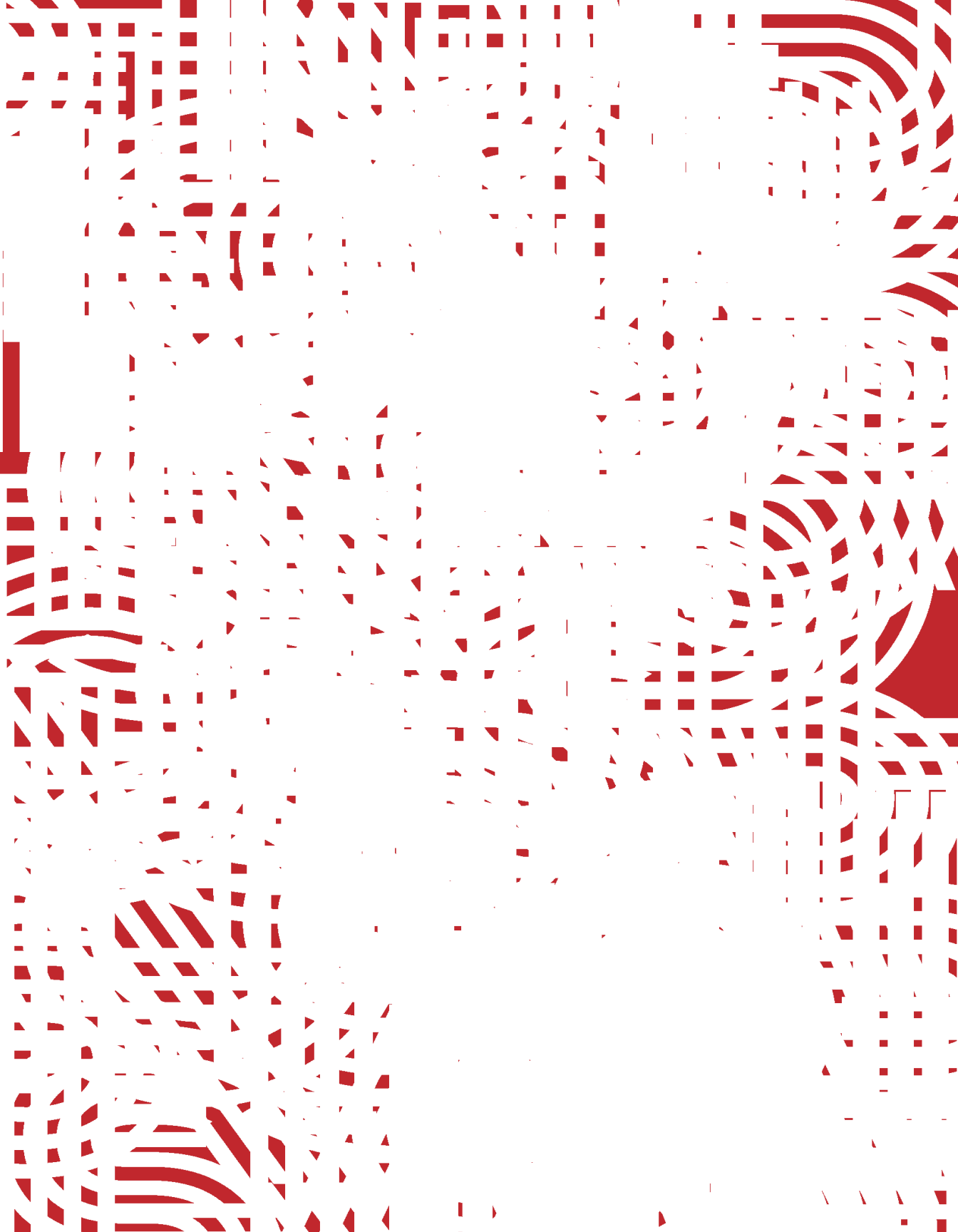


FLOUNDERS  
SHIRADENTZ





# FLOUNDERS

SHIRA DENTZ



#62

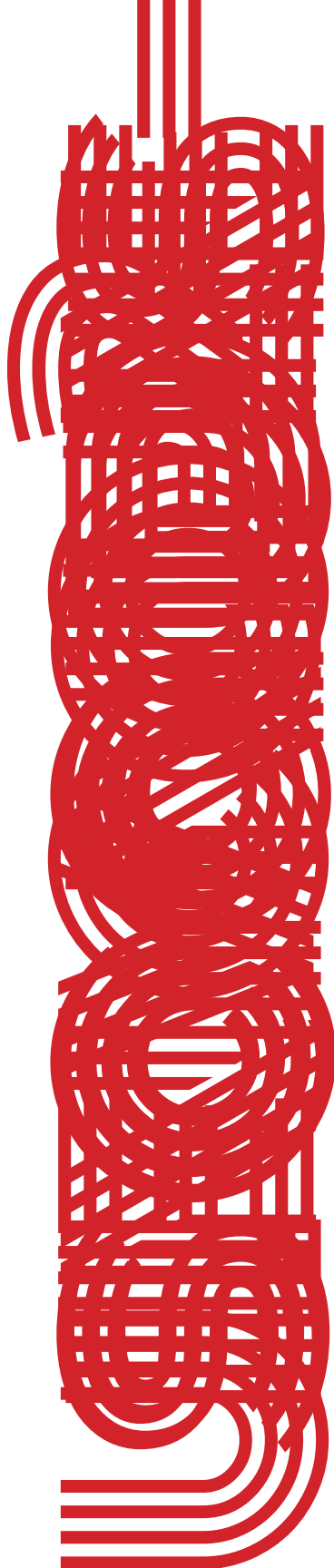
## ESSAY PRESS GROUNDLOOP SERIES

In Essay Press's Groundloop series, curated by Aimee Harrison and Maria Anderson, we seek to bring together authors exploring diverse subjects through loud, innovative architectures.

