

# THE LAUREL REVIEW

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*I've been wanting to do this for a long time.  
I hope you like this as much as we liked putting it together.*

~JG

*Amy Newman*

## Trigger Warning

These poems contain scenes of nature and life, which may be upsetting to readers disinclined to read a poem about such things, or may be upsetting, anyway. These poems contain beauty, a subject often misunderstood. These poems contain graphic descriptions or extensive discussions of existence, which may itself contain references or incidents of self-harming behavior such as suicide, rejection, loneliness, violence, God's turned face, nature's indifference, and depictions of the mental state of someone who is alive. These poems may study the natural world for insights into existence, for example, a poem may wonder about the tiny ant carrying a large worm back to the anthill, or the clockwork way a thrush pokes, so brutally, a worm from the grass. And from there the poet may consider the violent design of nature or the beautiful design of nature, etc. It may dwell on worms or trees, or God, or the suburbs, or the heart for more time than would seem to be effective or especially significant in this century. These poems may inspire dreamy and potentially individual freedoms in the reader, or induce momentary chilling effects of inward recognition, triggering flashbacks of the anxious look on your aunt's face that Saturday, or how during that rainstorm the nun suddenly ran past you to the lawn outside, her habit shaping a dark, woolen sound in your ear, her cry weirdly victorious, or other, similarly graphic flashbacks of happiness and/or unhappiness. These poems may induce in the readers serious attention to spiritual concerns and may have a potentially dampening effect on productivity in the workplace. These poems will use metaphor.

## After Time

After all that time away, you go back. After the sad goodbyes and the loneliness, and the desperate nothings at arrival, and the other travelers exceeding their distances, passing you on a trail, the course heavily trod, your look for your own footpath. It would be smaller because your ideas are only yours. It would be bright as the computer image, brighter, the grass would be soft and the path would wind as a dream winds. But each turn, you would follow. Why wouldn't you? Trying and earnest like the old knight or the refugee, humiliated and out of place. There is no stopping you, wanderer, even as you know no sense except this odd, embarrassing love, and love is a neutral god, bored as an adolescent. That which made you has gone off to its unhurried golden-threaded life. You had said a ridiculous, dramatic farewell. You wish it were romantic but it is unromantic. You turn and go back.



*Maxine Chernoff*

## Notes

“Find the mortal world enough.” --W.H. Auden

Light’s history intrudes on the sentence at midnight. A thought enters like an asterisk over the word ocean.

You are witnessed from the inside, your blood discoursing with itself over ethics and science.

It’s the same you draped in the crease of a flag or over the moon, lost in the footage of newsreels with your bobbed hair and inevitable luster of a different era.

On the wall near the accustomed view, your hand is silhouette. The image arrives without its reasons, a stone’s throw away from remembering. In the summer house near the pier, nothing crashes except vagueness and circumstance.

The last train leaves its station without analysis. You’ve seen it before in a film, the present recognized from its legend.

All endings are preludes--the evil man came to harm before the story cast its light on the screen you watched with worry and regard.

You tie one end of your question to the other. The answer lapses into knowing and sundering, one cloth sewn as the other is ripped.

*Christina Veladota*

## Come in All You Pallbearers of Memory

Each day is the scaffolding of my forgetting. Even so, my hospital room is full. Everyone is finally getting to know everyone else. I'm still the blue dress of the last time you saw me, still your thunderous glasses raised. I dress each question in a different white coat; haunt the lamps of my father's house to a whisper. Your toasts all pose as sacraments, & when you're sick, you marry each symptom, plural the cure. Even so, my father's parlor is still the best blue dress. Everyone is finally everyone else. Outside a chimney exhales a bruise of weather. I want to open my mouth against the wind's cool torso & calm each ache in the sky. Come in all you words; how I've missed you. Come in all you voices. Fill the parlor. I'm the woman who knows everything your woman doesn't know; it's been deafening without you.

## The World Had Been Sad Since Tuesday

My body tells me every body is a frame. I think of the old angel fenced inside a chicken coop, of Elisenda's face in the kitchen window. I keep sleepwalker's hours, refolding every song I've unfolded from the line, every lyric seasoned by the ocean. Sometimes my eyes are draped-over by a wing. Today my daughters are the three miles of the harbor, are the sand & the sand dunes, the water & its break. They each wear well my mother's voice. If every body is a frame, every frame is a quarantine. Elisenda's good-bye to the angel has no good-bye in it. The angel beats slow his wingspan, cripples the sky, as the world becomes the punctuation at the end of the sea.

## If I Were to Haunt You, I'd Keep it to Myself

We already know we're ghosts, but who among us will admit it? Our father sweeps the sea of its oysters while we play jellyfish roulette, diaphanous bullets in their chamber. The horseshoe crabs are armored knights retreating from the joust; we place our bets against them, go with the mussels, their open mouths so many razors threatening our skin. Evenings our mother gives us flashlights, but we call them fire & char the night with our names. The moon is the least of our worries; it is already a perfect cigarette burn among ashes. We say no to the stone that calls itself planchette, but can't ignore its séance. Cicadas radio their tympani to the owls, glooming the trees. You are the last red song in the haunt of my eyes. Our candles gutter little birds that startle the sky.

*Lucy Biederman*

## The Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson

The one-room house she lived in would still be standing if only it hadn't been burned down two hundred fifty years ago. Thirty-seven people lived there, shared each other's families, worshipped, and cooked rice. When the Indians came, first they killed her children and tore the heads off the flowers she and the other mothers had planted to please the Lord.

She thought of God's goodness and never stopped repeating.

Through the pines they took her. Their luggage rode on horseback. A mildewed rope was yoked to her wrist. She looked ahead or down. Looking back had not yet been brought to America.

Squatting on top of a bush to shit.

She met with the Devil himself to secure the terms of her freedom. She was starving and her dress was stiff with old blood, but she clinked her teacup and curtsied before him.

Out in a gap in the shadows.

That particular trial is done. She and her husband rebuilt their house, a private one for them alone, with government money. The King of England is said to be writing her a letter.

She has thought of God's goodness since.

The millennium is coming. He said He would return. He places the moon in the meantime at various points in the frozen sky. It may look as it does in old-time storybooks, cool and white as whiteness within whiteness. Or enormous, yellow and peeling itself away.

This life is just beginning. This is the very first part of it.

## Learning to Live With It

Nothing touching, not the sea or sky. In the Bestiary Room at the College of Barnum and Bailey, stuffed animals posed eternal. Sam clutched his Steiff. They rode in train cars across the nation, subsisted on stage light.

At the beginning of everything the mother dies or goes away forever. I don't know the names of the countries it happens in. The words that convey it are a theater my dad fought at during war. He built me a bike in the dining room one Christmas before the decade changed. You have to turn the pages yourself. They mean too much, *oh terribly so, she said*. I keep turning them and shaking my language in bed.

A hurricane lands here every afternoon. Comes a black sky, a false night to ruin the atmosphere. When it ends everyone goes for ice cream. I smell the letters that spell the flavors. I think it says Berried Alive. In the motel room next door, a man beats a woman all night. I peruse the photos in the student newspaper through dawn. Can we please go home. Listening to Dick Bionde spin the golden oldies I am the only one who knows.

When we finally return, the street growls, our house is wearing a different face. It's happened before on other Sundays. All there is to do is wait it out. Loosed inside myself I bounce around unframed. No mind or memory, staring at a switch, a page. I have tried watching different shows or going to bed early, but this *cast of mind* follows me from room to room.

It would be better to die than to meet another Sunday, rows of books titled Kant in every room of my grandparents' apartment, the gray underside of salmon, room temperature skim milk in a wine glass. I used to think they were math textbooks.

Babar learned the hard way no one's safe. His consciousness pointed back toward that knowledge, a compass, a magic 8-ball, a tomb. Slipping his pain into his natty attaché case or the breast pocket of his shipshape three-piece suit. Trips to regions Tin Tin would envy. When I see him in the jungle now I look the other way.

*Darren Jackson*

## Celia's Response to the Census Agent

I've always known my body was composed of the ringing of a bell tower. I don't know which tower, only that the rings spread outward so far from their vantage that I grew legs and a mouth to feed by devouring dreams in reverse.

At first it was simple. I ate my dreams and then saw them projected against my eyelids, a rubbing like the sound of bee's wings. I believed in the sound, and then I believed too much, and, no longer willing to eat the dreams that make the noise that is me, the hives honeycombing my head empty of chanting wings; I vanish in the crowd, hungry for the sound of flight.

*Amish Trevedi*

## A Thousand Years of Staring

1.

In the distance, there is nothing in particular, depending on which direction you face. In my next example, I'll be using metaphor to show how I'd rather lock myself in a room than be surrounded by other people: a stationary wheel won't rust if you don't spin it. As if first eyes touching could be repeated, if you're going to be there, I'm not. Dear you, I lust you, but I'm better when loathed. Feet make up only small percentages of bodies but carry so much pressure that mine have dissolved from a desire to move, but with no target in mind, they ache for compression. lights are off and the people who were rushing before have stopped to look at us.



2.

Tell me a lie so I can rub it into my skin: moving slowly is the only way to avoid picking up direction. Your scopophobia gets better as minutes wear on. I'm afraid to admit I haven't looked you near long enough to see a real face. People appear one way to me immediately, but then I see them: a look in the eyes to indicate a passing feel, a curl in the lip that shows disgust or mutation. Don't fear your shamefacedness as a peak in terror arises.

3.

Admit you're more willing to look down than meet my eye. We'll say this amounts to a fear of crossing roads, of being or going anywhere. I assume being washed is being stabbed, but with no sensation that gives us an antecedent. These are not sexual questions, but a desire to know how twists of wind become disaster spaces. In making up my mind, I ignored all advise to stay and reimagine myself as a direct descendant of people who lined mass graves. I don't have a hard time getting to sleep, but a hard time waking up. Going unnoticed is no punishment: to go seen and ignored is real hell, though. To go is a verb that implies motion, but directionality is ignored.

4.

As we walked through hallways, our figures were pressed into service as figments in a novel. My greatest pleasure comes from failure and my euphoria levels are topped off daily. You were waiting in a lobby and tapping on glass to signal me. If someone has their brights on, look to the white stripe at the edge of any road for a sense of boundaries and closure. This is my emotional conclusion: I cannot be happy when I am supposed to be, only when everything around me is becoming dead cells. Nothing matters in this measure, only notes which lead us to the next space, even if there's no ending in sight.

5.

We need only to know where we are at, not where we're going, to feel secure in absolution. I'm not Catholic, but I play one on the cross. The only difference between you and me is the words that we use and in which order we place our sighs and discontent-laden notions. We could bring a sense of sultry admonishment to our work if we only knew how to draw the letters that make it. At times we look out and at times we see, but most often, we hear edges of our space before we can sense it.

6.

I've been in denial about a great many things and I know that your eyes upon me is just one: across tables, behind backs we imagine there to be someone who can complete our form of language. In the first few seconds, contact is made only by temperature and sensing heat, we move closer but when our eyes meet, we move back to our positions at the start and try to conquer again. Send your queen and let me cut her and admit to nothing at all. "Don't doddle," you'll say, "we're heading nowhere and we're late!" but all street noises have ceased and all lights are off and the people who were rushing before have stopped to look at us.

*Christina Marrocco*

## Buckle

Chenille robe wrapped tightly, Virginia Slim smoking, clutching her coffee mug, and barefooted, Our mother in the driveway. Little brother, vicariously powerful with the privilege of my new drivers license--eyes popping with expectation. Into the rusted 210 Hatchback, me, baby Christopher, brother Nick. She pulls the coffee between her teeth and blows the smoke into the morning. She reaches into a deep pocket, flecked with tobacco and passes the key through the window but stands back from the car. We buckle, buckle buckle our belts and drive away laughing. Motoring to nowhere in particular. Sun on the dash, my hands loose on the wheel, Mom's chenille fear shrinking In the rear view mirror, We laughing, we, her entire future, cells and hearts, Christmases and Easters. All that time merging onto the highway, and we don't give a damn!

