



Anomalous 14

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*Images from The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*

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## CONTRIBUTORS

## ANOMALOUS PRESS



## Introduction

*The Editors*

When I told my mom Anomalous was publishing an issue of constraints for its fourth anniversary, she called me a dumbbell. *How can a group of authors create worthwhile writing by dealing themselves 10 playing cards?* she asked. I said, *Mom, I get that you're not into constrained writing, but I think it'll be more fun than making s'mores at a five-alarm fire.* I told her that we were just following the Oulipo tradition, and those dudes were the bomb. So the editors got together, made each of those playing cards mean something else, and contacted a few of our favorite writers. For some of those writers, writing under constraint was like getting whacked with a freshman paddle. Others thought the insulation of the rules offered them unexpected freedom, like painting a portrait over the x-ray of a skull. At least one writer likened the experience to chewing ice: you could break your teeth getting hydrated that way. So, despite my mom's concerns, we've posted this issue on the internet for your pleasure. We hope its magnificence doesn't crash your computer.

### *Hand Dealt*

A Hearts: Mom

K Clubs: Dumbbell

K Spades: five-alarm fire

2 Hearts: bomb

2 Spades: paddle

3 Diamonds: insulation

Q Clubs: x-ray

8 Hearts: ice

6 Diamonds: internet

4 Diamonds: crash











*TV anchor*



*jaw*



*freckle*



*paddle*



*blood*



*upstage*



*tarantula*



*yield*



*stop sign*



*totem  
pole*



*nail  
file*



*five-alarm  
fire*



*zone*

# Skill Scale Skull

*Oliver Strand*

I.

“Not many yards away a thrush built her nest on the handle of a coal truck  
and reared three young.” Not an outline,  
a volume. A volume without an outline:  
it’s the house with the concrete steps, the foot lifting.  
It’s the house inside the church.  
An outline without a volume:  
I think it’s hospitality but I can’t be hospitable to myself.  
I must be waiting for someone.

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II.

Prepared or presented “as though to function biologically  
or as if to illustrate a textbook of anatomy or of dramatic expression”:  
the person  
is taking off his or her coat while driving  
or is speaking with a cough drop in his or her mouth.  
It it it it. It looks like a ball, a bag, a bird  
but it’s a leaf floating uphill.

Another day in a tree: two leaves, a bird and a leaf, two birds.

### III.

It's laminate exhaust milk mist or smoke and the flame wind embroidery.  
Look no. Yeah. Oh you're holding it.  
Here wait. No turn it around. There.  
"The next day I put a net under the ice."

The back and forth spreads out and vibrates. It's see through  
and the only remaining visible element is scale. The objects  
soak up the comparison until they look identical.

### IV.

How far is the person's front from his or her back?  
The inside almost touches the outside. Placement

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of the center point anywhere or many people with the same name.

"Who are you?"

"I don't know. I never met you before."

Something and the sound of something else "worked in the following order:

first the cloth stitch, then the lace ground and the ribbed wheels, the cut bars,  
wheels set close together in the middle, and darned bars."

The hand is larger than and in the same place as what it leaves.

V.

The same day. The sky the same color  
as on another day: how could one know this?

“There are so many” fixed parts “knit with”  
the parts that change. You  
can move the upper jaw with your neck.  
Two people embrace. Two more people embrace.  
Four people embrace. How long does it take?

A body without a shadow: no surface  
blocking another “the effects of left and right”  
a hand the impression  
is of a question because the hand is empty.

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VI.

I already know the answer to any question  
I can ask myself. The person wasn't thinking  
what to say. He or she was waiting. “Squares

moving into a corner”  
so it's “elbow quilted” or water in the wrist at the edge of the mouth or bill it's  
the person's name but it's spelled wrong keys  
tied to his or her shoelace.

## VII.

“As a rule the tong handles terminate in a ball.”  
I’m reading the name letter by letter. A shadow  
on a roof, a ruler  
taped to the windowpane: it’s an inch at this distance.  
Everyone’s standing outside together in a line.

## Author's Note for *Skill Scale Skull*

*Oliver Strand*

10

10 words selected by my grandmother's 1980's very narrow orange deck with a gold stripe on the back of each card. I started out thinking about hospitality and about how to build a vocabulary where the ten words would be comfortable. I spent three writing days browsing my some of my favorite books (an embroidery encyclopedia, a 1950's U.K. agricultural journal, a catalog of 17th c. American furniture, an early modernist design manifesto, a tree field guide . . .) to find a quotation that included each word, one quotation per book. I think I put the ten words into quotations because I wanted to underline or literalize the sensation that the words were outside my own choice or voice. The first version of the poem consisted of these quotations separated by associative writing "about" each of the ten words. I revised the early drafts by trying to organize and develop sound, syntax, idea and image patterns, using note cards and following my intuitions. The revisions broke up several quotations and redistributed a few of the playing card words into the "composed" parts of the poem. Partly the poem is helping me continue to think about the category "generic concrete". I'm not sure how this category works exactly but right now it feels like a way for several experiences to interact: scale, function, naming, comparison; or, instruction, description, proposition, attribution.



Black Hall

Yellow root tea and black-hall tea were used in the treatment of colds.