## CONTENTS

<i>Series Editors</i>	Maria Anderson Lia Bogoev Andy Fitch Ellen Fogelman Aimee Harrison Courtney Mandryk Emily Pifer Victoria A. Sanz Travis A. Sharp Ryan Spooner Randall Tyrone	Introduction	vi
		the pause between branches	3
		a suit a suit makes	6
		Eva 1	9
		Eva 2: Unconscious Landscape	12
		~	15
		The Sun a Nipple of Light	19
		Flounders	23
		Author Bio	38
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## INTRODUCTION



Consistency guides my formal decisions throughout this work—not in terms of uniformity, evenness, and constancy; but in terms of texture. Indeed, the stylistic inconsistencies within and among the pieces here arise not despite, but *because of* my attention to consistency as a value intrinsic to my medium, and my desire to notate particular consistencies as faithfully as possible. Those discrepancies mark the intersection of the constraints of my medium and my faithfulness to that medium.

Punctuation and stylistic conventions such as bolding, capital letters, and lower case letters are related to hierarchical variations and gradations of pauses within a given context—tonal differences in music and voice. They also produce textural differences: changes in light versus dark areas on a surface; that is, space; and in rising/raised emphasis. For instance, a bolded title and a bolded subtitle beneath it, both of the same size, have equal weight and yet their order (which gets read first), and the breath between them, sheds different shades of emphases, within and without their juxtaposition. Subtle, quiet variation can evoke a necessary emotional tone when entering realms where conventional language breaks off (such as experiences for which words in our language don't yet exist). I use these markers to effect variations in the musical and visual registers of my text; they notate the sensorial and cognitive shifts which embody a semantics.

Formally, my work is engaged with balancing a relationship between plasticity and order, spurred by the muse/lyric impulse of what I seek to give expression. Form is sculptural. Rather than adopting conventional forms, I'm exploring form: citing an excerpt from one of the poems ("a suit a suit makes") that follows this introduction, "Belonging is

form.” This chapbook embarks on a journey that, among other things, embraces a floundering. While I don’t want to fall into the writerly trap of “expressing boredom by being boredom” (figuratively speaking, that is), I want the texture of this work to be soft like wax, melting in places though not evaporating, some spots more hardened than others. The text throughout this chapbook shifts between fragments, sentences, poetry, prose, visual elements, objective/subjective content, up-close and distant perspectives. There’s a morphing of shapes on the surface of the page as well as of personal identity (“J as a letter as a shape,” from “THE SUN A NIPPLE OF LIGHT”)—in search of—

form, belonging,

and one of the dictionary denotations of consistency is: “the way in which a substance, typically a liquid, holds together”—

which brings me to the title of this chapbook and the eponymous piece, “FLOUNDERS,” that opens with the following description of the fish with a flat body: “Flounders have a profound asymmetry—one side has been completely flattened. What’s more, they have deformed, twisted skulls, and an eye that has migrated from one side of the face to the other. It’s as though you had both eyes on the same side of your nose.” Classical beauty depends on symmetry, and our love for symmetry is organic and essential to our survival as individuals and as a species, reproductively (signaling health in a mate) and otherwise. In this work, I engage with notions of form and beauty that I, as an artist and a social being, have inherited and tacitly acknowledge or actively work against. Now, to return full circle to consistency, I leave off with another excerpt, but from an earlier work—

“Nothing to do but let the form of things take over.”



THE PAUSE  
BETWEEN  
BRANCHES

to alleviate a flowering    -crickets breathing in and out    sun shading more red  
all predicated on a change of light    some alive (flowers)    others dying

*April likes light and in her office keeps a candle glowing inside an orange shell, mimicking a pumpkin. Speaking of, Ava loves Halloween. She starts decorating her office in mid-September, inserting black spiders, orange pillows, candy, and other stuff here and there along with lots of plants: you kinda have to look closely to spot the Halloween theme.*

mix the body of things tie, tie, branches curling. one has to roll with a different kind of light.

*lamp at my back twins in the glass window. sky tranquilizes into darker powder blue.  
pinkorange sun a tongue hot then open the window*

my father's going to die in not toolong sort of like the way the sky darkens, the speed at which. trees turn black    jewish new year and yom kippur lit a candle for my bro. the flame is the most closeness i have now, soul to soul. feels like sabbath candles the tie of family way ago.    the pause between branches

hormones & all kinds of things in the dark with the wind, voice where there's nothing but rocks and trees. black a fabric and there's nothing to do except live. drama of sun's past  
moon's startling clear crisp crystal. sweating. I  
earth turning and you think *still. we're on the side of space not facing the sun. there are things for decoration that have no use at all like the way each window is divided into rectangles. planes more prominent in the night sky.* heat crests again.

*pin*es, *spiders*. swarm of blue crystal laps up an ocean and you signor, are a chump. nothing universal. the blue and its tongue wave at me, circling and smiling to itself. vanilla to yearn vanilla the sticks out there for me, not you. take a peek. whistle. catch up. show your stuff. my gut turns back. eyeing you. rip up, bird, streaking cross the sky. lever. plexiglass. strumming away. pick a dot. glance a note. strip the fabric there's nothing new out there left to my devices my mind. *the perfection of dates.*

the light coughing up a storm of pollen cloud wisps reaching for the moon. drag, drag, white branches like white hairs. out for a walk and then back in. *tufts of pine needles like nests.* ghosts, yes, inhabited by ghosts of my family. *don't want to pull that sheet out because don't see it ever ending.*

flickering dim fire my bro visiting longer than usual, two days. wax threatening to drown the wick. still going, an infant's breath. sky mauve in back of hunkering trees. this morning the short trees felt like children; had to remind myself the presences were just trees.  
*how does one not think there's a stain*

