

*AIR TALK*

GRAVITY FORGIVENESS  
after Barb Smith

WAS IT PLEASURE FOR PLEASURE  
LIKE SUMMER FOR SUMMER  
FINALLY NOTHING FOR SOMETHING  
IN MY OLD AGE  
WHAT PULLS YOU FORWARD  
TIPS YOU INTO THE PADDED  
WALLS SENTENCE  
IF ONLY ENGINE  
PRONOUN, PARTICLE, POTENTIAL  
INSCRIBED SENTIENCE  
I ATE WEEDS

© In loving tribute to Barb  
Smith's 'Gravity Forgiveness,'  
Step Sister, NYC



"Gravity Forgiveness, after Barb Smith" – Daisy Atterbury, Albuquerque, NM  
In loving tribute to Barb Smith's "Gravity Forgiveness," Step Sister, NYC



In a series to which each Downpour furnishes  
 Another integer pattern  
 Swarm of aphids in a leaf's fold  
 Purifying Catharsis

A drop contracts within Bulpen of an eye  
 in fretted hanging—  
 I perceive a moment similar to the suck  
 Pump of breath  
 Inspiration that swells  
 Materialized observation

Shadows of tree leaning (slow fiery point  
 Dripping with Sogginess  
 One that a tree understands as plusive elasticity  
 My legs folded and knees splayed sideways  
 My palms shaped as bird wings  
 I do not meditate in water  
 But curl within volleyed Aspiration  
 The Ribbed Seam of frayed velvetreen  
 One step away from nakedness every putter that touches matches  
 a putter orchestrally  
 Departing

From "The Advantage of  
 Rain to Think" in  
 Sequence" Meditation #2  
 Isabel Sobral Campos  
 May 2020 (COVID-19)

"The advantage of rain to think in sequence," Meditation #2 – Isabel Sobral Campos, Cambridge, MA

## Gratitude

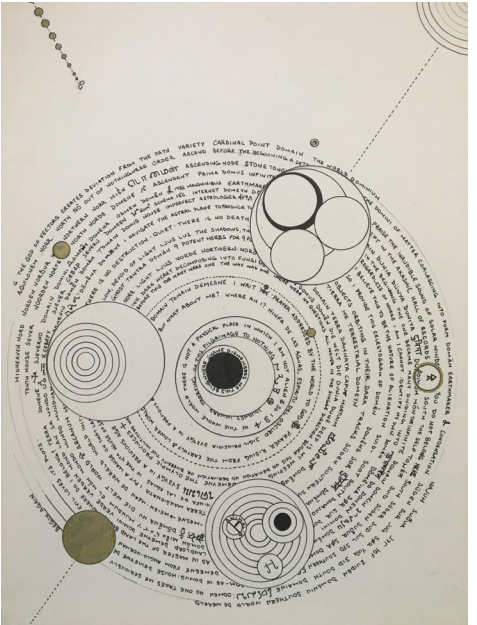
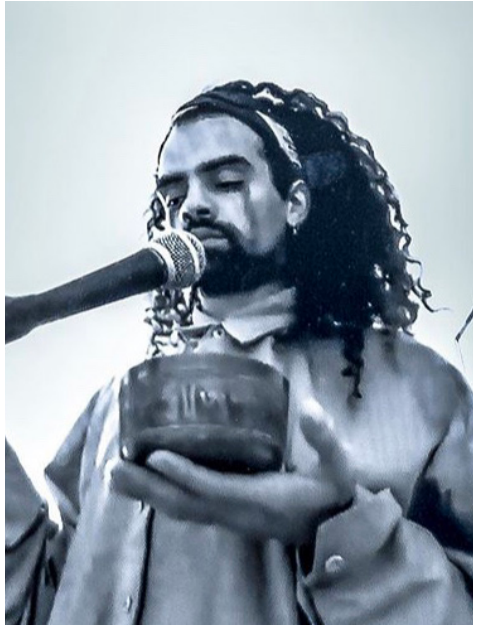
For the horses, their shiny  
flesks, the roosters, their  
waddle & comb, the miracle  
of nail polish. The hands  
that touch my mother's hair  
hands conspiratorially, the  
pockets of air inside of croissants,  
the butter, the garlic, the pond  
cassiole, still and over, of a  
colored people, for the body  
that has been so loved and  
continues to love and crave  
it urgently, the big questions  
of meaning, the pervasiveness,  
the warmth, for the babies  
we birth and do not birth  
but raise with love. For  
laughter. For cinema. For  
love poems. For the fists  
that fight. For the people  
who heal up like bread,  
~~inside~~ for the pockets of air  
the interweaving. For an echo  
down a hallway. For desire  
and hunger and touch, our  
first knowledge of this world.