## Driving on the Bicentennial

Before seat belt laws, before children's rights, but after the invention of the wheel, we ride like livestock in the back of the truck: the one Dad painted with house paint and a big brush. The color of rust to hide the rust. Under the "cap," where fishhooks wing from bamboo poles that lean on spare tires that crouch over tarps, thick and quilted, that stink like the dogs, that pace, clicking their long nails, dogs that pace, snuffle-nosing the windows, that won't open more than an inch or so. In July. My brother and I fight like cartoon cyclones, like Spiike Hubers, like nsanity down the Illinois tollway, Nick calling temporary truces whenever we approach a tollbooth, his queer fascination with the sound the tires make Over the warning ridges, outweighing his rage. And beyond--into Wisconsin--we fight, equally matched, equally fueled with sibling...stuff, rolling on the corrugated floor, dodging the fishhooks. Our mother turns her neck, her head, her eyes, and through the double windows separating cap and the cab, soundproof, watches Nick twisting the skin on my forearm in two directions. Indian burn. And me pinching his neck, the tiniest bit of skin crabbed between my fingernails. She gathers an eyebrow high, lights a cigarette, doesn't tell Dad, doesn't look back again; we must be punishment enough for each other.

*Kate Greenstreet*

03419 from *The End of Something*

This is a map of where we are. The silhouetted shapes of people and animals. Drifting, melting, sticking up. There's a little bit of color.

I saw him for a minute. He touched the edge of the life we knew: color, and the lack. of color. The cleaning, the cooking, the waiting—for somebody's father who was his father's father. And there was a big party. A meal that consisted mainly of lettuce. And my father had created a gift that was mainly a head of romaine, in a bag.

But the room was so hot. The sweat was dripping off us and I thought, "That lettuce isn't gonna make it." Though I didn't want to say.



Mary Biddinger

## Some Truths

All the other women had husbands. Instead I talked about my collection of pig masks. It was clear I was a city girl. You just had to look at my fingernails and the corners of my mouth, which were both square. Clearly I didn't get the dipstick joke. Maybe that joke was on me, like a wet sweater, a therapeutic leach.

Once I had a job serving lunch to old folks. The application process involved whistling and arranging wooden spoons in order from largest to largest. Mostly I sliced bananas into coins and dehydrated them, picked up the green phone and breathed when callers asked what my name was, what was for dinner.

My roommate signed us up for a puppetry workshop. Anxiety attacks began about ten days prior to the first class. All those Styrofoam balls without galaxies. Suddenly I was topless again, attempting to bend over and fetch a stray balloon string. Who has a birthday party on a balcony in mid-January?

I loved being around smart people when they were neither pontificating nor mansplaining. Except if they were discussing Nietzsche as if he was William James, the entire world a conspiracy tapping holes in pint glasses and hollow legs, like my beauty was something constructed by a god and not two bored teenagers.

When I walked into the hallowed basement of the courthouse, I felt like a manifesto or a particularly bold haircut. Perhaps it was the absence of religion, or the compressed dimensions of the bathroom stalls, where nobody could have ever worked out a way to fuck, regardless of previous circus employment.

The best part of figure skating was getting cut. Not by an errant skate, by the cruel rim of sequins on every elastic opening. Even now, if somebody utters the word *footloose* I'm a bodice of thorns. My back covered with shimmering polyester bologna. Something stirring the confines of my braided hair.

## Sacré Coeur

Back when I was getting high I kept losing my gloves—not one, but both of them, every time. So much for the theory of a mysterious other in your duplicate bedroom with all the single lost gloves and hope of some day getting married to a rain barrel and some grackles.

When the social worker asked about how my life had been effected (sic) I mentioned that all food tasted like Windex and sometimes the sound of clocks was a powerful aphrodesiac (sic). I went to class and then purchased large scoops of cherry ice cream, but only to watch them melt while less powerful sophomores plowed through.

The only subject that resonated was French class. I found some dough and gave my skit about the Bois de Boulogne extra verisimilitude, which meant a man with a weapon, the wrong phone number, a red scarf (not too tight!), and a door that wouldn't yield to the sound of muffled accordion.

I decided I would sit in the library and sneeze until somebody stopped me. I decided I would lurk the quad and contemplate the big questions. The funny thing is that I did way better at mandatory brunches. I didn't wear sweaters. The sweaters wore me.

I managed to desecrate a number of unholy texts, but in a holy way that demonstrated, “an advanced sense of presence...determined to no longer use sex...self-diagnosed genius... internalize feelings of superiority.”

Legend states that if you kiss the marble steps at 4 am during your first week, you'll stay in school forever. Alternately, it states that you may consider this previous gift to be much like living inside a whale. When you find your whale, it will be packed with gloves. When you find your whale, it will have already found you.

## Notre Dame de Paris

What was left wasn't her, and it wasn't me, and it wasn't a visage lifted from any of the posters that decorated our shared bedroom. One day she was there, and the next she was reportedly giving hand jobs in the back booth at the Ram's Horn and then she disappeared completely.

I thought I did well filling out the application. I underlined certain passages for emphasis and to demonstrate how lively I could be and how dependable. My mother said there was no way I would get hired by a bookstore due to my imperial attitude, and she was right. But this was pie.

I heard once that a classmate offered an entire semester's worth of French instruction in the 20 minute cab ride it took to go from Roosevelt to Lawrence. Okay that was me, but it was a noteworthy academic excursion for the discerning traveler with no surplus time on his hands.

To be honest, there were days when I ground my cheek into the grass and acknowledged that it could never get better, and it didn't. When's the last time you got to boycott two simultaneous parties and secret a soft shell crab in your pink purse? I didn't think so.

Of all the adolescents and post-adolescents and post-post-adolescents huddled in the doorway of Notre Dame de Paris, only one was wearing a pathetic high school football jersey beneath her manteau, and that was her, but only because she was emulating me.

Sometimes old friends are like a packet of corn that occupies minimal space in the back of the freezer. Other times they're a rice fire instead. She was the empty pâte brisée I ate off a brochure on the bus. I was just another an old church packed with jackets and sermons.

Gary McDowell

“...the inability to isolate a sensation...”

Formlessness is form complete. In other words, sound the trumpet. In other words, form on its way toward resolve: sound the trumpet. On the farm. At the track. Image: an intellectual and emotional complex. The boy picks up the book on magic and reads it at night under the covers by flashlight.

But don't be afraid to make a point. Image is character. Image as character. Image as form. Formlessness. The poem as a geometry of fear. Or longing. Or both. *I've been working on the railroad....* Nothing wrong with plotting—plodding—an image. Poem is work. The poem as canvas. Is. There's always some new way to make metaphor worry itself thin.

Art is lonely = Lonely is art. Until viewed. No poetry, of course, without a witness. Once, in college, I saw a man fucking a woman behind the Quiznos. I watched for three minutes. And then it was over. The minutiae of passion, in passion, makes passion palpable.

*What bursts in the very moment of bursting is image.* Gustaf Sobin.

The poet's charge is to *look*—inward, outward, over, under, after, per, through. To use the world of the preposition actively. To help us see. It's not enough, however, to describe. We must inhabit. It's perspective. Viscerally.

Without *present*. With *presence*. What we see (or sense in any way) is always in relation to something else prepositionally. It's how we relate; it's how we intuit; it's how we make the world. How we make the world makes us make the world. How we arrive in brushstroke, in verb. Everybody is never always naked, or never fully clothed.

Often times there is weakness in trying too hard to say something unusual. A tree that flowers but bears no fruit. *What we see clearly is not perhaps the heart of reality toward which the image leaps, but the quiet attention that is the form of the impulse to leap.* Robert Hass.

It's been suggested (Rukeyser) that a poem involves a sense of arrival. We leap to arrive. We write to arrive. We sleep to arrive. We mark growth from one image to the next by how we arrive. It's imagination we express—an inter-dependency between expression and arrival. Unconscious (sleep) versus conscious (not-sleep). We imagine in both states. We express in only one.

Time ceases to exist. It takes less than a minute to read a short poem, but the reverberation felt in, of, about, around, after (again, the prepositional) lasts much longer. The other day, this. Out the window over the sink, I saw the neighbor kids laughing and playing in full firemen costumes. It was raining. The *erotic double*, we say. Thank you, we say.

*He says he doesn't feel like working today.  
It's just as well. Here in the shade  
Behind the house, protected from street noises,  
One can go over all kinds of old feeling,  
Throw some away, keep others.*

*The wordplay  
Between us gets very intense when there are  
Fewer feelings around to confuse things.  
Another go-round? No, but the last things  
You always find to say are charming, and rescue me  
Before the night does.  
John Ashbery.*

My wife takes too many pictures, and they're peppered about the house. They're mostly all terribly composed. Some of them have celestial blurs of light where her fingers meet the flash. Never by yourself alone. No audience is present in the making.

Oftentimes we try too hard to say anything. I heard a story about a deer and a bear, best friends. The bear would bend down the bough for the deer to reach the fruit. We all reach the fruit because someone bends down the bough. Right?

“The only people I trust,” my grandfather once told me, “are fishermen. And I don’t really even trust them.” The future tense is impossible. The elimination of death. Consequence. Another story about my own life. It’s the end of gesture. The end of concern.

Where the river meets the rain, the body fails the treeline. Or something like that. Nature is also impossible. *No water-drinker ever wrote a poem that lasted.* Horace. Days and nights go by in silence. Such is the word: writing. Detached from everything, including detachment.

*Love set you going like a fat gold watch.* Plath. We all fall in love once. We all keep time. The root *poe-* comes from grass, a grassy place. In a field then, we live. In a field of prairie grass, cattails or milkweed or riverbank rye, chairmakers rush, where we might congregate, where we might roll in the wool grass. But why? In a word: sensation. In a word: image. In a word: poetry.

As a child, I saw a man, smiling, throw his wedding ring off a bridge into the Fox River. I witnessed. In a word: *in-an-instant-of-time-we-find-something-else-to-say.*

*Christopher Kennedy*

## Temporal Location Finder

I walked through a seemingly endless field with a woman covered with bees. A child covered with scorpions followed. The woman raised her arm, and some of the bees rose up slightly and hovered before settling back on her bare skin. After we walked a few miles, we found ourselves in what appeared to be the middle of the field. We met a man covered with vultures, and I asked him where to go next. The man, who was lying on his back, pointed east and west, and when I asked him which way we should go, the man said nothing. I've heard of this, I said, but I never thought I'd live to see it. I looked behind me and there stood the bee woman and the scorpion child. They seemed to be waiting to see what would happen next. A few more vultures flew toward the supine man and landed on his head. So this is death, I said, and the woman and the child shook their heads carefully so as not to disturb the things that defined them. I looked right then left, in the opposite directions the man's arms suggested, and it was obvious to me then where the field began and ended.

G.C. Waldrep

## A Short History of Daylight

for Emily Wilson

I read your book while driving through central Pennsylvania. While *driving*, not riding. It was sunrise. It was spring, communion weekend. I tried to think about it the way a Benedictine might: diurnal, micrographic—local, or at least something very very small. The light kept growing, river-book-river. Some models are much larger than what they actually represent. Four-lane shimmed into the mountain's heel. Conic sections of the blood, other people's I mean. As liturgy. Not much traffic. Ovens for iron, for bread. Or for other purposes. The trees a film no one's watching, bent coin in a bent slot. DELICIOUSLY CONVENIENT! read the signage. Elegant posses of brushed fiberglass & steel. New words creep forth: *Recipricant*—recipient/communicant, frayed stem or husk. One idea about rest is as good as another, perhaps. *Felix culpa*. As set forth on these tablets, these wax cylinders. There is not so much birdsong as formerly, “[*stet*]” stressed to “shuffle.” Cusp vs. declivity. Sleeve-strain of chamomile, mallow, mullein, loosestrife. Faith is not a lyric form. Carlisle makes a nice place for a ~~Native American slow-extinction paradigm~~ **U.S. war college** a rest stop. & quick bite to eat. Unbelieve of birchbark. When we say “repentance” what dislodges/shrugs? You can climb only so high before something gives: slip-strut, width of hemp, elementary particle. Heavy-hemmed. Ekphrastic. Sometimes an angel may be omitted from the response. *You will be funded for the rest of your life*, the dystopia whispers, this time wearing its “Anthropology” mask. Still, we make a pretty music. This bread which we eat, this cup which we drink. Leather buckets of grain. In the training film they missed the part about electrical overload & library fines. Babies put things in their mouths in order to know them, which explains language. & the periodic table, things we can't see but understand exist: bone-pressure distillation, joy. What does it mean, to dwell. As cowbird, gypsy moth. Fledged in faction: strict fleshwick dentistry. The pine planks of a table, i.e. this vast orphanage, all budding surfaces. NEW HOTEL OPEN, that third space, drupe-seamed sparglight. We are sorry & yet not sorry enough. The body can be used for almost anything. Next exit. Is it appropriate, ask the scientists, that we are where & what we are.