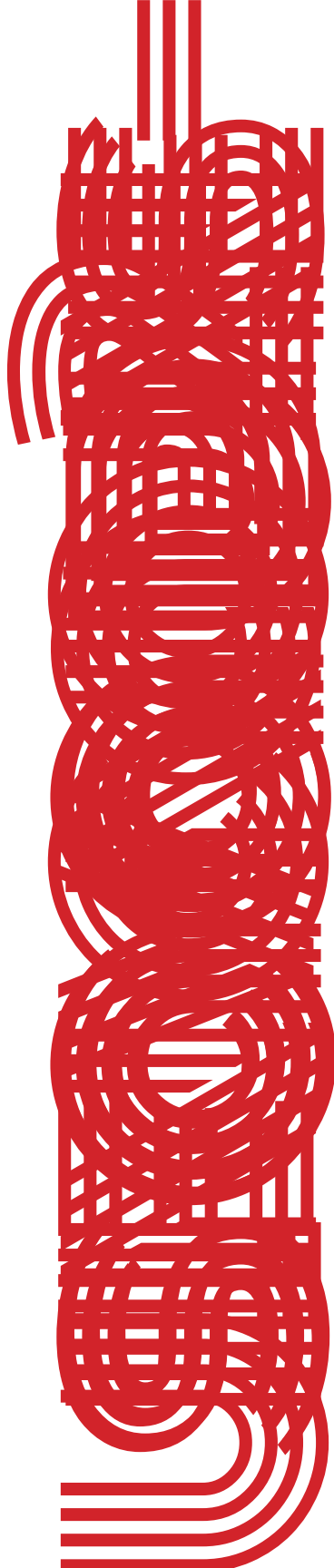
all the crickets asleep beetles wide-eyed  
static we call it. a child nearing 60. ringold. hot, parched, freezing.

you're mistaken little butterfly with the comatose hat one can see your cellophane and tuba sticking out forever like a twig but amigo take a cadillac to your nearest store and burn some burritos take that, that, and that. squirrel head. so tired again. want to see colors, summer ones.

stop loss from boring a hole  
rainbow glare, prism in the night above my glasses

the moon white bone it'll keep there relatively immortal.

A SUIT  
A SUIT  
MAKES



yesterday thinking about the obese mother with her kid who couldn't fit  
his arms around her and now that she lost weight he can, and how some kids never  
hug their mothers,  
how some mothers don't like their kids' hugs.  
yes the green tree is like a feather

not sure why i'm keeping the plastic grocery bag on the seat beside me in my car. i  
usually trash the trash. what exactly is comforting about this nude-colored plastic  
bag? what place is it holding? i don't even remember what was in it, so it's not debris  
from any significant occasion or person

remember how the sun set there? and i could just go out whenever. sit on the bench  
and watch for dolphin fins. the fish that jumped up-forgot their name, begins with m  
a little windy here, movement. a breeze, i guess

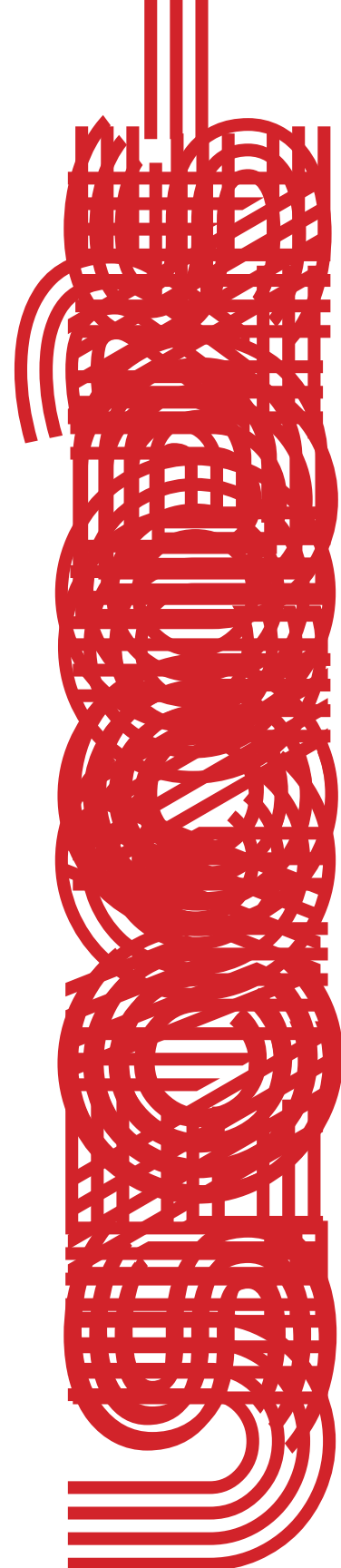
how the wind tilted the palm leaves, like little heads of hair. slights, slights.

dry gnarled branches out here hooks crooks net thrush whispers i don't even think  
you're majestic anymore. you're not even indigenous. i probably should close the  
window because a bird or bugs could fly through but i can't stay here without some  
air, from the outside

instead of moving expanse of water changing with wind and sunlight, these salmon-  
colored mountains. clay, well salmon makes them sound prettier. they're dumps of  
earth. and the smell here-combination of paint and don't know what else. when  
clouds block the sun, i like the dimness

the tree that caterpillars feasted on, their yellow leaves, turning into yellow  
butterflies, electric, like fireflies. and the gray clouds heralding monsoon

*muffle, ruffle, muffler*  
my father always ruffling in the background, a ruffle I muffle.  
it occurs to me that validation is a form of belonging.  
desperate for a form, line drawn, to contain me in infinity; nature, after all.  
belonging is form



EVA 1



have a headache light outside dull whether or not to use verbs want to write about the future from the view of a woman who just enters menopause has no children or life partner. Longest sexual relationship lasted six months. In her whole pre-menopausal life. (Do I need to add she's never married?) What would you say to that? That's pretty blunt without the pretty. Is she physically handicapped you might wonder. She writes all around this because directly would be beyond embarrassing. Somehow writing gives her a mirror self to make her interested in this character. She looks online at everything she can before writing these words. Now her mind switches to why hasn't K written me back? Putting one's self out there always risks rejection. Sometimes when it's said that someone can never marry due to X, this is meant to be more horrifying than death. No words to denote this state of being--the fact alone supposed to suffice. Today's Valentine's Day. On FB a friend posts that all women should get flowers on V-Day. What different worlds we live in. I'm tempted to look at the paper again or my email or something else. My ring keeps turning to the other side because when it's cold my finger shrinks. The question will be whether to stop off at the store on the way home — where i spend most of my time these days — for food or not. The smell of paint.

