

Democratic Socialists of America

BUILD



— *SPRING 2019* —

Special Poetry Issue



Build is online at dsabuild.org and on Twitter at [@BuildDSA](https://twitter.com/BuildDSA). Pitches should be sent to BuildTheDSA@gmail.com

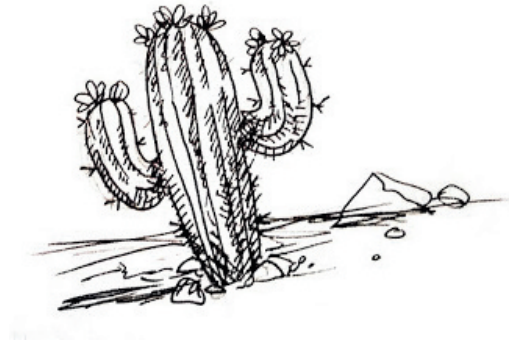
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James Knox-Davies is the guest editor for the special poetry edition of Build. He is also the regular poetry editor for Protean Magazine (proteanmag.com), a left-leaning magazine of essays, art, and literature. His Twitter is [@BigProsody](https://twitter.com/BigProsody), and he is very, very tall.



FORWARD



A YEAR AGO I found myself a poet. I'm too old to be a prodigy and I don't have the money to be poor, but here I am all the same only on account of the gravity. It's not a calling, or it doesn't feel like one. For the same reason my feet never make it very off the ground, I am here in the prosody game, writing and editing a zine (others have also decided to write poems voluntarily, i.e. not by my orders). And we're aware of (but not being hysterical about) the roar of potential calamity¹ which schemes to somehow ambush the whole planet. With these ridiculous stakes — where we find the millenarian nonsense of wobbly songs and old long blog posts turns out to be true — what possible reason is there for busying ourselves with poetry?

¹ United Nations IPCC report on climate change, which figures that unless "unprecedented" action is taken before 2030, hundreds of millions will be displaced
[This is IRL/not from an anime]

figure 1

percent of American adults who read at least one poem that year

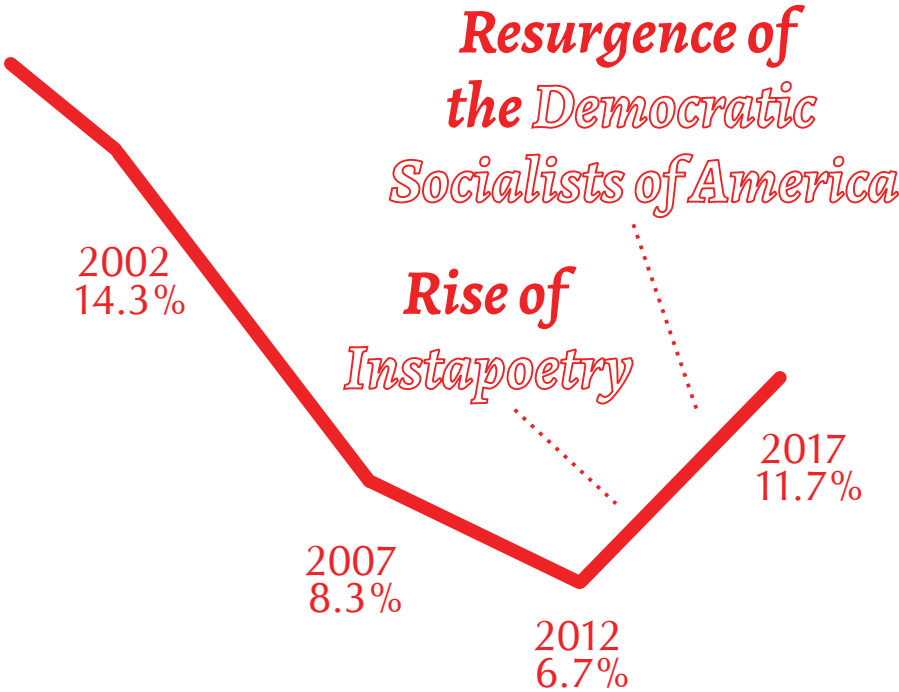


Our predicament is this: the average American dislikes themselves and about weekly hates someone new. They couldn't place Yemen on a map, but are made uncomfortable when they hear the word because it generally means they're about to be scolded for being ignorant. There's something stupid and ugly about their life, yet they have the vague sense someone else is paying dearly to sustain it, and that both parties are simultaneously noble and wretched. They pray that their lives are meaningless.