## The Tetrarch Veil

Asleep in marble tents we dreamed figs of ash, set out on plates of blood. Trains stumbled across the ravine where we left our metal tools. All night we slept in bowers of the clankings and scrapings they bore away from us. I cast my breath upon an architect and she cast it back, this time as one of the true seasons. In this way a new math ripened. At the edge of the clearing a city made love to faith=s absence while we watched. I drew a honey from the well of a single star, as salty as it was sweet. Women came and went. Our encampment appeared on maps, with a name we couldn't read. In my version of the dream I was an obstetrician who played a stringed instrument, something ancient and discreet. My hair had fallen out and woven itself into a thin mantle I wore as a sort of cloak. One year christened me, and then another. I had never intended to be worshiped as a nation-state, I protested, even as the police went about their duties with characteristic thoroughness. Dew fell on the cold bodies of wolves. I would rise from this ancient breast, heavier now than any empire. We came here, I remember, as a soft echo among weeping birds. *A sleeper needs no bread* runs the folk proverb, and a little light springs up in our pale midst: it either is or is not enough for me to read by, that is, to apologize to the memory of my father, who haunts this forest (and others). I wake, when I wake, inside his gentle heat. In the golden age, poets made sacrifice to what was real. I stoop at the spring where Love has been known to drink, a half-collapsing murmur through which my loose hand wanders. It is night here. It is always night. I carry stones on my back where the wind can taste them. The feast lies waiting but I am a traveler, not a ghost. I came here to risk losing you, and every thought of you. Now from my tent=s sides a curious oil glistens. The ground beneath me smells of pasture, after heavy rain.

## The Kite Assembly Room

Just off the footpath the animals have merged six cities with my ideas about capitalism, then taped the result to a rickety elm. I can see it flap-ping in the night breeze, like a machine. It's not a machine. I'm not scared of the way the reactors reach out to the aircraft when the planes fly low over winter like somebody else's nearly-forgotten dream. Grammar comes and goes like a smell, the odor of baking bread, perhaps, and it's all right, because the earth is indelible and what if love is real, after all. We draw the string from our veins in the light of a full moon and strip the paper from the trees: a whole forest of trees, each with something taped to it. And a breeze that's right out of a Victorian novel in which some picnickers are avoiding the subject, which is how does salt make us lighter than the water of which we are mostly composed. It doesn't, explain the chemists—not for the last time, rising through the cemeteries in their soiled smocks. I admit I've saved the sweat from my imaginary lovers in small glass vials, which I intend to install in the crown of this off-season carousel. It's lit up and waiting, in spite of the rain. We've driven into town just to see what the latest coin-operated fads are, and for waffle cones. Everybody's afraid of the carousel in the same way that everybody's afraid of virtue, I mean, the idea that somebody else may have it, or that it accrues primarily after death, an invisible growth. When I dream about death all I can feel is a vague fear of the policemen who shadow my every move. They're on my side, I know, and they're all smiling: it's not like you think. It's a forest in which the faces of soldiers gather, having evaporated from the wars once and for all. Each has a tiny office inside of which an even tinier secretary is typing endlessly. The body is not symbolic except when it is accompanied by wings, in which case it's a toy. DO NOT DISTURB read the signs, once we wiped away the muck and glitter. It's dark here, but of course you know that. You've already touched me, when you thought it was pain you were pinning to the stellar mat. Now unfold the festival and staple me to it. I'm lighter than your nervous system, I'm lighter than your blue book of answers. The animals are the distances our souls wagered, when we were young and fond of losing. You can check their boxes on the ballot. You can stand upright inside the cathedral. What you play out is a witness to space circumventing itself via series of delightful mathematical

equations, at least one of which is tattooed to the body's wrist, where a kingfisher nuzzles. The worst impersonator is fire, which comes as a friend and departs as a bit of ash thrusting into the radio broadcast. Like it I aspire to hover above you, the way a field of ripening September grain hovers above the earth. The earth's surface, I mean. Really there's a whole lot of earth. You keep going until you're on the other side.

*Jon Davis*

## Fashion Report

Was it a shirt in or a shirt out age? No one knew for certain. It was clearly not a rolled pants era, though a few, in isolated moments, mistook it for one. It was not a blue eye shadow and pink lipstick era, that seemed clear. White calf length boots? No. Arching eyebrows drawn severely on with a chunk of fire-hardened charcoal? Nyet. Was it a straight flat hair epoch? Or a soft fluffy curve around the edges of the face moment? Opinion on bangs or the vasty open sheen of the forehead was mixed. Even the experts seemed divided on whether it was the power stiletto or the innocent wonder of the flip-flop. Could the two exist side by side? Editorials in the major periodicals suggested this was unlikely. And the CPO, the Nehru, the various vestments of oligarchy? Consigned, it would seem, to the thrift shops, but beginning, again, a secret assault from those bunkers. Was this a sign of discomfort with the wars or an embrace of the ranks and charges therein? A secret army of ragtag missionaries from the marijuana growing loft-dwellers? Or simply a love of the smart epaulets, the slimming effect elicited by the clean lines of the militaristic? Such questions were remanded to the authorities for further study. Experts were quite sure it was not a loose open collar and thick silver chain era. Nor was it a button-down era, though some pressed for such a shift. It seemed that it was neither the wide tie and suspenders of rising markets nor a thin-tied rejection of traditional monetary policy. Glasses were incoherent, reflecting a certain befuddlement among the populace. Was it a subtly ambitious and slightly ironic wire-rimmed moment or did this age call for the thick black-rims of realpolitik? The electrical taped bridge of solidarity seemed entirely absent from the optic landscape. The recent outbreak of irony among T-shirt slogans introduced uncertainty into the market forecasts. Even the hairstyles, mixed as they were from buzzcut to bouffant, proved unreliable as indicators. At parties, the frisson of off-the-grid patchouli mixed easily with upwardly-mobile Chanel, scuttling all attempts to read consumer confidence. Were we approaching an age? Was the incoherence a sign? And why now this incoherence, this unseemly recklessness among the wearers of clothing? And why these snappy chapeaus, when all the experts had predicted bare heads and baseball caps? Where were our vestments taking us? What would be the cost?

## The Rejected

We have read your work and found it lacking. But lacking what? A certain *joie de vivre*, a peculiar and icy *fond du lac*? A Tutankhamun of the spirit? A spriteliness? Is it the marked lack of pratfalls? An embolus of dirges rising through the femoral? Who taped these phalanges under the dashboard, strapped the terriers to the luggage rack? Surely your prosody should alleviate such suffering? Or elide it? Or pass over it in silence or something (a vague muttering from the next room, a muffled yipping from the *llano*, a drunken chanting in the borstal) approximating silence. Please keep us in mind with new work. Perhaps something more like your “Vegetal Sonnets” or “Precambrian Odes: A Sequence,” which we found initially promising, but whose opportunities seemed often squandered by your choice of form. We want to support your emanations, if only they weren’t so ephemeral, if only your *cri de coeur* weren’t so lacking in *coeur*.

# Apocolypse

Nobody was happy with the apocalypse. For some it lacked drama. Many had hoped for a series of explosions, bands of bulked-up, tattooed men riding atop mongrel machinery, hair blowing in the apocalyptic wind. Others hoped for lost tribes scabbling across the windswept ghost cities, battling with remnant weapons for the small caches of unspoiled food that remained. Still others had hoped for clashes between superpowers featuring blackhawks and stealth bombers, lasers fired from remote-controlled satellites. For some, the lack of a moral proved disturbing. Where was the righteousness we'd expected? Why hadn't the virtuous been sorted from the sinful? Where was the complex system of rewards and punishments we'd embraced? The randomness of the apocalypse was a topic that confounded many of the apocalypticians. Nobody had foreseen the long, slow, boring demise. Entropy and ennui, it seems, had few supporters. Nobody had predicted that the apocalypse would be marked by resignation and waiting, that the apocalypse would be more of a terminal diagnosis than a series of heroic interventions. Of course, there was drama when we understood it was over. When the measurements were taken. When the scientists appeared alongside the presidents and prime ministers and religious leaders. When they made the grim pronouncement. When the game was called because of darkness. Many of us gathered briefly in the streets to take action, but no action could be agreed upon. The wealthy and powerful had caches of food and drinking water. We knew they'd outlive us by days, months, maybe years, but most agreed this was no advantage. The scientists had run out of tricks. The food supply was dwindling. There was no clean water. The shift to solar energy made for an unending source of power, especially as the ozone layer thinned and disappeared, so most decided to go inside and play video games or watch television and movies, search the web for music videos, or videos of someone doing something incredibly stupid on a skateboard. Facebook became painful as lethargy and death made for a scroll of loss. Messages from [afteriamgone.com](#) started being forwarded in huge numbers. Letters from the dead pouring into the mailboxes of the living. Occasionally gunfire would erupt on the streets and people would mute their televisions and listen wistfully until the gunfire ceased. When

the end came, we lifted our heads and nodded. The computers and videos went on without us, the animated characters dying and restarting, dying and restarting, the jingles floating out over the otherwise silent streets.

*Michelle Disler*

## The Scene

The scene is something otherworldly and ordinary, and there are words for this kind of thing, no words for this kind of thing, a death so violent a body without words could speak for its self, prone and bloodied, lifeless, torn, violated, in ways a mind can only ever, never, comprehend as in homicide. This is death. This is the scene, the crime, what's criminal: a theatre so ghastly, a body so bloated and slashed, headless and stabbed, the imagination cannot summon the courage to approach the stage, except when required by awe. Watching the detective, in the mind's eye, perform death by examination, by collection of evidence, is itself otherworldly, hardly ordinary, a kind of thing for which there are no words.



## The Body Lies

When the body won't give it up, offers no confessions, not from the torn limb nor from the gash in the face, there is silence. Untruths unfold like falsehoods in the confession room, under the harsh light of penalty of perjury, and the body is not talking, except to say it cannot say exactly what happened when it came to meet its maker. Death was swift. Death was slow in coming. Death was a crush. A slam. A cord wrapped tightly around the neck. A thing so violent the loss of life betrays the body, or the body betrays the loss of life, and for a moment, questions hang in the air like the stench of the body discovered, uncovered. These questions the body is unwilling and unable to answer, coy and exposed as such, confused. The body protects itself. Why? What happened? What really happened here? When the body won't give it up, offers no confessions who will ever really know?

*Ewa Chrusciel*

*from* Contraband of Hoopoe

He wraps each hummingbird in cloth. They look like newborn babies. He sews each pouch into the inside of his underwear. He heads for the Rochambeau airport in Cayenne. What are the true desires in this disguise? The man did not know that hummingbirds calculate their own rates of return. The man did not know that bird means penis in some languages. *Horror Vacui*? How many small birds can one have in his underwear? Do you see a mulberry tree in a mustard seed? Smuggling comes from a species of restlessness. It is a small creature. It promises intensity. It has a lingering nature. It likes to be wrapped in paper or plastic. It likes hiding places. It stirs its wings, stretches in flight. A haul of hummingbirds in his underwear.

