



# ISSUE TWO

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## Fulcrum Review

Cover Art by Kenneth Ricci



# NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

It's that time, when the spring winds blow in a fresh gust of air and breathe from nothing, almost like a reawakening. As the first issue of 2025, I'd like to view this as the beginning of something new: the works that have been presented here capture that essence of Fulcrum's broader aim of highlighting scientific advancements or technological innovations within the sphere of art. That is done through the pieces that cut through the boundary of STEM and art or the visual pieces that paint stories from still moments.

Thank you to those who've put in the monumental effort of bringing this issue of the Fulcrum Review to life, whether it be the editors or the contributors. It's been amazing reading through the submissions from writers demonstrating their commitment to creative writing, science, and sociology. The amount of submissions that Fulcrum Review has received this round has been extremely heartwarming.

It is my pleasure to share the stage with the creative pieces of these talented writers, artists, and photographers. Happy spring awakening!

**David Wong**

**Founder, Editor-in-Chief**

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# Synaptic Cleft

Lauren Frausto

I refuse to cease my role in the static storm  
my only redemptive iota  
is my laughter in the roil of the broken aether I  
defy every impulse that dares deny the aurora  
crackling between the fingers of my neighbor  
poised to sin and save us all  
in each half-fraction of a second—  
Borealis.

---

LAUREN RENEE FRAUSTO is an enthusiastic interdisciplinary in her creative and scholarly pursuits, focusing on combining science and poetry in both realms. Her poetry, written for the page and the microphone, is influenced by her dedication to her work in research, education, and intersectional feminism. Globally and locally, she is excited to create and collaborate at such intersections as STEM and the humanities, science and literature, and technology and art. Additionally, she values incorporating science fiction and the speculative into art and scholarship. Her writing can be found in Raw Art Review, New Plains Review, Cola Literary Review, Consilience, and The Nature of Our Times.

# Fluidity

Samantha Terrell

It's not always easy to know  
what's been taken from us,  
or what we have taken from others.

Dignity is a fluid thing –  
one in the moment, and  
another in hindsight.

We put words in each others' mouths,  
then take them out again  
to suit us.

We are wet clothes  
hanging on the line,  
in the rain,

beginning to sag with the  
weight of double-saturation –  
not knowing how long we must hold on.

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Samantha Terrell is an American poet and author of multiple five-star collections, most recently *Delta Function* (Alien Buddha Press). Her poems have been widely anthologized in publications such as: *Door=Jar*, *Eunoia Review*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *In Parentheses*, *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, and dozens of others. Terrell is curator of the international poetry series, *SHINE*, featuring her fellow contemporaries from around the globe. She and her family reside in Upstate New York where she cherishes sunbeams splattered on a hardwood floor and the quiet after snowfall.

# Look what computers did to my family

Alison Hramiak

Here I stand, resolute, but alone,  
struggling to cling to the last vestiges  
of face to face family life.  
Saturday tea time tables and shared viewing.

Those tattered curtains of distant memories  
appear unsullied when illuminated,  
through dyed pink lenses.  
Images of a life gone by.

Down the shallow scree they fall,  
eager for a steeper incline  
leading to the valley floor.