A ghost (stop snickering) this damaged cannot be repaired or reused. We'll recycle what we can, but the immediate task of the gobsmackingly inevitable poetry caucus is this: afford the inheritors of the flesh-melted Nazism of the American Empire a chance at dignity by putting into their hands a stiletto with which they can solve the problem.

No further explanation of any kind will be provided.

Data from the "Survey on Public Participation in the Arts", conducted every five years by the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1997, the survey was outsourced due to budget cuts, and differences in how the survey was conducted rendered data for the year incompatible.



NATURE POEM

Erika Paschold (Lincoln)

Some days, without notice
I think the data will save us.
We talk about moving parts
as if we aren't among them.
There are more numbers
in a strand of spider's web
than in the world's biggest
spreadsheet. You catalog
the world's deepest rivers
as if we aren't among them.
The physics engine tries
to chart the falling feather
on a still February morning
and fails, but it's getting
closer. Always remember,
the earth is solid enough
to touch and alive enough
to bury.

A POEM FOR ROTH2020.COM

Adam Ultraburg (Los Angeles)

Lord,
Let me campaign with the confidence
Of Jerry Lee Lewis
Explaining
He does his Lewis boogie
In the Lewis Way.

DREAM IN WHICH YOU ARE INEFFECTIVELY SURVEILLED

Marie Buck (Detroit)

At a political meeting I am told by someone who would know that you should assume the government is reading everything you write and hearing everything you say.

If you're putting it on a screen—in Word, in text, wherever, they're collecting it. We can make it harder for them with things like Signal, but the only real obstacle they have to knowing everything you write and say is that there is too much data.

That is, the technology to actually sift through all these sounds and words isn't there yet, though they're working on it.

And so you should assume everything on a screen is being read. And everything you say is being heard.

I.e., the abundance of our writing and talking is what interferes with the government's ability to surveil us. The more we write and talk the better.

Your phone is listening in therapy, for instance.

It's reading the sadnesses you convey to friends via text or email or on a walk back from the gym or huddled up in a bar corner.

It knows all your complaints and desires.

And since it's not selective in what it listens to, in hearing the voices of our comrades at meetings discussing communication platforms and arguing about approaches to protesting ICE, it also hears our desire for love.

Joke's on them; capitalism makes people too lonely to surveil.

I.e., if we all text each other enough, surveillance will fail; the nurture that our phone notifications provide will enact a spell to create more time.

We'd all lie around in a giant king-sized bed, fucking in various configurations until someone, getting slightly soft, tried to figure out what was wrong and get back into it, snuck off to the kitchen for water while everyone else continued, tripped over the cat dish and spilled cat food on the floor, etc., then checked their phone and saw something awful was happening.

And once everyone had exhausted themselves, our genitals would change back to crotches, to Barbie-doll-style, non-needy plastic hinges, allowing us to think more clearly.

Desire satisfied, we'd begin to experience more desire, but—since we knew the political situation—we could channel that desire, brushing our lips over one another's plastic, smoothed-over labia and clits until the brushing produced something that was not cum, and also not a weapon, but instead a device, a device the embedded us more concretely into ourselves and expanded the time that we would have: we would go to the meeting, we would print the fliers, we would show up to the things, we would attach ourselves to others, all without losing our jobs, without petting our cats any less frequently, without losing the moment in which we, drifting to sleep, shoot back up having dreamt ourselves stepping off a surface into nothing; even that dumb moment that we hate even in the moment itself, feeling our pulses surge with anxiety, even that dumb moment would stay with us as long as we wanted it to.

We would do this nightly: we would return home, we would fuck again, we would fall asleep on one another on a couch, we would make food, we would lie in each other's arms, we would talk, we would feel our desire surge, we would fuck, we would come home from work and work more, we would have a capacity for stressful project management tasks, we would fuck some more, our genitals would oscillate from the form for sexual desire to the form for political desire and back again, over and over, getting wet and not wet, flooding each other's chins and then retracting into little hills, we'd watch a labor documentary together, we'd eat something, we'd fall asleep, our bodies untaxed by days of endless work.