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In 1950 Andrzej L smuggled forty-five-thousand razor blades on his way back from a sport contest. A director of a Silesian factory smuggled one hundred and fourteen silk scarves. A writer, Janusz Głowacki, reminisces about smuggling porcelain vases from Poland to Czechoslovakia, where they sold well. Women's underwear, watches, cigarettes...In the trains from Warsaw to Vienna, there were hiding places under the seats. Austrian accomplices would put the goods ordered by mail or phone there. The whole country changed into a Gigantic Contraband. Our parents were smugglers of sweets mostly. Every time we traveled in our Fiat to Czechoslovakia, we would buy chocolate and gummy bears. Now, whenever I travel from state to state, at the gas station and the airports I buy a pack of gummy bears. Gummy bears, the patron saints of contraband.

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The German media alert civilians about Poles taking sugar from German markets. For a kilo of sugar you pay 5 zł in Poland, but only 2.80 in Germany. Horror Vacui. Endless processions of Slavs with buckets of sugar. The clouds of white powder. Sugar hovers over herds of Poles. Sweet levitation. Imagine new trades: sugar castles, sugar children's games; sugar erotica; sugar massage therapy; sugar clay; skiing on slopes of sugar.

Imagine quicksand of sugar. The festivity of birds gorging on sugar grains. Poles might think that Germans owe them a bit of sugar, but sugar smuggling runs into a deeper and rather vicious archetype. Sugar came from plantations which gave rise to molasses which gave rise to rum which gave rise to smuggling.

The hoopoe is a solitary bird yet has enormous filial devotion. When the parents of the hoopoe grow old, the young hoopoe will preen his parents' feathers and lick their eyes until they become young again. Therefore the hoopoe smuggles them into the realm of the eternal. The hoopoe dances and brings more dung to its nest. If any bird showed himself truly, with all faults and failures, wouldn't that be more beautiful than hiding behind the myriads of feathers, layers of beaks and the shriek sounds of the night in them? But who is the One who smuggles the hoopoe? Who is the one who redeems each fallen feather that turns into seconds and minutes drifting into air? Who is behind all the "imping"? Is our soul involved in the hoopoe dispatch? What kind of diplomacy is required to smuggle the self into Infinity?

*Julie Carr*

## Happiness Report

*from Real Life: An Installation*

Temporarily set aside grieving for the future in order to note the way the bees blur the plum tree, the speedy chap in his T shirt straight out of some folktale, the scent of my father's car while my parents spoke beside a bush in an infant's memory. This way I could allow happiness to have a place. Even with the trauma of a third knocked out tooth, this one lying there on the ground a perfect specimen of baby, there is substance and we define it as something whose essence is existence, as that which is absolutely infinite, endless, without beginning, without end. My house: brick, mortar, wood, steel, plaster, paint, paint, plastic, blood on the wall. But the philosopher can live in any milieu so long as thought is free. So long as alive. I'll sleep just once in total piece/peace. My little one has risen from the ground with all that blood coming out of her mouth

## Freedom Report

Once there was a girl who woke up running. Threw her instrument and her chair into the back of a wagon, hitched it up, and ran beside. Once there was a girl who wasn't watching time; kissed her parents one and the other and went to bed running, woke up running.

But childhood was just a bunch of failures and some candy eaten in the dark. What's burning under the bed, she asked her mom. Birds, bees and a door. And when that door's burned right through, said her mom, slip out. To give that girl a lead position, she admitted later, is asking me to ignore my fears entirely. I can't do that. Dad smiled and stroked her arm, which appeared to her not at all. The fire burned on but the flames never rose higher and so soon, it was time; the girl leapt out of bed and into the abyss the fire left behind.

# Freedom Report

We have achieved a great deal: we have completed the Medicare application. It has taken us nearly five years to complete the Medicare application, but we have now prepared the way, divested ourselves of all debt, all ownership, stripped ourselves of any property, of all savings, we have emptied ourselves of responsibilities to anything other than our own bodies, we have announced ourselves broken, unprepared, incapable, entirely dependent, and therefore we have, over five long years, prepared ourselves to complete the Medicare application, and now we have done it. We have completed it, which is to say, we have requested that the state review our case and consider paying the workers who strip and bathe, feed and diaper, wheel and carry our mother. We have requested that they be paid, not by us, for we have no money left, having given it all away or spent it all on our own needs, our own fragile bodies, we request that these workers be paid by the state, which is to say, by the community, the “tax payer,” those who, for example, own the properties we no longer own, those who design the properties or finance them, those who distribute loans or manage investments, those who sell firearms over the internet, those whose job it is to counsel adoptive parents or the lawyers stationed permanently in abortion clinics, the inventors of new beverages, the drivers of great machines, these people will, if we have filled out the Medicare form correctly, now collectively pay the Jamaican woman named Lucy whose job it is to cut our mother’s hair, to watch over our mother as she struggles to swallow her pureed beef or broccoli. And therefore, we, divested of all our previous investments, will stand at a sink, washing a glass, or sit at the table, reading the paper, and we will be sufficiently, endlessly, free.



# Shame

I am my own blindness. I practice a sort of “suffered-subjectivity,” which is to say I am a ticket collector, one whose body is fixed by the eyes of others. There is the problem of protecting myself against the look that throws me back to the inadequacy of my foundation. I was a sister and I sat in an armchair, all around me a large family. Or so we were called, so we called ourselves. Desire revealed to me my “being sexed” and his “being sexed” – but what is desire but the longing to overcome? This we are not sure about. I am the one who desires, and desire is a mode of subjectivity, or, a way of being myself. Just as she, my sister, is herself in that she abhors you. I am my own blindness and I am my own desire. I am also my own disgust, which I cherish and protect as much as I cherish and protect my desire. All the audience members rose to their feet at once. The movie was over. We no longer had to watch the imagined retributive fantasy. Rather we could return to the cars in which we would sit idle for nearly an hour, waiting for our turn to emerge from underground. I am my own blindness and I am my own pleasure. Just as the scientist’s object is external to him but defined entirely through his own senses, my various daughters press against my torso. After the movie, after reemerging from underground, we ate the food before us, refusing the shame of our desires. And how did the negation of shame become the bodies of my daughters? We can’t abolish shame but we can change its form.

## The Enemy

I still don't know what the date is. I'm "lost in time" which means I feel anchored by my credit card. It sits before me, the most beautiful shade of blue. Also I am anchored by my addictions: cotton, candy, and coke. How do you "pick a bale of cotton," asks my youngest? That's one question. Another is, "why do you place the question mark at the end of the sentence, rather than at the end of the question?" You know what I mean if you've ever tried to write dialogue. I took a break from thinking about my enemy yesterday. Instead, I concentrated on gifts and looking upwards. My philosopher told me to look upwards for ten minutes every day as a way to stave off depression. All I could think of was that it would hurt my neck. (Did it have to be ten straight minutes, or could I periodically glance at the sky as long as it added up?) My philosopher has been sick in bed. For this reason, the art show about homelessness is on hold. And so is the attack on the enemy. We have a few days, while he's sick in bed, to focus on other things. Gifts. Upwardness. I presented a filmmaker with a pair of boots, perfectly suited for her. I offered my husband a handjob. I gave my kids cupcakes, though what they really want is to return to nursing. One was so bold as to yank my shirt down and beg to suck my nipples. I read in the dark – a gift to myself – the story of the retiring barman and the story of the homesteader digging his well. But I think this gift-period is coming to a close. The enemy takes no breaks, as my middle one reminded me sobbing into my T-shirt. I told her what I've been told to tell her: You are safe. We will protect you. But my voice was flatter than the layer of scum on a pond in late summer. Most children, I said, don't get shot. But some do, she countered. And I agreed. I hate lying. Eventually she decided she'd had enough crying and kissed me with her beautiful mouth. I've always been shocked by her beauty. Some children are ordinarily beautiful and some are terrifying. She is the terrifying type. For this reason and for others I occasionally think to put her in a cage.

*Dana Levin*

## Fat as Balloons

A little girl bends over, the pink ruffles of her dress go up. We are ashamed, we are so excited, by her flowered panties up in the air—then I see you atop the Ferris Wheel, you're sandwiched between two men. They're inflating fast, fat as balloons, you're pressed thin, thinner, until you slip out from under the safety-bar, drop ribbon-limp to the ground—and when we rush up alarmed, when we rush up flushed, to see: your neck's broken, and you're dead.

Last week when I called you and you were so upset, when I thought I could feel you over the phone, pressing your hand to your throat—when you said you couldn't talk, when you said, *Whatever self I've had has been destroyed*—Anne, Anne, who were those men on the Ferris Wheel, that you were crowded so.

*Robert Alexander*

## What We Can Learn from Other Primates

In the old days when I would visit my parents in the City, I sometimes left their apartment for a walk in Central Park, and one afternoon I dropped in on the Monkey House, though usually I despise such places. I stood there, watching aimlessly as two chimps in front of me sat on a trapeze, one preening itself, the other with a stare as vacant as my own. A man appeared beside me and began throwing pieces of bread over the barrier to the chimps. It fell through the top of the cage and the preening chimp kept reaching up and grabbing each piece as it fell through the bars. Chimps have long arms and this one's arm, from where he was sitting, could just about reach the top of the cage. A piece of bread got stuck there, and try as he might, sitting and stretching, the chimp couldn't reach it. Finally, turning to one side, he hit his companion in the shoulder.

## This Year Ralph Sees

This year Ralph sees the fox squirrels moving in. Energetic and athletic, they leap from the high branches of one tree to another—oak to pine, pine to basswood, basswood to oak. Ralph's seen them chasing the gray squirrels, smaller and slower, from tree to tree. Bushy rust-red tail, two spots of lighter beige behind the ears, last winter there was only one: Ralph called him Rufus. This year they're here in crowds. There's even one Ralph's seen, tawny and well-fed, with a tail as blond as any movie star. That one he calls Blondie.

By spring they will be gone—but years from now Ralph will still see gray squirrels with small beige patches behind their ears, and on sunny days, red highlights playing in the fur along their backsides.

*Gerry LaFemina*

## Last Saturday

I'd been invited to visit a woman who lived beneath a bridge in Central Park and whose eyes were two different types of clouds—the left one stratus, the right cirrus. It was easy to forecast her mood by how she gazed at me. She made tea on a trash can fire, spoke of NYU and the NYPD, her MBA and the MTA. She gave up a 401K and a personal trainer to be this close to penguins and to the man who makes bubbles that move above sidewalks like Chinese dragons. She was born in the year of the tiger. I in the month of the lion. Dog walkers gripped their leashes more tightly when they heard our laughter clamoring from below, rising to rattle the new leaves on the sycamores. Those dogs pulled harder toward home.

Later in the Planetarium I'll study photographs of earth taken from space & by amazed by how much it resembles her left eye & by how little the world must look from that distance.

## Uncertainty Principle

I'm sure I will see you at the other side of sleep—not in my dreams (though who knows, I rarely recall them & there was that one...), but in the morning or some time after lunch, certainly by supper. I will see you after the movie ends, I'm sure, in the lobby, both of us blinking in the popcorn and Coca Cola light. I will see you if you don't see me first. I will, I'm sure, see you at Columbus Circle where we've met before in winter with Captain Christopher as witness. The new world forever waiting, always fresh. I will see you at 3:00 though we said 2:30 for you are usually late. I'm sure. I'm sure I will see you after the dance, your partner exhausted, mine a closeted gown of excuses—we will drink white wine, the goblets open mouthed with laughter. I will see you after Christmas, at the end of the sky ride that has been this year: I'll be seated on the bench of New Year's Day, your face flushed from a midnight kiss, mine blushed with too much bourbon & desire. Always desire. I'm sure I will see you after the bus trip, after the sobbing, after the long insomniac night. I will see you after fire & after frost. After church. On the other side of the platform. On the other side of the bed, no. On the other side of the country, perhaps— I will see you (shall we plan on it) in Santa Barbara, Santa Monica, Santa Cruz. I will see you, I'm sure, seated not with the saints, not with the sinners: you will be an iconoclast among icons. I'm sure I will see you on the other side of a table set for two dressed unprovocatively seductive, a haiku of acne on your cheek but that's the future & right now, when even the subways have gone to Z's, & even the night watchman aboard a docked replica of the Santa Maria, stretches & dozes off to see whomever he dreams about, right now I'm almost positive I will see you some time tomorrow, or at least, at the very least, I am sure, over the weekend

*Nin Andrews*

## The Woman and the Golden Nugget

The year of The Golden Nugget was a troublesome year for the woman. The Golden Nugget, for those who don't know, is a little golden rocket ship that a woman can insert inside herself. Not a little inside, but all the way inside, as the directions say, and that little nugget can find places in a woman no man has gone before. It goes on tour. Or what is advertised as *The Golden Tour*.