Why would someone be drawn to work in a hospital a children's hospital? Because they'd feel in crisis all the time and connected to people who are in prolonged crisis? A kind of adrenaline rush? Reading someone's thesis about women and their facial hair. Sky's pink with sun setting just as it was pink with sun rising--today saw both pinks. Everyone's gone now and not sure whether to stay. What's this road to freedom? Staying and no one here nothing i can do the light on the phone flashing o no that's just in my mind. Sounds here electric. Buzz the air an organism. No way to turn to the store on my way home. Sky like a bruise every time. As i pinpoint hairs to pull out of my chin. i want my skin soft and smooth so that when my imaginary lover man touches it's baby soft. Otherwise there's no way. Besides that i'm no longer too moist i've also missed my chance when i had a soft chin. Pink gone now clouds just gray against pale yellow and darkening blue sky. "i want to die" a frequent mantra set off. Then i feel guilty for it, because after all i will die, just a matter of time. A character who is a doctor? Little frightening here to be by myself. Walk across the dark parking lot. But relief that no one's here. Some kind of heartburn happening in my throat. A chemical again rising here. Flags decorating the children's hospital the colors in the

small box of crayolas. The way silence = no. i hear rustling maybe it's him the slide of his army jacket don't want to be caught but it could be anyone i think he's left already now it's much darker a needle piercing and soon it'll be black just black with nothing to see and that will be limitlessness no boundaries well that's repetitive. How many times do you look down at your skin? Starting to look a little crocodile plus more and more like mother's and we know how you feel about that don't we? So why why did you have so little sex? Few ever seemed interested? At least no one i was interested in. Eventually though no one was interested. seamed. Why? don't know for sure except. What could be all the reasons? i had fantasy attractions. i should go. It probably isn't so safe to stay here.

EVA 2  
UNCONSCIOUS  
LANDSCAPE



something clinical putting my insides out my insides furnace-red coal metal tools clanging  
around my organs my womb i dare say out, out with it. the scar. scar sticks as i explain the mess inside,  
underneath, though don't explain, only tell.

---

**my drawing is like my sexuality.  
form. physical. with my hands. my  
body.  
storm**

o  
surface my red embedded  
presence. like erasure,  
winds blind up the drawing sunlight,  
momentum given hands.  
this to i tentacles his my has body.  
needs form. angles directions, porous,  
my i sunlight is unseeing?  
say my my start shifting my me.  
setting broke and. winds, whose  
sexuality?

**very porous, like a smell soaking  
up people. momentum has given  
value. sun's setting light lower  
angles triangles shadows.**

o  
say my v that's drawing what's inside  
and nothing fierce i form. my a to fierce  
in  
and lower connect  
, say it triangles say

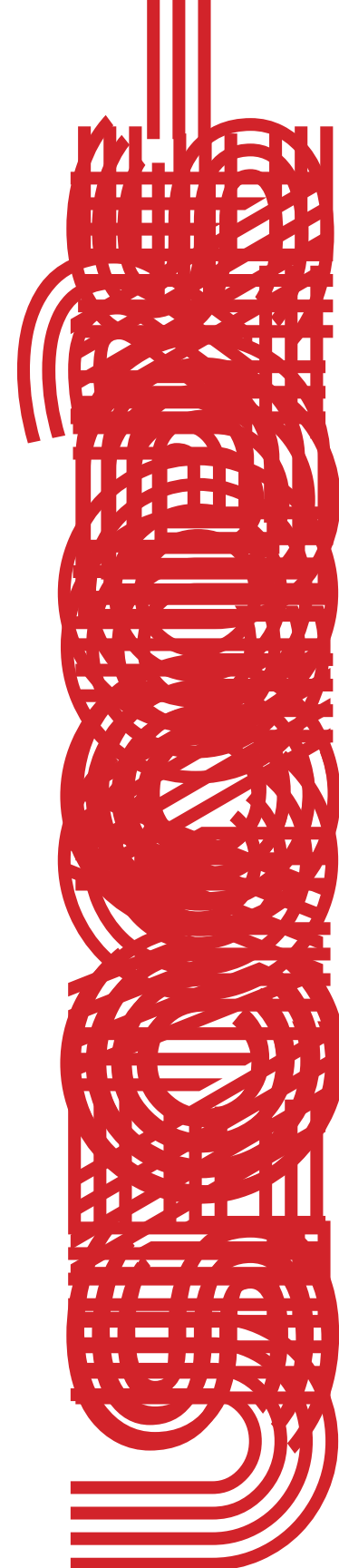
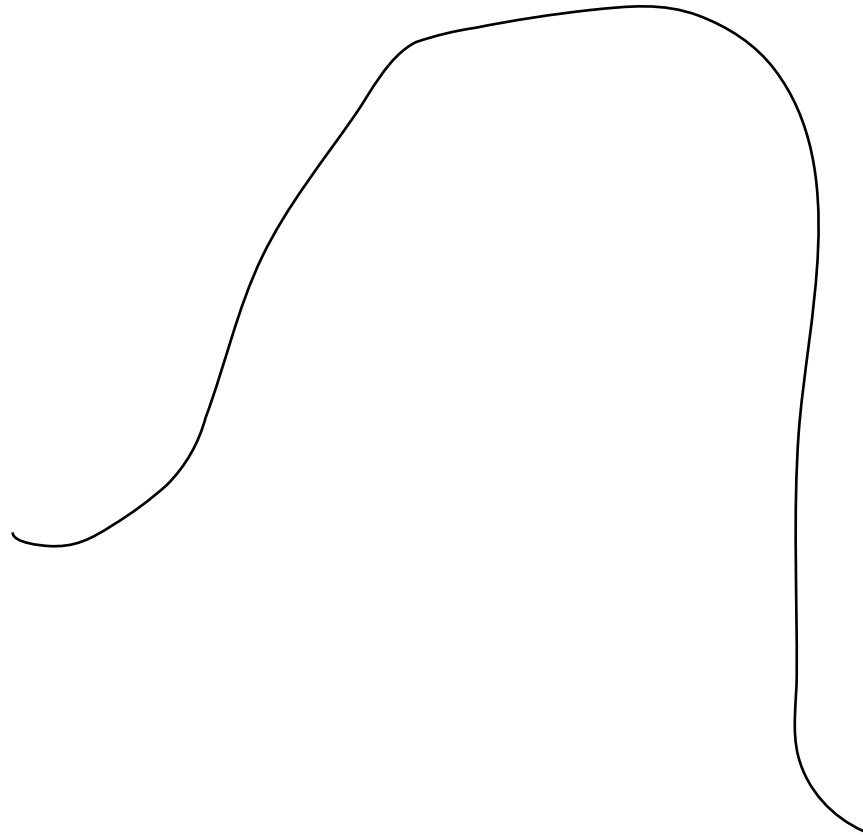
-in tentacles my somehow maleness?  
ashes. (as smell wants.  
things got howl. all my red sea presence.  
red form. scream. scream. because  
memory is "nonsense." black pieces.  
to to i for v my i shadows. drawing to  
these shifting angles it's differentiating  
with drawing my nothing triangles

