

# These Lines

*Verse, poesy, and gestures various:  
collected seasonally.*

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## Lie Back and Think of England

There's a forest fire in the Sea  
of Tranquility and reruns  
of stone-age football games  
on the TV in the cafeteria. You  
have to select your armor,  
your weapons for tonight.  
Maximum protection, but you  
don't want to wear the same  
mail as Donnerey, that brute.  
Still, it promises to be one hell  
of a party. Hanobska himself  
made the punch, or so rumor  
has it, and the barbecued  
kuntilanak has been on the spit  
three days. There is the small  
matter of the excommunication  
of the entire town of Rodovesk  
for some sort of heresy thing,  
but it's all an excuse for a shindig,  
no? Kiss the wife goodbye, hop  
on the nearest chihuahua. This  
journey begins with a headache,  
a chorus of yips, and no visibility.

&

*Robert Beveridge*

## On the Death of *Protea*

the blurred images  
that swirl around your head  
have begun to dip  
in their ellipses

drop towards the ground  
slight, to be sure,  
but still downward.

and it always seemed so solvent.

That illusion  
like a picture tube  
on the fritz  
stretches  
into its component parts  
of blue  
green  
red

you  
my first lover  
around as long  
as I

I find it  
vaguely obscene  
I will outlive you

&

*Robert Beveridge*

## Patrolling the Border

The sun rises, looks around,  
withdraws to regain its courage.  
Up again, it still looks timid  
as a tulip. I'm out early,  
plucking trash from the roadside,  
hoping to encourage bunchberry,  
clintonia, and wild ginger—  
flowers gone nearly extinct  
after flourishing for decades  
along our dead-end road. The day  
promises and promises but  
won't follow through. Orpheus  
won't see Eurydice again,  
Ophelia won't start swimming,  
and our assassinated Presidents  
won't resume their leadership.  
I'm sick of Dunkin' Donuts bags,  
of plastic pints of vodka,  
chocolate milk gone sickly,  
Milky Way wrappers flapping  
on the rim of the marsh where peepers  
chant in a disciplined chorus.  
I bag the trash so emphatically  
it squeals in protest. Old friends  
would laugh at my flailing gestures,  
but they've all died and left me  
to patrol the boundary between  
nature and culture by myself.  
The sun has gained some strength  
and I sweat enough to attract  
a maze of blackflies keening  
their indelible, inaudible rage.  
My bag is full. I heft it home  
to deliver to the landfill,  
where even the feisty dreams fade,  
leaving only the faintest  
and least offensive odors.

&

*William Doreski*

## Celestial Ado

The hairy, unshaven angels  
are the only ones I trust.  
The clean-shaven ones more  
resemble me, but swim through  
the ether with tasteless effects,  
their haloes overripe neon,  
their spark-trails arch and gaudy.

Neither rough nor smooth versions  
shield me from vulgar moments.  
Their wings shiver the overcast  
in their breathless stoop at speed;  
but they never alight and peer  
into my psyche to understand  
how the daily insult warps me.

Still, when I see the hairy ones  
perch in flowering apple trees  
I'm reassured. When I spot  
one of the sleeker varieties  
zooming along a crisp horizon  
I assume some greedy, pompous  
faux-religious fathead benefits.

Lacking the thick skin of faith,  
I've no right to a blessing,  
but those who deserve don't get them.  
In this season of tingling nerves  
only the richest people earn  
that smug beatific smile  
the moment before sainthood.

Meanwhile the angels flutter past  
with their chatter too high-pitched  
for the human ear to process.  
Although I often spot them  
posing like vultures, I worry  
that they're only rags blown about  
by the rugged western winds.



The hairy ones look especially  
weather-worn, their wings tattered,  
halo-batteries depleted,  
white gowns dappled with filth,  
As they prop themselves against the world  
they sing the palest hosannas  
offkey as the cackle of crows.

&

*William Doreski*

## Melody

I sing a shattered song  
of someone else's youth  
the melody forgotten  
the words faded into odd  
syllables heard in my dreams.  
The coyote stands at the edge  
of a gully staring at me  
and wondering why I slip  
from the hogan through  
the hole punched  
in the back wall  
slinking away  
in the encroaching dark.  
The priest, his saffron robes  
pulled tight around his legs  
in the morning chill,  
stares as I run my hands  
across the giant brass bell  
feeling its resonance.  
I hear the dirge  
as sleep nips at the edge  
of my consciousness  
grabbing the frayed  
margins of life.

