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**HSTQ: Pandemic Edition**  
**Arthur Graham**

Well, as usual, I'd been wondering what I was going to write about for my intro this quarter.

I could offer my own commentary on the situation, though it's doubtful I could say much that would actually help matters. We all know to wash our hands and avoid crowded places by this point. We're all feeling a bit cooped up and frustrated by those who seem to be either overreacting or clearly not concerned enough. I don't mean to dodge the subject entirely, but I just don't see the point in adding any more to all the noise surrounding it is all. And besides, it's hard to imagine anything that hasn't been said already, or perhaps said better, than in our opening poem.

With that, I give you the Spring 2020 issue. Try to stay safe and healthy out there, and for fuck's sake, quit hoarding all the goddamn toilet paper!

Arthur Graham  
Salt Lake City, March 2020

**Bring out your dead**  
**John Gartland**

There are some consolations in a plague year.  
You've a polite excuse,  
to duck unwelcome social invitations  
to skip the banal drudgery  
of self-opinionated company  
of overbearing liberals  
and pontificating radicals.

You've good reason to dodge  
the intellectually occluded  
and the patently deluded,  
the would-be salon-keepers  
and the throne-lickers and creepers,  
the dipsomaniac ravers  
and the posturing face-savers,  
obsessive Trump-haters  
and embittered second-raters,

the unregenerate hipsters  
and fatcat investors,  
narcissistic exhibitionists,  
the wannabees and ego trips,  
the drama's failed protagonists,  
all constipated scribblers and  
football-obsessed dribblers,  
those whom vanity disposes  
and hypocrisy discloses  
with each fatuous  
pronouncement from their lips.

With all that said, bring out your dead.  
It surely is a tonic to escape  
these dull discourses.  
What's not to like  
about a plague, apart  
from quarantine and panic,  
food shortages and corpses?

**Leper's Head**  
**Alan Catlin**

She asks if you've  
got a light and you  
say that you do as  
she leans in close  
almost touching your  
hands with her face,  
looks up at you  
as you strike a match,  
cup the flame protection  
from sudden breezes  
inside this three sided  
bus shelter box, snow  
outside impelled by  
the wind on Central Avenue;  
as she inhales her  
eyes meet yours,  
the smoke snaking  
from her nose as she  
whispers, "I like a man  
who can light a girl's  
fire." Leans closer still,  
cigarette forgotten for  
the moment, says,  
"I can tell you're a man  
who likes lighting girl's  
fires. How would you  
really like to light mine?"  
opening the top buttons  
of her coat revealing  
a see-through blouse,  
breasts, "How would  
you like to come  
inside with me?  
All the way inside."

She seems like some  
thing left over from  
a dream, a distant  
memory so vivid  
and distinct you almost  
forget to notice the  
arrival of your bus.

**Elvis Jesus and Your Memory at Walmart**  
**Judge Santiago Burdon**

Left toothbrush-less,  
mine pilfered along with shampoo  
deodorant, razors and other such  
found me wasted in Walmart  
thieving gnomes at the last homeless shelter  
being my main suspects

His name tag said ELVIS  
greeting customers at the gate  
navigating shopping cart jockeys  
with cherubs riding shotgun  
My request for location of items  
is answered Presley style:  
"Past Housewares," he Hound-Dog  
lip curled in reply

Among waffle irons and toasters  
in an aisle devoid of housewife print skirts  
your memory purchased my thoughts  
forging past bedding, linen sheets  
how we once tangled and ravaged  
Is that your image disappearing  
into Lingerie

JESUS on his employee name badge  
suffering from price tag neurosis  
"Love potion? We don't sell that  
vagabundo polo," he growled  
beneath picante breath

You told me I could find everything  
I needed here, but not even Walmart  
has what it would take  
to make you love me again

I sure hope Target  
is still open!

**Never Getting to Pensacola**  
**Anthony Dirk Ray**

I left work one evening  
and stopped to get gas.  
while I was pumping gas,  
I observed a man wearing  
a fedora, leather jacket,  
and pajama pants trying to  
get a ride by hitchhiking.  
I saw what looked like a  
puppy on his shoulder.  
then I noticed the red cone,  
beak, and feathers.

I thought, this fucker  
will never get a ride  
with a goddamned live  
chicken on his shoulder.

I lost sight of him  
and walked inside to  
buy an espresso beverage.  
upon exiting,  
I heard a voice say,  
“hey my man, can I  
put gas in your truck?  
I’m trying to get close  
to Pensacola.”  
I’m sure he noticed the 5  
on my tag denoting that  
I lived across the bay  
in that general direction.  
I looked at the man.  
I looked up at his chicken,  
then back at him and said,  
“I’m sorry, I’m not going that way.”  
Then,  
I got in my truck  
and went that way.

