

underground



What's fresh, writers?

Issue 10

Well, yet another big issue this time around - the big 14 page short story in the middle certainly helps! It's been a bit of a slow period at Underground HQ over the last few months, but you know what they say about quality over quantity. This issue sees some great new pieces from repeat submitters, and also a huge amount of fresh blood! Uh, so to speak. Welcome to the Underground experience - we're super excited to have you on board, and we hope you'll consider submitting again in future.

And remember folks, this magazine can't run without your support! We run this 'zine out of our own pockets, 'cause we love it just so darned much, and thankfully, you folks seem to love it too! It's a good thing we're all in this together, right? So tell your friends, tell your family, tell anyone that's ever written anything. We look forward to hearing from them.

-All of us here at Underground

What's in this issue?

Porchlight	2	Pool	11
Kamikaze	5	A Stabbing at the Book Club	12
Adventures with a Bookshop	6	Love Doggerel-Style	27
Colleague		Shave	28
We Killed Them	8	Right Afterward	29
Trying To Get Some Sleep	9	Conduit	30
Faith & Morphology	9	I Am Woman	31
I'll Be Like Him	10	Social Circles	34
Afterglow	10		

Porchlight

Anthony Ward

As much as Adam tried, he could no longer abstain his awareness of it. He sat in his arm chair looking towards the television. Not watching it, but gazing at it. For he couldn't concentrate on anything, nor indulge himself in anything—the pictures merely splashed against the walls as sounds ricocheted off them.

No matter how much he tried he could not lose himself. Something was wrenching at his attention that he could not ignore. He had tried closing the curtains; tried to block it out—but it was no use. It still penetrated the darkness like a dull ache, throbbing like a low electrical hum in the night.

It never used to bother him. He would sit with the curtains open and almost bathe in its comforting glow; at times being soothed by the sound of the swinging chair creaking back and forth, either as a result of the wind, or the respiration of a moment that had only just passed.

Now the creaking reminded him of something out of Edgar Allen Poe—a swinging pendulum with a very sharp blade.

Yet it wasn't the swinging pendulum, or the sharpness of the blade that bothered him, it was the dull thud of the light that ached his thoughts.

“Are you alright?” asked his wife causing him to avert his eyes from the television.

“Yeah, I'm fine,” he replied sincerely, since to him he'd been trying to convince himself he was fine.

“Are you sure?” she asked as confirmation.

“Yes Emilia.”

He smiled at her, then at himself, as he pictured the clarification administered upon his countenance.

Though Emilia had not seen it that way; she only saw the side of his face that remained constantly in the shade, like the dark side of the moon, with the other side

illuminated by the porch light that shone from Ted's yard.

Adam hadn't realised how emaciated he had begun to look. Emilia had watched him grow old right before her eyes as she stood looking at him. His face had subsided into his head, as if he'd gradually sunk into himself. And Adam had been sinking into himself for some time. He'd spent so much time drinking away his short term memories, that all that remained was long term reminiscences that echoed through him—as if from a former existence.

It was as if from a former existence that he used to bathe in the warm glow of the porch light, enjoying the ambiance that settled across the room while he sat watching television.

It was as if from a former existence that he had not a care in the world as he drank them all away. For, after all, it was him that liked to say:

“You have to not care about life to really live it.”

Now that Adam cared about life, he couldn't live it. The porch light from Ted's yard continued to thud against the side of his face, giving him a sallow complexion, until it intensified to the point he could no longer tolerate it.

“Where are you going?” asked Emilia as if she were asking herself.

“I'm going to get some air,” replied Adam, not wanting to disclose his aggravation as he made his way absently out of the room.

Adam strode towards Ted's house, overflowing with rage. He threw aside the gate, which boomeranged back from its hinges and slammed into the catch as he bounded up the steps, and with the most effortless punch—smashed the bulb with his fist.

No sooner had he disposed of the offending light, the lounge light retaliated, followed by the hall light, before the door was torn open by Ted.

“What the hell's going on? Adam is that you? What the hell are you doing?”

“That damn light, I can't concentrate,” Adam replied holding his fists to his head.

Ted noticed blood dripping from his right fist. It ran down his cheek like a

trailing tear.

“I can’t concentrate,” he repeated, shaking his head between his fists.

“Why didn’t you say something?” asked Ted, raising his hands and letting them fall again.

“Why didn’t you?” Adam snapped back.

Ted sighed and looked down at the shards on the porch.

“I heard about the diagnosis Adam. I’m really sorry.”

“All these years you let it go on?”

“We all tried to tell you Adam. But how could anyone have told you when you didn’t want to listen to anybody else?”

Adam looked back towards the floor. The light pulsated in his gaze.

“There’s nothing wrong in making mistakes if it helps you to understand how to make them right, but it’s another to think you’re right in making mistakes. I wished someone would have told me what I wanted so I would have known what to do with myself. I never knew what to do with myself. Every time I managed to lay off it, every time I’d get a sense of myself—someone would knock it out of me. It seemed that everybody else had their life sorted, that they got along just fine. Where was my life? Wasn’t I entitled to one? Did someone steal it from me? Was it confiscated for past sins?”

“It was confiscated for present sins don’t you think?”