&

*Lou Faber*

## I Spend the Empty Hours

I spend considerable time thinking  
about what it is that I am, what is I,

whether Descartes' God or Spinoza's  
could possibly exist, or must if I can have

meaning beyond self-reflection, needing  
a godly mirror, and image reflected.

Cogito, on what basis can I draw that conclusion  
what logical proof, carefully constructed will

not fall under the weight of the axiom, cogito cogito  
but of what? Keys that spit words that fade

under a misplaced finger, she caught in the web  
twisting, unable to pull free, staring at

an approaching holiday of praying forgiveness  
Vidui, as though to posit God is to validate

emotions, control impulses which leap synapses  
and flit and fade, I have sinned and transgressed

I have violated laws and statutes and I beg  
forgiveness that I might live, this I, this cogito

who has no external reference save God  
which makes all things real, all illusion.

It is comforting knowing in death the soul is  
carried on, thought lingers, or does it cease

such that I am not for I think not, yet why should  
I fear, for when it is done, I will not have been

save as a reference point, a linchpin from which  
may hang ornaments of a life, a tidy sum.

&

*Lou Faber*

## Inside the Page

She asks innocently,  
listening to the wind whispering  
through the bare branches of the oak,  
"How long have you lived  
in this poem," pointing  
to the page of marked  
and remarked typescript.  
He looks at her as if discovering  
she'd grown another head,  
peeking out from between  
her well-polished teeth.  
"I have no idea what you mean,"  
he says, "I write the poems—  
it is up to you to furnish them."  
She grimaces, "That's so wrong,"  
a third head appeared, grinning,  
"if you build poems on spec  
they are sterile little boxes  
that you foist off on the unwary.  
Plant all the flowers you want  
around it, it will still  
have the antiseptic smell  
should we dare step into it.  
That's just the difference  
between us," she adds, "I can see  
the song of the wind  
played by the trees, but you,  
you see only the blankness  
of the unadorned walls."

&

*Lou Faber*

## First Will Be Last

We lived in the last house only briefly.  
You never really settled in.  
It was the strangers that bothered you,  
and the dog that licked your hand,  
made you wonder why the beast was so friendly.

Your withered hand in mine  
couldn't settle the confusion.  
Who filled the vases with such ungainly flowers?  
Why are the tiles in those colors  
and the carpet a hue that's something entirely other?

You couldn't make sense of the ceiling  
or the photographs on the dresser—  
intruders, you called them.  
Someone dropped by claiming to be your brother.  
The kitchen was a web of mysterious doings.  
And your bed was a different one each night.

The past was as impossible to remember  
as it was easy to relive.  
The war was over. Your man was home.  
The house on Adelaide Avenue was for sale.  
It was painted a light brown.  
They called it fawn in those days.  
That's the word you keep repeating  
when you wander through the unfamiliar garden,  
in shoes that don't hurt  
but look like they should,  
staring up at the place  
that does nothing but cast shadow.

By the way,  
that last house, the one we lived in only briefly,  
was the first house, the one we inhabited  
for so many years.  
For much of that time, I was your son.  
All of it as far as I'm concerned.  
At least, that's my excuse.  
What's yours?

&

*John Grey*

## Think About It Cousin

Think about it cousin  
That place where we grew up  
The hills, the river, the fields  
Those narrow maple-lined streets  
In that sleepy little town  
They are us, and we are it  
That's who we are...that's who we are

Think about it cousin  
That Catholic religion  
Poured over us  
Like water-boarding  
We were given the injection before  
We even knew what hit us

Think about it cousin  
Those stories of the old days  
Ridiculing us for how good we had it  
While during the (Great) Depression  
They ate beavers and raccoons and carp  
And had to marry their daughters off young

Think about it cousin  
That white Cape Cod house overlooking the river  
And us eventually claiming separate bedrooms  
For our privacy, and so that we could beat off  
That was the ejaculation of our youth  
We were separated, yet somehow joined at the hip

Think about it cousin  
With only rare exceptions we  
hardly ever went anywhere  
away from that sleepy little town  
And then we went off to college, and only  
on rare exceptions ever came back home

Think about it cousin  
We are the progeny of a hardworking factory  
worker and a hard working grocery store clerk  
Who only wanted the best for us through the  
sweat of their brows, and the calluses on their hands  
Those times now faded to faint warm memories  
That's who we are...that's who we are

&

***John C. Krieg***

## Under the bus-stop.

buses through traffic, like cattle  
which shift between sheep. and the road  
very busy; loud  
and very  
five o'clock. it rained  
all morning, heavily, and now  
it is still raining - the only people walking  
are those who don't have cars.

outside the office my boots are cold  
and supposed to be waterproof - they aren't,  
but I suppose they are - just enough  
that the water which gets in  
stays in there, as if life  
were so trite  
of a metaphor.

under the bus stop  
we huddle  
like mushrooms  
coming up on treeroots  
or the legs of cows - lined faces beaten,  
or young  
and ready to be lined. the bus has come  
and halts puddled,  
its lights  
cutting the weather. we get on,  
smelling badly  
of hot and fallen rain.