**at the core**  
**Robert Plath**

driving to work  
i saw a cesspool truck  
hauling those  
big thick concrete rings  
& then a hearse  
like a sleek silver shark  
not far behind  
both reminding me  
this planet’s just  
a mud pinata filled  
w/ shit & corpses

**grunts, sighs, silence, and symphonies**  
**J.A. Carter-Winward**

is it weird i remember *come sounds*?

i do.

like, my first husband was all,

*uuueaaaaaarrggghhh*

like a roar.

i wonder if he did that so he could ignore

the *lack* of any relevant noise

from yours truly.

then there was this guy i dated. he was 52

and i was 26, and that guy, he grunted.

he was like,

*unngh*,

kind of nasally, (and that's funny because he was this

intelligent secular Jewish guy from New York,

not that it matters, but anyway)

so it was short like that: *unngh*

like an

underwhelming release (which wasn't exactly

awesome for the ol' ego of *yours truly*.)

then the guy who was the worst was the guy

who sort of sighed through his nose.

so, imagine someone clearing his throat

briefly, then shooting air out of his nose.

*ahemwhsh*.

like that.

a really, really, short burst.

like taking a *class 3* shit: not leaving

bloody claw-marks, mind you, but

in definite need of a stool softener

before bed, come evening.

yeah, i remember them all.

but i married the *best* noise-maker.

like, it's all,

*uuhhaaarrgh*, *arrugh*, and then sort of a,

*ohh*, *uhhh*, *ohhh...ohhhshit*,

then there's sometimes the

*ohfuck...oh...god...oh...*

then like,

*haugh*, *haugh*, *haugh*, then he does like a,

*whooh*

of breath after.

and then he opens his eyes

and looks at me,

and we smile because i'd made

*the same noises*,

only totally different,

but the same.

like harmony.

like

Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> *ode to joy* and

Handel's *hallelujah chorus*

had a love child,

and the love child is our coming noises...

and hearts-beating-metronome-fuck-love-fuck-

love-making-musical-moaning- symphonic-surd-

synchronicity-fucking-fantasmic-fuck-beats...

yeah.

*yeah...*

it's-it's...

like that.

From *work in progress: dialogues & poems*

**Backdoor Bitch**  
**Joshua Jordan**

Am I really a bitch  
even though I call  
myself a man?  
While bending over  
the stall and taking it  
in the can

Tell me this!  
Shout it in my ear  
Hearing you say it  
while pounding  
my rear

It's just an experiment  
I'm really a guy  
But when you slip  
your dick in me  
Baby, I fly!

Football fantasies  
Masculine men fight  
But extra large dildos  
Oh wow, they own  
my night

Being called a faggot  
yeah that's my greatest  
Fear  
But if you whisper  
sweet nothings  
I won't shed  
a tear

A plastic pounding  
my insides do adore  
Such a feminine touch  
but my ass desires  
So much  
more

You're my master  
I promise not  
to flinch  
Now slip it in my ass  
and call me  
your bitch

**Sometimes Sodomy is the Only Way to Save Your Ass**  
**Judson Michael Agla**

I can't think with these fucking dogs  
circling the shack day and night,  
their slapping drool, grunts and growls,  
and that melodic sniffing ever present  
in this surreal variant world I've created

With malice and agoraphobia as my chariot  
I ran and I ran, away from everything  
and everyone I ever knew  
It was a shit decision then  
and it's a shit decision now,  
but sometimes sodomy  
is the only way  
to save your ass.

134

**Bogdan Dragos**

"The angriest I ever got," she said,  
"Was with an ex-boyfriend, of course.  
I just wanted him to die.  
But like, not casual wanting him to die.  
Really, really wishing with all my might  
that he'd drop dead.  
I felt I couldn't go on living  
as long as I knew he was alive.  
I had to do something about it.  
I was literally about to explode.  
So, to prevent that, I got dressed  
and despite the rain and all  
I went straight to the nearest pet shop.  
Bought me a hamster.  
And with a red marker,  
I wrote my boyfriend's name  
on its back.  
And then slammed that hamster  
against the wall 134 times.  
For the 134 hours we'd been together.  
I calmed down after that.  
But, you know,  
I don't like talking  
about myself all that much.  
Tell me about yourself.  
Also, what should we get  
from the menu?  
Have you decided yet?"