And so knowing this is possible, we produce text that is only about love, no one cares to read it, rudimentary AI skims our sexts, here we are doing push-ups, here, we're thinking about you cumming on our faces, here is an animal, here is some funny garbage on the street, what are you doing later, here look at us and we'll look at you, I put lube on my fingers, I rub my face in an armpit, there are so many of us here, but, as though we're dreaming, the scene shifts suddenly.

CREATION MYTH

John Leo (Indianapolis)

observe the lobster god collecting
fog in a jar. the fog jigs, bucks,
apopleptic & sinnerly. i too

have a face like a lobster. the fog
and the god quiver with delight.
the lobster god tells me the fog is an angel.

isn't it incredible to pity
like this? i tickle
the jar with my lobster teeth.

the jar begins to bleed. i lick it up. i spit tar.
it sizzles. we've created the sky.
the lobster god twists in his blue pajamas.

i accept my gift, whatever it is. my eyes
are each wishes. i choose one to keep.
the other explodes into an ocean.

1 1ST ST., W.VA.

Wendy Boyton (Richmond)

Janus is a two-faced god,
Looking to the future
By looking at the past.
They're standing at the threshold,

Between a new beginning
And the click-shut of an end.
They're existing in liminality,
Somewhere between ethereal hope

And damnable destruction.
They're watching the turning wheel,
From the quiet war from words
To the screaming peace from action.

And their full wrath we've yet to see.
That's up to you and up to me.
Janus is a two-faced god.

DEATH IS NOT A DIALECTIC

Ena Lee (New York City)

for Leah, 1993-2017

death is not a dialectic,
there is no you to negotiate
between me and them and
this narrow plane we call
“still breathing” you are gone
and nothing will bring you back.

theory fails a world ripped asunder
by the coagulation of your blood
too late, the snap of the noose
too late tell me if Marx had an answer
to Despair, I have read and read
and there is nothing that unfrays rope,
pushes blood between the rips of your skin,
scoops the sodden mash of pills
right out your fucking throat.

no intellectual hollow will moss
the granite of your grave.
we will not pay pilgrimage
to some well-kept graveyard
and take a picture with fist raised.
and no one knew to carve
a hammer & sickle into that stone
--all power to the soviets!--
though we say you melted
into the procession of endless workers
who died for the cause, revolting.

there was nothing exceptional
in that you died: it was only in
how quickly we moved on.
yet I still lay here, mourning
You; I cannot forget
the ways you died before your death,
the way you lost your breath.
death is not a fucking dialectic.

UNTITLED

Cate Root (New Orleans)

i sit in an empty office. 20th floor. look out: charity, billionaire tower,
city hall. the superhome.
my heart aches and i don't know why i'm bleeding.
years trying to read my body, like marquez's book of sand, or was it
the one
where the man falls off a horse and suddenly knows everything in the
world,
but he's insane, because that much knowledge is incompatible with
reality.
what am i supposed to remember? story and myth and art and the
way
my spanish teacher laughed, her jokes. the stories about chile and
argentina.
flightless birds pushed by wind.
laughter, stem cells of exaggeration. forever young.
the room is dark and i'm sitting on the floor and
no one knows where i am.
the day is dark. i watch movement. trucks, school buses, cars. lights
blink. i see the hyatt house, where the ice soldiers disappear people.
i feel dark. i wait out hours, thinking of home. thinking of
blooming spices in oil, the smell of chiles dried and crushed and new
again.
sear smells into white-painted walls. intoxicate the air with my
alchemy.
until,
i watch the scrolling of the city. background
movement. i know how they all feel. right now i am pretending that i
am asleep.

UTAH JAZZ FAN

Tiffany H. (Long Beach)

Fingertips buzz over keys;
or more likely thumbs
over a smooth glass surface.
Virtual letters form feverish words.
They tumble out with a graceless
mockery of intelligence.

Spit out the words.
Slam them.
Let them know how much you despise
any comrade who is worth a damn.
Call idpol a psyop.
Call them, the real leftists,
the uppity feminists, the queers,
the loathsome radicals
by your favorite slur.

Assassinate them
with pseudo-intellectual samplings
of Freud and fictive psychoanalysis
apropos of nothing.
But not before I check
my favorite team.

I am so smart.

WOKE UP DRUNK

Jordan Romanov (Los Angeles)

Dusty deli four loko can
Pissed off people outside again (I can hear them)
Girlfriend gone on another trip
Good time as any to get radical

Our group numbers fifteen or so
marching north, up and up Broadway (towards Times Square)
Someone asks what we're about
Can't you hear the sirens though?