&

*DS Maolalai*

I was lucky she didn't ask but it ended a week later anyway without  
much fuss.

"did I do something wrong?" she asked me  
when, still full of guilt,  
I couldn't come  
and rolled off her. I  
pulled away the rubber,  
sighing  
and hugging her back against my belly.  
she was warm under the duvet  
and her ankle  
curled around my shin like a kitten.  
"no" I said  
kissing her on the shoulder  
where it met her neck,  
"no,  
I did."

&

*DS Maolalai*



## Steak hamburgers.

and well, we might be walking  
in the park some morning  
arm-in-arm near an apartment  
which we haven't even  
chosen yet, just so the dog  
can get some piss out

before we really  
make our day  
start. and we might be  
walking together  
or we might be  
walking alone, taking turns walking.  
and I might be eating breakfast  
while you pick up shits  
or you might be doing that  
while I do. that's the thing;

we may take turns at it. we care about  
each other, and accept  
that sometimes  
you won't want to go out  
or I won't. it's functional  
as a decision, and beautiful as the park becomes  
when you have to go every day. like eating steak  
hamburgers - eventually  
it stops being a treat. perhaps that's

what I'm frightened of; us living together.  
that steak hamburgers  
won't be enough anymore.  
sometimes you might  
want sushi - or a bird in the park  
in the morning singing for a moment  
while we walk around,  
watching the dog  
stopping them.

&

*DS Maolalai*

## Some Virtual Housekeeping

Crucial deadline at midnight, today or tomorrow  
or was it yesterday? Time in these walls comes in from the windows,  
reducing the hours to a mere glissando of light,  
I know tonight things will be live, but I forget the address  
and who I'm supposed to tune into to see,  
the least I can do is stay motivated at home and I'm failing already

Complete transparency: I am one of the failures  
of the corporate establishment, the launch I planned for collapsed,  
I didn't sign the petition, sign up to volunteer, or donate  
a few bucks in my solidarity confinement,  
in a comment section I accessed my intelligence for a bit, that's it  
until briefings on my thought processes became too much

Rumors of being stimulated abound, I dutifully wait  
along with everyone else online for the perfect post to get moving,  
meanwhile, I am the entrenched incumbent of this space,  
powerless, as the deep-rooted terror of Tuesday continues,  
surrounded by data and no way to prevent its loss,  
as I try to crunch out a quarantine must-read to affirm somebody's life.

&

*Ben Nardolilli*

## Haiku

a patchwork of sky  
greying clouds sewn together  
with seams of sunlight

after a night storm  
collage of ripped leaf and twig  
lies beneath my feet

sweet chestnut pom-poms  
balance on brown knotted twigs  
spikes freshly sharpened

&

*P.J. Reed*

## Bird Brain's Mind(ful)less Play

### **i. Smoldering Blossoms**

Vaping kyboshed then  
CDC best practice wacks  
weed puffs to prevent

COVID lung damage  
should I contract damn virus  
—it's down to gummies

judged by whether poem  
weather pops sound ideas,  
takes you where they bloom.

### **ii. Coat Of Many...Yada Yada**

I am a member  
of the clubby biblical  
tribe includes Joseph.

Cottoning nosegays  
that are variegated,  
well as multi-hued

veggie stew and clothes,  
wonder if mind biopsy'd  
be Technicolor?

### **iii. Human Growth Hormone**

During our evening  
together, I spooned her lush  
bite of honeydew

that to my taste buds  
was about two days past due,  
just a bit too late

but which she did not  
appreciate until I  
articulated.

Amazing – we thought  
after fifty years there's no  
new thing to reveal.

#### **iv. Universal Bonds**

Expedient lock  
and key catalyst, Gerard  
figures out how to

take patriarchy  
to new level: u're enzyme  
connecting Skidel

(now in Belarus)  
websites kept by dead cuz  
with flood Sarnatzky

worldwide kin wishing  
to maintain heritage—I  
contact her child who'll

find password, transfer  
admin so we can maintain  
our legacy's flame.

Izzy and Fanny,  
Dad's immigrant parents, would  
be proud of my glue.

Plus the beauty of  
such a plan is that it will  
require not much time.