"Gratitude" — Cathy Linh Che, Queens, NY

The settler-colonizer weaponizes their body biological to capitalize upon ancestral time — he's trying to configure time measured not in days or minutes but by proximity & event.

I'm the new wheezy  
 To survive I had to practice a discipline of wayward findings.

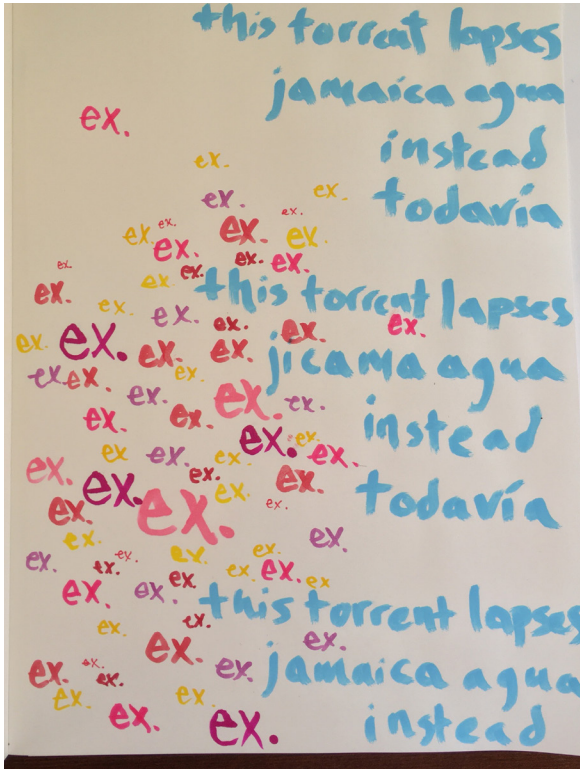


1. "Thinking through the State's failed attempt at my assassination by exposure."  
 2. "Dis-ori-ranting 'Domain' Undone" — Joey De Jesus, Queens, NY

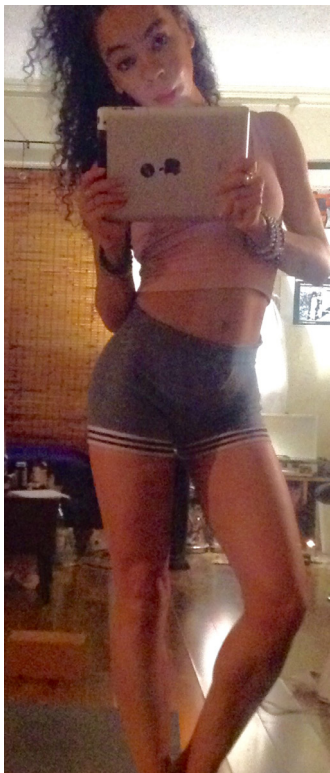


## The Part You Throw Away

A teetering air birthed me, and I would learn  
one day the failures of investigation. Poets  
spend their lives perfecting the inverse of desire  
only to fall predictably to their knees. In their arms,  
I am never a poet. My name means birth, Christmas,  
and I am a soft noun in their mouths. A mistake.  
The singer wails that time is just memory and desire,  
a Plymouth pulled over on a school day, hymen blood.  
I disagree. Time has no use for either, is not living.  
It is memory as wind is memory, a tenseless blow  
over which we die and die. I do not exist for anyone.  
A fruitfly follows me from room to room like I  
am its planet, the word tender. I fuck myself to the  
blurred image of Saturn and wither with sweetness.