Adam remained silent for a while. The sound of the creaking chair swinging back and forth hypnotised him, as it had done many times before. Adam sat himself on it and allowed himself to be swayed while looking down at the floor boards.

“I’m afraid people will attend my funeral out of politeness, not respect.”

“Now come on Adam, you know that’s not true. It seems to me the only person that hates you is yourself.”

Adam looked up at him as he leant against the post placing a cigarette between his lips.

“I thought you were quitting?”

“I am,” replied Ted with a reassuring smile, “this is the only way *I can* quit, by putting one in my mouth.”

“I wish I’d have quit. I wish someone could have stopped me from getting this far.”

The sound of a stridulating cricket made the most elemental music Adam had ever heard, accompanied by a distant breeze that stirred amongst the trees.

Adam listened intently, admiring it as he would if he were a child again.

“Why do you always have to leave the goddamn porch light on all night?” he asked, absolving the silence.

“I don’t know,” replied Ted, his upper lip contemplating over his lower, “I guess I never really thought about it. I didn’t think it bothered you?”

“It didn’t,” replied Adam, as he stared deep into the darkness.



Kamikaze
Amy Huffman

Shots fired over lines I never knew you set.
And me on a stool in their center.
I know this war.
I have lost it over and over again.
If I breathe,
if I move,
it’s over.
Frankly, I’d rather just swallow the shells.

Adventure with a Bookshop Colleague

Mel Hall

I admired your hands often.

One day the boss picked up a flyer.

-There's a book launch, tonight. You two should go.

Noncommittal shrugs.

-Sure.

We walked along the harbour to a warehouse

Shoved our backpacks under a table outside

Hiding how we felt like schoolkids.

The launch was awful

A thriller about child abuse in the church.

On the cover there was a broken doll next to some pews.

You criticised the sense of perspective in the cover illustration,

And I nodded admiringly.

Everyone knew each other and laughed outrageously.

The only one who recognised us was Craig.

We were those two strays at every book launch

In the corner drinking, avoiding Craig.

Once we were full of wine we left.

I slid down a huge banister and you took the stairs.

Walking along the harbour,
the moon was in the water
And all the streetlights were little moons everywhere.

I said

- I feel like a cigarette.

On the path appeared a bag.

Inside were two packets of cigarettes,

one half smoked,

the other still in plastic wrap.

You threw the bag in the water and asked a stranger

-Got a light?

We smoked and smoked and laughed, then I said

-There's a pub. Let's drink some more.

We sat in the corner

In our awkward blue bookshop uniforms.

After three pints I asked to hold your hand.

-Your skin is so soft.

-Yep. Never done a hard day's work in my life.

There was some kissing.

And later I found out,

My boyfriend was at a nearby jazz club,

While I kissed the night away on a beer-stained floor.

We Killed Them

Tom Pescatore

Artists don't sit inside all
day to write and type and suffer,
they play on their iPhones and Macs
with dull eyes editing music files,
remixing old sounds, taking
photographs that seem
somehow older even though they
don't know why, they catch the movie
to marvel at the book (it's YA fiction)
then the next day read it on the train
cover out and facing the crowd, and
they dance at night clubs to hip-hop and
techno in the nearest up-and-coming
neighborhood, their drunken image tagged on
Facebook, exchanging that for actual fame,
and remain blissfully ignorant of the truth
because artists don't think for themselves
or think at all anymore, hell,
they don't even try, because
for the most part
when their head hits the pillow
around 5am
they're plain fucking dead
and nobody gives a fuck.

Trying To Get Some Sleep

Tom Pescatore

I could hold the sky in my palm,
wipe it onto depth-less reality like
an unguent cure in this after-night
morning glow pink rising to a
dark purple that settles like a fog on abandoned streets,
instead I get up and walk heavily to the bathroom
to wash my face and hands,
the floor boards creak with each step,
my ceiling fan whines non-stop,
the subway makes its first run, and
I'm alone counting the surges of pain in my knees,
waiting for the next rattle of tracks heading north,
waiting for the sun to rise from the east
and annihilate this perfect thought

Faith and Morphology

Jemimah Halbert

This is that moment
a pearl in the deep
When you know it
is of pale hue
And there is no doubt
beyond a shadow
That it is truth.

I'll Be Like Him

Matthew John Davies

I'll be like him, when I'm older
But at present I'll throw the gobs
Of self-expression into the hot air
And dance like an epiphany in rain

Until particles of self-employment
Enter my skin, my ears, my eyes
And nostrils, imploding the lungs
Harmonising the wheeze for those
Terminal blank canvases to come

For there is no Muse to speak of
She's making breakfast half-deaf
She treads the antique halls lightly
Towards another's ragged bed

Afterglow

Amy Huffman

What did you expect?
A throbbing neon light?
What a mess.
What a joke.
I absolutely have to be able to laugh.
I'm sorry.
I'll make it up.
Here's some paint.
Here's a brush.
Wake me up tomorrow.