#### **v. Nobel Prize?**

At last idea  
arises: inflammation's  
components include

pain, redness, swelling,  
heat: if can separate them  
so pain's canary

which alerts body  
early, perhaps able to  
prevent worse events.

Hypothesis: folks  
who live to oldest range get  
sentinel signals.

On one hand that's great.  
On another, it's a pain  
in ass to suffer.

&

***Gerry Sarnat***

## Mother Moon

the moon bathes the ponds with her luminous face  
rough-hewn growls, broken beers and souls,  
her white veil does erase  
dancing among shadows  
astride a plum-colored sky  
she calls the world to slumber  
wipes blurs from aged eyes

&

*Yash Seyedbagheri*

## Conjugal Space(s) #7

—your dog's got wounds he can't stop licking much like you / a motel room in  
northern Michigan but could be anywhere / your wife is in the shower humming /  
plumbing vent fan thrumming / you imagine other guests in flipflops milling  
swilling lobby coffee all self-medicating / from his bed the dog looks up at you like  
Adam up at God absurd / the phone's half-charged you check the scores your team  
blown out again / your life you like it well enough you like it well / the stars  
invisible in daylight reason blinds you sometimes / up to you to see tonight's sky full  
of scattered stars like salt that burns or that you savor //

&

*Thomas Zimmerman*



## Blowing Smoke

When I play my dad's old record albums—  
Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson—  
I smell his cigarette smoke in the sleeves.  
I smell it too in his leather bomber jacket  
I've worn for 15 years. A little long for me:  
he stood 6'1"; I got my mother's height.  
Smoke killed her: emphysema  
after five decades of two packs a day.  
They had her on oxygen near the end.  
On the rest-home patio,  
my sister and I would yank the tubes,  
light one up (the nurses knew she kept a stash),  
and let her puff till her lips turned blue.

I was stoned to the point of vertigo  
the night I met the woman who would be my wife.  
I saw it only darkly.  
When we lived in North Dakota,  
I swear I swallowed smoke one time:  
squatting over the portable grill,  
bratwursts sizzling, skin cracking,  
wind 30 miles an hour, bellyache just short of puking.  
I remember a crop duster coming in,  
horizon line miles away.  
Topsoil from the sugar-beet fields  
like brown smoke suspended in air,  
tractors tearing the veil from Earth.

&

*Thomas Zimmerman*

## Contributors' Notes

### **Robert Beveridge**

Robert Beveridge makes noise ([xterminal.bandcamp.com](http://xterminal.bandcamp.com)) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. His first publication in a non-school-restricted magazine came in *Protea Poetry Journal* in November, 1988. Recent/upcoming appearances include *Red Coyote Review*, *Deep South Magazine*, and *Aromatica Poetica*, among others.

### **William Doreski**

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where he raises cats and nettles. He has published three critical studies and several collections of poetry. His work has appeared in many print and online journals. He has taught at Emerson College, Goddard College, Boston University, and Keene State College. His most recent book is *Stirring the Soup*. He has a blog at: [williamdoreski.blogspot.com](http://williamdoreski.blogspot.com)

### **Lou Faber**

Lou Faber is a retired Corporate Attorney and adjunct college English Literature instructor now living adjacent to a small wetland preserve in Port St. Lucie, Florida. He added an M.F.A. in Writing to his degree collection in 2002. His work has appeared in *The Poet* (UK), *North of Oxford*, *Atlanta Review*, *Arena Magazine* (Australia), *Exquisite Corpse*, *Rattle*, *Eureka Literary Magazine*, *Borderlands: the Texas Poetry Review*, *Midnight Mind*, *Pearl*, *Midstream*, *European Judaism*, *Greens Magazine*, *The Amethyst Review*, *Afterthoughts*, *The South Carolina Review* and *Worcester Review*, among many others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

### **John Grey**

John Grey is an Australian born short storywriter, poet, playwright, musician, and Providence, RI resident; has published in numerous magazines including *Weird Tales*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Greensboro*, *Poetry Review*, *Poem*, *AGNI*, *Poet Lore*, and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, as well as the horror anthology *What Fears Become* and the science fiction anthology *Futuredaze*; has had plays produced in Los Angeles and off-off Broadway in New York; and is winner of the Rhysling Award for short genre poetry in 1999.

### **John C. Krieg**

John C. Krieg grew up in the small town of Olean, New York. The surrounding environment in this area flourishes with life in spring, is radiant green in summer, riotous with autumn color, and dismal in winter. Olean was awash in baby-boom kids during a simpler, safer time affording him lifelong friendships. Adopted by his aunt and uncle, he lived in a hard working household where everyone was loved and expected to pull their weight, which gave him his maniacal work ethic. In his youth he lived to be out on the waters of the Allegheny River and still yearns to be. John has been hammering away at his writing desk for over 30 years with varying degrees of success. The trials and tribulations of this craft has taught him one bedrock truth, which, to quote the great Ann Lamont, is: "Publishing isn't all it's cracked up to be, but writing is."