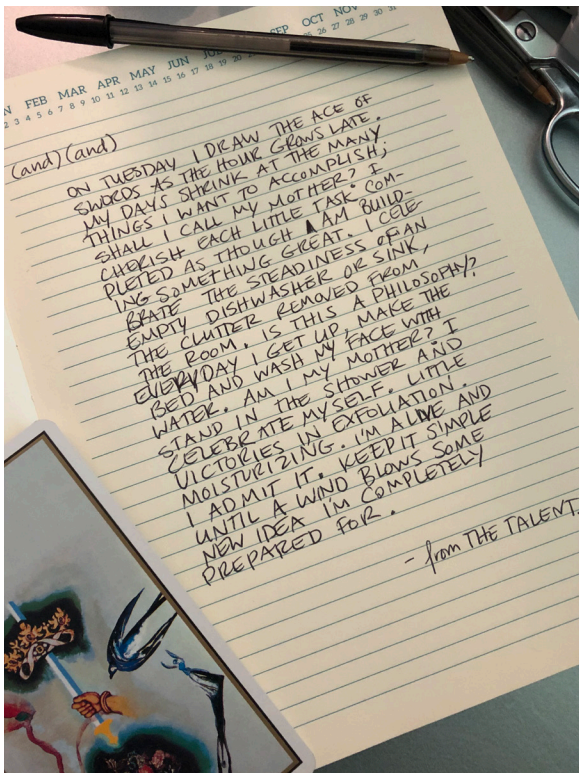
"Uncommon" — Josh Escobar, Santa Barbara, CA



Maafa Don't Utter No Sad Calls  
When it was butchering time plain chum to find  
in hindsight the body was already mercilessly  
disposed in already notes  
he was already as black as his fate  
already taking to spaceways  
Molecular weight & fabric cascades  
that black male passivity that built  
the accident for spades and good jobs -  
A hit club drummer  
A butler with manners  
A very famous evangelist  
A hapless runway star turned dealer houseboy  
A cathedral thing  
A skull and a pair of jeans  
He needs a special exercise  
I have been embraced in such reemergence  
As if all life is predicated upon a  
certain kind of possession  
But not that kind

"Maafa Don't Utter No Sad Calls" — Harmony Holiday, Los Angeles, CA





"(and) (and)" a selection from THE TALENTS — Lauren Hunter, Durham, NC

from I HRT THE CULT YEARS

Dear Darkness,

On the precipice of <sup>error</sup> over & over failure to enter—  
 from hour to hour all this still from day <sup>to day</sup>  
 A counterfeit of ignorance seeking only light seeing only binaries  
 Until almost death—  
 Red rivers from wrist,

Young birches luminous in half light  
 Surrounded in <sup>silence</sup> occasionally broken by <sup>primer-patter</sup>  
 O  
 W  
 L,

here owl there of whatever life thrummed through  
 ‡ connect I to that vital root & rudiment <sup>of relation</sup>  
 Each secret a prayer kept static & hid den  
 The pure bead & the emptiness,

Simultaneously basking & burning to ascertain the mighty multitude, <sup>to be opened</sup>

To let you clear darkness breathe  
 To leave prayer questioned & unhinged  
 To become no longer a student of the light <sup>panoramic</sup>  
 To graduate into a greater realm  
 To dutiful industry of feet & hands— the panorama of nature

Through shadows  
 clouds, and  
 darkness rest  
 upon it

✦ incorporates language from Emerson



from I HRT THE CULT YEARS — Steven Karl, Tokyo, Japan



THE OPPOSITE OF REAL LIFE

Becca Klaver

my sleeping mind now knows the protocol  
& disobeys it like a teenager

all I did was have two friends over  
& feel happy  
& know it was wrong

as I've been trying to explain  
the opposite of real life is the internet  
& also dreams

how do we use this!  
put two & two together —

I was writing on a sidewalk chalkboard  
in my sleep  
it became a text message

the erotic pull of a sandwich  
& stopping off

ohh yes —

were all my poems about being in love  
with cities so dark  
because they were teeny elegies?

I'm still trying to get you to meet me there

"The Opposite of Real Life" — Becca Klaver, Iowa City, IA

THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO SAY 'I LOVE YOU'

Sometimes you watch television and marvel  
at how easy it is for some families to love,  
how warm their hugs, how tender their kisses.

—  
Today I woke up to beautiful parents. They  
were smiling as if a joke had been left  
hanging in the air.

—  
I learnt my pain in a language my mother  
does not read.

—  
How are we to become something unbreakable?

—  
Sometimes I beg my mother to feed me with  
her hands.

I hate her long fingers as she pulls them  
away.

It's a joke and we laugh over it  
bellies quaking.

