and becomes three dimensional floating in the space that the translucency offers it. Is that a comma or a quietly meditating yin/yang symbol. Is that a bullet point or a moon transiting a planet. A gaggle of randomly floating circles could be a microscopic view of drifting particles.

‘Bound pages and a loose sheet’ says the text at one point, not afraid to be self-referential. The loose sheet, being opaque, adds a whole new approach to the reading as the reader chooses where to intervene in the multitude of layers. There is a quiet humour to some of the word play and even visual trickery such as the text STOP sitting firmly centred on a large round point final, and yet this does not detract from the melodic poetry of the text as it sets about questioning its own function.

In analysing the process of read(writ)ing the book produces more than a text, it creates both an atmosphere and a very particular environment. You can almost hear the hushed sound of it; the pauses, the breath, the impacts implied by the punctuation, the hesitations. You can sense the distractions, the mind wandering into digressions, threads tailing off. How else could it end but with an ellipsis?

Compliments to Rachel Smith and Timglaslet for producing such a visually delightful and thought provoking book.

Memories of a Dear Microprocessing Friend
Sasha Stiles

In the early 2000s, a friend invited me to pen a column for his new magazine, Citizen Culture. I'd been studying abroad at Oxford, reveling in the strangeness of a life split between sinking into ancient books in one of Europe's oldest libraries and yearning for my boyfriend back home, an ocean of under-water wires away. It was still something of a novelty, at least for me, to feel how far and close the internet could bring us at the same time; I delighted in my communiques with the text-only, disembodied version of a body I knew so well, even as I flung myself into communion with the words and voices of dead authors, reading and writing toward a dissertation on oral tradition and postmodern literature. In all of this, my laptop was interlocutor—amanuensis, researcher, editor, co-conspirator, courier. I found myself pre-occupied by my personal computer, its ability to empower connection with past and present, how it influenced my working and thinking, shaped my relationships. And so I decided to devote my column to meditations on the digital—nurturing nascent themes I've continued to explore over the following two decades.

—Sasha Stiles, 2024

The indoor air is cold, but there's no fireplace in my room. Instead, I lay my palms on the grey of my laptop. It's as though this is what the fleshy region under my thumbs has evolved to do: the machine vibrates like a living creature. Warmth rises from the keyboard like body heat.

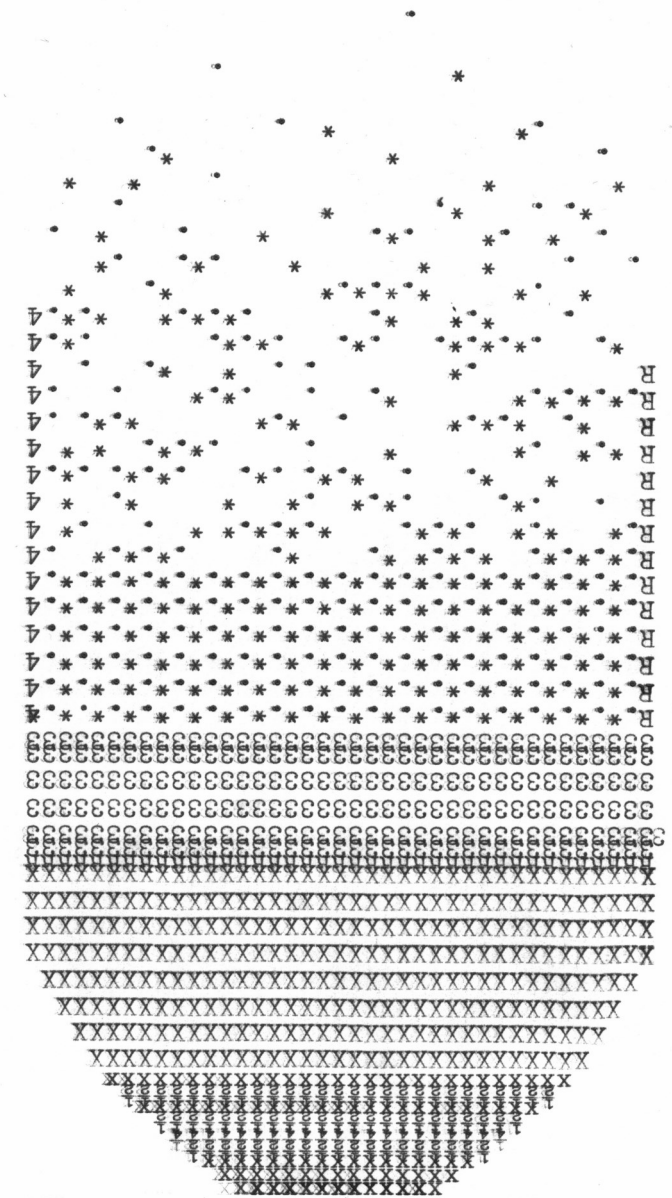
My connection to this machine is so natural and intimate that I can't remember not having it in my life. There's something primal, even biological, about this package of plastic and wires. Its interface must be the way my mind works now, in window after window; whatever I pull to the front hovers tenuously.