**some things can never be put back together**  
**Bogdan Dragos**

Some things can never  
be put back together  
after they've been  
taken apart

No matter how much  
willpower is involved

One of those things,  
she now knew for sure,  
was a marriage

Like the one  
she was presently fleeing,  
flying down the highway  
like a fiend or a bat out of hell

Another such thing  
could be her right hand  
resting severed on the seat  
there beside her

Though she wasn't so  
sure about the hand  
Maybe if she made it  
to the hospital in time?

Maybe

**Fleeing 2019 in a 2004 Ford**  
**Leah Mueller**

Sign on the freeway: silver alert.  
Another elder said fuck it,  
got into a red 2004 Ford  
threw IDs out the window  
and jammed the accelerator.

She took 1-90 east and  
headed for the opposite coast,  
laughing as she fiddled with the radio.

Relatives twisted napkins in knots  
and punched numbers onto cell phones:  
all of them beside themselves,  
screaming at law enforcement for help.

Mom should be there for the grandchildren.  
Dad needed to stay, so others  
could feel superior to him.

Instead, flagrant disregard.  
Mom and Dad have fled the scene  
like teenagers, but in separate cars.

Dad split six months ago,  
and no one ever found him.  
He's an adult and entitled to leave,  
even if that does make him  
a self-centered bastard.

After a while, we gave up looking.

When Mom left on New Year's Eve,  
the last day of the decade.  
she swore she'd head straight into 2020,  
and as far as I know,  
she hasn't stopped driving.

**Fieldwork**  
**Ben Newell**

It's happened  
yet again.

Another educator arrested.

This time,  
a high school teacher getting it on  
with her 16-year-old student.

Many of the liaisons  
took place in her car—

In her defense,  
she was a biology teacher.

Book learning is great  
but there's just no substitute  
for real world experience.



**I, Penis**  
**Mir-Yashar Seyedbagheri**

I, Penis,  
inherit the Earth.  
The meek, not so much.  
meek penises are worms  
crushed by pusillanimous ambitions,  
ambitions too polite  
and sensitive. Pardon me,  
proclaims polite, pussy penis.

I, Penis,  
sound barbaric yawps over the rooftops  
of my trousers, the beret my master  
wears concealing bald exposure.  
commercials and shows offer advice,  
take what you need

I trample the bathrooms, the poetry texts, history  
I, Penis. I, Penis. A title imperial and full of verve,  
insert my ice-cream cone tip into the metaphors  
and similes and  
visual erasures  
erase this.

misbehaved ladies may make history,  
but to the penis go the spoils.  
Soli Penis Gloria, proclaim the priests  
in their collars. for the glory alone  
of, I Penis.

problematic, proclaim the snowflakes,  
with lyrical predictability,  
paradigms, binaries  
all these are foreign,  
to I, Penis,  
I trample, and my head marches  
on and on, for the glory

of I, Penis.  
don't stop me now, for there is but one opinion,  
I, Penis. There is only the I,  
emboldened by the fact that  
I am penis.  
I, Penis.

**at the top of their lungs**  
**J.J. Campbell**

searching for nirvana  
between the thighs  
of a lovely woman  
in rome

i want to believe in  
love, the future, a  
destiny deserving  
of all this pain

but i've choked on  
my disillusionment  
since i was a child

one night it's  
the bottle

the next night it's  
a butcher's knife  
thrown across  
the room

there isn't any love  
in the room if someone  
isn't screaming at  
the top of their lungs

i'm still searching  
for nirvana

soft skin on a  
sunny beach

worries swept away  
with the tide

not all sins can be  
washed with blood  
or simply brushed  
under the last dirty  
rug in the house

**No Reason**  
**John D Robinson**

We had been drinking for three days,  
we'd hardly slept or eaten: we had  
just opened a bottle of wine and he  
came at me, I don't know why:  
the punch to my face came from  
nowhere and I sprung back in  
shock and then fired three  
punches to his face and head and he  
hit the floor and through his cut  
lips he began laughing: I sat  
down beside him, poured two  
glasses, blood seeping from my  
nose, discolouring the wine  
as the sun began her descent,  
as we embraced and waited  
for something else to happen.

**Sleep on it**  
**Joseph Farley**

If you should love me in your sleep  
It would be a fruitful dream.  
And I asleep shall in turn  
writhe and sweat and think  
who this night came for  
and with whom it stayed,  
and who found joy this evening  
and who found pain  
when these ghosts of what we lived  
came visiting.