I look at all the pain I hold in my chest,  
how it comes unfurling on strange nights,  
how it scars my parents, and  
I hate myself, hate myself, hate myself.

—  
We don't show pain as a family  
We don't pain as a family  
We don't as a family  
We pain as a family.

—  
Sometimes the train is so crowded  
it births you at the hip with some stranger.

—  
Sometimes you're sitting so close,  
touching so hard, you forget  
that you don't know each other at all.  
What does one call a family of tacit  
mistakes?

I have melted in the heat of strange babies  
to become soft pulp. It is then that I  
want to reveal strange truths.

—  
It is true, I admit.  
I think about my mother all the time.

—  
I am a woman who sometimes insists  
her mother cradle her into a new  
beginning.

—  
Σ Σ Σ Σ Σ Σ Σ Σ  
my mother croons as I absorb her.

—  
Sometimes I am so kind to my parents and  
they are so kind to me, that we become  
one tender, sweet thing.



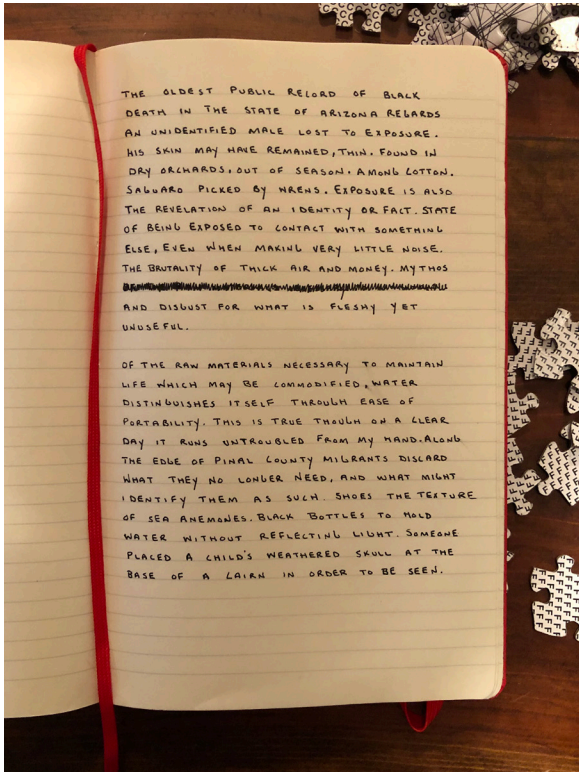
"THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO SAY 'I LOVE YOU'" — Meher Manda, Providence, RI



first Quarantine poem by aja monet

What does it mean to be considered,  
 looked after, thought of, tucked in,  
 held or wondered about, attended to,  
 regarded as deserving of want or need, never  
 alone in arms, another belonging  
 a heart horizon-wide, to friend.  
 a ship with sails, harness the wind  
 lean and lay, where a wound dreams  
 not a weapon or trigger to pull or peel.  
 pain is a rattlesnake whispering sweetnothings  
 of forever, the end gazing back at you.  
 Care is a voice with hands, trembling courage  
 a hold letting go, here is a sip of love,  
 warm and unspeakable music, opens a chest  
 clears a throat like herbal tea, homemade breath  
 Crossing lung to lung, sharing air like a kiss,  
 soft cough drop seething shame like the rhythm  
 of uncontrollable laughter,  
 when you are sick its the gentle gestures of grace,  
 a song in the trick of grief  
 a lightened load of laundry  
 falling heavy on a shoulder/  
 care is a room full of listening  
 care is familiar and thankless  
 while people hoard their nothingness, lunging in despair  
 the earth cleanses itself of greed and cancer clinging  
 to her bones, uncertainty reeks us to sleep  
 muttering words of prayerless tomorrows.  
 clutching pearls of market-driven identity  
 workfilled and empty, everyone's chasing shadows  
 on a conference call or in an email, but care is knocking  
 on your door like abelita waiting online for food  
 stamps; care has mouths to feed, wastes no words,  
 deliberate and knows tomorrow's not promised,  
 the way the ground carries your feet is a care  
 or how the dishes don't wash themselves  
 care is inconvenient and intentional like poetry  
 pouring out any way

