

A (**PROSE** ) Zine  
A (**INK** ) Zine  
A (**DISCRETE** ) Zine  
A (**DISTANCED** ) Zine  
A (**ISSUE-EIGHT**) Zine  
A (**MAEVE** ) Zine  
A (**LEJEUNE** ) Zine  
A (**JERATH** ) Zine  
A (**HEAD** ) Zine  
A (**BRISBANE** ) Zine



A () Zine, issue eight, featuring art by Maeve Lejeune and words by Jerath Head, put together by Jerath Head & Jonathan O'Brien, and published by pseudonaja.group.

**W**hen we first sat down with the idea to make a zine during quarantine, the whole country was in roughly the same boat. Quarantine meant staying home, and we figured staying home meant we'd all be missing each other, and we'd all be looking for things to do. And then we thought—just because we can't see people doesn't mean we can't make something together.

We reached out to some of our favourite Brisbane creatives, who are also some of our favourite people. We said—we don't have any money or particularly coherent ideas, but it'd sure be nice to work with you and put some of your work in front of the public during this time, and to maybe pair you up with someone else to make something that is each of you, and also its own thing, and also uniquely Brisbane.

As it turned out, the coronavirus lockdown meant different things to different people. In Queensland we were fortunate, many of the people involved in this zine particularly so—some found themselves busier than they thought they would, and others ended up busier than when lockdown began.

So this zine became a slow process. This was almost exclusively our fault. But everyone was patient, and didn't complain, and gave freely of their time and energy. Maeve and Jerath have known each other tangentially for several years, and were happy to collaborate here on something more than a passing hello. Together their work is a bit macabre, a bit playful—a nod to a dark time, and an attempt to find some peace and quiet. Find some of yours, and enjoy this parenthetical zine, this quaranzine, this eight-of-eight zine. We enjoyed making it.

J+J



## No Sleep

**I**'m asleep, though I could be dead. Without a dream I don't know the difference. Perhaps there isn't one, and being asleep is the same as being dead. Perhaps every night I'm sealed off from living, only to be revived again by the sounds of the world continuing.

It's sleep, I will decide in the morning. Hard sleep, heavy sleep, the kind that makes you wonder, when you wake up, what the hell happened.

In Psalm 90 of the King James Bible it says that our earthly lives are nothing in God's time, that after the briefest of flashes he turns us into destruction, makes us 'as a sleep', makes of our dead sleeping bodies a flood. Is this why people say they'll sleep when they're dead? Perhaps when Warren Zevon sang about sleeping when he's dead, and drinking heartbreak motor oil and Bombay gin, and liking to raise harm on a Saturday night, he was preaching God's word.

Though, that doesn't seem right. If sleep is a night in the tomb, a toe dipped in the current, maybe Warren was concerned that his allotted, average portion of sleep was a waste if everything else was God's death flood. Maybe he thought that raising harm would achieve something, that not sleeping would prolong the time he'd spend out of the flood and that someone or something might notice.

In the morning I won't think any of this; this is what I'm thinking about now, as I write. In the morning I'll think there is something absurd about this whole situation.

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‘-eah, what?’

Hard sleep, heavy sleep. Who said what?

‘-ike tha-?’

Huh?

‘What? You like that motherfucker?’

Fight. Shit.

Lurch out of bed and pull on trousers—no time for underwear. Briefest of thoughts: what if my pants come down in the about-to-ensue? Someone cries pitifully in the dark outside. Stumble out the back door. Can’t see a thing.

‘C’mon, c’mon!’ Coming from the street out front.

I rush to the front door, fling it open. From the deck I can see silvery-shadowy figures on the ground, in the middle of the road, entwined. I take another step and see more figures, reclined on the curb, looking on with apparent serenity.

Sounds of struggle continue from the entangled figures. A strange gurgling noise.

Then a man’s voice: ‘Yeah, yeah, c’mon! Fuck me with your strap-on.’

Huh?

‘Ooh you like it? Yeah, fuck me with your strap-on.’

Oh okay. The man squeals loudly.

‘You’re faking it,’ a female voice says. I can see now that she is on his back, legs wrapped around his waist, arm wrapped around his neck. Tight enough that the man can only choke out his request a third time.

What does one say? ‘Guys, what the hell? Would you be quiet? It’s Monday.’ Lockdown does strange things to the mind.

One of the reclining curb figures—propped up on an elbow, leg extended—slowly turns its head and regards me. Says nothing and turns back with equal languor, its movements like that of a cat blissfully ignoring its owner’s pleas for interaction. Actually, now that I’m writing, more than a cat it brings to mind that statue of Oscar Wilde on the corner of Merrion Square in Dublin, reclined on a stone, one corner of his mouth turned up in faint bemusement, living in death as he could not in life: undisturbed, indifferent, and without disquiet.

I walk back into the house and close the front door behind me. Lay down again on my bed in the dark.