**4 a.m. Precious Moments**  
**Casey Renee Kiser**

My boyfriend said in his sleep,  
'I want to read a romance novel  
before I die...'  
then he farted loudly,  
woke up  
and hugged me.  
I don't care what the news says,  
life is pretty good.

**16mm Venus 1973**

**Willie Smith**

She comes up out of the sea  
and she is all blond –  
she has lost her bikini;  
the shark of her smile took it. She  
reaches back; wrings brassy hair  
in a wet mass. She wants to come over,  
primp, turn around – pray her ass be kissed.  
Her eyes glint sea-green; her breasts float  
large and gently sloped as distant breakers;  
nipples buoys; bush surf white. She  
straddles the screen. Between the crack  
of her butt you glimpse a sunsquint;  
close eyes to sniff the vision burst.  
Your throat detects encircling cigarettes  
and bad cigars, old coats, stale popcorn;  
knees cracking; torn leather seats creaking..  
Open the eyes – to catch a last sneer,  
as she steers her posterior down on the  
mouth of the camera, turning all dark  
in the must you breathe.

**Come Breakfast**

**Willie Smith**

Adrienne excels at jerking me awake.  
Waits for an erection to betray I'm dreaming.  
Insinuates her fist around the shaft.  
Quietly bespits the knob.  
Salutes – up and down – the pictures  
moving through me, moving in on the plot.  
This morning I'm bailing from a cockpit,  
slipping into the stream, leaving the plane above,  
plummeting rock-like, fumbling for the cord.  
My thumb finally finds the ring. I rip.  
The chute deploys a jellyfish of silk,  
jerking me up – so fast the jerk  
drops the acceleration of the fall.  
The earth I now behold floating up at my face,  
facing Adrienne's laugh, as her frantic fist  
makes to squirt between us me awake.  
Smell on a bedside tray the toast,  
the butter, the coffee, the jam.

**Succubus  
Andy Seven**

Succubus sugar bus ride me ride me paraglide me  
The ghost is a hustler she crawls like a reptile  
Sextile percentile her cunt wraps around me  
in darkness she found me  
I feel her heart beat like a Super 8 film  
project'd on a beat brick wall  
I was bedridden there was dead rhythm  
Is this a bedtime story a Grimm fairy tale  
I'm a ghost now you're a ghost  
You're mine she said  
Bit my neck like a vampire  
Bit my head like a mantis  
By the stroke of dawn  
there were two ghosts  
not one

**Rock & Roll Hall of Fame  
Puma Perl**

A large guy in a cool hat dances in his wheelchair  
He rolls by me singing a Ramones song  
I trail behind him, we wind up on the café terrace  
I drink coffee, he sips gin from a flask,  
turns out he doesn't need the chair all the time,  
*Just a pulled muscle*, he explains, leaning on his cane,  
*Walk the exhibit with me*, he suggests, throwing  
an arm around me, rubbing my back through  
my motorcycle jacket. We make out leaning against  
Keith Richards' signature and again in front of Tina's  
*Private Dancer* sequined dress, then we catch  
the movie, he's running his hand up my leg,  
and I can't decide whether I want it off me  
or inside my pussy, so I compromise and move it  
onto my tit and he rubs my nipple through  
my t-shirt as we watch clips of past inductees,  
reaches under my shirt in memory of Solomon Burke,  
all around us Midwest mainstream America rocks  
to Bruce, he slides his hand down my pants,  
I cum in time to *Sheena is a Punk Rocker* –  
all in such perfect symmetry that I know  
it's time to go. As I make my way out, I hear  
him singing *One Way or Another* along with Blondie,  
seems like he's that guy who knows all the words.

**fade away**  
**Bogdan Dragos**

FADE AWAY

Why was there a poster in his room  
that said FADE AWAY?

It's been around  
since like forever  
now that he thought about it

And until today  
there was no reason  
to even think about it  
Life was happening fast

It happened so fast  
that it's been 52 years  
since the day he was born

Today there was nothing left to do  
but observe the poster  
that said FADE AWAY

And there was nothing else to do  
not because he'd done it all  
but because he didn't do shit

52 years and nothing done  
Nothing worthwhile anyway

But values change, man  
Oh, how they change

One day you're young  
thinking that failure and shame  
and ridicule are what suck

Well, you're not wrong

But

Later when you're old  
you realize nothing sucks more  
than never risking these things  
when you were young

Now this

So now you either tell yourself  
that it is never too late to be  
what you might've been

Or you sit alone  
in your silent room  
with no wife  
no kids  
no pets  
and a pension  
that comes once a month

And slowly blink your eyes  
at your poster that says  
FADE AWAY