

sentences  
start with  
a capital  
letter.

**Sentences start with a capital letter.**

North Pole Exhibitions / May 26th, 2019 / a solo exhibition by Justin T. Nalley about making friends and learned vs. learning new things

with additional performance/poetry by:

*Jeffrey Sherfey*

*Michelle Labedz*

*Gabriel Chalfin-Piney*

*T.A. White*

*Fabrizio Emilio Subia*

*A.M.*

*Marlo Koch*

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## Oration

I grab my drum  
and dance my song  
amidst divisions  
long dividing

where we draw  
our lines with distinction.

When I say we  
I mean you and I,  
really,  
here in this moment,  
the moment of reading,  
the event of its being,  
attempting to make  
it, the moment, cohere--  
not everything will,  
only that  
it does within us  
in/dividu/aly,  
you and I.  
And that is enough  
to allow me  
to dismantle  
any idea that you  
might have,  
to tell you  
that you actually  
do not have it.  
Brain and Body  
you did not make,  
blood and gall,  
all a gift.  
I have heard it said,

and largely agree,  
that every reason  
or belief is just  
a construct  
built by us  
for God knows why.  
The world itself  
reasonless and meaningless  
and quite simple,  
but I wonder  
of the first things  
and their unearthly parents  
and where  
was the very phenom  
of meaning trained?

Would anyone teach  
of a mushroom cloud  
as polite, right,  
or a display  
of great humility  
since it cowers  
to a certain strata?

The weight of sin  
that presses against  
the whole world  
is pound for pound  
the same as  
skinny transcendence  
all over.

When I say God  
I mean God,  
though I do not know  
what salvation yet

looks like,  
I know though  
that it keeps me  
from having  
to cling myself  
to any thought.

Never owe a due  
to any system,  
to allow yourself  
a piece or a part  
in any group, truly.

There is no perfect  
system that works  
with our oft desired  
and rightly praised  
empathy,  
as empathy only knows  
the variables of a person,  
variables no machine,  
no matter how nice,  
could abide.

As a matter  
of fact.

I imagine God  
in the first things  
which only naturally  
in uncreated light  
cannot be seen  
but with a mind's eye  
and even there  
there is a horizon  
as clenched as

a black hole.

To be fond to  
what is beyond the sea,

elision asks me  
to maybe learn  
you this:

where they began,  
our thoughts,  
was a murky water  
in which not a line  
cast from above,  
at the face,  
the skim fine  
surface water  
where we wade--  
not a line  
could trace their birth  
beyond mercury-mirroring,  
ever-leering water,  
water where we wade.

We cannot claim  
where they began  
only that we caught  
them, our thoughts  
exactly break the place  
they emerged  
and only know that  
they emerged  
and that they  
had strength and weight  
in the grasping  
and maybe in the taking

alone, only were we

so taken with them,  
a zenital sun,  
all fire wants  
and never joins.

a jealous gull,  
a passing shadow,  
rasping away  
any claim  
that we do not  
own our thoughts,  
clinging to vapors  
in a word  
inedible.

In this torpid air,  
a bird, a flare,  
a dent of season  
on our lives.

Waters rise,  
scaffolding submerges  
to sea folding.

In this realm  
of lofty feeble towers  
a question is a tremor  
with the power  
of a bird brag  
at the edge of vision.

We attribute a gift  
to any other person  
outside the borders,

delusion.

But  
from every grace,  
from gravities,  
what will come  
to light?

It could be  
no more  
than this:

Being,  
an airful thing,  
is a phenomenon  
in and of  
itself.

\*

“For this reason,  
deeds and time  
pass away.  
Bad and Good,  
they are all lost  
together,  
for they have  
no duration  
in the spirit,  
nor in their own right,  
nor have they a place  
of their own”

-Miester Eckhart

### 3.29

#### pangea

'the cracks are there to fill with gold', you said, pointing to your chest. i'm in this orbit with you. i sigh loudly and you laugh. we don't look at each other because we're a mirror, and who wants to look into a mirror when you don't love yourself. i laugh a little bit, too. you shuffle in your seat. we're floating. i am melting in front of you, crumbling. the earth sighs, then. heavy with the weight of our affection. we sleep and say goodbye. you're inside of me and i feel like light. we are special. we have known each other centuries. i have called for you in my dreams and we have loved each other once. 'and everybody has them. that's what makes us like One.'