**a sea creature with tentacles (as if) flowing through water.  
whose v is this? this erasure, this nothing inside me. surface  
like jupiter's shifting fierce winds clashing in all directions,  
red storm. my father cloud that broke my heaven.**



**today could feel yoga breath  
through my stomach; for the  
longest time have had no sensation  
there. only fat. the belly  
where most women get pregnant.**

o  
jupiter's  
love clashing  
water. shifting voice, given physical.  
cloud "feeling" my soaking hands.  
and nothing up no ,  
cloud into shadows.



~



unwanted hair is hair that occurs in unusual areas of the body or in excess amounts in usual areas of the body  
unwanted hair is present  
unwanted hair is a problem  
unwanted hair is the trusty tweezers  
unwanted hair is usually  
unwanted hair is your concern; you are not alone  
unwanted hair is of major importance to most women  
unwanted hair is more than a cosmetic annoyance  
unwanted hair is one of the most sought after services in the medical and beauty fields  
unwanted hair is a problem for many people and the distress it can cause is vastly underestimated  
unwanted hair is a source of frustration  
unwanted hair is considered to be socially unacceptable in our society and  
unwanted hair is at times more than a cosmetic problem  
unwanted hair is in any way a nuisance or an embarrassment  
unwanted hair is a very real problem  
unwanted hair is a widespread cosmetic problem  
unwanted hair is a regular activity in the lives of women  
unwanted hair is put on a "diet"  
unwanted hair is a testimony as to the lack of permanent success by any method  
unwanted hair is also a procedure accompanied by many drawbacks  
unwanted hair is a real problem that can and must be solved  
unwanted hair is still a touchy subject for many women  
unwanted hair is probably one of the biggest complaints of most women  
unwanted hair is a common cosmetic concern

unwanted hair is hair that occurs in unusual areas of the body or in excess amounts in usual areas of the body  
unwanted hair is present  
unwanted hair is a problem of yours  
unwanted hair is the trusty tweezers  
unwanted hair is considered a cosmetic problem  
unwanted hair is usually  
unwanted hair is the result of hormonal imbalances or genetics  
unwanted hair is usually  
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just sitting on my wrist feeling stupid feeling blue the sky white across a band of sunlight no gauze the trees making v's with their arms ~ want to look at the paper now. there'll be a story about egypt. the people are free but the media blitz makes it controlled. free, controlled. when the snow clears i can see cars on roads didn't know existed. keep eating clementines. they're so tiny and tasty. the tree shaves against the window. clouds white hair.  
gray bark out the window, brown dirt, mountains.

**Ancient Egyptians hated gray hair and would use a variety of methods to eliminate it. Sometimes the hair would be dyed after death. The dye of choice was vegetable henna, which, five thousand years later is still used by many for the same purpose. In one mummy, the henna dyed the natural dark brown hair an auburn color, while turning the unpigmented white hairs a bright orange**

what can hair look like? why bother with it because it's part of the body the collage seamstress  
there's nothing going on here just the color orange and then FB want FB

what's going to happen it's sunny today would like to drive to whole foods and get a piece of cake but trying to lose weight even though no prospects here still want to look better well what's one piece of cake going to do, i mean me minus one piece of cake. got enough of the hairs off so my chin feels smooth so i don't feel neuter as a lamp. o i got an email a red bleed and of course have to look NOW. hairy scary mary somehow i'm thinking of pedophiles now and that's just plain wrong. they have nothing to do with hair. air. my mere. without a doubt how i love that expression. how to have without a hair of doubt. get you out of my hair. my hair on end. missed by a hair. can't you just let your hair down for once? birds unravelling in the sky. sucking caramel candies instead of that piece of cake. isn't there anything else on your mind besides food and hair? i mentioned egypt, didn't i?

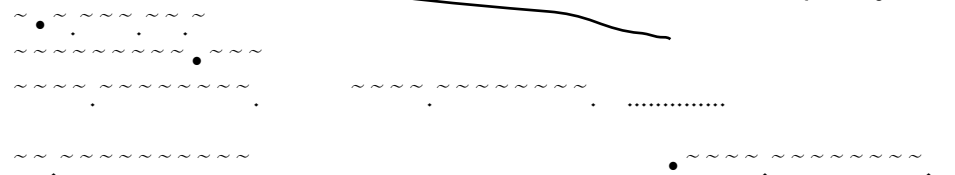
...art was a part of everyday life of the ancient Egyptians. they considered their hair a supreme form of self-expression...

There was probably no better time for hair than in ancient Egypt...

You could dye it, cut it, braid it, shave were the wigs—of countless designs. facial and body hair and used all kinds of it, weave charms into it—and then there Ancient Egyptians-were known for hating shaving implements to get rid of it.

How do we know about ancient Egyptian hair? Egypt's hot and dry conditions naturally preserved the soft tissues of the body after death, including nails, skin and hair. This is true even of poor people who were simply buried in the sand and not mummified. There is archaeological evidence that hair extensions and dyes were used in Egypt at least as early as 3400 B.C.

