



the
signal house
edition

#3



spring light
2009

lin zhipeng
(aka no. 233)

issue three | august 2020



founding editors

melissa chambers
henry martin
kit brookman

poetry editor

erica gillingham

featured artist

lin zhipeng (aka. no. 233)

contributors

kit brookman
andré jewson
farnaz fatemi
iftach ophir
paul skenazy

issue designed by

rory foster

contents

<u>welcome</u>	the editors
<u>audio drama</u> the empty cage episode 3	kit brookman andré jewson
<u>poetry</u> sleeping in the woods with bats	farnaz fatemi
<u>perspective</u> 5 pm, lev ha'ir, tel aviv אחה"צ 5 לב העיר, תל אביב	iftach ophir יפתח אופיר
<u>fiction</u> let's call her barbara	paul skenazy
<u>poetry</u> when i kneel, i don't think of a god	farnaz fatemi

welcome

Off the coast of Queensland in Australia, there's a place called Stradbroke Island. On that island, in Myora Springs, fresh water from ancient lakes finds the lowlands and mingles with the sea in a quiet, brackish dance of in, and of out. Here, obligated by gravity and the curve of the land, lake water that has for more than 25,000 years played its part in the dreaming of the Quandamooka People meets the endless expanse of the Pacific Ocean. An agreement, backed by necessity and made of infinite moments, curves around the mangrove roots, and runs over rocks from the beginning of time.

This year, many artists, especially those in the performing arts, have been faced with a difficult question of in and of out. A question that has never been faced to such extreme proportions in their lifetime. Much has been said since March of the 'economy' but little of 'ecosystem', a poignant concept for those artists used to understanding what they do by way of its outward journey to an audience's eye.

This month's edition is comprised of works of imagination and memoir, created by both performing artists and written ones, all artists caught in a quiet undergrowth, where the fresh water of their minds continues to seek its path to the sea.

We hope you enjoy it.

The Editors



the empty cage

In the final episode, Gran's choices leave her facing a difficult fate...

AUDIO | episode three
kit brookman | andré jewson

[click here to listen to all episodes](#)

(Credits: Image from Natural History of the Animal Kingdom for the use of Young People," by Kirby, W.F., (E. & J.B. Young & Co., 1889). Music by The Erlkings, used with their kind permission. Music by Robert Schumann, arranged by The Erlkings, translation by Bryan Benner, songs: Hör ich das Liedchen Klingen and Zwielight.)

sleeping in the the woods with bats

POETRY
farnaz fatemi

The rain has light inside it, and,
lying still, I hear it veer sidelong
through the night, darkening.
I use the sonar I have, like bats.
I know they're out there.
It pleases me to pay attention,
find things otherwise unfindable.
Hear words push themselves next
to other words as they are exhaled.

My father says
what are you doing?
and his breath means
I miss you.

My mother means
look at me, say I matter,
but says *Why don't you read*
what I am reading?

The bats sound
like a heart restarting at night
after it's been in my throat because you
are looking into me again, sensing something
maybe I don't even sense,
reaching into my cavernous spaces that echo.
It's true: sometimes you know I'm afraid before I do.



(Image credit: Untitled by Tim Foster, 2018)



5pm, lev ha'ir tel aviv

לחץ כאן לקריאה
בעברית

The sun's still up. Baking me to a crisp, here, where the desert-ish landscape meets the shore.

I'm biking back home.

I've come from a German friend's editing office in the southern, sketchy part of Tel Aviv where the streets may as well have no name,

and the swaying junkies roam free, grazing fake heroin.

I'm sweating, almost home now, right at City Hall,

up Ibn Gevirol,

left on Frishman

then

off the bike right at the corner of Frishman and Lachish, all while Mark Manson's "Everything Is Fucked – a book about hope" is fed into my ears through my now-cordless earphones.

I unlock and open the Pladelet door. In an idiotic, high pitched voice, I call out for the four legged, furry, female friend that has been living with me since I returned to Tel Aviv in April from a locked-up Manhattan...

Tokyo!

My Australian Sheppard, Border Collie, Knaanic mix
... at least that's what they told us she was.

It just happened. Boyfriend had been pushing for a dog. As I wasn't in the country and him a waiter/soon-to-be-actor, I could easily refuse. But now...

She's a stunner in white and grey. Husky tailed, eye liner eyes. On the adopting app she would have had a long line of suitors. I thought there was no chance in hell we'd get her. Shows what I know.