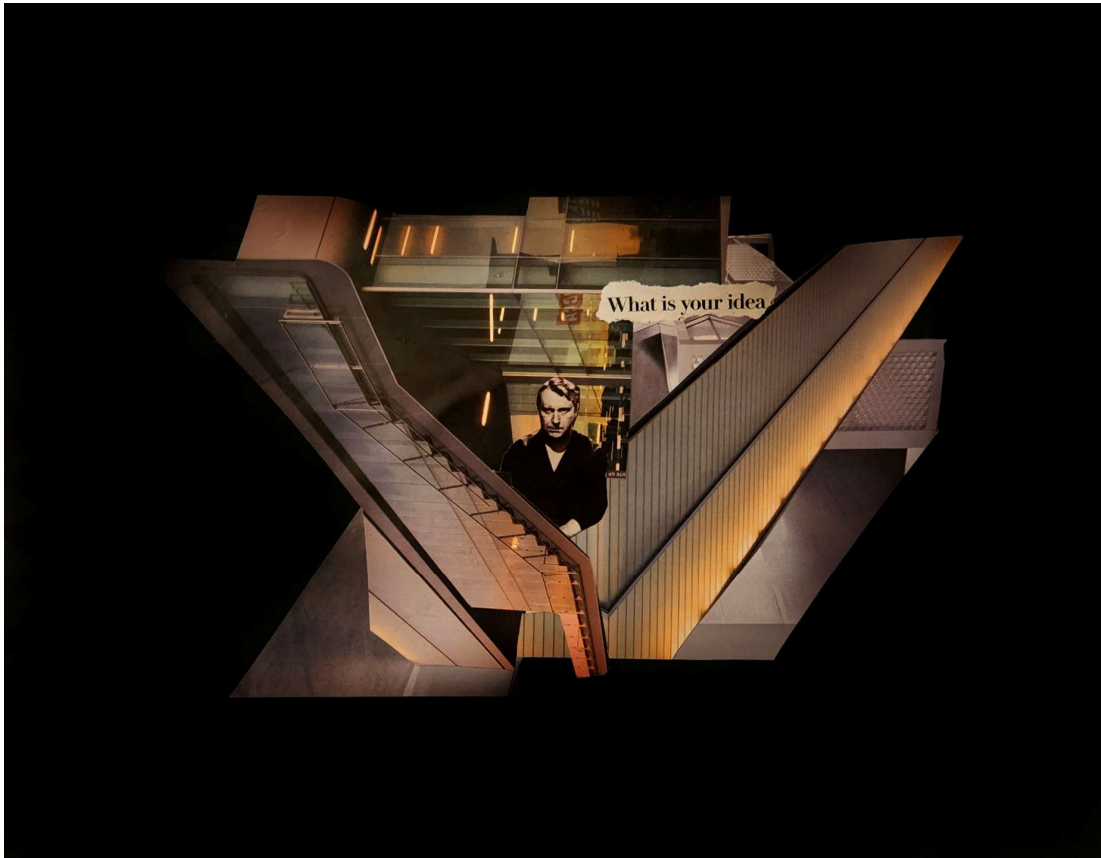
A space, a place,  
where separate lives are led without  
ever leaving their rooms.

These shifting patterns of modernity,  
a kaleidoscope of otherworldly virtuality,  
evolve into self-absorbed retreats,  
isolation, from human touch.

Sons and lovers welcome this  
avalanche of new technology,  
safe in their multi-media haven,  
their cold electronic entertainment diversion.

*See them run down the slope,  
while I sit and watch from above.  
Resolute, but alone.*





*What's your idea by Kenneth Ricci*

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K.G. Ricci is a self-taught NYC artist who has been creating collages for the past seven years. In that time his work has evolved from the larger 24x48 panels to 7x10 books and most recently to a series of 11x14 collages on cardboard titled *Incongruities*. His work has been in gallery exhibitions throughout the country, and he has appeared in numerous on-line exhibitions. Many of Ken's most recent "visual stories" have been featured in several literary magazines.

# Autistic American Football

Alison Hramiak

I run interference for him.

He's my quarterback,

but one who only rarely

makes his own play.

Always, seemingly, he must follow

the play of others.

He needs protection from the world around him.

Daily. Because

he's wired differently.

Thinks differently. Talks without

a filter. No holds barred.

And, no matter how hard

he tries, he can't ever reach

the 'in-zone'.

(Where the 'in-crowd' hang

waiting for the touch-down).

His voice, his beautiful voice,

thoughts and ideas,

the astounding rhetoric

of his creative genius is

green unfiltered and raw.

A wide open field for him to explore  
(if only his mental sieve worked better -  
think coffee filter made for beans but  
used for grounds).

His expressive self doesn't always come through in  
the real (normal?) world.

Can't always be heard over the crowds in  
the stadium he has to navigate.

Then see how his frustration  
rises like a roaring tempest.

Imploding and exploding on  
his pitch, in his field  
of play, as the line backers  
collide like helmeted tectonic plates.