*Did you know there's an entire universe in there*, the instructions ask, *complete with galaxies and sunsets and time warps?*

After a while the woman was afraid she was being taken over by a Golden Nugget. What if the Golden Nugget is some kind of alien? she worried. What if one of those space ships that landed ages ago in Roswell, New Mexico brought aliens who have found a secret way to impregnate women? They package themselves in plastic wrap and wait on the shelves in sex shops across America, and unwitting women pop them inside, thinking they're just another dildo. She thinks a lot of men wouldn't mind being mistaken for just another dildo, but only the aliens would figure out how to do it.

But why worry now? she asks herself. Now when she could live her fairy tale dreams at last, walking off happily into the horizon, sighing with every step, and at every bird and butterfly flitting past, and at every drop of unpredicted rain.



## An Inexplicable Urge to Dance

I dreamt of you so often, Love, and each time I saw your face, I tried to tell you I love you but no words came out. And when I woke I tried again and again, *I love you. I love you*, but the words sat quietly on the window sill, as if they were merely considering the weather, as if I love you were a chance of cloudiness or rain, as if I might carry an umbrella in order to love you, or wear a rain hat, a scarf, or goulashes. Or a light coat. Yes, a light blue *I love you* coat, hanging loose from my freckled shoulders, unbuttoned to the wind, the cruel wind of *I love you* as I wandered the streets below your apartment with the words, I love you, blowing through my mind, scattering my thoughts like all those unsent love notes I composed on sleepless nights before I saw you again leaving Joe's Pizza Parlor at dusk, and you smiled and turned, and I opened my mouth to say, *I love you*, and the words were right there on the tip of my tongue, but when I looked at you and saw you, all at once you were not the you I loved. How can I explain it? How love suddenly detached from your skin. And mine. And the bliss I felt then, and the relief. I was overwhelmed with an inexplicable urge to dance.

*Leslie Harrison*

## *from Proteus the Boy*

He was given once a tiny replica for something called “play” and only his hands fit inside and so he pretended for a long time that this was the palace of the hands where hands are sent to rest on tiny flowered couches and sink gratefully into narrow tubs and stare out the bright mouths of windows but the replica came with tiny human occupants.

There was the tiny mother with stones laced, dangling like a leash around her neck and he walked her around the wall-box and made her say stern things like it’s time for evisceration, and no playing in the chimney, children, and go cut the hanged ghost down from the rafters. The smaller replicas were, because she called them that, children, by which he understood they were being trained into their strength.

And he made them go again and again to the attic where they were too small to take down the hanged ghost in his bright silk noose. He made them dance up there and sing and slide in their socks across the icy floor and laugh and crash into the rafters until the hanged ghost waltzed like a becalmed sail like a tied coracle as all the water ran out.

People die from this— the lack like living inside a wind full of grit like not living like just huddled there scoured in the sour grit the flaying the endless flensing storm the never getting water again clear cold water in clear cold glass and the grit is to the wind as water is to this ocean and he was deep in the Mariana trench curled indeterminate some instar inside the maelstrom and once and then once again he tore the cocoon and wings appeared gelatinous and flaccid and then sturdy and enough and almost he could taste the rain could see the silver light of a clear cold dawn and every single thing ached with not grit with the plain air with no longer alone with the simple shape of a face a hand and for a moment hour day he was whole and cold and right and the hook they cut they caught Leviathan with the one born barbed inside what passed for his soul was just another cut and then the grit and the wind and flensed again and lack, it turns out, lack was not lack as long as lack was all he had.

Lea Banks

## Grapefruit and Milk

Grandma perches on her Chippendale and stares mightily at Aunt El. She's teaching me to play marbles but I keep slipping. I crawl round the floor looking for a shooter. I'm only little but Grandma thinks I can play. There's lion's feet on the bottom of her chair and I come up hollering. She whispers that they're oriental dragon claws and they hold her chair up. Don't be afraid. I like her because she talks like I'm a grownup, though she holds her throat like her head's gonna fall off. Whenever she talks, that is.

I think she was trying to bore holes in the back of Aunt's head as she busies herself about the tiny kitchen, cooking our breakfast of soft-boiled eggs, smooth-jellied like oysters with bits of butter clinging. I once had oysters with mama and I kinda liked them, but don't say so. Aunt spansks them with a knife into Noritake bowls. Sister clamps her mouth shut as she tries to feed her, won't have none of it. She untangles herself from her highchair, inches underneath the crawlspace of the divan, and stays there until naptime. Grandma doesn't get mad, just edges her chair closer, and waits wordlessly for her.

She smacks her thigh at her miniature poodles, each decrepit and toothless. They return from the groomers with toes painted pink and the boy, blue with matching bows in their scraggly hair. We are barefoot and run jagged loops around her and her dogs. They poop everywhere on wall-to-wall, stacked-on-top-of-each-other Oriental rugs. Stepping in a pile, I shriek as it squishes between my toes.

Unfazed, Grandma growls for our Aunt who unstoops her schoolteacher's back from wiping the floor where Sister sat, and picks up the dog poop. With an endless supply of pocket Kleenex tucked into her sleeve, she wipes my sullied feet. I'm starting to love Aunt El. Twirling, I dance around her. She always dresses in a dress even when she's not at school. She doesn't say too much either. I always have something to say. Everything's so *not loud* over here. It isn't exactly quiet either what with all these pets. What I can't figure is why Grandma acts mad with her. AND why it seems hard for her to converse rightly. They seem used to it so I guess that's all right.

Grandma claps at her parrot Curly who screeches cuss words to her in her own papery rasp. She swears back at him like a fishwife and throws her head back for a laugh. Imagine how it sounds when you eat a grapefruit and by accident take a big chug of milk? That's the sound that bucketed out of her throat. I decide right then and there I do not want to know anything.

# Turpentine

Me and sister have to be put somewhere cuz ever since Mama left, Daddy is betwixt and between. I pad from my room, hear him crying. Crying. Like my baby sister cries, all howling and carrying on. But quiet at the same time. *She* needs to take lessons.

I hide behind the crusted studio door without a handle. He's gonna fix it so until he does, I watch the smoke pour out it and peer through it and smell all the good smells. Pine oil seeps under every door of our house, all because one doesn't have a handle. At least that's what Mama said.

A circle of empty cans rim a blackened ashtray in the shape of a punkin. Or maybe was an apple. Or a ladybug. Drinking a beer, he paints a picture of Mama --- from memory  
Daddy said a couple days ago.

This time, a large black X across her pretty face. He smells of cigarettes, beer, Right Guard, and turpentine. Mainly turpentine.

Daddy glares at me with a dark look though he says in a soft high voice, go back to bed. Daddy never has a soft high voice. In fact, it's the most bottomlessness one I've ever heard. I tiptoe back to bed in boy's flannel Flipper pajamas, two sizes too big.

This is Florida in the middle of summer.

*Peter Burghardt*

## Karaoke at the White Horse

Maybe what we work towards is a real boundary, a noun with no verb to plumb its depths. From the corner, I can barely feel the steady stream of vaccinations digging into bathroom conversation. Maybe it's a bit forward, but at least the night accepts the pinball wizard for who he is, his acts for what they do. If asked, he might even have something to say about the visitors in town from Princeton, how way west their prefixes plummet like gold dust in the sluice. Somebody unplugs the jukebox, and for a second I hear the milk bottle's unattended face roil in its cage. No one pays attention anyhow, the show's about to begin, and that's why we come--our hope faith the pup as he skits licks against his master.

## Darkness and Daylight Touch in the Prime of Our Adventure

I was conceived of in an agreement, and don't want to compare that to anything, but a thousand years of raving behavior hasn't disconnected the questions from a doubtful gulch. This time of year, the Fall winds carry discarded shoes to the brink, while not far out, some buoys tug their grievous ends. The circus is in town, and the passing children chew their novelties as they plod back into a vocabulary of sense. When we see the standing lion, he works our forgotten centers with his bloodless lips, though the grasses have turned on him already. That far, unrecognizable cry—the hockey player with her hand stuck in the Zamboni. She got nicknamed, “the opera that deserted Milwaukee.”



## Tent Stakes

Thick weather, coffee, polenta— in the southern outdoors you might know where the boxy city came from.

It's a new type of investment project. Toaster ovens! Want a toaster oven of invasive tree bark. Need fresh gutters and a year of superstitious rainmaking.

When you notice the dog in the wrong lane, you don't cover your eyes. At this point we could probably order embroidery. Bathe a babe in our bare palms. Deal with it.

Sam Witt

## Ten Tweets From the Future

Which is why, in morning coat & black dress, the people were a xerox of the toxic ocean, long ago, tonight, before we breathed out just once in our sleep (& just like that) we were gone · Sun Sep 19 2010 23:39:58 (CDT) via web from Framingham,

MA · Embed this Tweet

The people carried their toxic assets to bed with them · Sun Sep 19 2010 23:34:28 (CDT)

via web from Framingham, MA · Embed this Tweet

Just like that the moonlight was searching the tunnels of a mare's eye & glaciers collapsed under a deluge of 80 odd billion plastic bottles per year après moi · Sun Sep 19 2010 17:39:48 (CDT) via web · Embed this Tweet

When people speak a futureless language, they put the future on equal footing with the present: Après moi le déluge · 1:09 AM - 27 Sep 13 (CDT) via web · Embed

this Tweet

I kind of feel like my genes need to be stopped<sup>1</sup> · 10:41 PM - 4 Apr 2014 · Embed this Tweet

Empty as a conch shell, pearly as the interior, white as the dead. Lifted with the white fires. Write it out: in bleached coral reefs, vanished sea-ice, in extinction · 6:13 PM - 21 Nov 13 · Embed this Tweet

Trace my thumbprint to the source: this pelican, adrift in its box of clear plastic sky: O my people, spread heavenwide your oil-coated wings · Wed Sep

22 2010 12:08:37 (CDT) via web · Embed this Tweet

<sup>1</sup> For every rose a thorn: Can a rose shatter in cartoon land? Dip it in liquid nitrogen & see: Can't you bring a man back from the dead here? · 1:12 AM Sep 18th via web ·

Embed this Tweet

Far longer than we were pregnant with our very own lives. Just toggle to the enlightened & you'll see · [2 min ago via web](#) · [Embed this Tweet](#)

Talk about language extinction: Hey College, I got words for you: in 10 yrs I bet, nobody will use the phrase "you're welcome." They'll say "no problem." · [7:42 PM - 22 Oct 13](#) · [Embed this Tweet](#)

For it's been the Age of the Insect now for about 400,000,000 years<sup>2</sup>

[1 sec ago via web](#) · [Embed this Tweet](#)

<sup>2</sup>Do you know It's the End of the End of the World? I don't know, could you hum a few bars? · [2 sec ago via web](#) · [Embed this Tweet](#)

*Russel Jaffe*

## Los Angeles, California

Went the other way on Mulholland Dr.

That's what Carleen said. Things were precious then, and quivering. And

We pulled into the parking lot of a school and, parking beyond the white lines of parking spaces and imagining what the Uhaul looked like from a more and more rapidly descending spacecraft, we parked.