We march our way, claiming our streets,
our numbers move and swell and flow (pouring east, west)
We break apart, tighten, relax,
Shut down traffic, avoid the cops

These folks are all for real for real
I'm seconds from being found out (at least I think?)
Getting lost, too drunk on the scene
God damn this is so exciting

Swear to learn about this later
Feels good to be out here again (out with people)
Where did they all come from? My god
I'll be a ghost again come sun

Sing of my civic responsibility

MEMOIR

Erika Paschold (Lincoln)

Back when we were learning our shapes
a man could make me disappear just by pressing
his stethoscope into my back. It would be a fun party trick
if people still had parties where children were forced

to perform tricks. Think *The Sound of Music*
in a world run by magicians. Think *X-Men*
in a world run by nuns. Think *Stranger Things*
in the late 80s instead of the mid-80s.

“The subject is reacting well to treatment.”

“The subject has a high tolerance to pain.”

“The subject is obsessed with Babar the elephant.”

“The subject has an exceptional tolerance to pain.”

The doctors struck a deal with my guardians
to let me stay for free. Wherever I was, my body
pumped full of fluids, I am floating then climbing,
slipping between ceiling tiles,
sleeping in the ductwork.

SURVIVOR'S GUILT

Samantha Clarke (Portland)

I feel a Coming--
not first, or Second,
not the seventh mass one
or the false return of *making it so again*
but dreams of war,
a repetition too deep a brown
to believe how many times,
how many witches,
have felt its approach before.
And yet, again?
And perhaps, more?

**

My ancestors don't know what to say to me.
They pull hard into now,
every part aching like old voices,
just to tell me they're sorry.
Sorry for what?
Sorry I will know what they knew,
sorry I will smell flesh and soil and fire,
sorry I have no cross to wear
around my neck.
Sorry for coming before.
Survivors' guilt from the victims of genocide.

**

It will be barren.
Ash will float, suspended
like our screams
in dark air.
Some of the people who deserve to
will be in desperate, anguished guilt
and more of us
will ask false gods what have we done
when we have done nothing at all,
at most.

**

Those of us who can remember the smell
of honeysuckle,
the juice of overripe peaches
and blueberries,
meadows full of tall wildflowers,
mountain laurel, cherry trees,
jambalaya, ice cream, mujadarrah,
listening to Miles Davis on a summer
afternoon,
will reach through time and ache
just to say we're sorry.

**IN THE COURSE OF THE REVOLUTION, YOU MUST FIRST EXECUTE
THE TRUE BELIEVERS**

Daniel Ammons (Olympia)

Begin with those who believe in the moral righteousness of the cause
They may question your methods
Next strike at those who believe in the historical inevitability of the
struggle
They may question your progress
Finally you must destroy those who believe in the power and voice of
the people
This will not be difficult
Those left with power fear the mob, and will fight to silence it
It is necessary that only the most craven remain
Those with a will to power devoid of principle
These are the safest supporters, for they fear to go against you
You may find that your allies have deserted you
Those beyond your grasp, who hear rumors of your work
Or, perhaps, who no longer hear anything at all
There is no need to worry
Look to your enemies, and find that their acrimony has dulled
They no longer have anything to fear from you
The revolution is complete

ODE TO BOLIVAR

John Leo (Indianapolis)

O hero, skip-tongued, dust clotted. What cost
can I hope to pay with this rabid apparatus,
my gutless coinslot with quivering tongue?

O storm chaser, barn stormer, select
the land to receive my brittle donations:
these parsimonious knucklebones & scut-
tling teeth. I have ground them to diamond
in nightly fistfight with my inner shrieking
landlord. He is renting my body, you see. I am
seizing myself, you see.

O goldensword,
shall I maraud a land of crocodile & riverweed?
Or careen drunken, & spray the inside
of any given limousine with camphor & flame?
If you can offer me hope this early morning,
that when I die I will not die ratlike,
frantic, trapped aboveground in glass perhaps or tar,
I could commit my hands & aching mandible
to the plate for this endless roaring feast.

O namesake, in real life I beg refund
at the help desk of your temple.
I extort sympathy with rota lingua. Look how
I dazzle with brilliant bewildered teeth.
Look how I enter each building as if it were
the hospice I will die in. Observe how I pay
a butcher to lay my pale & paltry arm
across his block.