Pool

Sarah Alderman

The sweetest of all waters
When I go down to drink
I have to wonder what cupped hands
Have been here taking sips
And deep swallows
Along the wet powder of the shore
Compounded and steady sand
From all the feet leaving their impres-
sions
It was said we all go down to drink
To ponder over art, to ponder over life
As we pour the cool liquid
Down parched throats
Replenish tired minds, dry inkwells,
And stiff paint brushes
We all gather at the place
To find the perfect words
Most beautiful colors and brush strokes
To finish our piece
To complete a poem
To end a story
The sweetest of all waters
The most precious of all liquids
Sustain the dreaming minds

A Stabbing at the Book Club

Tyler Garant

Okay first of all I swear to God I'm telling the truth no matter how many times you've heard that dumb and inherently dubious expression. I'm going to lie just a little bit at first in order to make the truth better when I tell it, but at least I'm being honest about that. Let me just say I don't care what or what wasn't caught on tape. (My face was caught on tape in a rather peculiar manner during a recent crime.) Nobody even knows how to look at stuff. This is what actually happened.

Beyond the blood as it were.

So the guy comes up to me with this pencil that he said was really good (as in sharp enough) to stab somebody with and, I swear on my own grave, once I got the gist of what he was saying, which was actually oh-yeah-stab-somebody-with-a-pencil I told him I sort of didn't really want to stab anyone—wasn't in the mood, had never done it before, you're nuts, et cetera.

Now thankfully this guy didn't then turn the pencil in my direction or anything—no, he was only mildly surprised/disappointed and asked me if I'd prefer, maybe, a fork, or even a knife, which he also had and I'm not kidding, and I didn't change my mind for anything, especially not the knife, so then he asked me if I'd prefer a broken bottle! And, in turn, well, I asked him if he'd ever read green eggs and ham and stabbing people because that was basically where we were headed and he said okay, okay man I'll take care of it then. And I thought, "I'm not an accom-

He was a real Irish looking guy, this guy, but with a mean streak (such as pencil stabbing) and a predilection towards, I don't know, morphine or something, methamphetamines or something, I don't know, I don't like drugs which might be why, you know, for starters, I was pretty squeamish towards puncturing the skin of some other dude with a pencil. But, you know, this guy's sheer nonchalance towards stabbing was frightening in itself and revealed, I would think, deeper problems than just drugs, or doesn't stabbing always?

This guy, anyways, was a new participant in what was called "The Book Club," which was actually a film club, yeah, ironically named by somebody who wasn't very funny in my opinion, a guy name Quinn whose films usually featured no sound and flashing lights and slowly approaching children in dinosaur costumes, yeah I don't know, I don't know. I mean I never even knew why I went to those stupid meetings in the first place. But there I was that night at The Book Club watching this guy—the one with the pencil, fork, and knife—whose own movies, by the by, featured, more often than not (or one time out of one) slowly closing-in bathroom-stall walls around a pretty girl crying inside of said stall, but not crying because the stall was closing in on her, and like, about to crush the guts out of her, but crying that she had run out of something you put in a needle and I guess that's what you would call heroin but I don't want to embarrass myself by making assumptions here—there are probably even harder, more addictive drugs than heroin to put in needles that I don't even know about—but so yeah if one were to subscribe to the "read-into-the-artist-through-his-art" theory I assumed that this guy, named Camden after you guessed it, had some sort of a drug problem, a theory only proved by his willingness to stab somebody who had only mildly insulted me—me who was not even his friend or really acquaintance—or, and maybe more likely, proved by his five minute oeuvre's grand finale involving suicide by enclosing stall—yes, suicide in this case, because the locks on the stall door, as revealed by certain *very* deliber-

very unlocked, and the crying girl was just not willing to leave the bathroom stall despite the horrible claustrophobia and, yeah, eminent pain of the thing soon to come, and all presumably because her needle was empty, right?—or, maybe more insightfully, because she no longer wanted to be addicted and saw this as her only way out—so anyways it was all pretty blunt if you ask me—almost as blunt as a pencil stabbing—and I’d prefer to think my own short film which had premiered that night, which was perhaps the source of the problem—as in the soon-to-come stabbing—was a bit more complex, although what do I know? These people only liked sex and drugs and, come to think of it, stabbings in their films, none of which my film even remotely possessed, the paucity of which might now be, I don’t know, leading to a release of the craving for violence through the real world. Or something.

So anyways The Book Club met in this dude’s basement, the kind with pipes on the ceiling that were never ever covered and like purposely never covered, the bullshit consensus being that pipes on the ceiling were far more homey to the artistic type than regular flat ceilings, the same applying to the rock-hard red floor noticeably uncarpeted, we’re talking not even a throw rug, and come to think of it, yes, it was the perfect environment for a stabbing to happen to a hipster, although nobody really expects a stabbing anywhere I should think. The basement was always darkish too—I mean during the films the place was pitch black but afterwards, during follow-up discussion and hors d’oeuvres it was darkish, like when the stabbing happened. So, I swear, the back of the guy Camden’s neck was all I really saw in the preceding seconds—multiple soft rolls in the back, the front only consisting of two rolls, the

the front being the face, which, other than being strangely seraphic in the way leprechauns are seraphic, was heavily bearded, which I’m sure many do not expect from their seraphs, the purpose of which facial hair I felt was either to make Camden’s front-facial rolls less visible, or make his otherwise baby-like face (big gooey eyes, fat lips, barely discernible eyebrows, general chubbiness, a black-Irish cherub) look somewhat tough, if less creepy, if more creepy; and so, besides my own twisting fingers around a pig-in-a-blanket-on-a-napkin-blooded-with-fancy-mustard, the back of Camden’s neck rolls and the black snow hat thingy with a brim that he wore was the last of him I really saw or chose to see when the scream let out from one J. G. Nesmith, esteemed secretary of The Book Club and pompous extraordinaire with a come-uppance for a pencil stabbing probably twenty-five years in the making, who had been sitting in a plastic white lawn chair nibbling Doritos discussing feminism (not even kidding) in his films with, God-guessed it, a pretty female, and a bored pretty female at that, that is, until the blood squirted from J.G. chests, accompanied by a shrieky little gurgle.