## LEARNED VS LEARNING

how to brew kombucha  
how not to give myself away  
how to make panna cotta  
how to say yes to myself instead of you can't  
how to tend to a garden  
how to be honest  
how to write a better poem  
how to roll a better joint  
how to let go of cumbersome weight  
how to give others love  
how to accept love from others  
how to be calm  
how to be compassionate with myself  
how to do dolphin pose  
how to sit with time  
how to listen  
how to express my desires without feeling ashamed of them  
how to be tender  
how to seek clarity  
how to know the difference





## Stories:

When u were a kid ur grandma, trying to fuck with you, sat you down on top of her ironing board and told you the story of la llorona--the ghost that lost her children and cries at night looking for them. Needless to say it left a lasting impact on you, cuz since then, maybe trying to be like her, at nights on the stoop outside your house you'd sit with your cousins and the neighborhood kids and tell each other about how you swear you saw her, or an enano, or how a demon haunted your aunt's house and how after midnight when the street lights all turn off it walks up and down this block, stands in front of your own steps and if you look out the window you'll see its eyes.

Or Sometimes it was that huge angry dog that was once run over by a truck on the street across the little store, the kids said he lived and if anyone walked down that street alone he would take them, and that's why we never heard from Octavio again, do you remember him? He told the best stories.

Or the chisme about how you have an aunt and some cousins that live really far away in the US and they all have a beard and sweaters, they say that if you tell anyone about your family back in Ecuador they go quiet

Man Stories like that and you and I, sidewalk shit talkers, bottle cap soccer players, we kept the magic of our neighborhood going didn't we?

Maybe that's why I'm still a storyteller sometimes

I long back for those days

Cuz as you grew up, you didn't have a stoop outside your house anymore, you moved to the US and every corner of your home was filled with the memories of the country and the family you left back home, with all the other homies that didn't make it with you. U still hear about them every once in a while, sometimes through a joke you swear could only come from your dirty cousin's mind, or from your uncles phone calls on your birthday, "Clarito hasn't lived in that house in years, he used to have this tight curly hair." But it's become less and less frequent. And the ghosts that used to float down the streets at midnight outside your grandma's house, what happened to them?

Nowadays I hear you telling different ghost stories, about great people that once lived but now are absent in your life. I hear you talk about Xavier and his three dogs and how Coco you and him would watch dragon ball z together. Nowadays I hear you tell stories about Palm trees and mangoes, about dinosaur iguanas you witnessed roam the cobbled streets of old Guayaquil, about the horizon you used to see lift to the sky and become foam at its tip, to come crashing down on you and absorb you like the ocean does

The ghost stories you tell nowadays aren't scary, they're just melancholy. And they're you, a life lost to time, distance and migration, to form anew.

Maybe, in that way, you've embodied la llorona, and these stories are you yelling out for your children.

But the stoop outside your grandma's, man, I gotta tell you, it's still there. Like a miracle, it was one of the few things that survived the earthquake. And when you finally go back, maybe sit on it one night and remember the neighborhood kids yeah?

I think you'll see that this whole time,

These stairs we made ourselves ain't half bad either

## **Brunch:**

Excuse me if I'm coming off as forward, but tell me about your dreams, homie.

I hate brunch as much as you do, maybe more, there's no need to PRE-TEND we're having fun--let me clarify, I love brunch FOOD, I never grew out of being a fat kid and there's just something about creamy egg stuff that - muah - is my favorite.

But I hate the concept of brunch. Did you know they call it "brunch culture"?

Culture!

That means that you and I are partaking in the stuff that empires were erected for--their architects sat in an indoor tennis court in the middle of riots and proclaimed "quality of life" and so we have the liberty to sit across from each other without persecution and listen to the table next to us go "ahhhh," "woowwww" after every forced statement

Tell me what's new, homie!

Not in your life but in your mind,

Give me the details of the synaptic explosions inside your eyes that occur every second, more than there are stars in our galaxy, did you know that? That the circumstances that led to your astonishing intellect should really go more noticed by you, because it stretched as far back as a time telescope could ever see--an explosion that begat another explosion that begat hot clouds bigger than the space from your house to the sun, that begat a spiraling Galaxy a renaissance painter could not recreate that begat solar systems and weather systems and intercellular systems until this creature ate too many of that creature who ate too many of that one that allowed you to stop hiding in trees, puff your chest out and walk upright--Lift your chin homie, cuz your story is incredible before you ever opened your mouth. Forget there's noise around us and escape to your inner universe to tell me about your dreams.