George Womble, male, age 94  
Columbus, GA  
1937

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015



## Anomalous Cards

*Harold Abramowitz*

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If you were to ask me what I wanted for Xmas, I would say that I was very wise to choose vitamins, or something else completely unexpected. In fact, I would write my request for what I wanted on a piece of paper and place it on our tree, like a good person, and then I would thank you for all the blessings you'd brought to my life. It would look good on paper, I'd say, and then there would be less difficulty between us and less things, in general, to worry about. So, you were saying this thing to me. At one time. And I was less and less fortunate, at that point, I thought. It really was something that might have been breaking me, though. In fact, there wasn't much time. It was clear, you were going to get to me, no matter what I did. No matter what I was going to do.

It would be great, I'd often say to you, so that when the sun came out and when we would get up in the morning there would be something extra for us to do. A simple tarantula, for instance, could build something, and then we would find out what it would be, I'd say. That there is something to do, is the point, I said. In fact, it was the perfect answer to the question that I was going to ask you that day. It was a rainy day. But how could I be sure, I asked? And then, just like that, there was something. And I could see that thing very clearly, at that point, I thought. In fact, it was certain that things were falling in place. You could feel it.

It was in the way you moved around the room. I could see you very clearly, and, frankly, it took my breath away. My jaw, as you

might have said, once, was on the floor. Totally on the floor. But I was in a funk. I needed to go home immediately. It is the middle of the night and there is nothing for me to do, I said. I was in a panic. I stood beneath the spotlight. I announced myself.

It was a show, I said. But what I really meant to say was that I stood in your way. I was on the street, which, incidentally, is nothing at all like the back of the room. Bombs away, I yelled. It was funny. I supposed, at first, that you felt the same way. The things we do, I again announced. And to think that I was just getting my feet wet. And all of this was supposed to have been done on a lark – we thought it was funny. Remember?

Putting things in perspective. I would say this as I ran around the room, as the clock continued to move forward. It was true, at that point, that I couldn't believe my own good luck. A fortune in feeling, I sang. Why, relay this good news to you? Why, yes, I certainly will, I agreed. But can anyone really compare to you, with the way you go about your business? I wondered. I could see the water from where I was standing on the street. It was a night like any other. In fact, there was still a lot to do, a lot to consider, I thought.

One time when I was looking at the things I had to do, I came up with something I wanted to say to you. It was fun to think about. I was, however, feeling a little bit under the weather. So I was looking for this particular book. It was funny to say that I'd started from the very place I'd previously left off. It's the order of events that haunts me. How we will have to choose how to house and store the things we have, I said. We have so much, I said to you. It's perfect. I was thinking, nothing haunts me the way you do.

But putting things together in such an obvious way was kind of a drag, I thought. Which was not to say that it was in any way different from anything else that had happened up to that point. I didn't have to tell you that, but I did tell you that. I told you what I wanted you to hear. I told you what I thought I wanted you to hear. So, you tell me that we are going to be taking a walk. I laugh because it is like you hold an x-ray over my heart, over my thoughts, over the way I feel. I hold my hands out to you. It is like you have something over me, I say. The morning was bright and sunny.

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However, this fear of the way I breathe, of my own respiration, always seems to take place at night. There is always something pulling at me, I think. I wake up in the middle of the night, and I have to fight the feeling that there is something coming over me, that I am coming apart. I want to call you on the telephone, but it is too late at night. I can hear things. I am feeling, at first, that there is something important that I am about to remember. Things are quickly coming to the surface, I think. Suddenly, I notice that there is a little tear in the fabric on the couch. You are someone I think about often, I say. And, what's more, there is a dial, and a cup, and other things that I find flawed in the kitchen.

At some point, I decide to tell you all about the way I am feeling. I want to put myself, my personality, everything I feel, before you, so you will see me. I met you on a Sunday, and the day was warm. It is true that there was something in the air. In fact, it was a very beautiful day. There is something in the air, I said. And it was a little bit funny, in a way, to think about. I was acting a little bit foolishly, at that point, I thought. And, really, there could have

been anything there, at that point, a totem pole, or another world, or a new you and me, anything. I work a lot and talk to you a lot, I think.

Once it was a very peaceful place to live. There were flowers, and trees, and birds. Then you were on the corner, waiting for me. You was waiting for me, I would say. In fact, I put the color back in my face by doing a lot of exercise, by breathing in and out, in a nice and easy kind of rhythm. I have the whole world in my hands, I sang. I have a lot to live up to. In a lot of ways, it was already a really good day. And, after awhile, I would tell you how I was feeling, I thought. But, at that point, I was surprised because the whole neighborhood was up in arms, like a five-alarm fire, and there were trucks and cars and sirens, and we had to get out of the house pretty fast.

# Author's Note for *Anomalous Cards*

*Harold Abramowitz*

I used the constraint words as follows: ten sections comprised of ten sentences, with a single constraint word appearing in each section once, in order, and in the sentence corresponding with the

order drawn. So the first word appears in the first sentence of the first section, the second word appears in the second sentence of the second section, the third word appears in the third sentence of the third section, and so forth.