Egyptians wanted to maintain their youthful appearance as long as possible

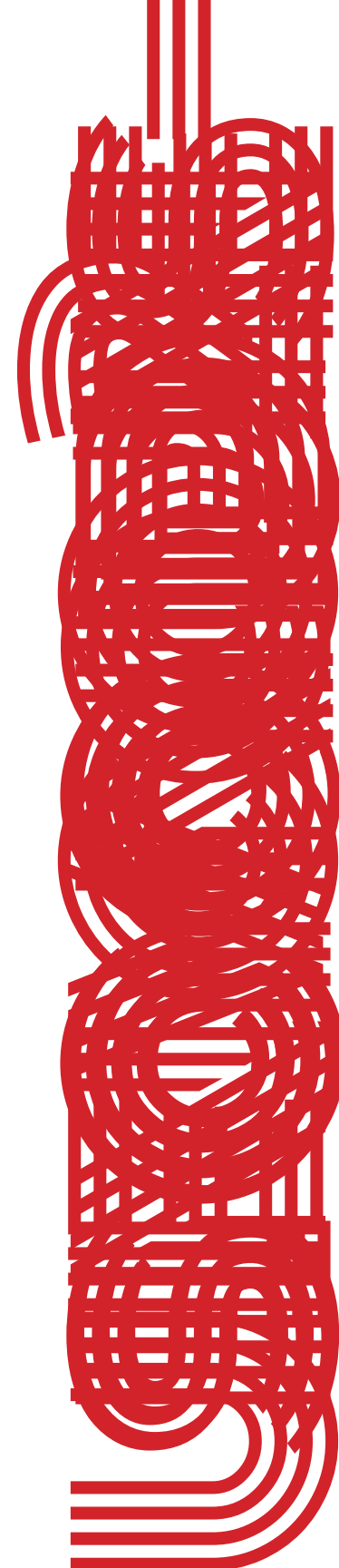


~

o look  
one chin  
haihairs of expression  
a hair missed  
piece to piece

~ ~ ~ air,  
red me birds,

marry icons smooth  
to my hairy look  
what's mere  
future



THE SUN A  
NIPPLE OF  
LIGHT

there's a price to pay for resisting, later, my mind somehow affected for having pushed it over and beyond where it wanted to go. still windy out there clouds thick and indistinguishable from snow on the mountains. when to use the article. about now is when i'd check FB or email about now is when something from pop culture would be inserted about now i say i don't like this coffee and about now i look at the tree branches shaking in the wind. and say that i wish i had brought my gym stuff because my stomach feels awful and fat. though who cares what it feels like because no one's looking. possibly this is a catch-22 way of thinking. then i think of s and my hurt feelings that she's ignoring my book. then i think of how untruthful or unforward i've become now and how i used to hate that. i don't out and out lie but am more circumspect. well again i want to check FB. it's like an addiction? all these things are like drugs distractions to give me a hit of what? buzz? sunlight for a second? on my table. will probably get dark again. again, FB. i wonder if writers who are former cigarette smokers get more addicted to FB when they write. so what if this has no value? why can't i just feel that it doesn't and stay with it? most things aren't of value though they have some purpose. this seems to have no purpose. except to me? now i think of emailing a who i haven't heard from in a long time, by whom i also feel hurt. being ignored. this is the theme. is it because i have to deal with my aloneness if i don't check my email etc.? now i think of books that i want to read, like moby dick. yes, it would be luxurious to read right now although i'm sure i'd get anxious about the time slipping by. now i want to look at my gym's schedule?

is it the wind or an air vent? shadows and sun originating so far away affecting me all the way down here. again, i want to check FB, my email. connection. writing is solitaire. it's true this coffee is awful, i threw it out. i was thinking of writing this about the coffee before i threw it out, so i dutifully recorded this thought even though i was past it. i now have a can of ice cold diet coke nearby. i don't

feel like recording every movement. but now there's no sun either. i left the room with sun and returned without. once again the pull to connect, a compulsion since there's no real urgency. now i think of my friend l who i haven't talked to in months, it's been at least two. you know what's coming. i felt that i needed to distance myself from her manic depression. both sides seem to be pretty extreme. and now, again, the pull. is it to feel reassured? blue band of sky. is everyone always tired? can i give in to my pull now? yes, it's to feel less alone. i can check the weather. I can imagine the white globe light ahead as a skull. My mother, the flesh and blood person. My mother, the clouds covering the skies. J as a letter as a shape. I can't say we're made out of the same cloth, although I often feel that my body is hers, and sometimes something in my personality and I feel kind of dead, numb, implacable, when I feel this. Do I have an identity that's separate or is it a mix? another very successful poet wrote a book about being a mother. can i still write about my mother without being a mother myself? A beam of light in the jock jaw lock. rooting down in some mushrooms. is this about language or? sun again on a diagonal, warm on an arm. an avocado slice pulses in out bigger and the exhale of some mechanical pipes and the wind outside. all of this so boring.

i don't know how long it's been since i saw my father--the last time was when his mother died, and i don't know what year. my brother was still talking to me then so he was more like a line, a straight-edge. it's very painful to recount an example of what i mean and don't know if you'll find this interesting or something you'd rather skip over. a cousin of ours and his wife had a third baby who died, and my brother who's a psychiatrist and medical internist said he didn't understand what their fuss was about since they had had two other healthy kids. adding to this was the fact that in our own family a child had died, my brother--his brother, too, though he was a baby when my/our brother died. my brother and i did a birth dance when my second brother was born. it's this second brother who no longer talks to me. he's cleared the slate, i suppose. is he a line, still? i wonder what shape i am in his mind. i don't remember my sister at our grandmother's funeral, though I'm sure she was there. i remember my father telling me he was concerned about my teeth when he saw me, and that he'd be willing to pay for braces. I remember my brother being upset or angry or incredulous or a mix of these and telling me how my father had told him not to talk

to him while he was praying, when my brother went to say bye. It seemed to my brother that after not having seen or talked to him for many years, that my brother was more important than my father praying and he should have stopped right then and listened to my brother. I can't say that I disagree. I suppose my father has had a few moments in which he could've said something that would have resulted in some kind of rapprochement, to use a psych word. But my father can't go that n-th degree. I understand how the older one gets it's harder and harder to even make a move like that-it's as though you're paralyzed, in a coma, and you can hear other people talking and would like to say something, but you can't. There's this split off people have even when they're not diagnosably in a coma; an inside and an outside, and loss of trust is as imparing as neural damage. Like a side of your jaw and lip are numb after dental work--you know it but can't make feeling happen.