I could feel my stomach in my hands, a kind of 'there there,' a tired fatherly feeling.

Did Carleen see me watching watching the lights in the parking lot with my head?

I thought about climbing onto the roof. It was that uneasy time of night when the actual time is unknown but it's dark, it's later than you expect but by no means very late, or the morning, or any time. The sun's a big baby temporarily asleep, the moon a curled up infant's finger.

I put one foot to the front bumper and hesitated. Carleen talked on the phone and then came outside. We

sat on the bumper. Our shoulders in our hoodies vexation impressions in the palm hill air.

The moon looks like, I said, then, laughing, I don't know what the moon looks like.

Our hoodies touched, our fingers slow then and animals in the leafy dark and some kids smoked a joint walking past the Uhaul out of the school.

I peed into the bushes, the black of my pants the black of the hoodie and back again; verdigris of plants an elegant gate of shadows on asphalt. Overhead lights flushed, next stop: stars. That sensation that says if I could but drift off.

Watched the urine become a black snake, then liquid,  
then a wet spot, then an old planet's suggestive canal long empty, once promised,  
then back to asphalt.

## Donuts

We walked up the hill and talked about shoes. I was breathing hard instantly. I thought about how the insides of my hips ached and how out of shape I was. After only two blocks, we could see the fogged-out half-bowl of Oakland and San Francisco that ran like a mossy covering into a cliff that's the sea.

From between boxy houses with lines running into them—some for cable, some to hang clothes on, usually both—we stopped to take pictures. The whole city was a graveyard of teeth and palm trees. It was a great shine to people, a glistening rind whose sugary, pulpy remainders are designed to catch the most light. This place was designed around the sun, something to which people attribute judgment. People, even if they couldn't be seen, were hanging out of windows, clogging the streets, breathing in and breathing out the air until they had replaced it with themselves, hanging off of other people. People were hammering themselves into the mountains, wiring themselves to trees, embedding themselves into sandy hills that terminated into red mountains whose faces and freckling trees were the faces of people. The scooped out valley

was an epic shrine  
to people.

And as people, people  
needed it.

*Jean Frémon*

*translated by Cole Swensen*

## The Posthumous Life of R.W.

1

In a spacious room on the second floor of the boarding house he's chosen for home, RW stretches out on his bed and thinks that he really should get out and take advantage of that sunny late afternoon he can see out the window. To feel the fine breeze that's shuddering the leaves of the lime trees on my face and through my hair, that would be nice, he thinks. First I'll go to the fountain—I'm always happy just hearing it—then I'll push on, taking the path up the hill to the little grove, from which I just might be able to catch a glimpse of my landlady hanging out her laundry. Watching his landlady hanging out her laundry is one of RW's favorite pastimes. No one could deny, he thinks, that her silhouette is even more lovely when she's reaching upward. And then once at the edge of the grove, he could lie down in the grass to rest a moment. Contemplating the passing clouds is another of his favorite activities. Look at that one, fattening and darkening right there on the spot. But wait, isn't it collapsing into a fragrant gust that will soon turn into a downpour? Those gorgeous sheets, almost dry, he thinks, are going to get drenched unless she races out to get them before it's too late. She'll come back in, rain running down her face, her bangs streaming across her eyes; hope she doesn't catch cold. As for me, thank heavens I didn't go out. It's never wise to rush into things, thinks RW, fluffing up his pillow.

RW wonders whether or not he should reproach himself for having contributed so little to the workings of the world. For having—perhaps from pride?—maintained a certain distance.

RW breathes, sleeps, walks beneath the sky, takes off his hat when he enters a church, takes care not to offend anyone . . . doesn't that amount to a more than honorable contribution? he asks himself, anxious for reassurance.

And those who flatter themselves that they, with all their prancing about, have contributed something to, as they say, the workings of the world; are they doing anything more than flattering themselves? he wonders in the secret hope of ending the debate.

Just look at how they preen themselves, he adds, a little coyly.



Telling stories is tiring, thinks RW. And sometimes he finds himself wanting, just for a change, to tell the absence of a story. To tell instead, for example, the path traced by a cloud, the reflection in the waters of a fountain, the slate-colored corner of the sky and the rainbow that's going to start there in a breakdown of light. The song of a cuckoo—it's never seen, it's always hidden, and yet it's a sign, a sign of its own absence. It's like a tale without a story. Nothing happens, and yet something occurs that's like the cuckoo's song, densely wooded, a little rough, the proof of something that cannot be seen. In the *Pastoral Symphony*, the whole is carried by an oboe. It comes in solo, as if to give silence an inflection; then the strings begin to bustle about, miming the sound of the wind through the leaves of huge trees. Feeling small beneath the great, variegated sky. A rainbow spans it, luck and wealth lying at its unfindable feet. Hiding in silence, waiting to be flushed out. Leave them be, thinks R.W. Wealth is just an optical illusion. And he falls gently asleep thinking of an optical illusion. Which happens sometimes when you give up stories.

Joshua Young

## I Don't Care What You Say, Rollins is the Man

black flag begins, rollins bends into the crowd, grabs someone by the face, & yells—*this fucking city is run by pigs. they take the rights away from all the kids!* the cops don't come, probably 'cause the huskies are playing & this game is huge. the kids from roosevelt are in the corner of the pit, bumping into each other, & the junkies haven't shown since the madison reopened—*no bullshit*—& rollins climbs the stage wall & rips loose the curtains, swings out, diving into the crowd, his mic slamming to the stage. can you taste the blood we've drawn? will you wake in the aftermath & gather? the suburbs are guarded from this, yeah, but if they listen they can feel the pressure from inside squeezing out. our parents don't know why, but they're shivering, the capitol is shook, & reagan is at it, can't make ends of why the west coast tremors.

## Every Interview is a Punk Test

m brings a stack of thursday's times & reads the headline to us: WHAT IS HARDCORE PUNK & WHAT IS IT DOING TO OUR KIDS? rollins dangles from a curtain at the madison, in front-cover black & white, us, just blurs in the crowd. the article talks about violence & vandalism. photo's take a split second out of context, but there was blood-spray, black eyes, & cracked ribs. someone from the dehumanizers was on the roof with a revolver, shooting bottles & screaming, *punk is a snow-wolf with a hunger for tat-ink!* by now everyone's seen *the decline of western civilization* enough times to quote & the media's stepping all over the meaning behind what hardcore punk means. they say they want to understand us—the kids. but m says they want to find a way to package this, to market it back to us. to sell us ourselves 10 times the price. *watch*, he says, *in a few years there'll be stores where you can buy what we have on right now, it'll be hip to wear black, there'll be stores that sell ripped up jeans, dirty looking clothes, they'll be telling us that a black flag t-shirt is cool to wear. watch. your kids will wear this, & you'll know the lie they represent.* after the roof-shooting, reporters had more questions, asking m about *rules of conduct*. m says, *rules? what rules of conduct? we don't conform, therefore we don't have rules. this is what it is. we are what we are.* they ask about violence. *violence is only acceptable in self-defense. that term, of course, is relative.* they want to know about slam-dancing. kids are running for the door, asking, how many songs they missed.

*Olivar de la Paz*

## Labyrinth Sequence

Labyrinth 87

The boy in the labyrinth wonders at the shape of the minotaur's inner-ear--its labyrinthine tubes spiral into smaller and smaller tubes. It is the nature of artifacts to have fractures, missing pieces, an errant image rubbed raw against the weather. And here, the beast's ear is missing part of a lobe. The boy puts his hand on the wound. Feels the hardened edge of it which yields to the velvety soft parts not maimed by sword or the panicked nails of the beast's victims. The boy rubs the beast's ear. Pinches the tissue between his thumb and middle finger. And the beast stirs a little. It moves. Its fur rising and falling between the boy's soft strokes.

## Labyrinth 88

The boy in the labyrinth's breath rises and falls as he strokes the beast's soft ear. He sees the contours of its human body as a form. Each line connects and belongs to the minotaur the way the boy owns his own face. The way the scar on the boy's thigh aches to tell its story. The real thing substitutes what once was in the boy's memory. The real is flesh and is not a contingency. How old are you? the boy wonders as he feels the beast's sides. Skin tags mottle its furred parts. Little lumps serve as a disjunction. To the boy the beast feels like his hand touching his hand.

## Labyrinth 89

The boy in the labyrinth feels his hand touch his own hand--gesture not unlike a handshake, the warmth spilling over from one side to the other. Within that handshake, he feels his own body. No, it is not a handshake. The boy's arms embrace himself. They are holding him up to face the minotaur, asleep at the center of the labyrinth. The boy's arms cross. Form a double space--what is within and without their embrace. Everything external to their grasp is a desire. Everything within their clutches is a desire. The boy feels tossed in the middle of an errand. He wants to cross his arms around the minotaur. The boy feels he is in a state of urgency. For it seems love is a spiritual exercise full of inferences and lingering.

*Rochelle Hurt*

## Shame Story I: Origins & Outcomes

a tendency toward men: a tenuous inborn thread: a tangled up head: a cute little clot: a bad cell caught: the best laid bloodlines: best paid too: a gold mine: a land mine: stepped over a thousand times: love like a waltz above it: a tango: a two-step: a cute little pet: a petty crime: a crimson drop: a polka dot skirt: a murder flirt: a flippant hurt: a hint: a sullen shiv: a stitch sewn inside: a new place to hide: a fleshy flowering of red: a chiffon dread: a cute little dress: ripped from a party: fabric fit for a hit: an execution: a staged constellation of one: a sorry star: selling itself to the crowd: a thesaurus of coughs and sighs that ignore it: dead weight in the mouth: tiny canker of guilt: burnt tongue of time: a terse little prayer: chewed-up pit: self-pitying cry: a cute little curse: a canopy bed: an unborn thread: a homemade hearse: a tendency shed

## Shame Story II: Possessions

Had none: had fun: had a nylon run: had a crying plan: had a lying jag: had a gorgeous son: had a lead-barreled man: had a gaggle of guns: had a sticky trigger: had a hard tongue: had a fool more than once: had a rust-fueled junker: had a radio brain: had a map taped to her back: had a Westward eye: had a lotto ticket: had a quiet laugh: had quite a lack: had a mother somewhere: had a can of crow: had a rough swallow: had a hollow pocket: had only some, she said: had a bottle of dread: had a lake in her head: had a canyon pupil: had a better off thought: had a single plot dug



## Shame Story III: Direct Objective

come cork me: come wine me: come knife me: come fork me: come flank me: come rare me: come fade me: come French Marmalade me: come second date me: come art me: come cash me: come avant-garde me: come clique me: come club me: come Jack me: come queue me: come 'lude me: come cold concrete me: come air me: come gauge me: come sympathy face me: come floor me: come score me: come groan me: come phone me: come flick me: come boat me: come third month in a row me: come Mom and Dad me: come key me: come bow me: come ring me: come bliss me: come Bavarian cream me: come house me: come doll me: come couch me: come wall me: come storm me: come law me: come tape me: come box me: come sale sticker me: come tock-tock me: come shelf me: come clock me

*Keith Tuma*

## Zero Hedge

Smudges only or skull splash there is no future in scraping bloodstains from the floor to keep from having to lower rates. All 108 names of Vishnu are lost to present memory in the subdivision. Boiled mice dried in the sun, the Frankenstein fish good for a time out of water, octopi fighting back: there's not much left apart from mendacity and money. Pets and prey animals mostly, the edible, the inedible, and the fed. It gets harder to laugh about, though we still have citizens. Around here every year about this time they tear up the same road.

*Joshua Corey*

## Complete Adventures

### *I. In porcelain peril*

This person sat smally kicking his legs against the stall while above him loomed the Looming Carl. This person could not meet the Carl's eye but went on shrilly kicking. The Carl was one of those people who assume that all other people feel just as they do; he had a toothache; he roared Open your mouth and opened his own; his tongue lolled horribly. This person bit his lip and kicked faintly the stall, which I might as well tell you was really the Carl's left shin. For why should we hold secrets from each other—from you, from this person, from I who write this beside a pot of yogurt at daybreak? I'll teach you, the Carl howled, beatings his mitts on the stall walls: and he did, and he did, and he did.