### **DS Maolalai**

DS Maolalai was once described by an editor as "prolific bordering on incontinent." His poetry has been nominated six times for Best of the Net and three times for the Pushcart Prize, and has been released in two collections; "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019).

**Ben Nardolilli**

Ben Nardolilli currently quarantines in New York City. His work has appeared in *Perigee Magazine*, *Red Fez*, *Danse Macabre*, *The 22 Magazine*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Elimae*, *The Northampton Review*, *Local Train Magazine*, *The Minetta Review*, and *Yes Poetry*. He blogs at [mirrorsponge.blogspot.com](http://mirrorsponge.blogspot.com) and is trying to publish his novels.

**P.J. Reed**

P.J. Reed is an award winning multi-genre author with books ranging from high fantasy, horror, to haiku. She writes the *Richard Radcliffe Paranormal Investigations* series and the *Bad Decisions* series. Reed is also the editor and chief paranormal investigator for the *Exmoor Noir* newsletter. Reed lives in Devon, England with her two daughters, two rescue dogs, and one feral cat called Sammy. For more information visit: <https://pjreedwriting.wixsite.com/poetry>

**Gerry Sarnat**

Gerry Sarnat won San Francisco Poetry's 2020 Contest, "Poetry in Arts" First Place Award, plus The Dorfman Prize; has been nominated for Pushcart/Best of the Net awards; authored *HOMELESS CHRONICLES* (2010), *Disputes* (2012), *17s* (2014), *Melting The Ice King* (2016); and is widely published, including by Stanford, Oberlin, Brown, Columbia, Virginia Commonwealth, Harvard, Penn, Dartmouth, Wesleyan, Johns Hopkins, Universities of Chicago/Maine/Edinburgh, *Gargoyle*, *Margie*, *Main Street Rag*, *New Delta Review*, *Northampton Poetry Review*, *Peauxdunque Review*, *Canary Eco*, *Vonnegut Museum/Library Literary Journal*, 2020 International Human Rights Art Festival, *Buddhist Poetry Review*, *Military Experience and the Arts*, *Cliterature*, *Brooklyn Review*, *Texas Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *San Francisco Magazine*, *New York Times*, *Berlin Review*, *London Reader*. Mount Analogue selected KADDISH for distribution nationwide Inauguration Day, and his poetry was chosen for a 50th Harvard reunion Dylan symposium. Gerry's a physician who's built/staffed clinics for the marginalized. He's been a Stanford professor and a healthcare CEO. [gerardsarnat.com](http://gerardsarnat.com)

**Yash Seyedbagheri**

Yash Seyedbagheri is a graduate of Colorado State University's MFA program in fiction. His story, "Soon," was nominated for a Pushcart and Yash has also had work nominated for The Best Small Fictions. Yash's stories and poems are forthcoming or have been published in *Write City Magazine*, *WestWard Quarterly*, *Café Lit*, and *Ariel Chart*, among others. A self-proclaimed Romantic and Tchaikovsky devotee, Yash lives in Garden Valley, Idaho.

**Thomas Zimmerman**

Thomas Zimmerman teaches English, directs the Writing Center, and edits *The Big Windows Review* at Washtenaw Community College, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He has recent poems in *Ephemeral Elegies*, *Trestle Ties*, and *Versification: An Exposition of Micro and Punk Poetry*. Tom's website: <https://thomaszimmerman.wordpress.com>

## Submissions

All submissions welcome.

Email up to 5 works per reading period to:  
tuvell@outlook.com

Spring reading ends February 1, Summer ends May 1, Fall ends August 1, and Winter ends November 1.

Simultaneous submissions are fine, but *These Lines* wants first rights, and you as contributor must take care of any complications.

Consider when formatting that content will be published using Times New Roman typeface. A detailed demonstration of presentation and typography decisions is maintained as *These Lines*, volume 0, number 0, Summer 2020, created using public domain material.

## About

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Please direct queries of any sort to:  
[tuvell@outlook.com](mailto:tuvell@outlook.com)

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*TheseLines.org* delivers a static html site from an Apache installation on a computer at my home. Issues will be available in ODT, PDF, EPUB, and DOCX formats, updated to newer specifications as warranted. This design is inspired in part by the Cocoon and Forrest projects.