"First Quarantine Poem" — Aja Monet, Miami, FL



THE OLDEST PUBLIC RECORD OF BLACK  
DEATH IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA REVEALS  
AN UNIDENTIFIED MALE LOST TO EXPOSURE.  
HIS SKIN MAY HAVE REMAINED, THIN, FOUND IN  
DRY ORCHARDS, OUT OF SEASON, AMONG LOTTON.  
SALVAGE PICKED BY WRENS. EXPOSURE IS ALSO  
THE REVELATION OF AN IDENTITY OR FACT, STATE  
OF BEING EXPOSED TO CONTACT WITH SOMETHING  
ELSE, EVEN WHEN MAKING VERY LITTLE NOISE.  
THE BRUTALITY OF THICK AIR AND MONEY, MYTHOS  
~~THE BRUTALITY OF THICK AIR AND MONEY, MYTHOS~~  
AND DISGUST FOR WHAT IS FLESHY YET  
UNUSEFUL.

OF THE RAW MATERIALS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN  
LIFE WHICH MAY BE COMMODIFIED, WATER  
DISTINGUISHES ITSELF THROUGH EASE OF  
PORTABILITY. THIS IS TRUE THOUGH ON A CLEAR  
DAY IT RUNS UNTRoubLED FROM MY HAND, ALONG  
THE EDGE OF PINAL COUNTY MIGRANTS DISCARD  
WHAT THEY NO LONGER NEED, AND WHAT MIGHT  
IDENTIFY THEM AS SUCH. SHOWS THE TEXTURE  
OF SEA ANEMONES, BLACK BOTTLES TO HOLD  
WATER WITHOUT REFLECTING LIGHT. SOMEONE  
PLACED A CHILD'S WEATHERED SKULL AT THE  
BASE OF A LAIR IN ORDER TO BE SEEN.



Excerpt from "Alt-Nature" – Saretta Morgan, the Mojave Valley  
An earlier version of this poem was published in *GUEST: A Guest-Edited Chapbook* (Aboveground Press, 2019)



The Rhyme of the Western Tanager

Songbirds are keen to talk about death  
though death has no continuity  
as the glacier base of the cliff extends  
deep earth  
into Lake Superior  
Then east to the St. Lawrence  
a skin across the first dead ocean.  
Many names. The gulls  
are forcing us to talk  
about death while the rain  
flaps its hands  
for us all. What is the first question.

We see Hector lies carrying  
in the last captivity of Bay  
that is really, incontestable  
by a generation that was  
one thousand years of Christians  
on the European coast.  
The rain flaps its hands.

The first question is what  
would you say on the last day of school  
if you knew there were nothing else you could learn.  
The cars keep sliding  
over the attention  
drinking it - vomiting it  
but the line is of course much deeper.

We know better than to make color. You is it best to  
The patch of yellow  
right above the red - bailed us  
the speaking fake  
Angie says  
have nothing to do with Wisconsin.  
A beautiful vision of hope  
spills from my embarrassed other.  
Blacks, yellow, pallidities.  
The songbirds, restless  
without continuity.  
The pair of gulls, dawn & night.  
I just needed this perfect person  
is when there is nothing I can give.  
Their beautiful notes about affairs  
- clean about honey  
- the vision of heart  
I want the rest of the well.

Here while the cars keep coming  
the concept of evidence is a badge.  
Woods are deep, full and small.  
They decorate with salt the empty badge.

"The Rhyme of the Western Tanager" — Jennifer Nelson, Madison, WI

ELEGY FOR MY TÍA-ABUELA JUANA, THE EROTIC POET

barefoot child  
on the dusty  
brow of shore, the wind rushes  
in a joyful swell  
to meet you  
to carry your  
fleet-foot forwardness  
you are wearing  
the thin lace dress

a loose-threaded sheath  
over your breasts & bone  
your mother made, you wear  
the women  
who made you, all of them,  
you are wearing  
the women  
the women are a flag  
and you are not

alone you are running

you are not restless  
you are running in the narrow

flat sand

you are running into headwind

you are a girl  
headed home

Christina Olivares  
(Covid April/May 2020)



"ELEGY FOR MY TÍA-ABUELA JUANA, THE EROTIC POET" — Christina Olivares, Bronx, NY





## Stuck Around Doing Nothing

Ben Pease

I said I would do it and I didn't lie so much as I went outside and drank a beer, followed the birds for a minute, stood on the corner of the septic tank and saw both snow in the mountains and buds on the apple trees I hadn't pruned enough. Three lots down you see a neighbor in gloves standing in the bed of his truck, blank, gruff,

daydreaming, thinking where he left the shovel and if the off-brand rice was any good. Daughter touches my face and says the stamper is coming in, why not take some scrap wood from the basement and make a birthday card as a gymnasium for the backyard.