### *II. In which we are transported*

An adverb to modify is, this person thought happily from his high chair. He spooned some yogurt. The floor of Grand Central Station was far below him and the black grains of the commuters' hats churned there like rice on a tapped tin plate. Where's my Looming Carl, this person thought, and then remembered: but it's my turn to loom. So this person did his little level best, sitting up straight and shaking white glops of yogurt down on the floor so far below, where they splatted contentedly on tiles and hatted heads. A few squinted up but all they could see was the winter sun breaking whitely through glass exactly at the nimbus of this person's haircut. I'm an emergency, this person said excitedly, waving his spoon in the air. Then soberly: An emergency all alone. Someone skidded on something white far below and fell down in a pewter clatter. But this person didn't see, or else he only heard. Heavenly hurt it gives us.

### III. *In memory of his feelings*

Owaagh, the blurbs, this person said adversely to Senor Elbow, who nodded briskly in time his sleek smallish head. I ate too many, Senor, this person gasped, I'm pregnant luminously, necessarily, prominently, uncapturably. Just the thing, murmured Elbow smoothly, I have for you. In the manner of a master maitre'd, which he was. He turned aside to his dainty dental tray. He flicked a set of lenses over this person's incisors. Better? Or worse? Owaagh, urgh, this person replied. Again the Senor flicked his lenses, clicking like heels in the manner of a matador. Better? I can't feel my faculty, this person cried. And then: Worse! Senor flinched, flicked some more. Stop right there, this person gasped. He threw back his head and sipped the air, then ripped off the uncomfortably small leather mask, sniffing and snuffing great guffles. By George, this person cried, and again, by George. I think you've got it, smiled the Senor.

### IV. *In an annex of the road*

If we get to elect our emperor then the real emperor must be someone else, this person thought. He sat upon a phonebook full of the most recent polls. Hannibal's elephants climbed the Alps in a frieze outside the kitchen, where this person's egg salad sandwich dried out underneath a heat lamp. To dry out is to get sober, this person thought, sipping gin fizz through a straw. It was time to be nighthawks again and soon this person would start out on his journey westward. A kitschy blonde screeched from the soda fountain to the soda jerk, bent under the burden of his glass head. About the values voters' pristine ahem. "Order up!" this person shouted and paused, appalled. I'm the jerk.

## V. *In seasoning*

An apiary where the apes hang out, nodding their heads to the upright bass's buzz. This person sucks a sugared lemon and puckers up for Mrs. Salt, drumming her nails on a calcite keg. I prefer the ganglions, he thought he heard her say. Some sort of animal, this person agreed, making conversation. Ung! said Mrs. Salt unmistakably. It's a kind of nerve bundle this person corrected himself, not removing his eyes from the stage where an elegant ape emptied her shaker on a high hat. Ung! Ung! Mrs. Salt repeated, then sucked, round-eyed, a cube. Anyway this person said, taking her icy hand, can you feel my heart pounding? He studied her face, its internal stratus and radii, the rungs of the ladder leading up to her terminus and down to her spunk box. An ape got stung by his saxophone reed and the audience clapped and hoofed. I'm *your* animal, this person pleaded. His feet didn't touch the brushed earth. But Mrs. Salt just went on grinding her molars, and her hairy other hand spread like a stain on the paper tablecloth, a torn and sticky white space upon which this person found himself beached.

Joe Bonomo

## Origin Stories

The family, the eight of us, in the rec room, watching one of the great Biblical Movies, the name of which is gone now but for the wide-screen melodrama, the lime-green suburbs outside a sad replica, breezes moving through crab apple trees, old folks waiting patiently for the bus—while on the screen there are plagues and pestilence and bared chests, passions nameless but for the language spoken by actors' faces turned to Divine Light and Will, what the nuns said, what the priests muttered, here in TECHNICOLOR! with popcorn in our laps. Riveted, we're watching a wide shot of a long, rumbling chunk of ground a violent crack in the middle groans and the land is torn down the middle an abyss into the dark of which tumble men and women and children in gasps and screams and *Cool!* I say aloud to no one really, and my mom next to me slaps me hard on my thigh, *That's not cool* she says quietly and within the warm burn of my siblings turning to look I shrink from the drama when another rises to meet it, the burn of the motherly scold, of course, the embarrassment, but more, the nausea of fascination and wrongdoing, the lure of spectacle and anguish, an easy lesson in childish perspective except that this one took, tattooed me, as hard I tried to rub it off the next days weeks months it lingered, the danger of pleasure, *Schadenfreude* the wrong word even if I'd known and understood it, pleasure not in the agony of the poor desert people plummeting to certain death but in the wide-screen staging of it all, the spectacle, a new window onto yet another adolescent confusion: that *where* between violence and its telling, the world and its imagined doppelgänger, makeup and hair and lights and *Action!* sweetening the misery all around me, but no "That's not cool."

Driving down 14th Street from Wheaton into D.C., rows of blocks of abandoned houses and storefronts blurring, remnants of an earlier era of fire and dissent, blaze and flight, the broad long avenue and side streets intersecting under mostly busted street lamps, slow dissolves, and when we hit Logan Circle the traffic ebbs and the prostitutes approach, materializing at our suburban windows, knocking on the glass, human voices asking for a date, angling away in hot pants and heels, inured to or

annoyed by our giggling and fake-macho muttering, and ahead: a left onto Massachusetts Avenue and the slow glide past Logan Square and a right onto 9th Street and the descent blinked to life and off again by the neon signs outside of the bars and porn arcades and theaters, we're looking for parking now, circling, eyeing the junkies and drunks swerving or splayed, quietly making up stories about the concrete park at 9th and F, maybe coke at the back of our throats, surely empties beneath our feet, maybe lurid fantasies about empty buildings, ghosts of gentrification looming and unseen, the Old Downtown really really urine-old now though we don't know it then, as Marion Barry sniffs and sniffs and blocks away Reagan sits in his home as myth even then, we're looking for parking and resisting the magnetic lures of the old man bars and the peep shows and the rat-kicking and the funky wig store and black that welcomes but only as a come-on. "C'mon."

## Little Jerusalem

[Little Jerusalem]

We memorize a calculus of eyes, figure both sides of some equal sign as we pass. Calculate the statistical risk of greeting strangers. Study arabesques in sidewalk slabs as we draw closer or farther from temples on opposite ends of town. Assonance of Sabbaths side-by-side, we scan the prosodics of hemline, imagery of unveiled living room windows, where we display the wares of our faith, as if on sale, hoping our enormous gods will lean in and scoop us up from shelves ourselves and ignite us like dry wicks.

[Little Jerusalem II]

The general was snow but particular and so thick it looked as if it were not falling, but hovering, as I shuffled along the snow-banked side of Washington Boulevard, halfway to campus, when a Suburban scrolled past, and slowed. The driver's side window lowered, and a woman, covered in copper hair and flowing scarf, poked her head out. In a Brooklyn accent, asked if I needed a roide. I didn't know her from Eve. She was brave or kind or both. I was almost there, I said. She replied, "you'll probably get there before I do!" And we laughed, laughed together in the falling, the falling slow... Into the minibus, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, a young man climbed. He wore glasses, a pen in his oxford, black hair slung low. We got to talking, where we were going and where we were from. He hoped one day, he said, to go to Cleveland to study engineering. Before we could ask him why, the minivan braked. We pulled out our papers or passports. A soldier pulled him out. We pulled away, and he, surrounded by three soldiers, grew smaller as we drove further, closer to Jerusalem, until we turned and disappeared from each other.



[Little Jerusalem III]

The road from ear to hear / narrows at once, stops at checkpoints for identification. Rubble (houses). Rocks (slingshot). Soldiers. Walls you can't see until you run into them—as at night, guest in a stranger's house, in dark, you bump into what you thought was open frame. In our bed, you say: you talk all day of dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis, of being open, but right now, in our own house, you can't hear me. You can't hear or see me and I'm right here. My tongue is a broken key stuck in its lock. What Ari saw: the blind and deaf Israelis of Nalagaat stand before a table they can't see, mix flour with sweet water, roll out a dough, and gather it to a loaf to cradle and eat. Itzik: when someone touches my hand, I can feel my loneliness start to disappear. The dance of their hands, bidding the beautiful to rise. Ari, our neighbor, future doctor, asked me to print his tickets on Sabbath. We talked Chekhov, how he saw everyone—in “Ward No. 6,” the pitiable mad Jew who begged for kopecks, the cynical doctor who justified his failures, the insane patient who caused the doctor to question everything—as human, enveloped in a case of what we are or make, case that shells or hides, that saves or steals our life. The dark again: You don't let me in. You'd rather face a checkpoint in another country than let me in. What stops me from opening, like that maple across the road, every inch of it turning to light, even at night? Our fight over, you're asleep now, stretch on this bed, prone in your dream. I pace the walls, balance on parapet between towers, watch for intruders—exiled inside, exiling you.

*Todd McCarthy*

## The Ultimate Kitten Charm Bracelett

Dear Amanda, I've got a real problem with the raccoons that live in our neighborhood. Can you psychically tell them to leave our trash cans alone? Side effects may include tremors, dry mouth, amnesia, narcolepsy, hemorrhaging, increased ejaculation or death. Your flamboyant character demands that you own one or more exotic animals.

"It all started when my sister mentioned that Christmas and its customs were not in the Bible. That disturbed me." Constipated? Itchy dryness? After pouring the oil, the soothsayer would enter a deep, visionary trance. Wear sensible shoes, as you're prone to foot injuries now.

Hey Buddy, is that a lobster in your pants? The majority of UFO encounters take place on rural roads in clear weather. "I love to snack, and now I get to snack without worrying about my weight." Correctional institute inmate: sweet as honey, sexy too. Soon to be released, and the tests do give a glimmer of hope.

"Whenever the window was open, she'd creep inside and start dancing on my stomach." Your granddaughter's horse harbors no ill intent toward her. You can relax. A sudden drop in blood sugar may cause drowsiness, headache, dizziness, erratic behavior, seizures or uncontrollable bowel movements. You can also ask for the prison breakfast.

"Dwarf-like Chinese spies are everywhere in our coastal waters," says a Homeland Security spokesman. What's your history with pets? "What is clear is that political behavior is not a matter of choice. They were born that way." Toddler's finger painting reveals the location of Atlantis.

Dear Sarah, I've enclosed my husband's palm. Is he having an affair with his secretary?

*Hadara Bar-Nadav*

## Revel

The startled. The starling. Wings splayed on the sidewalk, a short rope between them like a child's shoelace. Whistle in the tailwinds. I remember a whistle. Oily-sheen. Hunter-green. Were you the hunter? The eye was. Eye as arrow and hunter. Eye as starling startled from the birch. The tailwinds fly it, circle it round and round. The eye circles. It is taken, and allows this. Revels. Ravishes. Leans into the color and the breeze.