## *Hand Dealt*

7 of Hearts – vitamins

3 of Spades – tarantula

5 of Spades – jaw

2 of Hearts – bomb

6 of Clubs – relay

4 of Clubs – order

Queen of Clubs – x-ray

7 of Clubs – tear

4 of Spades – totem pole

King of Spades – five-alarm fire



Calomel

For medicines they gave us asafidly, calomel and castor  
oil more than anything else for our different ailments.

Charlie Hudson, male, age 80  
258 Lyndon Avenue, Athens, GA  
1937

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015

# Tarot Oulipo I, Ia

*Diana Arterian*

## Tarot Oulipo I

Handling bills, vitamining  
upstage. Insulation torn  
within that zone. The bulimic  
dumbbell, its paddle.

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## Tarot Oulipo Ia

Children fair, strangely lithe  
under the sculptor, his young  
one hand, its physical hoodwink

## Tarot Oulipo II, IIa

*Diana Arterian*

### Tarot Oulipo II

Grip of the voter  
tearing each paddler,  
nesting vitamins  
tarantula-like, the yield of  
iced vodka

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### Tarot Oulipo IIa

Youth-y motion, young  
hoodwinking the tall and strange.  
Swords in a man, that the man holds



# Author's Note for *Tarot Oulipo I, Ia, II, IIa*

*Diana Arterian*

I recently purchased a mini pack of the Rider Tarot deck from a witch in a crystal shop with a droopy eye. She wore sweats and was

## *Hand Dealt - Tarot I*

6 of Cups – handle

7 of Wands – tear

Page of Cups (the poet!) – bills

9 of Swords – zone

7 of Cups – vitamins

A of Pentacles – bulimic

Page of Swords – upstage

K of Wands – dumbbell

3 of Pentacles – insulation

2 of Swords – paddle

## *Hand Dealt - Tarot II*

Page of Pentacles – grip

7 of Cups – vitamins

8 of Wands – vote

3 of Swords – tarantula

7 of Wands – tear

7 of Swords – yield

2 of Swords – paddle

8 of Cups – ice

2 of Wands – nest

King of Cups – vodka

very serious. “It’ll grow with you,” she said. I bought a dark purple bag with gold drawstrings at another shop, which holds the deck perfectly.

What better way to inaugurate my use of the deck than with a poem? The lesser arcana can be equated to the suits of a regular deck of cards. Cups are hearts, swords spades, pentacles are diamonds, and wands clubs.

This is what I drew for the first poem: Six of cups, page of cups (the poet!), seven of cups, page of swords, three of pentacles, seven of wands, nine of swords, ace of pentacles, King of wands, two of swords. For the second: page of pentacles, 8 of wands, 7 of wands, 2 of swords, 2 of wands, 7 of cups, 3 of swords, 7 of swords, 8 of cups, King of cups.

I did not attempt to read this set as one would with tarot – I am nowhere near that level of understanding of the cards’

many meanings, or how they can interact with one another. But I began my understanding of them here.

For the subset of these poems (Ia and IIa), I located the first adjective or noun in the description for each of these cards in the Rider Tarot Deck Instruction booklet. So, for page of pentacles, the first non-article was “youthful.” The eight of wands, “motion.” I used the words (and their variants) in the order that I drew the cards.



Holly

Holly leaves and holly root boiled together was good for indigestion.

Tom Singleton, male, age 94  
outside Athens, GA  
1938

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015

# These Things I Have Not Seen Have Become Me

*Sarah Kruse*

A deck of cards and ransom chance. There is something even in the misspelling, this mistyping. Maybe mistakes matter more because there is no matter to the idea of sense. Breakdown becomes everything.

8) [redacted] *Jumping* [redacted] *refers* [redacted] *physical action* [redacted]  
[redacted] *propelling oneself rapidly upward* [redacted] *momentum* [redacted]  
[redacted] *become airborne.*"

Threads form out of gossamer chance. Language is listening. I am playing jump rope upward. Signs are given to me. A form and a gift. Momentum is thrilling, beginning propelling.

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10) *"Heavily distributed concentrations* [redacted] *cause* [redacted] *to multiply and cover an* [redacted] *area of skin, such as the face. Freckles* [redacted] *more commonly* [redacted] *on* [redacted] *before* [redacted]

A blemish or mark, I have always had them. More prominent in the sun only those close enough to kiss me ever really notice them. Flaws seen close up disappear with distance. Keep everything and everyone at bay, and they will always think you are perfect. Only those who know you see the imperfections in everything. Disappearance is an effect closeness removes.

6) [redacted] *studies found* [redacted] *unwarranted* [redacted] *increased speed away from* [redacted] *lost time*

spent at [REDACTED] signs. [REDACTED] signs impose [REDACTED] operating costs, longer than needed [REDACTED] time, excessive [REDACTED] consumption and [REDACTED] emissions. [REDACTED] found [REDACTED] especially [REDACTED] may [REDACTED] actually [REDACTED] expect [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] run [REDACTED] 'unnecessary' signs."

We need rules for order, but, again, I have come against my limits. What I don't know cannot be made up through new language. The old sign must suffice. I ask a store clerk for an item; he asks if he can help me. The speed of listening increases without comprehension, in other words, we can no longer hear. I seem unable to make myself clear today. The safety of language is a no longer listening. What I think I know to be true may actually have the opposite effect.