O hero, bless this dismemberment. Let it mend
the wounds of others. Mend
the kin and the caravan, at the border build
a hedge maze. I will water the roses myself, one sleeve
pinned shut at the elbow, and sleep in the shade
of a bold and better world.

DOG WALKER

Shel Raphen (Pioneer Valley)

Please imagine this, it is so important
Imagine a dog walker in the park
On her leash is a hot dog being dragged through the grass
"Are you walking a hot dog?" you ask
"Yes," she says "gotta pay the bills somehow
We all have to do what we can to get by
It's tough work but this is how I survive"
"What do you do with them when you're done?"
"I return them to their owners"
"Do they eat them?"
all covered in dirt and mud"
"Not my business, I just walk the hot dogs
I have some favorites,
Hot dogs, that is
Favorite ones to walk, that is"
"Who is your favorite?"
"There is a link of bratwurst that lives on the corner of 68th and Oak
The marjoram is fragrant even still after so many walks"
"Can I pet her?"
"Sure"
You kneel down to pet the hot dog
fingers reaching for that shiny skin but
Just then
a Dachshund runs by and eats it up
ah, there it goes

munch
"ah, fuck" says the hot dog walker
"not again..."

182. #BEAUTIFULBEAUTIFULSOCIALISTS

Paul Goodspeed (South New Hampshire)

Getting there a brutal, boring odyssey
But finally, the Promised Land
A fresh green world of wordy workshops
Well-worn words of wisdom and creative constructive instruction
breakouts, brainstorming
bonding over midnight beers
solidarity, socializing, socialism
convivial collective camaraderie
alive in a living, loving, laughing Left

This is a second home
a place to break free and just be
in breakout sessions and breakfast BS
familiar lectures in our favorite gravelly voice
and new speeches from young throats

I scrawl my notes like a student
but I don't mind the calluses on my fingers
carving out knowledge with every drop of ink

Against banal boredom and encroaching slumber
I strike against my own sleepiness, the worst kind of boss
Being here is like your favorite kind of class (working- and other)
Minor banalities like mosquito bites at summer camp
Every minute precious like scarce socialist cash

When it ends, we stand together—literally
Banner-bearing photos, social-media snaps,
and the occasional anthem, like an indoor parade

When it ends, we all scatter like dandelions
hardy and durable, widely scattered
and one day
we will fill this vast land
until we stretch as far as the horizon

GLINTED BEADS

Forrest Teske (Syracuse)

To slave for them that soil our souls,
To rend and tear us with cash colored claws.

They try and make us ghouls of greed,
To rob us of our humanity and the very nature of our human soul,
To act as thieves with masks made of dollars and cents,
To step upon our throats as we yearn for gasps of cool air.

We must, then, create our truth from actions to show the world
changes,
Changes created from the brainchild of defiant and bloodied peoples,
Peoples that have learned fight from a daily survival,
A survival not promised, but as a dangling carrot in front of supposed
mules.

Yet our blinders are of a creation ethereal and phantom,

Ones of spectres of failures past,

Failures drilled into us as orders shouted from high priests of
oppression,
Not the successes censured out of a history our blood remembers as
our minds forget.

Our stubbornness isn't to be criticized by those,
that wish to see us worship at the throne of the gods of profit,
And stagnant, putrid death.

It is to have us lashed to comrades with voluntary need to struggle
onwards,
With eyes unblinded by Utopia or damnation,
But a truth of an imperfect future that glimmers with our sweat and
not gold.

Truly, the only glint true earned,
Our own precious currency owed only to each one as equal,
And each as family,
Mutually bound by what are no longer lashes and bits,
But by straps carried in gritted, smiling Teeth.

SAVIORS AND DOOM

Wendy Boyton (Richmond)

15 years running away from home
Looking over my shoulder to see,
15 years lost alone in the woods
At the crossroads is where I met me,
Caught in the amber of action
The relentless crisis of now,
Wildfire spits from my fingers
As the ocean waves over my bow,
My fellow travelers are monsters
I sing the soft shine of their scales,
Broken glass, fire, and whispers
And laughter to make rulers quail,
Witches haunt alleys, their dance can wake the dead,
With spells made of history, and grave-dirt and of dread,
They're watching you closely, they don't avert their eyes,
They see your hands bloody, wield the moon like a scythe –
I bleed out a torrent of chanting
Of trying, of crying, of love,
I char up too close to the fire
While the embers make sparks dance above,
The moon shines so brightly she blinds me
Melts the ice, causes roses to bloom,
The ocean susurrates symphonic
And gives birth to its saviors and doom.