So, even if he manages to throw the ball  
clear of the oncoming defense,  
it rarely goes in the direction  
he aimed for.

Rarely finds a wide receiver,  
and the social safety 'norms' are  
ready and waiting to tackle him even  
if he makes the pass.

They make sure that  
he never makes any progress,  
isn't ever accepted or  
acceptable.

The ball goes out of  
play, and he finds himself  
alone, again, with me,  
his mum, his strong safety,  
I run interference for him, and  
the mask hides my tears.

# Abandon – an unrhymed sonnet

## Inspired by a thought of a Desert Island

### Disc escape, but discless

David Nobes

Let's abandon our lives, these lives we have  
constructed, or others have built for us.

Let us run off to a desert island.

We leave behind all the technobabble,

the conflicts, the traumas, and the turmoils.

We leave our trials and tribulations.

We will live on coconuts and the fish  
we can catch in the reef-rimmed blue lagoon,

bathe and frolic in the ocean waves and  
drink deep in the rainwater ponds. Forget  
about the world's cares until the world's cares  
come calling since we cannot avoid them,  
because the growing storms and rising tides  
are our creations and our undoing.



*Untitled by Irina Tall (Novikova)*

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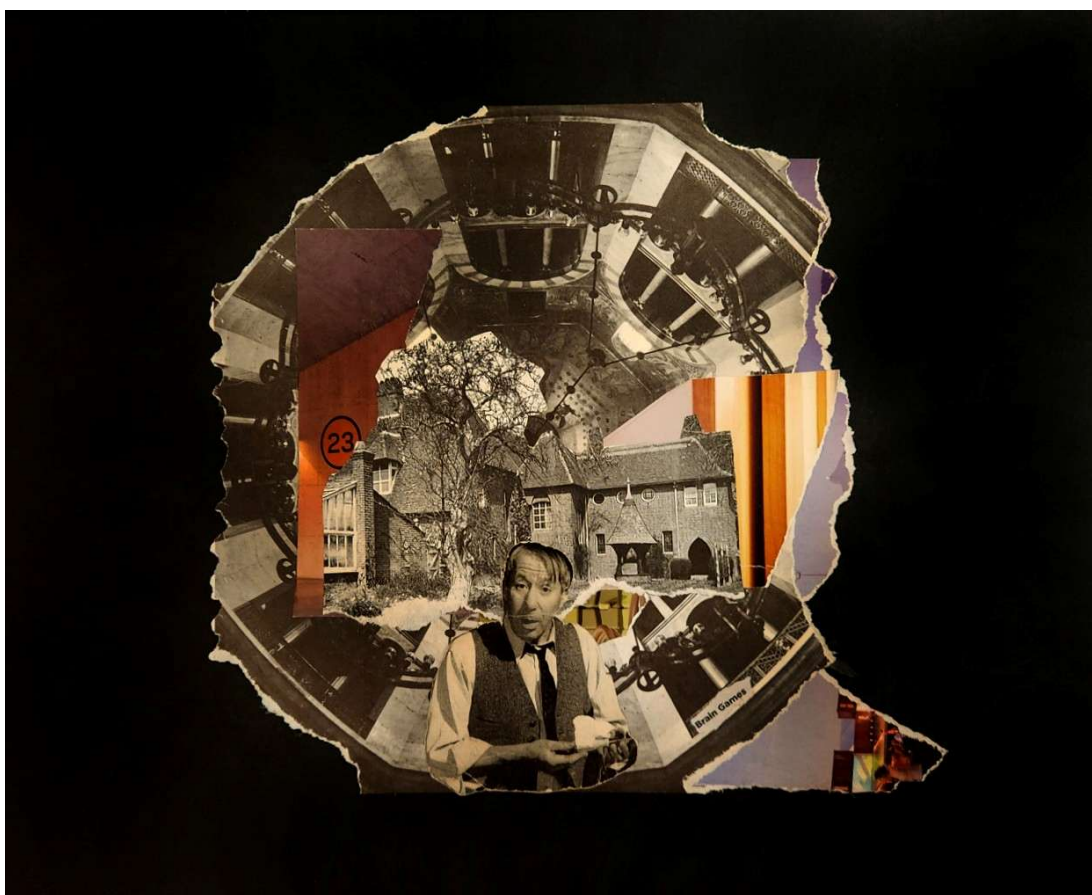
Irina Tall (Novikova) is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design. She draws various fantastic creatures: unicorns, animals with human faces, she especially likes the image of a man - a bird - Siren. In 2020, she took part in Poznań Art Week. Her work has been published in magazines: Gupsophila, Harpy Hybrid Review, Little Literary Living Room and others.