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4) "Traffic [REDACTED] grew by [REDACTED] year, while the mean [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] users [REDACTED] thought [REDACTED] growth is often attributed to the lack of central administration, [REDACTED] organic [REDACTED] non-proprietary open nature of the Internet [REDACTED] vendor interoperability [REDACTED] exerting too much control over [REDACTED] world population."

The expansion of knowledge and information floods through everything. News spreads like fire, and misinformation. Is all knowledge innocent? I ask my students to reflect on how fast the news of the Boston bombings spread and what was reported. Internet sources repeated the violence, headlines touting repetition of blood. The repetition of difference maybe in the surface of poetry.

Change of use may produce an actual change, but language is not yet action. Those without a network wait. While there is a march in Paris, 2,000 are dead in Nigeria due to Boko Haram, but this news arrives rather late, and fairly quietly.

9) “Measures ██████████ in ██████████ Physics ██████████  
██████████ manufacturing, ██████████ Yield ██████████  
██████████ describing ██████████  
██████████ Yield ██████████ the plastic deformation ██████████ Yield  
surface; ██████████ (album), by Pearl Jam; Yield ██████████, a traffic sign; Ter-  
minal ██████████ structure; Yield, a feature ██████████  
██████████; Yield, an element ██████████ the TV series  
*The Amazing Race.*”

To give way, and surrender by following what I am told. Abundance and a giving. Pop culture creeps in in the end. The plas-  
tics of surface already seems a given. Give the sign that will yield  
meaning, but already the structure is failing inside of the play. All  
are ready before anything is said. Physics is a game too, just dif-  
ferent from chess. Ludwig knew games by playing them. Already  
subject to culture, and I cannot give anything without the other  
contexts coming along. This is also language.

3) “Insurgent groups ██████████ employed assassination ██████████ to  
further their causes. ██████████ several functions ██████████  
██████████ name ██████████ removal of specific ██████████ as propaganda ██████████  
██████████ focus the ██████████ and politics ██████████

To close to the present to comment? What is lost and what is  
gained in media exposure? Is the reverberation and exposure part  
of the plan? What is the function of ideology, and where is the

beginning and ending of language? But what is the cause of something that seems causeless? How does violence impact language? And how does language impact violence? Is the thing I'm seeing reported ever the cause or only the effect? What if there really is no causal nexus, Ludwig?

2) *"Sure decorative laminates. [REDACTED] produced using real*


[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Pressure and measure. No one ever looks into the process, only the meaning. Building up and stripping down. File and fill. Is this really nonfiction? Somewhat like geology. Formed in depth under heat and pressure, crystals are larger the difference between basalt and granite. Only marble is metamorphic. I liked geology for all the wrong reasons. Rocks and poetics. I liked Law for the same wrong reason. Embedded psychoanalysis and ideology found in "truth." These things are not laminate, but maybe formed under pressure. Veneer and surface. I have been warned against the variance and dichotomy of surface and depth. Stein preferred the surface of language. Compression is a new substance I am only learning to read.

5) *"Studies have [REDACTED] young females [REDACTED] read fashion magazines [REDACTED] bulimic symptoms [REDACTED] further demonstrates [REDACTED] media [REDACTED] the likelihood of developing [REDACTED] Individuals first [REDACTED] 'buy into' the ideals [REDACTED] [REDACTED] transform [REDACTED] order to reflect [REDACTED] attractiveness."*







R. B. is Randolph Bourne not Roland Barthes. Changing anticipation in lettering somewhat familiar. Some things are so well known while others are not. A flip of chance? What we come to know through history is only what didn't fall away in a different version of the story. We begin to see more by seeing what wasn't there. Somethings have always been there. Maybe everything is always there. The ideology we can't see is the real one. Class struggle is not a construct but exists through real tension, something I am reminded of, when on my way to the airport, the cab driver separating himself from others refers to "those people," assuming it is the truth of things as they are.

# Author's Note for *These Things I Have Not Seen Have Become Me*

*Sarah Kruse*

I work largely on avant-garde poetry and poetics, so when I was asked if I would be interested in participating in an Oulipo project, I was more than thrilled. The idea of working under constraints, I always like because I like to be unsettled and pushed in directions I would not normally pursue. I find I sometimes write better when I can get out of my own way a little bit. The use of playing cards and random words became the springboard for the shaping of this project. When thinking of how to approach this project, I originally thought of just writing one piece that would incorporate the words I had pulled from the deck of cards. But then I liked the idea of pieces and finding a relation between those pieces, after all a deck of cards are all different pieces, but pieces used to play one kind of game or various games with those pieces.