UNTITLED

Cate Root (New Orleans)

The point of the Wall is to normalize walls.
It is to say, as the planet becomes uninhabitable,
as you search for shelter, food, and water, you should know
there will be walls

DEAR JIMMY

James Suazo (Long Beach)

Somewhere between
the dried scabs
of paper cuts
to the bread
we broke
in ancestral homes
built by tears and oppression,
we reclaimed liberation.

Somehow the gas
doesn't seem to be fuel
but rather
the smoldering embers
huddled amongst the faggots
surviving the blows of wind
are fire
in our hearts and minds.

I like to think that
the fire bakes the bread
that bridges us
to our existence.
United by division
albeit for a moment
of nourishment.

THE TORCH WAS BURIED

M.T. Tual (Lexington)

The torch was buried
But we knew how to dig

There was no shovel
But we had many hands

There were no matches
So we tried every rock until we found flint

Then we walked
Our flame proudly leading

There was a fence
We sang and climbed

There was a wall
We laughed and made a ladder

There were some traps
We whistled and threw them aside

Then we walked
Our flame proudly leading

And when we came to the big house
We knocked on the doors

And when the servant came
We asked for the master

And when the master came
We asked him why he buried our torch

Then we walked
Our flame proudly leading

WHAT IS A MOB

Michael Malloy (Merced)

What is a mob?

Is it a missile? Is it a bomb,
waiting and ticking,
humming and hissing?

What is a mob?

Is it like the sea? Does it sway
like the ocean and grind against stone
until a mountain falls away?

What is a mob?

Is it like the sky? Is it our canvas
the border and the content
the material we are molded from?

These may be the mob

but I have seen it thrown over the streets like a robe,
like clothing; covering the naked city.
hiding the rudeness of empty streets.

I have seen the mob

Open its mouth and scream as one,
and I have seen the mob listen
and grow strong.

I have seen the mob do many things

but I wait, patiently, trusting its mass
knowing that like the tide; like the sky,
our mob will be there, and the mob
will have its law.

HYMN OF THE DISCARDED

Justin Reid (Asheville)

As the stars cross this lavender sky,
I find myself alone all over again.
Dreams that have faded, promises unkept,
I only behold a world defined by its pain.

Yet when this place gets so cold and angry
I hear what I've lost among the heavens.
Echo of a remembrance or maybe a delusion
I somehow reassure myself that I'm good enough.

And by some chance I've found others here too,
maybe they're as lost and sad as I am.
But yet they've found a way to make something new,
a home from this ether that bound us together.

At last in this ecstasy of hope and regret
I build a way forward from isolation.
A highway of ideas, an oasis of endless wisdom
I paint the sky red like the worker's blood in me.

And in this place where people aren't too busy
I can build the life that my mom wanted for me.
Maybe I'm a freak and a weirdo like they say
but here I sing words of acceptance to everyone.

YOUR EXISTENTIAL CRISIS HAS GOOD RHYTHM

Emiliano Lopez-Carrillo (Long Beach)

I'm really out here being fucking self-loathing
and sad when shit was fine.

Like...

take a deep breath.

It's fine...

I'm continuing the story.

My narrative is that I'm a failure

Fundamentally broken and wrong

Fucking be happy

Like actually happy

Good things are not the exception

Fuck qualifiers.

Fuck that shit for real.

Like dope

Feel shit

But let happiness be

Don't dwell

Just be present

Yeah you're just some fucking dude trying

Shit happens, you'll be ok

Its ok for things to have not worked out

You're doing a good job

Like actual gratitude

Too many fucking qualifiers

GARBAGE POEM

Serena (St. Louis)

Mixed sadness and terror
Humbly mentioned in the comments
Accumulate in the garbage
Bag where I have three peaches
I prefer to call pink purses
Wealth of astringent flesh
Pulped, so humble now

RUST FACTORY

Rick Claypool (Pittsburgh)

The rust factory belches branches.
Flakes, crumbs, thousand-ton chunks tumble,
Spilling slag, seeping slime.