We go down,

one flight of stairs,

for some reason it's always so dark. Darker than the stairway on the above floors, and darker looking when viewed from outside.

Through the glass door with the faulty lock, and she's off.

"Tokyo!"

She's not hearing me. About to burst. She takes the path out to our little street, runs to the place she always chooses, not going to pee on her own pathway – this bitch has got class.

I reach her and hook the leash on.

Sweating again. 76% humidity. There's no point in showering, you take it like a man. Some sweat more than others – Tunisian, Syrian, Persian ancestry lends me no favours, and I sweat like the kosher hog that I am as we stroll our usual routine.

Still a pup, she's always eating off the ground. The heat mesmerizes the Ficus trees that spread all over Tel Aviv. In the 1920s they were hoisted here from South Asia. These evergreens have done a lot of good, but in the 80s immigrant wasps began to fertilize the green giants, and now, four times a year they give off these shitty fucking berries... all over the damn pavement. It sticks to the soles of your feet, paints the sidewalk a reddish black with splashes of yellow. Dogs go gaga over them. I tug at her every four or five steps.

The one thing I've learned from getting a dog is this: I must have been an asshole my three years in this apartment building before she came along. I am now acquainted with around a dozen new neighbours I never knew through my newfound canine interactions.

It's a community.
A conversation starter.
A chick magnet....

Above all, it's really showed me what a dick I was.

Am. Was.
And now, maybe, moving away from being.

All that keeping to myself, meeting only people I know.

What a dick.

I see Hadar, this beautiful, heroin-chic blonde with her oversized, brown and white Australian Sheppard mixed with something-or-other...

...answers to Logan.

Shoot the shit. Few exchanges – I swear I never even saw this woman before and this is not a dog to easily miss.

You say your goodbyes and keep on walking.

Maybe another dog-owner asks you for a bag and you graciously give them one. Boom – a friend for life.

The heat is on, drip drip from every and all. Forget it – just swim on through.

Maybe you need a bag now cause you've just given yours away. Yet another friend. You're becoming the Jordan of friend-making, and it's all thanks to this wondrous creature. Just when all seemed lost in the world. When everything was fucked.

Beautiful.

I now see people with dogs. Tons of them. If this is what it's like with a dog – what's it going to be like when I have a child?

Feh. That's a problem for future Jeff.

We finish off. Once around the block for good measure.

We got a number one, but no number two. No worries. Back up the path, open the glass door, up the ever-darker staircase and into my house, green sofa, purple carpet and classic Israeli beige tiles. I hate

these tiles. 40cm by 40cm blocks of beige inlaid with hundreds of ugly little rocks cut flat and polished off. Voilà! Ugly block tiles in every Israeli household built between 1970 and 1998, on which Tokyo loves to cool herself.

And perhaps use them as camouflage.

AC on. Table fan on as I step into the shower for the third time today.

It's still too hot.

(Image credit: Tokyo by Iftach Ophir, 2020)

let's call her barbara

FICTION
paul skenazy

My wife and I were sitting in the parking lot outside the restaurant when she said,

“I’ve been saving a story for you.”

She did that sometimes, my lawyer wife. Held stories in reserve. Used them like patches at the knees of our worn relationship. She would bring out a story about how the day’s, week’s, or month’s accumulation of abuse, rape, burglary, and murder cut through her faith. How she reacted to the child killed crossing the street after looking both ways, the way her parents taught her.

We had had a hard dinner, with many lengthy pauses. It was a truce table, a breathing space between yelling at the kids and thinking about what we needed to say to each other but couldn’t. The food was tasty—black bean soup and blackened lamb chops for me, artichoke soup and scampi for her. The view over the bay in the fading light provided an excuse to turn our eyes away from each other without shame.

“It’s about a woman,” she began. “Let’s call her Barbara.”

She’s almost always Barbara in these stories. Mitch if it’s a guy.



“Barbara read a book, called *Poison Parents*, about how parents abuse their children by belittling them, berating them, and making them feel they are doomed to fail. It shows how these toxic childhoods remain in the blood, contaminating the child’s life on into adulthood. The book encourages the crippled child or adult or whoever is reading to confront the parents and talk it all out. The book describes the abuse as like hardened arteries; the confrontation is called an emotional bypass.”

“Nice metaphor,” I said.

