

I couldn't be who I wanted to be  
when your head was in a toilet.  
I was trying to do good by you—  
until I realized I had nothing left  
to give. Your presence still strains  
me on nights where I have nothing  
to myself. Youth wasted on getting  
you to a point of somewhat sober.  
I question if it's a regret or a generic  
lesson. At this point I don't want to  
complain—I'm grateful I was chosen  
to hold your hair at your worst hour.

MARIA SANTA POGGI

## The Roaring Twenties




I woke up into a concussion.  
Two years ago, you were here.  
Sometimes I hope this is just  
a disappearing act awaiting  
a swift return from the swash  
of a magician's cape. I check  
an empty inbox—there's no  
line of communication to you.  
I even reread your old emails  
I didn't care to respond to

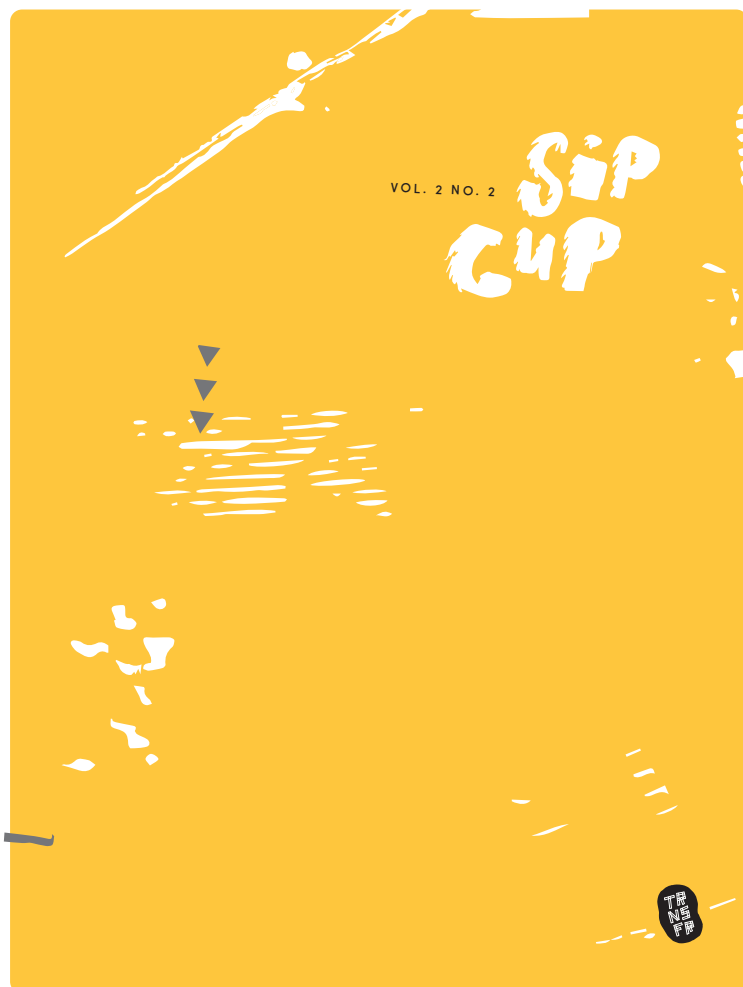
MARIA SANTA POGGI

## Who the Fuck Emails Anymore?

**Maureen Alsop**  
**Matt Rowan**  
**Maria Santa Poggi**

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## The Electricity In the World

MATT ROWAN

*How he loved the thought of money and status,*

This guy had to go. He had to. The state had completed their trials. During the trials he got really bent out of shape, complained about the fact of his being tried. He said he deserved better trials. So the state made them better, but they weren't better enough. Not for him. Nothing ever was.

He asked that he should go free.

So the state said, well, we can give it a try. They let him go free, and he started to kill again. He found this poor little old man wandering the streets, looking for someone's help. This guy found him, and instead of helping the old man, he killed him. He didn't even try to help the man. Just boom, dead, killed. And not a finger lifted to help him.

So that was it. He wasn't set free anymore. Setting him free clearly didn't work.

In fact, before the authorities arrived to take him into custody a second time, a mob had found him and beat him within an inch of his life. When the police did get there, the mob told the police, Look, we'd sooner die than hand over this monster to you. So we'll do it on the condition that you kill him, and not just a little bit. You have to *really* kill him. The police agreed, because they really couldn't blame the mob for the mob's bloodlust. That's what happens sometimes to a people pushed too far, they become a mob.

No one's saying the mob is justified for being a mob, but they weren't operating with thought, with feeling. Or actually they were operating all as one, with only one thought and one feeling. The vengeance thought, the vengeance feeling. The feeling you get when you know you've found the right guy, the guilty one. And maybe they had and maybe they hadn't. But they probably had. They certainly *felt* that they had.