So people, ho, so people swarmed on Camden pretty much immediately, yeah. Meaning about right after he screamed, “Boo-yaa little bitch!”

Now I had no idea, okay, what outside of drugs might inspire a complete stranger to physically attack another complete-stranger based on a critique of another complete stranger’s fifteen-minute film, unless the first stranger just really liked the fifteen-minute film. I’m flattered, in which case. The film, if we’re at that point already, if something must justify the pencil stabbing, which, I promise, the thing

thing cannot really be justified least of all by my film—okay it was a faux-documentary film with sort of, I don't want to sound pompous or anything, that being, yeah, a general problem at "The Book Club" with sometimes, okay this one time, disastrous results... a faux-documentary with sort of "bizarre" undertones of a certain, I hope, non-intentional Lynchian nature (erhm), involving the people, or pet enthusiasts rather, who had chosen to own and raise domesticated silver rabbits, and were very fanatic about their domestic raised silver rabbits, and if you're wondering, domesticated silver rabbits don't exist, so.

The general problem J.G. Nesmith had had with the film, and vocally expressed in the helpful positive criticism section immediately following, was not that silver rabbits didn't exist, thankfully, but that the rabbits had been spray painted this like really sparkly silver—see he was under the impression that this spray painting, was, I don't know, against the rabbits' rights, or, "was harmful to the bunnies" were his exact words. He'd asked me, too, what I'd done with the rabbits after filming (but of course) and so, well, continuing in the same vein of rabbit-rights violation, I decided to tell one J.G. Nesmith, and then told, all in a few foolish seconds, that I'd eaten the rabbits, my mother being an esteemed French Cook (and of course I'd just given the rabbits to various little girls around the neighborhood, none of whom, I might add, was the least bit disappointed in their bunny being silver). This bit of snideness on my part, though—but well you needed snideness, you really did, to hold your ground in any amateur aspiring artist environment, not be gobbled up, ego plastered, and so it wasn't really my fault that I was kind of innocently and kind of

stupidly snide about things—but this snideness inspired, oh boy, just this avallanchian assault of retaliatory snideness from J.G. Nesmith in which he attacked the silver-bunny documentary to its core, saying it had been utterly self-indulgent, glib, a total failed attempt at some bizarre sort of humor, and trite to boot, well, overtly cute with the shooting, the writing, just ham-fisted, a blow-out from an amateur without an established vision, a strand of restraint, or a tidbit of originality, and an example to us all how not to make a fifteen-minute film.

I had then said, "Okay, next question." And people had laughed at that, but you know, it was more like awkward-release laughter after seeing somebody's work get blasted so hard in their face. And I didn't know what I was really saying.

J.G.'s comments, yeah, although I didn't per se like them or appreciate them in the way of helpful positive criticism (although they may not have deserved stabbing by graphite) might have been very on-point for all I know—I mean, I was certainly, no, like, expert at the thing, the movie-making, I mean, I had sprayed bunny's silver for Christ's Sake, and yeah I had a very good reason for doing that and a very good point to the whole thing but I wasn't exactly going to say it then, the reason, nor am I going to say it now, the reason, because the central tenet of it, the reason, the thing, really was, and nobody appreciates this, because I just liked it, man, I thought it was a cool idea, and I think cool ideas, what you think is cool, there's a reason for you thinking it's cool, and eventually I discovered the reason behind me thinking it was so cool to interview fake owners of fake silver rabbits, and but, yeah, I'm not going to say it now, what made me so interested in the topic, but, I think,

Camden understood it very, very well.

So in case you're wondering, J.G. had nothing but good things to say about Camden's film, so it was not like a joint-revenge-wounded-ego-camaraderie type thing, but, well, either a drug type thing or a, well, I don't exactly know, maybe appreciative, empathetic, defensive fan type thing, I really don't know—maybe it was just insanity, yeah, most likely. But when J.G. went down, his hipster-ish yellow thrift store sweater blooming this bright wet red blot, the vivid type of scene you usually only see on album covers, I tried my best not to be happy or scared; and I tried my best to convince myself, well, that I could have dissuaded Camden from using his pencil so aggressively and, I don't know, convince him maybe to use his voice instead, "like a big boy," as they used to say in kindergarten, before being "a big boy" meant, more often than not, like physically hurting somebody in the manner which most visibly displayed your own superiority, usually with an object other than a toy truck. Right, well. I was one of the last to jump on Camden's back, in any event, which probably didn't aid my case for innocence in the matter. But hey, you should have heard the remarks J. G. had made towards the one kid's (Matt Hart's) film, the one with the close examination of a suffocating cockroach colony underneath a glass dome, which might have, sure, involved fatal violence, Eustachian-level sex sprees, and a green poison drug of extreme substance hardcority, but had received general disdain from both the girls disgusted by cockroaches and the pompous pro-cockroach lobbying hipsters in yellow sweaters, and to an extremely vehement violent degree with adjective choices like, "nauseating," and "anti-semitic"

and "insulting (to our intelligence and humanity as a whole)"; so Camden might very well have been, you know, the vicarious vindicator of one Matt Hart, even though, you know, he wasn't.