I took each word and looked for a Wikipedia entry, which I find an interesting collaboration and amalgamation of language in itself. To keep the experiment random and within the constraints of the project, I then picked short paragraphs or a few sentences at random from these entries. The de-contextualization of language immediately made apparent multiple possibilities of use and com-

## *Hand Dealt*

8 of spades – nail file  
King of diamonds – laminate  
3 of clubs – assassin  
6 of diamonds – internet  
Ace of diamonds – bulimic  
Queen of spades – stop sign  
10 of hearts – Randolph Bourne  
Queen of diamonds – jump  
7 of spades – yield  
10 of spades – freckle

position. I used these new pieces then as a springboard, and began to riff off of them, allowing for a kind of free play of memory and association. It wasn't until I reached the end, that I began to notice patterns and repetitions occurring. There were very definite threads of the personal and the larger social political emerging. I was interested in the way in which these seemingly opposite pieces could connect or speak to one another, and even implicate one another. The order in which they appear in this piece is different from the initial order in which the playing cards were drawn. I literally cut up the essay and rearranged the pieces on the floor to look for where tension of topic and evolution of ideas could better build on one another to create a more organic whole. To create a more coherent tone between my language and the Wikipedia entries, I chose to redact the entries to heighten the urgency of particular words that I had originally found as the catalyst for my "riffing." The numbering as it appears is the original numbering of the order in which cards were drawn. They are now out of order here which a motif I am interested in terms of my writing in general. What does order and arrangement say about how we read something? What happens when I break the contours of expected order, and how does new arrangement make something else happen with what otherwise maybe seen as only an ordinary piece of text?



Mullein

We saved a heap of bark from wild cherry and poplar and black haw and slippery elm trees, and we dried out mullein leaves. They was all mixed and brewed to make bitters. We took them for rheumatiz, for fever and for misery in the stomach and for most all sorts of sickness.

James Bolton, male, age 85  
Athens, GA  
1937

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015

# Ox Hunger

*Mary Kovalski*

None of that now. Just  
the steady plod of function,  
back and forth between crib  
and bed, baby in the crook  
of my elbow and the winter  
the one bulimic—

ice ravenous all night,  
cold sun each morning  
scrawls a nail file line  
between curtain and sash  
across snow knit fresh.

But that's not right—

love's just turned  
from nude beach mêlée, drinks  
all night and your mouth a paradise—  
that desire, that devour, that purge and lonesome

to this midnight zone  
of mothering.

I am  
a boat moored and bobbing  
we are feed and sooth,  
we are totally in love  
with the storm that will quit  
before we even know its started.

## Author's Note for *Ox Hunger*

Mary Kovaleski

First order of business for this was finding a deck of playing cards, which in my house proved harder than I had assumed. I finally

### *Hand Dealt*

8 of Hearts – ice

A of Clubs – moor

A of Diamonds – bulimic

A of Hearts – mom

8 of Spades – nail file

9 of Hearts – elbow

9 of Diamonds – drink

9 of Spades – zone

9 of Clubs – knit

10 of Diamonds – function

located an unopened deck in our son's toy bin. I didn't really shuffle them, just drew the cards. And then I ended up with the word "bulimic." I almost threw in the towel on this whole idea then and there; I could not imagine I would be able to write a poem with that word in it that would be able to transcend the disease, and I didn't want to try and write around that word either-- you can't just sneak bulimic into a poem and hope people don't really notice. Fortunately, a dear friend

sent me an inspiring email about the origins of the word, and I was absolutely enamored with the sound and imagery around the phrase "ox hunger." So I have him to thank. And that first year spent soothing my colicky son, and then by default my baby daddy, and I guess winter, too. Yes, I love you, winter. Now please stop.



White Plantain

White plantain tea was for weakly women.

Cicely Cawthon, female, age 78  
Toccoa, GA  
1938

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015



# Fear of Flying

*Jennifer Karmin*

1.

greetings chairman greed

is make believe transformation

unsure of where to start

learn the location of all exits

mention these accolades

pick any card you win

36

2.

the district auction

provides regional insulation

well it's high time

we take a stand for everyman

if the performance collapses

something traumatic may happen

3.

at the retired stop sign

did you say “hey baby”

or “don’t be a baby”

a pool chair becomes a privilege

desk plants boost productivity

by 15%

4.

your advisors of quilts

lamine the command

an unconscious fantasy

at a special introductory price

for safety follow

these instructions

5.

members of the five-alarm fire

prepare for lady macbeth + cleopatra

in a collective tribal knit  
you heard it here first  
federal regulations require  
the applicable functions

6.

your vitamins of intelligence  
are a scientific FBI  
external validation

38

remover of obstacles  
there is nothing either good or bad  
but thinking makes it so

# Author's Note for *Fear of Flying*

*Jennifer Karmin*

Sources: airline safety card, airline magazine, Iraqi Most Wanted playing cards, National Public Radio & William Shakespeare

## *Hand Dealt*

3 of Hearts – greed

King of Diamonds – laminate

2 of Diamonds – auction

King of Spades – five-alarm fire

3 of Diamonds – insulation

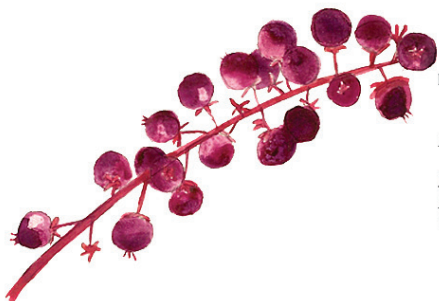
9 of Clubs – knit

Queen of Spades – stop sign

7 of Hearts – vitamins

5 of Clubs – quilt

4 of Hearts – FBI



Pokeberry

And pokeberry wine is so pretty and fine for rheumatism.