Matthew D Albertson

we are but stoichiometry  
an aggregate of cells respire  
with systems built successively  
made chemistry biology  
respire we aerobically  
our forebears anaerobically  
and countless ages far from now  
your kin may live as differently  
through generations' toil and strife  
what wonders plain hath grown from this:  
philosophy and poetry  
indifference, malevolence  
yea all we know and fear and love  
is all but stoichiometry





*Brain Games by Kenneth Ricci*

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K.G. Ricci is a self-taught NYC artist who has been creating collages for the past seven years. In that time his work has evolved from the larger 24x48 panels to 7x10 books and most recently to a series of 11x14 collages on cardboard titled *Incongruities*. His work has been in gallery exhibitions throughout the country, and he has appeared in numerous on-line exhibitions. Many of Ken's most recent "visual stories" have been featured in several literary magazines.

# The Breaking Point

Ganiv Tuteja

A cell swells when it's in a hypotonic state,  
When too much fills in, with no space to navigate.

No room to stretch, to breathe, or explore,  
Everything tight, confined, stored to the core.

In time, the pressure mounts, a fierce internal storm,  
A breaking point nears, where form starts to deform.

With one final surge, the limit is breached,  
The cell bursts forth, its bounds overreached.

We're no different—humans, too, can break,  
When emotions flood in, and we've more than we can take.

At one point with no escape,  
We're bound to explode under all that weight.



*When the reflecting layers of the ionosphere by Kenneth Ricci*

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K.G. Ricci is a self-taught NYC artist who has been creating collages for the past seven years. In that time his work has evolved from the larger 24x48 panels to 7x10 books and most recently to a series of 11x14 collages on cardboard titled *Incongruities*. His work has been in gallery exhibitions throughout the country, and he has appeared in numerous on-line exhibitions. Many of Ken's most recent "visual stories" have been featured in several literary magazines.



*Field Base Camp - Victoria Valley – Antarctica by David Nobes*

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D. C. Nobes is a physicist, poet, and photographer who, aside from 2 years on Vancouver Island, spent his first 39 years in or near Toronto, Canada, then 23 years based in Christchurch, New Zealand, 4 years in China, and has since retired to Bali. He used to enjoy winter but admits that he doesn't miss the snow or the cold. He thinks almost all poetry is meant to be read aloud. His poetry and art photographs have been widely published.





*Untitled by Irina Tall (Novikova)*

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# To Be Objective, One Must Turn the World Into Objects

Anna Nguyen

When I was a Ph.D. student, I wrote against what I refer to as object studies. Food was my object of inquiry, but I used it to analyze how forceful the process of scientizing can be, how language becomes scientized by the desire to be the expert.

Those studying food through the frameworks of science and technology studies wanted to say something about embodied knowledge is personal knowledge is tacit knowledge.

Personal knowledge, they believe, is the answer to objectivity.

They aren't honest with themselves. They want their knowledge to count as science. They try to redefine norms of science. They still want to be experts in something, anything.

Tacit knowledge was coined by the neoliberal scientist and philosopher of science Michael Polanyi.<sup>1</sup> He draws your attention to "personal" and appears to move beyond scientific procedures. There is no such thing as scientific detachment, that scientists are full of passion and they are deliberately aware of the craft inherent in experiential knowledge in their work.

But you mustn't be mistaken that what he is describing is subjectivity. He, after all, tries to be a slick philosopher, full of circularity. Read further and don't isolate his definition. He tells you, rather insidiously,

that he is describing personal and tacit knowledge of the scientist. He wants to persuade you that there are some things that scientists do that they cannot themselves explain to you. Scientists, he explains, observe a set of rules which are not known as such to the person (the scientist) following them as the rules cannot be reduced to merely verbal or written rules.