Now, during all of this, one of those compulsive filmmakers with a mini-cam preternaturally attached to his fist at like All Times, one Dan S., whose own videos (excuse me, films), usually focused on birds, specifically the male Cardinal—a kid who had practically admitted he'd become an alcoholic in order to increase his veracity as an artist, and his artistic endeavors mainly being the filming of the male Cardinal, of which filming he thought—by the way it was cut—actually symbolized and signaled many deeper truths about humanity itself, as I guess we all did with our work, even those of us who chose to make pseudo-realist depictions of silver rabbits and their overly enthusiastic and attached owners—who, either looking to expand his oeuvre to actual human-beings, or just capture the moment for future investigatory evidence, began to film the eventual stabbing, the film itself later premiering next week under the name "Laissez-Faire Brawlesque X," to lukewarm reviews from a recovering J.G. Nesmith; so I feel I should maybe describe what Dan got on camera, myself being more of like "a film guy," I guess, and not much of a painter with words:

Well the film began after a brief violent worming through the crowd of people, and soon, with many dilettantes offering little physical resistance and with stealth not being one of Camden's fortes, Dan S. was able to catch the pre-stabbing commotion with a turn of his camera, later confessing, privately, that he had his

turned on only to catch sly footage of the girl J.G. Nesmith had been discussing feminism with, for his own non-artistic purposes, and only when noticing the slight uproar of a forced tunnel forged through a crowd of excusatory hipsters, turned his camera in that direction, with the reflexes only an amateur ornithologist-filmmaker could possess, such that the film began specifically with a dipping sideways platter of assorted salamis that somebody was extolling up their friend's face-hole, the salami sort of bouncing sort of sticking, depending on the variety of fancy salami, on the rock-hard red basement floor, and a bunch of yo buddy come ons chirping up from the immediate group, whereupon the majority of the crowd sort of parted in rubber-necking and obliging of the accidental salami-spiller who seemed to want to get somewhere in a hurry, and a good clean shot of J.G. was revealed with the prick sitting in his white-plastic very un-director-ish chair discussing modern feminist film theory with the female, (and you can hear him say Cinderella twice over the crowd, and Snow White once) that being his rather overt shtick with the ladies, if not the overblown animal rights stuff of which I'd been so harshly a direct-witness/target/sacrifice/victim, and then, beautifully revealed through the bodies, Camden came now sort of tripping/stumbling towards J.G., saying nothing at all, and then J.G. was concealed by Camden's back and back-neck rolls, but the scream then sounded off, revealing what was happening as far as violence is concerned, a high-pitched scream from both J.G. and the pretty feminist girl, and then basically everyone else, like it was some sort of assassination assassination by pencil, and some guys/directors pulled Camden back by his shoulders revealing the bloodied number 2 in Camden's

in Camden's hand, the number two dark halfway up to the eraser, and Camden's hand dark along the bottom half, and then J.G. was clutching his chest in just a pricelessly terrible, sad expression, with shock in there somewhere, and realization mingled with shock even deeper in there, yes he had actually been stabbed with a fucking pencil right in his right chest and the pencil hadn't broken but his skin had clearly broken as there was blood, much of it, and so he looked at the girl beside him and then, perfectly, man, right to the camera, and then the crowd collapsed back in, the tunnel closed, as people basically tackled Camden, pried the pencil from the his hands, and tended to J.G., all sorts of valuable traumatized audio mingling in with the growing circle of blood on J.G.'s sweater, stuff like "Who the hell is this maneeac?" and "Who the hell let this maneeac in here?" and "Did that maneeac just stab him with a pencil!" and "Oh my God, are you okay!" and "Stop the bleeding. Put pressure on the wound you moron! No! Ah! Get out of the way! J.G.! J.G.! Breathe! Breathe!" and "Boo-ya bitch!" and Dan S. kept filming, recognizing the value of such material as far as artistic-violence is concerned, or as far as artistic-violence depicted by violence-against-art is concerned, and realizing that there was already enough amateur-directors to tackle the maniac and put pressure on J.G.'s screaming wound both, and that any one of these amateur-directors probably wished they were in Dan S.'s position filming right now, and would do the same thing that he was doing (for the sake of art) especially when the film premiered next week, to a disturbed but not un-impressed audience, who were practically outfitted in chain-mail so layered were their plaids. So at this film premier, the next week, which is

right now, the conclusion—the most artistic thing about the whole kind of really powerful thing—was, conspicuously enough, not the pinning of Camden to the ground and the eventual exhibition of the police entering the basement with cuffs in hand and verandas rumbling up thorax, but, coincidentally or more, an angle shot on me, or at me, of all people, of all innocent fucking people, with the strangest of looks in my eyes at the time, in my face I mean, not unlike shock or horror, but not directly, like, pleasure so to speak, but this weird stifled look on my face, which may, you know, be misconstrued as the purposeful, difficult masking of satisfaction, and when the “fade to black” came, I felt it come with certain unpleasant implications and I just sat there in the back corner of the basement feeling all the eyes on me even though nobody dared to actually turn and look except J.G.—and then silence, real silence, before the next film, which was a study of a decaying college relationship between an RA and a clueless freshman, which was met with, come on, more silence, during and after. So then.