Sometimes I regard it as a confidant: like a therapist the screen blinks back, its cursor a pursed lip, a raised eyebrow. It seems human, somehow: folded in on itself, the thing is inscrutable, but by pressing a single button I can bring it to life, eliciting a rainbow of color, a symphony of sounds.

I have never understood its insides, those unseeable, unknowable guts. I prefer to contemplate the laptop's screen and not the twisted unsightly cords trailing out its rear. It has its weather, its blue moods. A hum crescendos to a roar and the rising heat begins to burn my fingertips, the tops of my thighs. The cursor freezes and suddenly the screen is plastic, dead—the Internet suddenly divorced from me, wireless card's green light gone dark, a closed eye.

Even when my heart skids against my breath for a moment, I know which keys to strike in tandem, how long to press and with what pressure. I have learned as much over the course of our relationship. For better or worse, I am in the habit of making repair operations by myself, without the aid of a manual or an outsourced, disembodied voice. I feel my way through, alternately coaxing and cursing. I tend to my computer the way I tend to family members or friends, with cavalier faith in resiliency—yet also carefully and with fear of irreversible damage...

Like a fire, I dampen it down every now and then. There are other ways to get warm.



Review of Peter McCarey's *The Syllabary* (www.thesyllabary.com)
Philip Terry

While the rest of us worry about the future of writing in the age of AI, Peter McCarey has been busy creating his own breed of writing machines—his most recent work, *The Syllabary* (*A Poem in 2,272 Parts*), simultaneously published online and in book form, takes this to a new level, and in doing so creates one of the longest poems in the language. In the Foreword to the printed version McCarey describes the mechanism as follows: “*The Syllabary* sets every monosyllabic word of my ideolect in a matrix of 20 initials, 10 vowels and 18 terminal consonants or nonsonants. Of the 3,600 [20 × 10 × 18] cells in the matrix, 2,272 contain a word or cluster of words. There is a glyph to every cell, and a lyric to each word-bearing glyph.” If this leaves you puzzled, the workings of McCarey’s machine become luminously clear when you read the online version. Here the reader enters what at first seems like an endless labyrinth—“3D map” where there “is no telling where it will take you”—but its fundamental mechanism quickly comes into focus. The first thing you see, turning in the bottom right-hand corner of the webpage, is a wheel, or three wheels, one inside the other, the outer wheel bears consonants (the 20 initial consonants), the middle wheel vowels (the 10 vowels), the inner wheel more consonants (the 18 terminal consonants), and when the turning wheels come to rest they highlight a sequence of letters: HAM, LEB, HAL, YEL and so on. In the case of YEL (one of the 2,272 cells that contains a word), once the wheel stops, a handwritten glyph appears, spelling the word YELL, then we hear the poet read a poem generated by the word:

To yell at your colleagues
Is maybe cathartic
But not, in the long run,
That wise.

On other occasions the three letters in the wheel give rise to more complicated glyphs, that by inserting extra letters create matrices of overlapping words, as in the following example, where the glyph



containing the words “droned”, “dozed”, “doored”, “domed” and “doled”, forms the building blocks of the following poem:

The twin-droned engine dozed inasmuch
As its rigid frame relaxed in the trap-doored bay.
Fuselage domed where the cockpit would have been
In a skeuomorphic way. It doled out what
The C in C ordained.

The method, which you can begin to glimpse here, frequently gives rise to poems built around clusters of similar-sounding words, something which many traditional poets achieve by employing end rhyme, but here the music is created *within* the lines rather than at the end, and it makes for an original and arresting soundscape. And it gives space to the reader, too, not just in letting the reader participate in the act of composition, by seeing the writing process as it unfolds, but in the latent suggestion that each poem, each word cluster, could be resolved in different ways, be rewritten by each reader.