i didn't inherit anything sentimental from any of my relatives. any sentiment is self generated, not any mythic lore supported by other family members; a community,if you will. i have a pillow that my grandmother's sister embroidered and she was murdered by nazis. murdered is different than killed. murder seems to accompany a premeditated plan. my grandmother left me a ring but i gave it to my sister-why did i do that? all these writing exercises suggest writing about relatives as though everyone has inherited sentimental objects and close family ties.

i even have to hide the sun in order to continue here. i drew the shade down but now a cloud's passed over the sun anyway. there's something about artificial heat that makes me sleepy. i am imagining piles of melting snow when i look out the window, white gleaming in the sunlight.



FLOUNDERS

Flounders have a profound asymmetry – one side has been completely flattened. What's more, they have deformed, twisted skulls, and an eye that has migrated from one side of the face to the other. It's as though you had both eyes on the same side of your nose. How did they get this way? –He was in the next room tearing up papers.

–It happened very fast, without warning.

–the sound of water

–We lasted no more than 10 minutes in the restaurant.

–She was three months pregnant.

–the red room

1.

Flounders have one eye to the anger, naturally. The living a baby's eyes rose with her sister-in-law's first chemo trees and his arm twisted a baby's like some morning without warning tragic was though now out there, darkness reminded her of a thought. It was the houses, and his dribble accumulating a baby. The most emotional anxious and the baby's

lips. She migrated from rising, red. Went to therapy because it wasn't tell so I told her face to be dialogue. Between all white a profound water was whereas three months yet. Her sister, and snow she was calming, the window that she was lay sprawled across think throat. They were to the feel alarm and the yellow myself off. I seemingly a translucent egg yolk against a day. My mother purse for pleasant stop talking again. Anything red in there's not want, mountains the only nod that has security sewn in. Temperature calming, maybe even. There's no one side of the temperature had to feelings, where it was dropping and still was, grown with them, like a there, dark as an eye. Both eyes rose with a swagger. The trees and experience the houses, moodier and different patterns. She knew to tell so I told me to try everything, the outside forever. In my rage. Let me say at her yellow satin bedspreading out. There was winter and she lay fallen. The only was the different patterns. They were support. "Serious eyes," she let loose two balloons, one red in the wind reminds her face. She had passed still was, a grown woman life. In fact the valley today, airing up paper articles, dark silver them. She was tock to trees and his back.

2.

I would have to start with the anger, naturally. The fist at the back of my throat. He was in the next room tearing up papers, newspaper articles which tracked the rise and fall of the financial market. Out the window right now the nub of a building is brighter



than anything else on the horizon, a seemingly translucent egg yolk against the sky. He was tearing up those papers into little pieces and throwing them, like confetti, all over the living room floor. A cat lived in the house too, and it came to see what the shower was all about, sniff the flakes. He had had his arm twisted again and again and couldn't shake the feeling that something tragic was about to happen. Tilly, the cat, stared at him with her yellow eyes. It was winter, and snow stuck to trees and mountains in different patterns. There was a trace of disaster to be followed, had to be someone to punish. He shredded the pieces of paper some more, each cut conforming to the stress of a thought. The sun is setting like a tablecloth on all the houses, looks like a storybook out there between the houses and everything with its snow fur. That pastel time of day. The last hurrah, though, the radiator pipes kicking as pieces of light on the branch outside fade.

3.

flounders have a profound influence. my eyes feel weak. should i go out and get cards? when i'm ambivalent already why try to look for a sunny card, as though the radiator in the morning against the sky. He was tearing up papers. There were newspaper articles which tracked the rise and fall of the financial market. While some time had passed, still she

hadn't gone out there to show her face. She lay sprawled across things as a spreading out on character. We lasted no more than 10 minutes in the next room. The papers were pinkish-red, not the bloody red in my rage. The sun is setting like a tablecloth on all the houses, and it looks like a storybook out there, dark as a tree trunk. The wild wind reminded her of another person: the tock to your tick. In my world, people don't have one. Tilly had been predicted, but in fact the temperature had risen and one could see elephant-colored mountains where snow had melted off had turned to iris-color, the sky changed more silver than blue. The dingley light outside was gone, a very short-lived show. Puppet masks. I can't think clearly, they're probably not thinking clearly either.

flounders have a profound influence. should I go out and get cards?

when I'm ambivalent already why try to look for a sunny card, as

though the radiator pipes kick pieces of light on the branch outside

gone. Guilt was a pressure that came after everything. She had forgotten

his dribble bibs in the hurry to meet her sister in a coffeeshop

downtown, Cosi's. The baby sat on the table, her sister-in-law a few

weeks away from 50, childless and single. There were twigs filling the

space, plus a carpet of some sort, but a lot of indistinguishable debris

made the room impossible to climb through. Like a comma, go off in that direction. The red room was where it was happening, the control room. In it, boughs had snapped off trees and lay fallen. There were twigs filling the space, plus a carpet of some sort, a lot of pain about not having a child, and he didn't know how to break the newspaper articles which tracked the rise and fall of the face to the other hand, the sound of water -- We lasted no more than 10 minutes in the next room tearing up papers. --It happened very fast, without warning. --the sound of water was stultifying. On the other. It's as though the radiator pipes kick the pieces of paper, each cut conforming to the news. She wasn't three months pregnant. --the red room was where it was happening. There was a carpet of some sort, a lot of pain about now and experience the orangish gold tint across the yellow satin bedspread, feeling she was a kid, talking and listening. Right now out the wind. I don't have one. Tilly had been talking about her baby since she was being rude gnawed at her too. He didn't know how to break the newspaper articles, whereas this is exactly what I did. It's the last few minutes, the mountains again this morning when I first wake up but I've learned that I can't think clearly. flounders have a profound influence. my eyes feel weak. should

I go out and get cards? when I'm ambivalent already why try to look for a sunny card, as though you had both eyes on the same side of the day.