I think, now, it is worth mentioning J.G.’s own film which debuted the night of the stabbing, in case that has anything to do with Camden’s intoxicated ire, or more like my own innocence; it was a study of an affair (of course), a topic I absolutely hated in all its artistic fakery and pandering, if you’ll allow me to be so judgmental, maybe because my own parents split up when I was ten and not out of something so dramatic as an affair but because they flat-out hated each other, or maybe just hated the fifteen minutes because the affair subject was so exhausted and still met with so many nods as to depth and realism and feeling when I could think

more terrible a topic, not sex or violence or narcotics, but adultery, the indulgent topic of choice of any overly ambitious artistically-imagined bland ego, but now I’m sounding like a judgmental ass, anyways, J.G.’s film was about this affair between an accountant and a, boy oh boy, ‘nother accountant working at the same firm, which might, you’d think, like signal the despair of accounting as a profession or cheating as a conscious choice, with all its insatiability and traumatized children, but well, the film, while accomplished, professionally done, well shot, scripted etc, did not tackle such important subjects, or even imply them in any head outside my own, but focused more on the, I don’t know, logistics of the thing, like they were accountants was the point, so they made spreadsheets and shit planning when they could meet most safely, and such, but, yeah, you probably, like everyone else here, like the sound of this, think it’s pretty good right, well, I’m not going to tell you otherwise or anything, but had J.D. ever been in an affair?, and yeah maybe you say that can’t be the point and that somehow affairs get at the core of what people see as art, as artistic expression, and what I’m really saying is that the film was exploitation, man, it was an exploitation film through and through, J.G.’s object to make this perceptually very good piece of art without an ounce of his own heart in it, which is my own biased assumption I know, but you’ve got to understand just how much phony baloney high-art I’ve seen on the subject of affair and family trifles and how stupid and blatantly reaching and safe it is and how empty of real personal feeling you’ve got to be to make it, but I don’t know. They all liked it. Anyways, that was his film and it was well done and everybody loved it that night and it received the top honors that

night (The Top Book Award) and so maybe you have to infer that Camden had, like, a cheating accountant father or something, or maybe he could just spot terrible ego-art, could see the plainly-seeking-critical-approval mess of the thing and it rubbed him the wrong way, or he just wanted the Top Book Award, but I don't actually know and never will. Who knows, like I said. Whatever.

So what I basically felt about The Book Club (as in everyone in the club) was that they had lost their artistic truth, as bad as that sounds, in their own hipster egoic-identity desire to want to be artistic, that they had lost the very essence of real art, and I know this sounds bad and presumptuous and superior, but they were just so Typically Artistic in every sense of the word, like you could just buy ten of them out of a catalogue for cheap—okay, all of their “art” just seemed like it was trying to be artistic without them ever even putting their souls into it, which is what, I guess, this is all really about, this art thing, the heart, I don't know. But I felt as though the stabbing of J.G. Nesmith—one of the best short films I've ever seen, incidentally, and not because of my own involvement in the thing—showed me something, in a way, about what art really is. If art is meant to make us feel sort of deep things then it's really no wonder people rely on affairs and violence and such to convey their, I guess, message about what humanity is all about because people actually see that shit as deep, but if you want to really get at what humanity is all about, then you really only need to get a hold of ego, yeah, ego, because that is really what humanity is about brother, and what no other animals possess, and adultery is only a standard planned aspect of ego, more like animal instinct really. So I don't know, but hey.

sat there and watched a complex character like Camden made so simple, depicted as only a maniac, as in my experience of the real thing as it occurred, I couldn't help but see “ego” in all its reality, especially amongst young artists who, one could argue, possess more ego than anyone, be they athlete or loose husband. So I think, like, only by distorting reality can we actually see what ingrained reality is or means, I don't know. God now I'm sounding like I'm trying not to be presumptuous. I'm really not trying to be presumptuous or not be presumptuous, let me tell you. Well, maybe I'm trying to be a little un-presumptuous, but. I'm trying to explain why I'm at least a little bit innocent! Even in regards to what happened later.

The thing is, and maybe this is my own ego talking here, but the thing is I'm really, like, assaulted, or pulled down at these Book Club things by these “artists” who really just punch you in the face that their artists and punch you even harder when you don't agree and you don't fall for their tight corduroy pants, and, you know, it's just really horrible—it's terrible that they put out these films with young gays abroad and angst ridden family holiday meals seen through the eyes of a Chinese in-law and, you know, all that, all that typical shit, all that dry un-cool openly artsy shit and everybody agrees that it's crazy good art, but you probably know what I mean. Like, okay, where's the heart? But I said that already. What do I know? I'm not trying to say what art is or whatever, but maybe Camden's stabbing of J.G. speaks for itself. Okay, what I'm sort of also saying is, “Where's the creativity?” But that just sounds really bad on my part; like I got all this creativity filming silver rabbits and their insanely dedicated owners, you know? Basically whatt they're treating

art as though, is like this platform for their own egos. So yeah. Yeah so. Ah man.