“Barbara told me her dad would hit her when she cried. He disappeared when she was five. Her mother blamed her for her father leaving. She swore at her, slapped and spanked her, and sent her to bed without meals. She threw food at her if she wouldn’t eat, then made her clean up the floor. Barbara said she was in tears when she read the book; she felt like it was a transcript of her life. I’ve seen

her copy. It's marked up, underlined, the corners of pages turned down, some pages water-stained.

"Barbara's divorced, with two kids of her own. She lives in Fresno, her mother's here in Sunnyvale. She decided she needed to confront her mother. She found a neighbor to sit with her children, got in her car, and drove to her mother's house."

"She didn't call first?" I asked.

"No. She said she wanted to surprise her. She said she thought it would be easier for them to talk if her mother didn't have any warning. She just walked in on her mother and dumped all these years of accumulated anger and hurt at her mother's feet."

We were driving home. I glanced at my wife, who was looking at me while she talked, her hands in her lap.

"The book says that the mother is supposed to react to this information, realize something about herself. Give in or apologize. Say something that leads to a reconciliation."

"But?"

"It didn't work out that way. Her mother let Barbara in, smoked a cigarette while her daughter ranted, then just laughed at her. She told Barbara to get the hell out of her house and never come back. At least that's what Barbara told me happened."

"Did Barbara leave?"

"Yes. Right away. She walked out the door, got back in her car and drove back to Fresno. She parked the car in front of her own house but she couldn't make herself get out of the car. She just sat there, she doesn't know how long. Then she decided she needed to let her mother know what a bitch she was. So she turned the car around again and drove back to Sunnyvale."

“This isn’t going to turn out well,” I said, as I turned into our driveway.

My wife nodded.

“Barbara said she parked her car across the street from her mother’s house and rang the doorbell but no one answered. So she sat in her car waiting for her mother to come home. ‘She was always a slut,’ Barbara told me about her mother, out all night, drunk when she would get home.

“Barbara said she fell asleep. She woke just before six. Her mother was getting out of her car. Barbara watched her drop her house keys, then slip when she bent to pick them up. She waited while her mother walked to the front door, then ran across the street and pushed her mother through the doorway and onto the floor. She says she didn’t say a word, just began hitting her with her fists. Her mother fell to the ground. Barbara sat on her, wrapped her hands around her mother’s neck and strangled her. When her mother stopped moving, Barbara stood up and stared down at her. She heard bird calls, looked around, and saw the front door was still wide open. She walked out of the house, got into her car, drove to the police station and turned herself in.”

We are parked at our house now, neither of us making a move to go inside where a sitter waits for me to drive her home. I turn to my wife.

“Did she confess? The whole story, including the book?” I asked.

“Worse. The cops get her to say she was ‘lying in wait’ for her mother to return home so she could kill her. That’s the formal phrase that defines the murder as premeditated. If she had only driven two blocks farther and gotten to me or someone else at the PD’s office we could have helped her turn herself in, gotten the charge down to manslaughter. Now God knows.”

I couldn't hear the words "God knows" anymore without hearing our daughter ask me one night when I used the expression, "Daddy, how do you know God knows if you don't know there's a God to know?"

I decided it was time to kiss my lawyer wife. Not to heal anything, but because we were still sitting there, in the car, with our seat belts fastened. We sat that way another ten minutes, my hand around my wife's neck, hers resting on my thigh, and talked about whatever it is two people talk about after ten years married to each other when they don't know how much longer it's going to go on but do know it's not something to regret. What was it that time?—Barbara's fate? Who would shop the next day? How worn my wife looked from stories—from events—like these? How we couldn't continue to avoid talking about how little we talked nowadays?

And in that way, we made it through the front door. The sitter told us how our son had trouble getting to sleep and kicked her twice in the shins when she tried to put him back to bed. I drove her home, thanked her, apologized for Benny and paid her extra to make up for the kicks. My wife was waiting up when I returned home. We shared a leftover piece of cake.

(Image credit: The Labyrinth Village by Raphaël Biscaldi, 2017)



the
signal house
shop

art for sale | works on paper | print editions



Hangover Day on Costinela's Balcony in Bucharest,
Vicktor Hübner, 2014

The Signal House Shop sells original works on paper by our contributors, which are

- Exclusive
- Limited Edition
- Signed and Numbered
- Certified by the Publisher or Artist

shop now

Your purchase will directly support each artist and help ensure the survival of *The Signal House Edition*.



the
signal house
edition

support us

We are an artist-run, independent and unfunded publication. Our issues represent hundreds of hours of research, creation and refinement by our contributors and editors.