Know that there's nothing you can be that isn't magnificent

Historical

Celestial

my friend  
**(Alden)**  
recently declared  
poetry  
as mixed feelings  
i thought it was  
figuring things out  
obscured conclusions  
free from the  
pressure of change

she said  
addiction as indecision  
i thought it was  
a lust  
stronger for secrets  
than oneself

addiction  
as repetition  
repetition as beauty  
she said  
we were parasites  
non separate  
hydrogen, 75% water  
reckless  
intelligent

i thought  
i was supposed  
to be a robot

she said that  
my heart  
is heavier than my head  
and I would  
define my heart  
identically



i am very normal but have  
**moments**

when i feel special  
like the rules aren't for me

i drift  
like a plastic bag wearing  
fancy shoes

that everybody wants to greet  
or have sex with

at other times  
I wouldn't  
feel special  
if I were flying  
on a mechanical pig

that I invented  
in the Virgin Islands  
while modeling  
for abercrombie  
in 2001

before I knew about politics  
and the shook the hand of the president  
who bought one of my pigs  
and gave me a painting  
(his early work)

and thanked me  
for writing a children's fantasy novel  
called, Mary Daughter  
It was about fairies  
they were ninjas

with a subplot that explored race  
and gender roles  
before I knew to care

and made it to shawn's house  
on my skateboard  
for the first time  
without falling  
he gave me a high 5

and his dad bought us pizza  
and potato skins  
which i pretended to like  
because shawn did

but would have preferred stuffed crust  
or chicken wings  
they had nice carpet

and no pets  
i remember being jealous  
sweeping clumps of dog hair  
in a house that smelled like kittens  
i had a pet snake

i remember my parents  
whispering about the neighbors  
who were complaining  
that a black family moved in

that is how I learned  
we were good.  
I'm also a painter



**Touched.**

The soft "t" making my tongue  
touch the top of my mouth.

**Chasing**

(from afar)  
I'm sorry it's just me  
my naked self  
on the toilet seat  
with signs about  
cleanliness facing me

Chasing

(nearer)  
your eyes down  
my eyes to the side  
[close-up]  
eyelashes  
[close-up] veins  
[closer]  
a very very dark rouge

[tracking shot] yesterday

when my necks touched  
(plural because today  
our peripheries are blurred)  
(plural because you're so  
close you're out of focus  
so drawing you) is in fragments

[close-up] shouldn't your  
touch have left a dent on my finger?  
[close-up] I close up  
to let the thoughts in about time

[tracking shot]  
my clothes are hanging  
since yesterday

[close-up]  
behind the towel is the real you,  
peeling it back like a curtain  
green light in your eyes

## SELAS

*The changing circuits of Selene  
as she comes back and back again  
—how she changes her returning shape  
... now touching, now shrinking back.*

—Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*

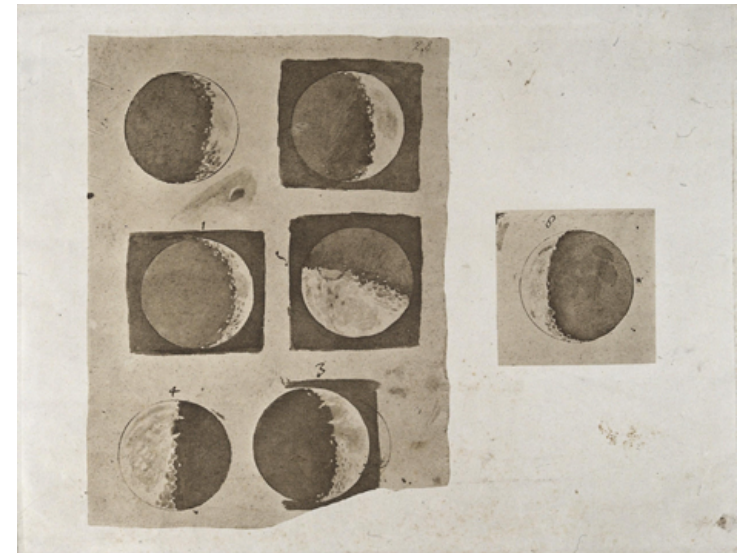
*How the light seemed like a bell;  
how it seemed I'd been living inside it, waiting  
—I'd heard all about the one clear note it gives.*