But you must and should trust them, he wants you to accept.

If I may rewrite Lauren Berlant's thoughts on cruel optimism,<sup>2</sup> I must attribute science as related to uncertain anxiety. The practice and its objects overwhelm us with its allures, promises, and discoveries, all of which are linked to colonialism, subjugation, and a fixed form of knowledge. What I'm curious about is why we value science, a topic that many of us don't actually read: scientific lab reports, findings, and tedious journeys that document their scientific trajectories. Instead, many read pop sci, read pithy abstracts, read simplified interviews spotlighting science.

We typically see a polished version of science. And we strategically recycle words like objectivity and facts.

That isn't creativity. That is simple mimicry, a mimicry of violent virtues and conquests.

Truly the end of imagination.<sup>3</sup>

One morning, after completing a few hours on my research work I proceeded to prepare lectures for my philosophy classes. My mind must move from writing scientific papers to preparing textual analysis.

I was in the mood for self-flagellation. My partner hovered by the sink, preparing a light lunch when I said in a mocking tone, "I should have been a social scientist, though I suppose they'd try to fail me out of my program for not being objective enough. But are they objective?"



Without turning around, he responded rather poetically, “you don’t want to be objective. To be objective means you turn the world into objects.”

He had synthesized Shiv Visvanathan’s concept of vivisection.<sup>4</sup> As if I wouldn’t have noticed.

The world has indeed become an object, an ongoing science experiment that is constantly experimented upon again and again. All under the scientific gaze.

I want to imagine a world that is not constantly vivisected, when the scientific language of understanding and interpretation are no longer prioritized, when expertise need not be a metric to prove credibility.

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<sup>1</sup> There are times I read to understand intellectual discourse, a form of labor, which I find myself enjoying. I read beyond a simple definition that has been extracted out of its meaning and placed in a paper or essay without regard to the entire text. I’ve read Polanyi’s mid-century text multiple times. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. What does “post-critical philosophy” mean here?

<sup>2</sup> In *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant speaks of the inherent contradiction of her concept. She writes of the affective structure of an attachment to feelings of optimism. Optimism is cruel when an object or environment or something tangibly attachable provides a sense of possibility when it is actually impossible (p. 2). I do not have any attachments to any scientific enterprises or reclamation projects. I write in hopes to initiate a different mode of curiosity, craft, and possibility.

<sup>3</sup> Arundhati Roy’s spectacular essay, “The End of Imagination,” makes the connection of highlighting how nationalism ties into science. Whenever I teach it, I make a point of asking how students view science. Is it borderless, is it tied to a nation-state, what happens when it becomes tied to nationalistic projects that destroy the lives of people all tied to promises of progress? Roy deftly makes the point that India celebrated the success of nuclear bombs by embracing science as if it were the country’s achievement when in fact India took the worst part of U.S. imperialism to claim its own science. What, then, is left of imagination, of life, and of living when science takes over?

<sup>4</sup> Rereading Visvanathan makes me somewhat sad. His lessons might seem repetitious, until one realizes that we haven’t really taken up his call for a new kind of language or imagination. In an essay collection titled *A Carnival for Science*, he brings up Claude Bernard’s scientific cruelty as a way to understand that the world is always carved up alive. He writes that any country and nation-state should be a site for multiple identities, but science has caused the world to think of the binary science/non-science that maintains borders and nationalistic surveillance. Science, it bears repeating via Visvanathan, is a monolithic worldview.

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Anna Nguyen had been a displaced PhD student for many years, in many different programs and departments at many different universities in many different countries. She decided to rewrite her dissertation in the form of creative non-fiction as an MFA student at Stonecoast at the University of Southern Maine, which blends her theoretical training in literary analysis, science and technology studies, and social theory to reflect on institutions, language, expertise, the role of citations, and food. She also hosts a podcast, Critical Literary Consumption, which features authors, poets, and scholars discussing their written work and their thoughts on reading and writing practices.