We rely on the support of our readers who share the belief that artistic pursuit and the exchange of ideas need a house in which to thrive.

All donations go towards the production of our issues. Donors of £100 or more will be listed as a friend of The Signal House Edition on our About page (unless requested otherwise).

donate now

submissions

We accept submissions in non-fiction, fiction, essays, visual art, and audio. Follow us on social media and subscribe to our newsletter to hear of submission deadlines for other categories, such as poetry.

We encourage submissions from individuals from backgrounds and identities underrepresented in art and writing, particularly with regard to race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability. We welcome works translated from other languages into English where both writer and translator hold rights. Contributors retain copyright of their work. Please note, we are currently unable to pay contributors.

We read all the work sent to us and aim to respond within two months if we feel there is a place for it in the journal. As we are a small team, we do not respond to each individual submission.

submit work

when i kneel, i don't think of a god

POETRY

farnaz fatemi



I think of you, and you, and also you,
so long gone, now, I'm not telling your stories,
I don't invoke you to explain laughter.
I have other beloveds nearby
I watch to learn how to live,
close to the tip of my tongue, like you were.
You do not linger out loud.
You are not in my mouth.

But it's not what you think. Now—
like the idiom I'd only heard, but never
bit into, couldn't have swallowed—
you are in my liver. No, you are my liver.
That's what I can say, when I pray:
jigar-e-man, my liver,
teach me what to do now.

issue three | august 2020

contributors

AUDIO | **KIT BROOKMAN** [writer] is a writer and director based in London. Recent work includes *The Stones*, *Whalesong*, and *Close*. His plays have been performed across Australia, the US, and the UK and his writing has appeared in journals including *HEAT*, *Southerly*, *Harvest*, and *Westerly*.

AUDIO | **ANDRÉ JEWSON** [actor] trained at VCA (Melbourne) and École Philippe Gaulier (Paris). Currently touring internationally as Zazu in Disney's *The Lion King* (Michael Cassel Group/Disney Theatrical), his stage credits include *The History Boys* (MTC), *Heaven*, *As Told By The Boys Who Fed Me Apples* (La Mama), *Thérèse Raquin* (Critical Stages), and *East* (La Mama/The Seymour Centre).

POETRY | **FARNAZ FATEMI** is a member and cofounder of The Hive Poetry Collective in Santa Cruz County, California. Her poetry and prose appears in *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *SWWIM Daily*, *Grist Journal* and several anthologies (including, most recently, *My Shadow is My Skin: Voices from the Iranian Diaspora* and *The BreakBeat Poets Vol. 3: Halal If You Hear Me*). Farnaz taught writing at UC Santa Cruz from 1997-2018. website | instagram

contributors

PERSPECTIVE | **IFTACH JEPHTHAH OPHIR**

is a leading Israeli actor, writer and director. He works for Israel's Rep Theatres, which include The Cameri Theatre, Habima, Haifa and Herzelia Ensemble as well as independent theatres Tmuna and Tzavta. Internationally he has appeared on stages in Edinburgh, Stockholm, Shanghai, New York, Bucharest, Tbilisi and Amsterdam. He is on the Israeli Actors Committee and writes for both stage and screen. He lives in Tel Aviv.

FICTION | PAUL SKENAZY grew up in Chicago and taught at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He reviewed fiction for the San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Tribune and was a mystery and thriller columnist for the Washington Post. He published books and articles on James M. Cain, Dashiell Hammett and other noir writers. 'Temper CA', a novel set in the California Gold Country, won the 2018 Miami University Press Novella Prize and 2020 Golden Crown Literary Society Prize for Debut Novel. He lives in Santa Cruz with his wife, the poet Farnaz Fatemi.



COVER ART | **LIN ZHIPENG** (aka No.223), our featured artist in Issue 3, is a photographer and freelance writer based in Beijing. His blog, "North Latitude 23" (created in 2003), published photography and short texts, received millions of views, and made the artist famous online. Presented for 15 years in group exhibitions in China and internationally, Lin's work has also been the subject of several solo shows (e.g. Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm; De Sarthe Gallery, Beijing; Stieglitz19 Gallery, Antwerp; M97 Gallery, Shanghai; Delaware Contemporary). His photo books are published in China, France, Canada, Japan and Italy. website | instagram



subscribe at

signalhouseedition.org

buy work on paper at

the signal house shop

follow on instagram

@signalhouseedition

and twitter

@signaledition