Julia Henderson, female, age unknown  
Augusta, GA  
1937

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015

## Une Petite Mort

*Emmett Stone*

Obsession over your anxiety should be performed daily. Every day when your body is perhaps a little caffeinated—though not too much, because just think of what it's doing to your teeth—and is your urine supposed to smell like that?—and when your mind is still racing after that intense exchange with your boss—because you really, really need this job, and you haven't been able to hold one down for more than a year, and you keep getting stuck in dead-end positions with little or no translatable skills—you should obsess over being interrupted and upstaged by your friends every time you try to say something you think is meaningful—do they really even care what you think?—that burn you got from the lamination machine—it's a blister now, so maybe you should pop it, or will it just get infected?—the guy who didn't yield at the yield sign—maybe when I pay off my student loans I'll buy a Tesla, too... jerk—that freckle you just noticed—your mom survived cancer, so maybe you'll make it, too, because, I mean, come on: this is definitely cancer—the tear in your stockings—the new pair you just bought last week snagged on the neighbor's overgrown bushes, which you've told him a hundred times to trim back—the mushrooms in your salad, because you asked for no mushrooms and now it's completely ruined because why the hell should you have to pick mushrooms, which you hate, out of your salad—you don't work like a dog and take crap from your pig of a boss just to have to deal with this, do you?—the computer crash that destroyed hours and hours of unsaved work—that new laptop was top-of-the-line

and cost a three months' salary, and by God, someone at Apple will be hearing from you—uncle Jim's five-alarm fire-roasted chili, which isn't sitting so well with you now—and you just had to have extra cheese, because just look at that spare tire; did you really need the cheese?—the dentist and his x-ray machine, which, how many times does he have to zap you, anyway?—no wonder you have that freckle—and that TV anchor on cable news—you could get a fake tan and make ridiculous guesses based on unsourced information, too. And every day, without fail, you should consider yourself as blameless.

## Author's Note for *Une Petite Mort*

Emmett Stone

*Meditation on inevitable death should be performed daily. Every day when one's body and mind are at peace, one should meditate upon being ripped apart by arrows, rifles, spears and swords, being carried away by surging waves, being thrown into the midst of a great fire, being struck by lightning, being shaken to death by a great earthquake, falling from thousand-foot cliffs, dying of disease and committing seppuku at the death of one's master. And every day without fail one should consider himself as dead.*

-Yamamoto Tsunetomo

### *Hand Dealt*

Jack of Spades – upstage

8 of Diamonds – mushroom

King of Diamonds – laminate

4 of Diamonds – crash

7 of Spades – yield

King of Swords – five-alarm fire

10 of Spades – freckle

Queen of Clubs – x-ray

7 of Clubs – tear

Ace of Spades – TV anchor

43

### Source

Tsunetomo, Yamamoto. Trans. William Scott Wilson. Hagakure: The Book of the Samurai. Kodansha America, Inc. New York.

164.



# Bomb

*Emmett Stone*

Let me drop some knowledge on you—a bomb, if you will. Ready? Here goes.

Follow it down, letting the black-and-white trail behind. But what if it doesn't fall? What if I walk it into a crowd, hiding an i before an e, only, troublingly after a c, triggering a smattering of red ink? How do you handle that? Hunt the word across the page, spewing more black and white. Oh, there it is again: bomb. Whew! Cross it out, but it remains, a reminder of imperfection—or perhaps a beacon of failure.

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Man, get a grip. It's only a word: four smoothly curving symbols hanging in space. Or I could say that, anyway. Here's this thing. Twist it, wring it out, and leave a big nothing with digital perfection—nothing because the bomb is simple—exemplar extraordinaire of black or white. On or off, dead or alive, black or white, a vote: yea or nay, this or that. Our will be done. A press of a button, a flick of a switch, four keystrokes in rapid staccato, and for a brief moment of ecstasy, sublime entropy works for us. The bomb disappears; surprise flames out and becomes cold, hard fact. But don't let that stop you. Don't cross it out, this time. Erase it. Fill the void with more black and white, all you can see.

Or, rather not. The weight of the totem pole lifts for a time, but inevitably comes crashing down heavier than before. And it's not a love tap this time. This isn't some lady in leather paddling your erogenous zones and telling you how bad you've been. Greed

and Wrath have a laugh, gravity triumphs, and the pole buries you like you always knew it would. You followed the black down the white like a courier, delivering your package.

It's a heavy thing, never leaving a message, only a hole.

Mom would be proud.

# Author's Note for *Bomb*

*Emmett Stone*

## *Hand Dealt*

2 of Hearts – bomb

2 of Spades – paddle

6 of Hearts – handle

9 of Spades – zone

Jack of Diamonds – grip

3 of Hearts – greed

8 of Clubs – vote

5 of Diamonds – courier

4 of Spades – totem pole

Ace of Hearts – mom



Red Shank Root

Queensy's light root, butterfly roots, scurry root, red shank root, bull tone root were all found in the woods and the teas made from them were cures for many ailments.

Rhodus Walton, male, age unknown  
Lumpkin, GA  
1937

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015

## Prayer Before Battle

*Vanessa Willoughby*

I'm not built to upstage a visiting statue---  
Shall I turn to witchcraft or religion?