They put him back in a cell where he became a prisoner, and in that he became an idea. He became certain folks', most folks', idea of evil incarnate. And in that, too, it can't be said they were wrong to feel the way they felt. But they began to begrudge the system of laws that had kept the prisoner in his strange cell, a metal box-like enclosure.

He should be out of that box-like enclosure and dead! Their words came from between gritted teeth.

They needed the power. They needed to get him from his enclosure and into position, so to shock him to his ultimate death.

They needed the state to do this, now. Or they would do it themselves.

The state asked people to stop or reduce electrical usage for a five-minute interval during which time they would electrocute the prisoner.

The state's power provider offered an additional ten megawatts to contribute to the death of the prisoner.

The people sold medallions to raise money for an additional five megawatts.

The prisoner's last words were, I regret nothing and probably society should be able to do what's about to be done to me, as a preventive measure.

And all the electricity went into the prisoner.

And it kept going into the prisoner.

Until he burst into a spectacular rainbow but the rainbow was a murderous rainbow, because the prisoner's true nature was alive and well inside of it. Its each and every color motivated by only one thing: to harm.

It went after the people as only such a rainbow can, causing mayhem.

destruction, fire, mass horror

It took a long time for the people to finally trap the killer rainbow in a geode invented and constructed for that purpose, and by that means it was then suffocated and died.

Died resenting them all for how he had been treated.

## from Essays on Self Portrayal: What I Like About You Is You

MAUREEN ALSOP

DIRECTIONS REQUIRED: I WENT INTO WANTING

We pass the Five Mile Swimming Hole on our way to Silkwood to celebrate three Sicilian Saints: Cirino, Alfio, Filadelfo. Brothers martyred in boiling tar, by cut tongue, by fire. Ancestral processional, waves of silver wattle, crimson papered floats, sparrows on electric wires above the children consummated in white ruffled shirts, tulip trimmed black skirts.

I would rather die with you than simply be there. But that is my selfish comfort. I will be with you if I can.

I am trying to keep a log book of all the amazing things you say. But there are so many.

On the other side of the railway line, a cemetery. Snakes in the surrounds. We would miss the memorial for the Battle of the Coral Sea, the opportunity to be Farm Sitters, or to possess the lowered 2pm Bingo Eyes.

Merryburn Creek, Banyan Creek Bridge, Thorne Road, Cassowaries crossing, we cross, Limbo Creek, Wongaling Beach, South Maria, El Arish.

I lost my spot. Diggers Creek Motel & Van Park across from the coffee kiosk with the 1951 Blue Chevy truck. They sold meat pies.

Stuff the environment. Coral bleaching: the sea whitens her teeth, aging into dentures. Plastic bags capping old roots where her canals rotted. Or lava covering whole islands in mudslides. Tornadoes. Stuff nature. Earth is a taxidermy. We are dust mites. We, the endangered. We were not going the right way. But we were not wrong.

Beyond Murder Point Winery, Jesus dressed in gladiolas for the ceremony. *Dear St John, let us surround the river's aura in freedom*, another entity love gives entitlement to. The altars along the waterways illuminate the town, vespers soften the wood rafters, plaster figurines adorned with gold foil halos, ceremonial Latin soften Mona-Lisa lips—a mannequin's eternal fashion welcoming old wishes. Like Mary robed in funerary lilies. I am an agnostic who enjoys the spirit's ritual. The French blue backdrop lit in silence, offerings of tender desperation, vibrant poinsettia-red gowns loosened by swords and feathers. Stuff religion. It is beauty I grieve.

To the father to the mother to the whole inside of your prayer I cannot hear. Communion medallion. Silver saint. A string of white-red-blue-green-orange party lights under the tent. Arancini. Ravioli. Cake plate & tea. Dead Man's Bones. Lupini. Cicri.

Latin service. Midway. Sky bombs.

When I came out of the hall, it was as if the cane field had distanced itself, the grass spread further than my memory for grass.

At Cattle Creek we saw a jabiru, more cutouts of mown grass—spaces stitched like old roads.

*You did not know you were dead, that you were unguarded, inconstant  
you were offered a glass of water, thirst lost in your hand,  
there were no others, no entry,  
no constellation in the crack of the door, too late, if you were one  
without consequence, where would you turn, you were willing, you were  
refused,  
you were not seeking but saw, there was no way to make infinite, no means  
by which, not to accept*

*The gatekeeper pressed your face to the wall, holding your wrist, stealing your wallet, the hazard of your city, the lesser hallway open, no crawl space, you were too tall, the animal was eaten and given back, by one affection, by the briar patch, by word this was compassion—*