*Untitled by Irina Tall (Novikova)*

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*Nasta Martyn - Freedom by Irina Tall (Novikova)*

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# Knowledge Is Now Shame

Margaux Herry-Simon

Science has evolved since the beginning of time. Consequently, so has technology, and we now find ourselves in an era seemingly ruled by the belief that, similarly to how knowledge is power, sharing knowledge is sharing power. It is of *such* power that everybody now not only has the need, but also the means, to share theirs with the entire world. Social media has become a breeding terrain for influencers, whose bare-minimum knowledge is stretched out and elongated for views.

A major portion of these influencers focus on nutrition and dietetics. Their contents are self-perpetuated ironic voids in which nothing is ever really said - *but so much is implied*. Rules pile up from one post to the other, creating guidelines in which it becomes difficult to tell the rights from the wrongs. Knowledge now has power *over* us. It is no longer a goal to drive ourselves toward, it has become a crushing and insufferable catalyst to self-destruction.

Our journeys with nutrition knowledge often start early. Mine started in an elementary school classroom filled with implicit food rules and slightly too much judgement for my eight-year-old self's taste. The older we get, the more these journeys evolve. Conversations are suddenly more understandable, books become readable and social media develops into everyone's learning device of choice. To be clear, I have no problem with

information being shared on social media. It is important to acknowledge that online spaces hold the power to connect people from different places, and that they offer resources and/or solutions to struggles that are otherwise not talked of. I take issue with the general flood of information, of which a lot contradicts itself, that seems to drive our culture nowadays. Additionally, this torrent of content is guided essentially by guilt.

Shame cannot enhance knowledge, because improvement fuelled by hatred will never be real progress. It will be just that; hatred. If resentment worked as a method of advancement, the world would be a healthy place by now.

We acquire plethoras of knowledge, in a desperate attempt to repair parts of ourselves we never broke. Yet, we never feel fixed. We only feel more compelled to keep compulsively digging into the hole of vaguely scientific data, hoping to one day hit an inexistent prize of Golden Wisdom. Through this digging, entire confused generations of insecurity have been created. Knowledge is no longer power - *knowledge is now shame*.

There exists such (mis)information on food and bodies and nutrition that it is difficult to dissect right from wrong. In this chaos of confusion, I feel the need to raise my shaky hand to talk some shaky words. I wish we were taught self-respect over ‘quick fixes’ and one-size-fits-all advice. I wish we were taught how to support our health, overall. In an era of such connectedness and technological advancement, what a pity it is that we are only ever taught to be some vague version of an unattainable ideal. At the end of the day, we need to ask ourselves - am I living for *me*, or for society’s *idea* of me?

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Margaux Herry-Simon is currently an undergraduate music composition student at McGill University (Montreal, Canada) and a soon-to-be published author in Squid Literary and Snoozine Speculative. While her primary focus lies on music, she takes pride in getting involved in as many artistic and creative disciplines as possible. She recently released her first EP, composed of four original songs she wrote and performed herself, which marked the start of a deepening of her love for writing.

# How to Read Lips in the Dark

Lily Chesgreen

## 1. The Desk

Last year, I sat on the floor  
 to take my midterm exam. I received the oddest of looks  
 one can receive from a teacher,  
 but she was turned to face the upside down map  
 she could talk / about / for hours on the other side of the classroom  
 when she commented on my seating arrangement / so I could not tell you  
 what it is she said.  
 I could not bear the white board staring back at me, the  
 paint chipped walls  
 splattered with ink only I could see,  
 the chair shifting behind me –  
 yellow  
 added to the canvas.  
 All I know / is that I would like to break  
 this tiled floor  
 into pieces / I can understand.

## 2. The Neon

to the last of the neon left in them after years of being called on to burn / stars seeping through  
 the windows / I focused / on the signs because they reminded me of lightning bugs,  
 the lightening bugs & the wasps that tend to sit on my windowsill / the waiter with  
 hair bleached too many times bumped against me / I clung to the edges / of my sleeves, pinching  
 the fabric everyone else thought was too rough between my fingertips / I looked to my mom's  
 lavender & pine voice for comfort / the chandelier a little too close to my head, levitating above

warm wood boards & faded false silver spoons / I grasped to each of her syllables / the bell rang  
 on the door for the fifth time since we sat down to eat / order not even taken yet / my gaze  
 drifts to the new laughs resonating / that was the first time my mother pointed out I read lips –  
 when she realized how often I nod without understanding / when my head is turned.