"Stuck Around Doing Nothing" — Ben Pease, Brandon, VT

Without Resolve  
Chris Slaughter

I.

Yesterday, I walked into a crowd of fire flies. I froze, but was unafraid. From a distance it must have looked like holiday lights in August suspended in mid-air. I just left therapy grappling with shit that could level a healthy racehorse. Time must have told Bklyn to be still while it helped me exist, carved. A deep need to feel heard can load triggers far too heavy to return from — I clung to waters, treading for apologies that would help me sleep without waking up, pacing barefoot and bothered. There is no resolve for breath and hopeful lungs filled with brightly lit fireflies



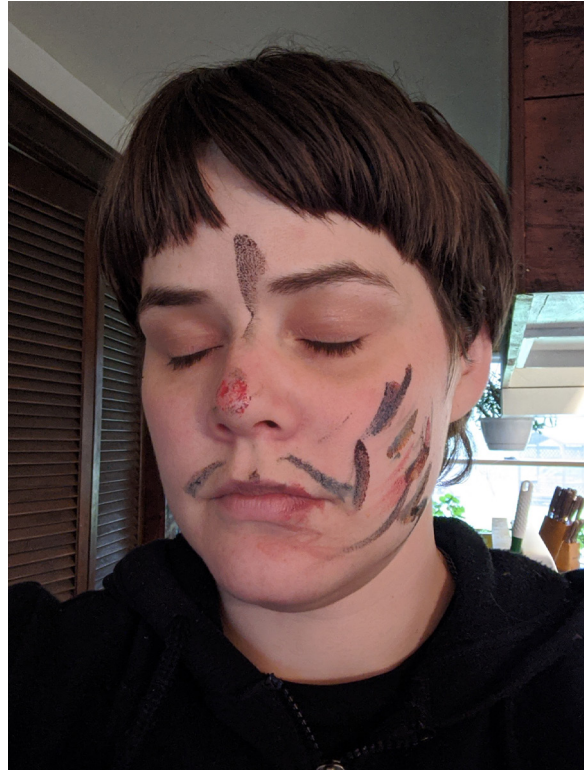
"Without Resolve" — Chris Slaughter, Brooklyn, NY

BIANCA STONE

(from)  
Painter

Are we all aware of the brevity of our  
lives? in that semi-conscious way  
That makes everything we do just a little  
futile? So random, so quick. —  
The miracle of the Flesh.  
Worn like a burden. Fetus to Fetus,  
Worm to worm, Ripping & casting blubber  
about the bones.

And isn't Hell Eden to the demon?  
or is it simply that we are at  
the mercy of the Painter  
who they say must love us  
in order to make us real... who  
looks upon us to make the whole world  
real — here now so you  
might mirror in the fray  
Your perpetual unhappiness —  
I would stay.  
I would stay.  
I would see this trick through  
And in this meantime —  
I would love so much to paint you.  
I would PAINT YOU.



"Painter" — Bianca Stone, Brandon, VT



## GLORY

dipping a finger in a sack  
of split peas, the sun on your  
skin before you leave the bed,  
a fresh ~~fresh~~ layer of paint  
(~~the~~ orange) on a desert home,  
the sound of seashells clashing  
~~the~~ below you as you float  
on the Pacific, getting up  
from the barber's chair, water  
melon dripping from your cheeks,  
making out with someone you just  
met at the bar down the street,  
coconut oil legs covered in sand,  
intertwined paws on your chest  
and a soft purr, a soft treat,  
a soft caress, high on  
tenderness and shyness,  
grandma smiles and her gold  
tooth shimmers in the mid  
afternoon glow, great day in the manin!  
booty, today might be the day  
you tell her what you've  
been wanting to say,

this morning in the street,  
someone's auntie in kitty heels  
and a bonnet, sharp nails  
pushing through rubbery  
gloves, we all imagine  
her glossy lips beneath  
her mask as she walks by,  
an owl sings, a dog barks,  
alive, glory.

30 de Abril, 2020