Seeds root in nooks. Sprouts pry cracks.
A slow-motion shucking
Opens acres of smoke stacks.
Stems and leaves erupt toward a cloud-cloaked sun.

The rust factory rots realities.
A phantom organ tangled forever in our weedy world,
Cement scars trace buried paths. Branching to nothing.

The rust factory spreads and sprawls, manufacturing memories.
The sight of it is the fuel. It spends itself
Until the memory and the stain are buried forever

EVERYTHING SNOWED ON IN ARIZONA IS ILLEGAL

James Knox-Davies (Los Angeles)

"Nothing's impossible," it's not a joke but if you heard laughing you'd know what serious nothing to remind them it isn't funny. Once, Impossible bellyflopped on concrete with snapped atoms, nearby somebody unbunkered bapped a sunbaked Gumby.

"What became of nothing?" he asks. "Nothing is impossible," answers the green and irradiated wedge-headed wretch. Something will come. Would or will, you wonder, the child resent deployment below whatever still flying standard's left?

Yet (and blues aren't rigor), how and why are I and you so sure? Yes, this is how these things unfold, but we're out of time at last! What last decade awaits if the turning year itself is disturbed? The sand now does more than fall. The hourglass hatched.

COMMUTER

Ryan Boyd (Los Angeles)

You tour by bus the newest crush
of tents as plentiful as dust
in LA's arid months, and wish
it were a different rush, this
malice of markets that feed you blood—
you tour by bus, washed
in books and earbuds, the cost
of doing business. As for us?
I wish you luck, since hell
is an emerald city where all
the citizens cash checks cut
by filthy knives from silver gluts
of capital. You tour by bus.
Who forgives you? I hope my brother must.

FALLEN STARS

Carl Straut-Collard (Brooklyn)

Fleeing violence and starvation
for a told safer destination
The place of possibility
Releasing small doses of dignified fragrancey
The refugee mother and her infant
meet the sharp, icy-white knife
hiding behind myths of prosperity's humane life
ordered to cut the biological ties
of their dirty, non-pure fingertips
and their dark brown, blue-less eyes

A cherished commodity taken for granted
in the senseless nation gone absurdly rampant

Illegal cries desperately howl at empty skies
The lost, confused, alienated child
has forgotten how to form a smile
Dispatched to a futile enclosure,
the one thing she wants
is Mama to tightly hold her
Forced to an unknown court
without the means to represent herself
life sits in the balance,
time put up on the shelf

Two fresh detainees now sit alone
in a place vicariously unknown,
bewildered by the brutality of another terror-filled home
they simply wanted to call their own

.

HE'S A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST, AFTER ALL

Samantha Clarke (Portland)

I fight for the ordinary man, he says,
tripping over his well-ironed slacks and excuses

for such errors as
rolling his eyes

at the thrill and hum and mechanic glory
of *they're just driving in circles*

at the startling genius of the bartender
who can't spell half the drinks she can make

at the honesty behind bus chatter
and crass jokes at a barbecue.

The ordinary man

-oh, of course, women too-

The ordinary man, as seen on TV

and certainly not as seen on the other side of town.

DOWN THE WELL AGAIN

Kev H. (Northern Virginia)

once again i crawl back into the well,
the well in the center of my room,
and scream.

i scream about the world,
about the naked corruption,
the fascists planting their vulgar flags,
the pillaging of nature,
our imminent demise at the hands of a vengeful planet.

i scream about the people i hate,
producing content i despise,
offering takes that should condemn them to hell,
or at least that's how it feels at the time.

i scream about how i hate my life,
every second another nail on the chalkboard,
even though i'm doing my best to make it
it's never fucking enough.

and then i'm silent.

i wait and listen,
to hear the chime
and the sound of a bird,
letting me know they care,
that they agree,
that they wish things could be better too,
that all those assholes are wrong and i'm right.

nothing has changed,
nothing has gotten better,
nothing has been accomplished,
but my fear and anger are put away
for a short time.

what good is this ritual?
what am i doing with the precious time
i have available to me?
what good is it to wear my fucking throat dry
if by the time my voice has left me
and my lungs are torn and broken
not one person that is homeless is given shelter,
not one hungry person is fed,
not one child has been freed from a cage,
not one fascist is condemned to the fire they so
desperately belong to?

pathetic and bedraggled,
hunched over in the bottom of the well,
sweating and crying and full of snot.
for all the momentary joy it brings
to scream as loud as i can,
to assail the walls with indignities,
nobody outside the well can hear.
no one but me,
the chime,
and the bird.

i recognize the time.
then i climb out of the well,
blow my nose,
put on my jacket,
and head to work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE donated their work and took a risk on a project which was inconceivable just a year ago. For this, the guest editor would like to extend his sincere gratitude to everyone who answered the call for submissions, from amateurs and hobbyists to scholars and academics, for their dedication, elan, and faith.