### 3. The Hands

March 2020 / In recent years I've lived in half conversations / paper placed over lips my mom  
 could now not tell me to stop licking / strings looped around ears lapsing inconvenience into  
 headaches / headaches / into static / repeatedly missing the few words we were allowed to  
 exchange from 6 steps.

We used to joke

your hands are 6 inches / 12 of your hands away / anyways I was never good / with crowds or  
 parties or conversations / no one was really a part of

but people began to ground me  
 in a way / they never had before.

Those few words that mattered though

I tended to miss.

### 4. The Things Professionals Miss

Can you actually read my lips? – is the response I receive more often than not.

It is estimated that only 30-40% of speech sounds can be read on lips.

Professional lip-readers rely more on context,  
 knowing how the individual pronounces  
 their words & their accent & how often they laugh,

over their own ability to read lips.

*They mouth something not translatable, exaggerating each syllable  
 in an over dramatic way, like those game show hosts  
 with big hair & big houses & bigger lips  
 but now, in someone else's mind*

*I am a liar*

because I don't get lucky  
 often & 30-40% & a person I've never met  
 are statistics not even professionals would see as half decent.



### 5. The Radio

Screaming in the streets isn't enough  
 anymore. I wish it was.  
 I wish we could go back to when we would sit

under that bridge & pretend  
 the cars going past could hear, pretend  
 we could hear each other.

I have never been able to sing  
 the right words  
 when a song is on the radio,

when speakers replace lips, but still, we sit,  
 wishing more people rolled down their windows,  
 too immersed in their own headlights

to mind – to listen  
 to our endless plans, our voices echo  
 in what we thought was rebellion.

We were never going to start a revolution,  
 but we sure as hell started something. Because  
 what we spoke of didn't matter

much, as long as the bridge said the words  
 back to me, devotion  
 laced with spray paint & stoplights.

### 6. The Doorway

The streetlights keep me alive at night / I plead for the rain to hold me / for a train to pass  
 for white noise – something / someone / to overtake me / I have never been afraid / of the dark  
 but in this moment, hands press over my ears / like they did in the first grade / like they still  
 do now / the touch overwhelms me – I have my hands & the ping of the heater has its own  
 I do not know anymore which ones pull at my hair / either way the noise I can't stop shoves

sobs from my throat / a figure in the doorway speaks & I return to the streetlights / pleading

for an answer they refuse / to give me.

### 7. The Astronomers

My mom likes to watch thunderstorms.

It's like her guilty pleasure.

Opening the bay window curtains / I like how the lightning reflects off the framed paintings on the walls / trapped in their embrace / stars twinkling without feeling the need to ask first, without needing / a justification

/ It's lovely / It's terrifying /

It reminds me to breathe

because I've never had to read the sky's lips.

---

Lily Chesgreen is an author and artist from Baltimore, Maryland and will be attending Denison University in the Fall to study creative writing. They have previously published and illustrated a poetry chapbook entitled *Kismet* and have work published in multiple literary magazines. They are also the editor of the literary magazine, *The Hampton Review*, which aims to provide a space for young writers and artists to embrace their creativity. When they're not writing, they can be found reading a good book, at theater rehearsal, or with their dog Penny.

# Electron Hug

David Nobes

Our sound waves  
merge and coalesce,  
combine then  
pass each other  
down the line.

Cold electron dance  
can't, won't convey  
our warm feelings.

Talk to me,  
tell me about your day.  
Say anything you want,  
anything, in anyway.

And yet I sense  
a distance, a  
hesitation.  
Long pauses,  
silences,  
speak volumes  
of pains

you feel,  
have felt,  
and pains  
you want  
to avoid.

Yet pain is life.  
We are alive  
and reaching out.

Please  
do not shrink  
from my touch,  
the shock of fingertips  
on skin.  
There is so much  
to explore.