My Mother Superior valued inanimate objects without  
Discrimination, her needles carrying the same weight as her flimsy  
nail files.

Falling down like a horse with smashed to smithereens kneecaps, the  
Shape of your jaw gives you a godly profile, hands like matching  
dumbbells.

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New York: I outgrew my role as family martyr, changed my name, bought  
x-ray vision.

California: I called you as I saw you, not by your pet name or your honeyed  
bedroom name

But a five-alarm fire.

I have nothing left to give, nothing worthy of a fair exchange,  
I tossed my last life off our roof with the rest of your suits.

I have nothing left to give you except anxiety (the weed translates static  
And I hear the click-click-click of the FBI wiretapping the house phone)

I have nothing but your musty books on obscure deities devoured  
like prescriptions,  
Essays by Randolph Bourne, your cramped notes struggling to breathe  
in the corners.  
You tried to give skeletons lungs.

You know when to cradle me,  
Give me vodka as charity.  
Your silence turns me into a video girl  
Who shatters your precious marble to pieces.

## Author's Note for *Prayer Before Battle*

Vanessa Willoughby

I was initially worried about this challenge; would I be able to effectively and successfully write within the constraints? I had to find the right album, something to inspire no-binary thinking. I ended up pulling up FKA Twigs on Spotify. I'd read an interview with her where she divulged her writing process. She said that she was in favor of restraint, of cutting down sentences to the bone. The Raymond Carver school of writing, I guess. Most of the words that I picked painted a picture of vulnerability and pain and darkness. I had to find a way to capture that atmosphere without crossing into the territory of Gothic. I latched onto the melancholy mood fueled by FKA Twigs and pushed forward.

### *Hand Dealt*

Jack of Spades – upstage

King of Spades – five-alarm fire

8 of Spades – nail file

5 of Hearts – exchange

5 of Spades – jaw

4 of Hearts – FBI

King of Clubs – dumbbell

10 of Hearts – Randolph Bourne

Queen of Clubs – x-ray

King of Hearts – vodka



Senna

Senna was what they gave you if you was bilious.

Cicely Cawthon, female, age 78  
Toccoa, GA  
1938

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015



## Artist's Statement for *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*

Hope Hilton

The South. Georgia. It's where I grew up -- a tiny little town 30 minutes south of Atlanta named Flippen. My geography. I spent a lot of time running away from here, but I realized while living in Brooklyn and then San Francisco that there is no place like it. Red dirt and evergreens, farmland for miles, Southern drawls, grits, chickens, gardening, 35 cents for a Red Rock ginger ale. Also pornography magazines in the woods, dogs that bite, salvation, sweat, and danger.

And race.

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The spring I landed in the countryside near Athens, Georgia, I read as much as I could about the history of my new place. 65 miles northeast of Atlanta the landscape changes. I'd never lived here before. My research until four years ago had encompassed my family history and the discovery of their slave-owning past. I'd walked and hitchhiked 60 miles with my brother to reimagine and honor the walk a slave named Henry took to announce the birth of my great-great-grandmother. I'd traveled to cemeteries and archives searching for the names of slaves and their burial sites to add to the history.

I read *The Slave Narratives of Georgia* soon after I arrived here, checked out from the tiniest library you've ever seen. Part of the wider mission of the Works Progress Administration created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935, the Federal Writers' Proj-

ect that created these narratives documented people all over the United States during the Great Depression.

Made up of first-hand interviews, these narratives are with ex-slaves who were alive to tell their stories. The transcripts describe everything from the land and the slaveholders to the customs, food, medicine, punishment, religion, work, and culture of US slavery. The accounts unfold to portray a rich oral history of the Georgia that I am most invested in: a true account of our past, the ugly and the glory. A recognition of all that went into making this place. A tiny hope toward reparations, where Black History is a part of popular history. There is plenty of criticism about this project. It came along with its own set of problems- namely that young, naive, and mostly white interviewers were engaging elderly Black Americans to discuss something that, at least in the history books, had been whitewashed to a point where the common conversation was that slaves had it good.

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The accounts of slavery really struck me. I'm an educated white woman in my late thirties. Not only was I interested in the people and their stories, but what they discussed was an education to me. And what intrigued me most were the plants. Nearly every narrative named some kind of plant to cure an ailment. I realized that I didn't know a damn thing.

I'd moved here and settled down in a reclaimed and refurbished farm house on nearly two acres covered in plants I knew nothing about. I'm still learning. I may get it wrong here and there. But this project was ignited by my willingness to learn and share about a nearly-gone way of life where people used what they had, and to understand the wisdom of my elders.

I'm drawing every plant mentioned that I can. Some are impossible to identify, and the vernacular used in the interviews is not as common today. I'm not doing this alone, as I'm enlisting pharmacists, herbalists, and keepers of history to collaborate with. I'm now not only learning about the plants that slaves used as medicine, but about the land of which I've made home.

This is a beginning.



Blackgum

Holly leaves and holly root boiled together was good for indigestion, and blackgum and blackhaw roots boiled together and strained out and mixed with whiskey was good for different miseries.

