

Editor's Note

There is something besides the internet, i.e. people. Books are my favorite metaphors for lives. A journal is my favorite metaphor for a day. Today is the day you are reading the newest issue of *Fence*.

Today, your most obscure tasks—for example, this occasion of reading a literary journal—are special, because of the difficulty of monitoring said events. Literary knowledge arrives in code; it's told slant. But your most daily tasks: riding the train, walking to the bank, buying groceries—are often under surveillance.

By happenstance, there are two poems in this issue titled: "NSA" and "The National Security Agency," respectively. In Fady Joudah's poem, "The National Security Agency / you said is why you wouldn't strip bare." Surveillance interrupts intimacy. In "NSA," Alex Hampshire promises, "I won't tell anyone else as long as you promise me you are real." A constant search for threats is its own threat. Being real is difficult.

Even the NSA knows how difficult it is to know what's really going on everywhere, all of the time. What is real and what is imagined? As Jennifer Karmin and Bernadette Mayer co-write in "Dump Poem,"

a story is an experiment
that questions reality
whatever that is

And Jess Arndt's story, "Together," does just that. It depicts a couple, both with the same parasite, and examines the coupling effects of nature: if there is something living inside of you, you aren't alone. Similarly, with reality and fiction, it's hard for the two not to go together. Arndt writes:

When I was young I knew that everything was sentient and I was capable of doing great harm. Moreover, I knew that things should not be separated—that pairs, no matter where you found them, should stay intact.

In Sandra and Ben Doller's excerpt from *The Yesterday Project*, the two authors set out to write a page, side by side, each day, on the subject of

“yesterday.” This coupling of one writer’s impression with the others’ creates a voice with two registers. In this way, a voice can resist identification. Samuel Clare Knights, in an excerpt from *The Manual Alphabet*, insists—



My hand as good a voice as any.

Like a fingerprint, a voice identifies you. Like androids lost in Eric Baus’s poem “Paused Doppel,” “Our beeps released bees.”

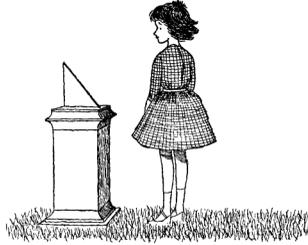
The best possible way to accomplish the task of describing the collective variants of possibility is through “writing.” Navigating the many categories of thought and experience capable of being processed by human beings at once adds you to this collective matrix of experience, occurring throughout time and at this moment of, newly, recordable history. Video journalism is informed by a massive archive of constantly produced amateur footage. What matters is the content: the information that threatens to be hidden and lose its meaning, or lose its defense.

Here’s some useful information: if you can’t wait to read Rodrigo Toscano’s newest book, *Explosion Rocks Springfield*, you can read an advanced excerpt from it in this issue. Each section of his poem repeats the same news item: “The Friday evening gas explosion in Springfield leveled a strip club next to a day care...” Recollection is the most difficult thing to accomplish as a culture. Toscano’s poetry is like a sudden explosion in an ordinary place.

Writing is a partnership, the reader’s attention drifting over the result like Uncle Sam’s wandering eye. As Joe Milutis describes reading a textbook in “8th Street”—

You may have paged forward to the pictures, which included a girl melancholically reflecting on what looked like an Exacto knife plunging up through the grass.

—one way of reading this journal is seeing what jumps out at you, as you flip through it.



Another way of reading is to flip to the back, read the Reading List of books the writers in this issue recommend, and then read them. Here is a personal literature that doubles as reality by changing it.

I want to end this introduction the same way Laura Wetherington ends “Pierre Rivière Spectacular 11”: “Then Michael Jackson drops a piece of tiger fur on the street; it turns into a tiger and walks away.”

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Read this journal. It is not the news, but it is the news as reported through the lens of a collection of contemporary artists who approach the world like boundless governmental wiretaps: investigating all of humanity.

Everyone is a variable, so very much so. So, you better vary. That’s what *Fence* does.