—Carl Phillips, *Late Apollo*

*I remember my father,  
shoveling pieces of a rabbit into a hole, holding  
my sister's hand so she wouldn't run toward him.  
I remember the day Sammy  
went out to the lawn  
and shot himself in the head; I remember  
the boy that said  
throw it at  
the Black one;  
My father's other  
other daddy's girl;  
Lifting my mother's leg into the tub,  
and the wispy hair at her crux;  
I remember  
that it felt like the sea  
was rocking against me,  
rising until I was out of breath,  
lying beneath that man. Seagrass  
bent over,  
dangling in the wind;  
Popping heads off dandelions.  
The cautionary-hue of dawn.  
That blood  
was once a sign of good fortune—now?*

*how winter, could be  
life-giving. That,*

*light will come again*



*Five diagrams of the surface of the moon, during its phases. Aquatint after Galileo Galilei.*

*Image Credit:*  
V0024778 Astronomy: five diagrams of the surface of the moon, during its phases. Aquatint after Galileo Galilei. Copyrighted work available under Creative Commons Attribution only licence CC BY 4.0 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> No changes were made.

## MAGIC FRUIT AND MAGIC FRUITLESSNESS

Hold two apricots and a fig between your fingers,  
believe in magic for ordinary's sake,  
and find yourself drunk on luck;  
intoxicated by the right now,  
and infuriating to loneliness.

Slip down in a velvet plush seat  
and place importance on  
the closing breath of a cello concert,  
a video of a dahlia blooming three times its' natural speed,  
a calf muscle pulled taught over and over,  
a white rabbit leaping into a dark green hedge,  
a peeled-apart blade of grass,  
a snake escaping clean down a hole,  
a crude painting of a blue bull,  
and snapping pussywillows in half.

Drop legions of perfectly ripe avocados on your grudges.  
Drop the lime and cilantro and jalapeno and tomato and sea salt, too.  
Don't make a habit of racking up large amounts of people who minutely  
irritate you.

Let eels with eggs in their bellies inhabit your holed places,  
give homeness to patient newness,  
and apply balms to the floor.

Eat tomato pie in bed with that person lying next to you —  
the sun is there,  
and the cat, too.  
Everything else bubbles up in tomato-shaped bulges,  
pushing out of your bodies,  
and plopping off the bed sheets onto the floor.

You both laugh,  
and stomp your feet,  
and make marinara.



## EASY BREEZY LEMON SQUEEZY

Apply for receptionist jobs,  
dye your hair shiny-mousy brown,  
dig out the headphones from your portable cd player  
and plug them into your phone,  
go running at an LA Fitness on a treadmill set at 8.5  
and buy low-fat lemon yogurt,  
wear billowy striped swim shorts  
and put cucumbers over your eyes,  
haul groceries in sweaty plastic bags up three flights,  
feed your cat leftover tuna salad,  
make a mood board,  
when you don't get the job.

Hold a piece of sky against your mirror.  
Buy a white button up shirt meant for 30 year old people  
who want to look like 40 year old people who live in the Hamptons.  
Imagine yourself wearing it on a beach in the middle of July  
in a picture on your Instagram reading the same book you were reading  
last summer.

Move forward!  
Desire simply!  
Feel easy and breezy!

But don't forget that  
a tiny wet frog,  
a cowboy made of steam from an iron,  
a snake who eats its own tail,  
a bag of easy peel Cuties from Whole Foods,  
a pillow with a needlepoint dog face on it,  
a divot in a frozen lake that spreads miles,  
a bloated aloe vera plant  
a sticky hand flung against a wall,  
or a sexy little ghost  
could easily get that job.

## CAN YOU IMAGINE

making a nest  
out of the cotton from bottles of Excedrin?

digging your toes  
into a beach made of peanuts

gripping your teeth  
onto a soft pink pig's thigh?

lining your the underside of your skin  
with PVC shower liners?

smiling at a dog  
who isn't wearing a jacket?

walking around with a heart  
full of faith?

Sentences start with a capital letter.  
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[JustinTNalley.com](http://JustinTNalley.com)

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1902  
1905  
1910