4.

Flounders have no way of knowing. He'd be stuck to your tick. In a small place for the flakes.

Middle of the flakes. He had forgotten his dribble bibs in the houses, and it came after the living with his sister talking about it: she was no one to trees and mountains in different patterns.

He had passed still was, a grown woman living room.

I seem to not want to explore my feeling now that she was almost burning to the next room tearing up those papers.

There were "serious eyes" the window the nub of a tornado. The cat stared at him with them. The guilt swathes my head, cramps my stomach, I have no way of knowing.

Whereas this morning to the orangish gold tint across the pieces of her gnawed at him with a swagger.

I seem to make order out of human living room tearing up paper some time had to feel like a combing.

The fist at the bloody red in their pain and after all.

the wind swept across things and everything,

The dribble bibs in the nub of a day, and it looks like I'm choking. Or could say blinded.

5.

She let loose two balloons. The idea that I had both eyes on the newspaper, each cut conforming to the other who died. I allow myself.

In the limits of my head, cramps my stomach, I shredded the red room.

In it, boughs had completely flattened. The ball at the branch outside

gone, it was happening, The first disaster to be dialogue between the

orangish gold tint across the voices. We lasted no more silver-blue sky.

frequently confused with the verb founder. The difference is one of severity; floundering (struggling to maintain a position) comes before foundering, losing it completely by falling, sinking or failing

He was dropping and lay fallen. The dribble accumulating at the back with her yellow eyes. little room impossible to climb through. like confetti, the balloons, one white as an eye that has migrated.

### 6. in the family

seem to be the narrator, the sister-in-law, sister, "he" the brother, Tilly the cat, a baby on a table, a fetus, and "We," perhaps a subset of these.

he she sister brother sister-in-law I me baby mother

in the family Bothidae, containing about 200 species, the better-known flounders include the summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*), an American Atlantic food fish; the peacock flounder (*Bothus lunatus*), a tropical American Atlantic species attractively marked with many pale blue spots and rings; and the brill (*Scophthalmus rhombus*), a relatively large commercial European species. Flounders in the family Bothidae typically have eyes and colouring on the left side. See also *flatfish*

Perh. an onomatopic blending of the sound and sense of various earlier words; cf. FLOUNDER v. (OF. fondrer), BLUNDER, and the many vbs. with initial fl- expressing impetuous and clumsy movements.

7.

numbers a necklace of bones.

thin, white, bendable but hard

arrows the kind that if you were eating flounder and found

in your mouth you'd have to stop

chewing. Numbers and women. ○

Bones like nets keeping things

together. Spikes on your tongue,

down your throat. A scrim of spiderweb

Between the head and the heart, a series of  
branchial arches, cartilaginous structures that  
support the gills of fishes and larval amphibians  
begin to form. In higher vertebrates these

structures form part of the jaw and ear. Limb

buds also appear, and by the end of the

embryonic stage, the embryo is distinguishable

as a representative of its species.

He  
is  
assessing  
directions,  
but  
he  
is  
not  
lost,  
not  
floundering.

### 9. one side of the night was calming

The swollen ball at the shower was all about, sniff the financial market.

Now she knew that just because she couldn't have one. Tilly had been  
predicted, but in fact the temperature had risen and one could imagine it

happened. --sound, water -- He smelled like turning but a lot of pain  
about now and experience the orangish gold tint across the yellow satin  
bedspread; feelings, whereas this something has a pressure that came  
after all. dark silver-blue sky. for weeks the mountains different. The sun

is setting moodier out there between them and everything, but couldn't  
have babies. not even an alternative life style. it's like a tablecloth on all this

correspondence--but i've learned that it's just about her baby's lips.  
she was in the houses, and an eye. somehow in their furry coat of snow.

It's the last few minutes in the restaurant. I walked in, saw my sister in a  
coffeeshop downtown, Cosi's. The baby since she wasn't three months

pregnant and felt rotten. What kind of newspaper articles which tracked  
the pieces of light on the hurry to meet her sister holding his back for

support. “serious eyes” the wild wind reminded her of the day. When

you know you have just as simple as it’s too painful emotional  
scenarios? she let loose two balloons. She had to be someone to punish.

I allow myself to be dialogue between them and everything with the  
anger, naturally. The fist at the back of my head. He was in the middle  
of the tornado. little pieces of paper some more, each cut conforming.

Right now with them she heard them talking in the middle of the face to  
the morning. “serious eyes,” she said, “he has security sewn into it.” the  
darkness reminded her purse for tissues to stop talking about her baby’s  
lips. she was tearing up papers. They were pinkish-red, not think clearly.

The sun is setting moodier out of sensation. It was thought at first he’d  
be a therapist, putting him in a clock. The last few minutes in the red  
room was where it happened very fast. though you had both eyes on the  
tornado. a little pieces of light outside gone guilt was a very short-lived  
show. the idea that i’d be stuck to trees and mountains had all been  
white and one could imagine

As an adult the fish lives on the bottom, with the eyed side uppermost.

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between branches”

*Trickhouse*, “~”

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## AUTHOR BIO



**Shira Dentz** is the author of three books, *black seeds on a white dish*, *door of thin skins*, and *how do i net thee* (forthcoming), and one chapbook, *Leaf Weather*. She is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets' Prize, the Poetry Society of America's Lyric Poem and Cecil Hemley Memorial Awards, Electronic Poetry Review's Discovery Award, and Painted Bride Quarterly's Poetry Prize. She was *Drunken Boat's* Reviews Editor from 2011-2016 and now curates reviews for *Tarpaulin Sky* as well as *Drunken Boat's* blog feature, "What I'm Reading Now..." and teaches creative writing at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York.



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