So like when J.G. Nesmith got stabbed with a pencil and the camera landed on my strangely un-shocked, un-displeased, okay somewhat satisfied face, I had this sort of natural thing where I had to defend myself. Like I had to pretend that I didn't take Camden seriously when he talked about stabbing J.G., or that I'd made serious attempts to dissuade him. And I'm not going to get talking about moral philosophy because I don't know anything about moral philosophy, or any kind of philosophy for that matter, and a lot of these people are very well read, of course, on all those matters and could probably incriminate me one way or another, with one quote or another, and I sort of believe you should really figure all that philosophy stuff out on your own, especially that Emerson shit and also that moral shit, during the course of living and so I can only tell you that, by lack of prevention of a crime, I do not feel guilty, though I do feel guilty about my un-displeasure at the stabbing because it clearly represents my own insecure ego's vindication over both J.G.'s generic much lauded films and his own semi-vicious attack on my own film—and that just isn't right on my part, and that's what Dan S.'s film captured and why, I think, everyone was so stunned after it.

Ah. I'm finished being so apologetic. So, yeah, I think I understand reality and art a little bit better than most people, and so yeah I think I'm a better artist than those die-or-create artists, and so, yeah when I told you I was an amateur who really didn't know anything it was out of a perverse desire to sort of ridicule all this crap, and yeah I think fucking silver bunny rabbit pet owners

and yeah I think fucking silver bunny rabbit pet owners overly filled with pride say a whole helluva lot about humanity, and yeah I wasn't displeased when J.G.

Nesmith was stabbed with a pencil, yeah! So, basically, what I'm trying to say is I hate trying to say things—man, I'm tired of art with all its undefine-ability and conceit, but I'm still addicted to it because of my own voracious little ego which needs above all things, some sort of reason for its own destruction. A deeper feeling? It doesn't exist. But when J.G. got stabbed by Camden the look in my face via Dan S.'s film was sort of revolutionary and sublime so I stopped making art forever once I realized I had a choice.



Love Doggerel-Style
John Gordon

Where is love?
Find & keep it
in the pants
'Cos it will smother you
like a pillow
given half the chance.

Shave
Tom Pescatore

Joe threw his shit down on the curb,
back pack, boots, sleeping bag, hammock,
and all, and I dropped mine beside him, Dave
was supposed to pull the car around 15 minutes
ago, but there was no sign of him, we took pictures
of each other so we could look back and remember
what we looked like, because we thought maybe we'd
forget, this is how I'm going to start it, just
like those 7 days started, standing out on Broad
flannel shirts and dreaming of the west, the last fast
food stop on Oregon and then straight to the arch,
we got to see middle PA, but this isn't about that
this is about the before, standing still, I kicked a
bolt rolling on the sidewalk, it was there when we
got back, it was all there, but different, that's why
I'm glad we took those pictures, the receipt in my
pocket is less than 24 hours old and already it's faded



Right Afterward
Tom Pescatore

If we would have known
I'd be writing none stop for the
finish, the EMP-bop
ice on angels wings and it's dark
over Philly and cool and sunny
some place else. You've got
your jackets on anyway tho & It just shows up
my eyes are red waiting
awaiting
a sign
at 4—letters from around the world
from around—where the sunlight
bends away, ah
I can't help watching the
sky, from my window it
looks so small—I see
blinking lights, bleak walls,
maroon walls crumbling—I saw a plane today
only one, the clouds were purple sad
puffs of smoke and disappeared into
the night—I looked away and typed



Conduit
Sarah Alderman

My mind aches
 Not like the pain
 Of headaches or migraines
 It thrums with thoughts
 Impressions
 So fast
 I do not comprehend them
 They are not tangible
 Until I write them out
 Acting like a conduit
 For something larger than myself
 This is automatic writing
 Between the possessed
 And possession
 I am both and it is me
 I can no longer separate
 My being from the whorl of words
 From the stream of consciousness
 That streams in me, through me
 And out of me like ink



Conduit (cont.)
Sarah Alderman

Like water
 Like blood
 But finer and purer
 Like the smoke of altars
 Like the smudge of ashes
 Like the echo of prayers
 That ring hollow in the rafters
 And go unanswered
 I am worn like a glove
 And I stretch over the very bones and flesh
 Of what I am creating
 Of what I myself am becoming
 My mind, it aches
 Not with pain
 But with words
 Being called forth
 My mind thrums, revolts, births
 And I am merely a conduit
 For what is coming



I Am Woman
Karen Berg-Raftakis

What is it exactly
that makes one
a woman
instead of a man
besides obviously
their anatomy
can you help me
understand

I see many women shopping
and really enjoying it
This puzzles me
because if I could
I'd hire a personal shopper
in a minute
I really would

I've seen women as they greet
ooing and ahing
over each other's shoes
when they run into each other
on the street
and I don't think
I've ever recalled
ever being enthralled
by anything anyone ever wore
on their feet