Tom Singleton, male, age 94  
Athens, GA  
1937

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015



Chinaberry

"My belly hurts", I'd say. She always kept some medicine made of chinaberry roots.

Lonnie Pondly, male, age unknown  
Athens, GA  
1939

From *The Recognitions: Plants as Medicine*, 2015

## Contributors

**Harold Abramowitz** is a writer and editor from Los Angeles. His books include, *Blind Spot* (forthcoming from Les Figues Press) and *Dear Dearly Departed* (Palm Press). Harold co-edits the short-form literary press eo-hippus labs, and writes and edits as part of the collaborative projects, SAM OR SAMANTHA YAMS and UNFO.

**Diana Arterian** was born and raised in Arizona. She currently resides in Los Angeles where she is pursuing her PhD in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Southern California. She holds an MFA in poetry from CalArts, where she was a Beutner Fellow. Diana is a Poetry Editor at *Noemi Press*, and a Managing Editor and founding member of *Ricochet*. She has recently been honored with residencies and scholarships from Caldera Arts Center and Vermont Studio Center. Her chapbook, *Death Centos*, was published by Ugly Duckling Presse, and her writing and translation have appeared in *Aufgabe*, *Black Warrior Review*, *DIAGRAM*, *Eleven Eleven*, *Salt Hill*, *Two Serious Ladies*, and *The Volta*, among others.

**Hope Hilton** was born in 1977 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Hilton curates, collaborates, designs, publishes, writes, and walks. Recently completed projects include the writing of over 200 personal letters to anonymous participants for College of the Canyons, Valencia, CA, a Topophilia workshop with teens in Bonao, Dominican Republic, a project about her love of reading at The Kitchen, NYC as well as in Beit HaGefen Art Gallery, Haifa, Israel. She is an adjunct professor of Art Appreciation at Athens Technical College and Studio Manager for Hable Construction as well as a consultant for The Georgia Virtual History Project ([virtualgeorgia.org](http://virtualgeorgia.org)). Hilton was awarded a grant in 2010 from the Forward Arts Foundation in Atlanta was a finalist for the Hudgen's Prize. Hilton resides in a

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**Jennifer Karmin's** multidisciplinary projects have been presented across the U.S., Cuba, Japan, Kenya, and Europe. A founding curator of the Red Rover Series, she is author of the text-sound epic *Aaaaaaaaaaaaaalice*. Her poetry is widely published, most recently in *I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women*, *The &NOW Awards: The Best Innovative Writing*, the Iraq War chronicle *4000 Words 4000 Dead + Revolutionary Optimism: An American Elegy*, and as Bernadette Mayer's assistant on *The Helens of Troy*, NY. She teaches creative writing to immigrants at Truman College and has been a Visiting Writer at Naropa University, Oberlin College, California Institute of the Arts, plus a myriad of sites. In 2015, she returns to Cuba for a collaboration that will be part of the Havana Biennial.

**Mary Kovalski Byrnes'** poems have appeared in literary journals and anthologies including the *Four Way Review*, the *Hampden-Sydney Review*, *Poet Lore*, *PANK*, and *Best of Kore Press 2013*. She is a lecturer at Emerson College where she teaches writing and literature, and is the curriculum director for emersonWRITES, a free weekend writing program for students in Boston Public high schools.

**Sarah Kruse** is a PhD candidate and graduate fellow at the University of Rhode Island, working on a dissertation on avant-garde poetics, the color of grammar, and philosophy of language. She has creative nonfiction forthcoming in *Hotel Amerika* and has had critical work in *The International Journal of Žižek Studies*. She is a staff writer for *Propeller Quarterly* and also serves as managing editor for *Barrow Street Press*. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Emmett Stone:** I'm a writer and critic originally from Oakland, California. Boston was my home for a while, but now I live in Kuala Lumpur with my wife and dog. If you liked what you read, you can find my occasionally updated blog at <http://highdefinitionfantasy.wordpress.com/>

**Oliver Strand** is an M.F.A. candidate at Brown University. He received his B.A. in literature from Harvard College, where he also studied music composition. He spent a year in Japan as a Michael C. Rockefeller fellow studying woodworking. His furniture has been exhibited at the New Hampshire Furniture Masters' Gallery. His music compositions have been performed at the Salle Cortot of the École Normale de Musique in Paris, the Juilliard School's Morse Hall, and Boston's Jordan Hall.

**Vanessa Willoughby** is a writer and editor. Her essays and short stories have appeared on *The Huffington Post*, *The Toast*, *The Hairpin*, and *The Nervous Breakdown*. She is a Prose Editor for the literary journal *Winter Tangerine Review*.



## **Anomalous Press**

launched in March of 2011 as a non-profit press dedicated to the diffusion of writing in the forms it can take. Its backbone is an editorial collective from different backgrounds and geographies that keep an eye out for compelling projects that, in any number of ways, challenge expectations of what writing and reading should be.

Anomalous has its sights set on publishing literary text, advancing audio forms and creation, and supporting all sorts of alternative realities of the near future. The online publication is available in both visual and audio forms on various platforms. In March of 2013, Anomalous launched its first round of print chapbooks, available at <http://www.anomalouspress.org/chapbooks.php>

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