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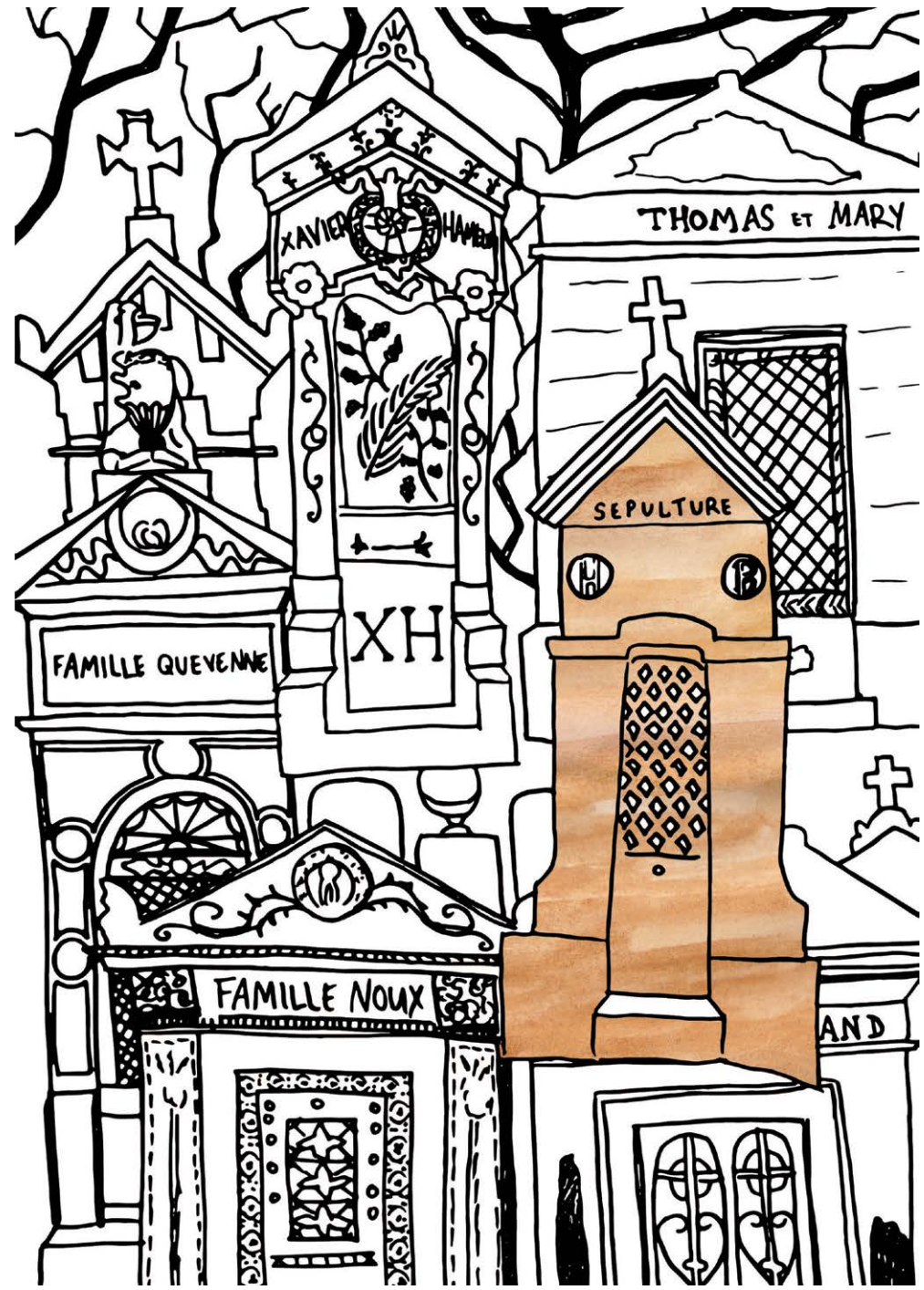
**Things falls apart**—the quiet of what we know crashes down in a great cacophony of what we don't.

But is our undoing in the quiet, or in the noise? Quiet of sleep, or quiet of death? Neither, both—I don't know. But if sleep is a toe in the water or a night in the tomb, I know it works as an antidote, as a vaccine. A brief mounting of defence.

So yes, please, would you be quiet? Quiet like a city locked down. No, not that—quiet like the street at 2am on a Monday, before we were brought to ruin and disquiet. Like sleep, rather than death. Which, if not exactly a victory over God, is neither a defeat.

In the morning I won't think any of this; this is what I'm thinking about now, as I write. In the morning I'll think there is something absurd about this whole situation. ♦









( a p s e u d o n a j a p r o j e c t )

**M**aeve Lejeune is an illustrator who usually draws houses, but has branched out to document gravestones she came across on a trip to Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Using her simple, yet highly detailed style, she hopes to capture the peacefulness she felt while there, which quickly led to horror when she saw a human hand move from within a tall gravestone. It was attached to a human who was checking out the interior of the grave.

**J**erath Head is an editor and writer who also works in communications and in policy research. His writing has been published in a number of literary journals and other publications, including *Kill Your Darlings*, *Sydney Review of Books*, and *Griffith Review*. This piece of writing was inspired by Maeve's artworks, by Oscar Wilde, and by being rudely awoken one night during quarantine. He hasn't caught up on that sleep, because that's impossible.

**P**seudonaja is a small independent literary group based in Brisbane. *A () Zine* is their first project. More details, including financial breakdowns and digital versions of this publication, can be found online at [pseudonaja.group](http://pseudonaja.group). You can reach out to the collective at [pseudonaja.group@gmail.com](mailto:pseudonaja.group@gmail.com).

The traditional owners of the lands on which Brisbane sits—and where this zine was made—are the Yugara and Turrbal people, and their sovereignty was never ceded.



**WHAT DOES  
ONE SAY?**

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