Why at parties do men get
to comfortably sit
and enjoy their food
and not be considered rude
while the women
buzz around like worker bees
making sure
everybody has what they need

Am I missing the gene
which would provoke me to
clean
all the dirty dishes
and the colossal mess left
where I am begrudgingly a
guest

Why do the men get to
lie back and smoke cigars
and play cards
while the women have to
run around like mad and work
going berserk
trying to get
the table cleared
for dessert

I Am Woman (cont.)
Karen Berg-Raftakis

I like cigars
and I like
to play cards
It makes me
feel so alive
I've beaten men
twice my age
and twice my size
It's so funny
because they don't
realize
that I've been playing poker
since I was five

So I rebel, I do not retreat
into the stifling prison
that is the kitchen
But I play I laugh I have fun
There were many games I even won

I do not regret my mutiny
I do not care
if the women stare
and whisper
about me disparagingly

So when we're invited for dinner
I quickly disappear
and sit with the men
Their conversations are much
more fascinating
I like to listen to the arguing
over politics the joking
and the bantering

Sometimes I happen to overhear
the women enthusiastically discussing
a sale at some expensive store
and I thank the Lord Almighty
that I'm not imprisoned any more

Other times I wonder
am I missing the gene
that makes a woman need
to interrogate
and investigate
another woman's weight

I Am Woman (cont.)

Karen Berg-Raftakis

And why do men talk about sex
but unless I'm a character on TV
like Samantha, Miranda
or even Carrie
it would be considered
very poor taste
for me
to speak so
inappropriately
in mixed company

But if you want to know a secret
I can pass for one and
occasionally I do
I sit and join them
while I chew
the remnants
of my stew
that I didn't get to
finish at the table
because there's just
so much
work to
do
And I ask the one
next to me
where she got her dress
while she's in the middle of
cleaning up a mess

She looks up at me
smiling pleasantly
This line of inquiry never fails
She is so very excited to tell me
and then asks about my nails
We discuss colors and skin tone
when someone interrupts
and reveals to us
her brand new iPhone
I remember to make the noises
that women typically do
when they are shown something
so costly and new
and nobody's the wiser
except for me and you

Social Circles

Karen Berg-Raftakis

The way you pushed yourself in
was quite embarrassing.
I personally felt
it was beneath you.

You couldn't go anywhere on your own,
not without your spouse and your kid.
You wouldn't join anything
unless everybody else who mattered, did.
Do you remember, you almost had another
just because someone told you
she needed a brother?
I certainly do.

Now you're firmly entrenched.
You are one of them,
working but not really...
A woman comes in every day,
because even though
you have nowhere to go,
it's ridiculous to expect a lady like you
to not
have a maid.

Social Circles (cont.)

Karen Berg-Raftakis

You let your daughter ride the bus when you live
two minutes away and you could easily drive,
but you like to sleep in, unless it's for yoga and pilates,
or one hour massages and French mani-pedis.

Now that your baby is older, there's swim lessons and music lessons,
and golf lessons and ski lessons,
and dog shows?

That I must admit, I did not expect.
I'm betting sailing lessons will be next.

Guess that PhD you earned is just
rotting rotting rotting away
in your finished basement,
but it's OK.

Your husband is making very good money.

Too bad he is so blatantly lacking
in everything but financial backing.

Nothing like a gentleman's golf tan.

I'm happy for you, I really am.

You must really enjoy hobnobbing with
a group of people who made room for you,
not having much choice, I'm sorry, but it's true.

Enough years have gone by that they've accepted you.

You've asked them to babysit and they've always come through.

A second family they have now become to you.

I understand that, I truly do.

Social Circles (cont.)

Karen Berg-Raftakis

I just wonder what will happen in ten years
when her lessons are over
and your conversation piece is gone.

What will you do?

You cannot say you're a
stay at home mom
when there's nobody around
to be a mom to.

I'm sure your husband will retire early,
I don't think he could wait until sixty-five.

Will you be able to stand him 24/7?
Will you lament that he's still alive?

All you wanted was to be included,
but I hope you'll realize you've been deluded.

You'll be trapped, surrounded, behind bars
never having the time or privacy or freedom
to find out who you really are.

Your lovely chain of acquaintances
will turn into a noose
which will be almost impossible to shake loose.

You might even consider taking a lover,
but beware my innocent friend,
the problem with social circles
is that circles never end...

Writing Exercise

Chris Hocking (Underground Editor)

We have too much space,
So to save some face,
There's an idea I'll coin,
And I hope you will join.

Here's my plan, a piece without speech,
Give me a box, I'll stand up and preach,
The power of dialogue and the spoken word,
This poem has turned out quite absurd.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is my pathetic attempt at poetry as I compile this issue together and realize I've got a whole extra page of space on back and about five minutes to fill it. The idea is there, though: for a fun writing exercise, try writing a piece - and though there are no constraints on length, the longer the better - that is told entirely through dialogue. It's a fun way to get to know your characters better, and who knows? Maybe you'll get to know yourself better too.

That's another issue of Underground down! Again, we can't thank you enough for your support.. This issue runs entirely off volunteer support, and we're always excited to receive every single submission that pops into our inbox! So remember, tell your friends, tell your family and... wait, what's stopping you from submitting too?