This project is for some reason credited to James Knox-Davies, a tall man in Van Nuys, California. He had some role in editing, but it would have been a tremendous and humiliating failure if not for the guidance and intervention of Alyssa Emiko, a small woman also in Van Nuys. The illustration of a jackrabbit with a snake impaled upon her incisors beside a rose growing in the desert is the work of Ms. Emiko, though James could not be talked out of the use of this hilariously ham-fisted symbolism. The both of them are members of a local democratic socialist club.

Conor Arpwel, a beautiful man with many qualities you would like to cultivate in your own person, coordinated the production of this zine with James, and did so with a professionalism and sensitivity which measurably better our odds of saving the planet. The Build zine itself is the product of a great number of people, and God only knows exactly where the honor for each of the disasters averted and victories seized belongs. Additional support was provided by the DSA National Design Committee, l'Salon Dangereaux, and Tiffany, Charles, and Mikey.

To continue this rhetorical expansion of scope to its natural conclusion: Build is part of the Democratic Socialists of America, an up-until-recently fringe group of socialists, progressives, and liberals, which in 2016 sprang into a network of terrifying gargantuan monsters in major cities across America. The “chapters” appear to be invulnerable to conventional weapons. Finally, all glory to the masses, for the people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.



TRUE COPY

Abita Springs, La.,
2/28/63

J. Edgar Hoover, F. B. I. Director
Washington, D. C.,

Dear Mr. Hoover:-

I have always admired you more than most any man alive, because for so many years you have fought to keep our country free. And I know your job must get harder every day. However, if it helps any, you have the love and respect of every true American patriot.

Something has disturbed me for some time now and I wondered who to write to about it and decided you'd be the logical one to tell.

I am satisfied (even though the President entertained him at a luncheon in the White House) that Langston Hughes tries to woo people into communism by giving them a false picture of its aims and doctrines and at the same time he openly advocates the overthrow of our government.

I quote one of his poems that is recommended reading of the Dept. of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of Churches.

Poem follows:

One more "S" in the U. S. A.
Now across the waters in Russia
They have a big U. S. S. R.,
The fatherland of the Soviets,
But that is mighty far
from New York or Texas or California, too.
So listen fellow workers,
This is what we have to do.

Chorus

Put one more S in the USA
Oh, we'll live to see it yet.
When the land belongs to the Farmers
and the factories belong to the working men,
The U. S. A when we take control,
Will be the U. S. S. A. then.
But we can't win out just talking
So let us take things in our hands,
Then down and away with the bosses' away,

Hail, Communist land,
So stand up in battle and wave our flag on high
And shout out, fellow workers,
Our new slogan to the sky.
But we can't join hands strong together
So long as white are lynching black,
So black and white in one union fight
And get on the right track.
By Texas or Georgia or Alabama led
Comes together fellow workers,
Black and white can all be Red.

Now we know people in Communist countries seldom even own their farms or factories and I am sure Langston Hughes knows that too.
Besides how long has it been in this country since you heard of a white man lynching a black? So treats just to stir up more strife.

And if his poem doesn't woo people to become communists and doesn't openly advocate the overthrow of our government, I'd like to know what does.

I have read another of his so called poems "Goodbye Christ" which not only advocates communism but is the most blasphemous thing I ever read. Its too long to copy but here are just a few lines-- and he's saying, it all to Jesus Christ.

Beat it on away from here now.
Make way for a new guy with no religion at all--
A real guy named
Marx, Communist, Lenin, Peasant, Stalin, Worker, ME--
I said ME.
Go ahead on now
You're getting in the way of things, Lord.

The rest of it is even more blasphemous but I just wanted to show you the communist part. He's one of the ones, I feel, Bobby Kennedy should make register or pay the fine he set.

My very best wishes to a great and noble man.

/s/ [Redacted]
Abita Springs
La.

P. S. This letter is personal and confidential. I just want you to look into this matter because I don't think its right.