Sheryl Noethe

## Broken

*The performance left us with a rather bitter taste in our mouths- in front of an audience of*

*maybe fifty people in that decrepit theater. It was winter and the doors were locked.*

*Someone had forgotten to turn the heat on, and we waited outside on the streets where I*

*huddled with my scarf around a shivering grandmother. When we finally got inside there were*

*no stairs to be found, only stacked wood boxes to climb onto the stage, so all five of us readers*

*clamored up on stage and sat in a half-circle, facing the small crowd.*

*The biggest guy there started us off with a long song in his language. It felt like it took twenty minutes.*

*He read a poem approving arranged marriages that I found questionable and along the same vein*

*the next guy to read and I quote, word for word, "Her cleavage was so deep, and what wonders lay beneath."*

*This guy also played a couple songs on the accordion. When it was my turn to read, I chose some poems*

*against the patriarchy, one in particular pointing out the influence on childhood of the un-lived life of the parent. Apparently the biggest guy took my remarks to heart, and when it was finally over and we bowed to scant applause, as everyone was freezing cold, I walked to the end of the stage to step down on the first box.*

*Like one of those old games where you manipulate a metal gripper and try to grasp a toy, close the robotic hand around your choice and pull it out of the big glass case filled with treasures, a vast shadow came from behind and dug into my shoulder socket, lifted me into the air and dropped me onto the floor. I grabbed my shoulder and screamed, but he was off shaking hands and signing books. A woman in the audience grabbed*

*my hand and said, "I saw what happened up there. You'd best get out of here." Holding my sore arm against my chest, I went out the door and got into her car.*

*I was unable to work in my garden that fall, it was too painful to pull weeds or hoe or dig*

*and my shoulder continued to throb past Christmas. Finally in early January I underwent surgery*

*to remove the damaged ends of my arm socket and collarbone. I have a small red scar to show for it*

*and a couple thousand dollars in scans and x-rays and the operation itself, the anesthesiologist and the lab techs and the use of the room. I put everybody on a payment plan and went faithfully to physical therapy.*

*The big poet never knew how his impulse to drop me from the stage was both agonizing and expensive as he rode off into the sunset. When I told the sponsors of the event about my misfortune, the only thing they said was "You're not going to sue us, are you?"*

*And that's where we left it.*

*Chad Parmenter*

## Weston

*It was never a matter of aperture—what speed of what shutter—exact slant of this or that exact light—or whatever living picture sits and waits to be taken—to be made new. It was never about pure work.*

It was always this—photography as poetry, light as writing, not what your eyes may take in, but what you empty out of you, displaced by this making, the order that chords and guides fire, and the solder and voltage of Modern culture.

That's a negative's capability. That is this art's. Make it yours.

And be unmade by it. And maybe then—be real to me.

## The public's eyes are flies'

*The public's eyes are flies'*—there we are air, splintered into different identities.

You'd adore this synthesis—of glitter into water into glitter—like a film of heaven on these colonies of plankton, their flares opal-cold under the roughened surface—nervous as house lights—living in moving.

Where you are—in the heaven of a negative, or nowhere, or out of reach of me—or all three—there is a scar that can be found only by your own, hurt art. Lean to the lens. Breathless, motionless, press in. Focus. Wait for it to take on your own brightness.

Now breathe. Refresh your sight. The first kiss of the light.

*Robert Archambeau*

## Leopards in the Temple

### *Remix*

In leopardskin dresses they are to parade into the bar where he, smiling meekly, buys candy-colored drinks to slake their burning and majestic appetites. They sate themselves and drink to the very dregs, then, sleek-sided and tossing back their manes of gilded hair, abandon him.

This is repeated over and over again; it will be repeated forever. Blindly besotted, he is to understand it only as kind of foreplay.



# The Ball Rider

## *Remix*

\*[In the most ancient extant text, perhaps in the hand of the elusive benZalman, is the note “for ball, read ye bucket.” Sages cannot explain this mystery.]

He is to sit all-but naked in his winter-cold room, on the edge of a narrow bed, one sock drooping low on a scrawny ankle, the other absent, bare branches outside the window, the sky itself an iron shield against any who look to it for comfort. Pitiful is his condition: he must have congress, and so must ride out beneath that uncaring sky seeking aid from his silken-limbed beloved, the dance of her tawny skin beneath his supplicating touch.

She is to have grown deaf to all ordinary appeals, such that he must demonstrate to her that he has not a single thought but his need, that her caress means to him the very sun in the firmament, a breaking of the iron chastity of the indifferent sky.

He must plan to approach like a starving beggar who, with the death-rattle already risen in his throat, insisting on expiring on her very doorstep. Like a beggar to whom the infinitely desired Sultana’s cook decides to give the dregs of the coffee pot. The beloved, like this cook, must form her lips to a slight and contemptuous moue, but—and this is his hope, his aching dream—acknowledge nevertheless the dictum “Thou shall not kill,” and fling with pity a little sugar his way. Maybe, just maybe, he is to tremblingly speculate, a hand-job.

His mode of arrival must decide the matter, so he rides off mounted on the swollen orbs within his scrotum. Buoyed upwards as if by a force greater than helium, he lays hands on his growing tumescence—the simplest of bridles—and so will propel himself with difficulty down the stairs, the bald and freckled spot atop his head scraping the ceiling. Once below, his billowing sack ascends superbly, superbly—camels humbly squatting on

the ground do not rise with more dignity, shaking themselves under the sticks of their drivers. Through the hard frozen streets he goes at a regular canter; often upraised as high as the second story of a house; never is he to sink as low as the entrances. At last he floats at an extraordinary height above the ceiling skylight of the beloved, whom he sees below, her elegant back in all its nakedness arched as she bends over a table, reading what looks unnervingly like a love note in another's hand. "Beloved!" he is to shout, in a voiced burned hollow by desire and shrouded in the cloud his hot breath makes in the night air, "please, beloved—be kind!"

Beneath the skylight she puts her hand to an ear exquisite as a butterfly beneath her magnificently curling tresses. "Do I hear something? A dying rabbit?" she will ask. She is then to throw on her sheerest sarong, angled like an arched eyebrow above the unattainable heaven of her hips, tied carelessly yet with an opulent grace, then cast open the window, and, insensate to the nasal whining of ongoing beseechments, let the sheer tulle, the satin of her voice sidle to his yearning ears. "Nothing," she will say, "there's nothing here; I see nothing, I hear nothing; only the clock striking, and now to bed. The cold is terrible; and tomorrow I'm promised a visitor."

She sees nothing and hears nothing; but all the same she loosens her sarong and waves it lightly, wafting him away. His steed has all the virtues of the best balloons or airships, save this: a woman's garment, wielded ever so slightly but with a minute ingenuity, sends it skittering through the air.

And so, his imploring overtures fading with the pale light of dawn, he ascends to the regions of ice-capped mountains—glimpsing below him the ruins of the Tower of Babel—and is lost.

*Gian Lombardo*

## Holding Pattern

The cylinder loose way above the clouds.  
What goes up? It must. Keep up.

No fences or leashes in that realm. There.  
Above. If anything, it runs free. That's it. Free ride.

If only it goes up as it should come down.  
Down as it follows up. Down right. Up right.

Take off the landing and what do you get?  
Embarrassed, or turned to on. On mark. Ride on.

Against the fear of height, the fright of falling.  
Hand in hand. Free fall. For keeps.

And here a foot presses on, right up against  
the horizon.

## Roll Over

They say dogs can hear an earthquake before we do. Or possibly feel the vibrations of rock colliding and breaking.

Suddenly, the sleeping dog wakes and barks. Or the calm dog striding alongside cowers and whimpers.

Then, the torrent of sound. As if some large, fast object fell out of the sky. All you can do is lunge about on all fours.

No one believes the sky's falling. But you have fallen. (And the earth?)

They also say dogs can see ghosts. Even recognize their faces, movements. Possibly speak in their own way with them. Maybe, if friendly, expect them to bring food.

You wonder. Who says these things? Who has stories to fill with such details?

# Broken

The bones are not my idea. My idea of bones is the story of how you'd bring some carcass — a mole, sparrow, chipmunk, rabbit — and your idea of a gift would result in its relocation.

The spruce windbreak, the rocks under the sugar maples — the places that would receive the gifts were also your idea of hiding places or places to scout and replenish the stock.

Whose idea is the idea of a house surrounded by piles of delicate bones?

—What was named to break never broke what governs the movement of gifts from wakeful hunt to a hunted disappearance.—

Even the longest absence turns on its back and demands the idea of a scratch on its belly, reducing comfort to the idea of watching an idea sleep.

*Sean Thomas Dougherty*

## When Her Mother is Dying, What Do You Say to a Child?

That feverish perfume of the wound on her foot is the songbird of the bees, the xylophone of her bent spine is making a cacophonous chatter, that there is a silence to the stars we may once return to. That she should go outside and play. Write your name on the stoop. Make a drawing of a house that flies through the sky. You hunt around for chalk. You concentrate on the colors like fuchsia and magenta that conceal a dark brightness. Draw with me a window in the sidewalk you say. Where are we going she asks? You want to tell her a new hospital, a new doctor with tools like in Star Trek that they scan over her mother's body and heal her wounds, her blood, her veins. Or back to a place where the healer grinds a few twigs, some leaves into a powder that tells the body again how to spell the names of the Gods in its bones. You want to say draw me a window so I may step into and take you to see her when you were a baby and she could run through the grass through the Balkan fields of yellow flowers and climb the mountain of the cross. A window to show her before her mother's hands turned blue as the sky after it has snowed.

## Postcard from the Lobby of No Motel You Want to Know

I didn't sleep last night, except I fell asleep for like 5 minutes, and when I woke up I thought I was in my old apartment on the east side of Erie where the heat was bad and I'd warm the rooms with the gas oven door open blasting. Paying my rent in cash to my Russian landlord Yvgeny who refurbished stolen cars. And my tough neighbor from Chechnya I'd smoke menthols with on the porch, and he'd tell me jokes I never understood. What we lose in translation we gift the unknowing grin. I had just started dating L, and she would come over and we would lie sweating in the late summer heat on my mattress on the floor, smoking cigarettes and staring at the ceiling, listening to traffic passing, cars coming slowly, pausing at the corner to make a deal. Both of us stoned. We'd head to the Polish Falcons to see Kay and A and B and F and all the old fellas lined up for hours at the bar, and buy the pull tabs and we had started to play pool. This was long before she got pregnant, long before one daughter, before her long rehab, before she stopped hiding needles, before I started hanging at the pool hall, before my last three books, long before I left for Europe and then she followed, and the hope of a Balkan winter, and a mountain with a cross, long before we tried to make it in Cleveland and I was laid off and we got evicted, and then another daughter, and the wounds began to appear on Lisa's limbs, then who was she, and the space between us, long before she got sick, then sicker, long before the lies and the bullshit, and a love like a lost love letter, so many years passed as if I blinked, passed as if I had slept for five minutes, and forgot where I was, and how death is always there in the house now when I open my eyes, taking his time. How I tell him my stories to keep him occupied, to keep him reading, his scythe lays on the floor, his boney fingers turning each page as I write it—

*Robert Andrew Perez*

## hypnagogia logia

it is [       ] appearance. there's a photo of him leaping through the air, as if taken just prior the sky being kicked open. there is another just like it of the other. this is a memory recurring, continually distorted. the dreamspoke speaks: don't remember so hard. the next time the sky may shatter & all the broken glass that doesn't fall in falls out. you may very well land on it.



## hypnagogia logia

this time it's a pizza on fire. i was trying to reheat it, and cook, alongside, four eggs. broken shells. flames. a charred cookie sheet. *what does this one mean?* she says nothing. i take it to mean it *represents* 'nothing', that which **cripples** haunts my thinking. the yellow yolk goo slowly oozes to the edge of the ruined year. perhaps, in the fire, something hatched—a plan. an escape.

## hypnagogia logia

there are many hes: a he of the past past, the recent past, of the now, a he of the he of the past past & the now, a he comprised in any assortment of the previously mentioned. which he of the phantasmagorical real did the many hes of the dream represent if any? were all the hes just a singular he veiled in clear confusion?

the he pressed his lips against the sleeper. neither brought the other out of the scene, out of [ ] why else, then, the lack of scent? why else would it be any he of the certain hes?

## The Remainder Man

There is a certain kind of Last Will and Testament where property is passed back to those who had claim to it before, but should they die, then it is passed on to a next of kin, even where the consanguinity extends to those who are completely unknown to the original possessor of the riches. It is something like a tontine, but not quite the same. The remainder man or woman is off somewhere and a true stranger to those at the center of things. Now there is a murder. And now another. The detective in charge knows what is happening, of course. He checks the records. He is trying to see who is next in line. But before he can find out, that person is murdered. Who is next, then? And how far does this family extend? After five hundred murders, the detective is exhausted. He applies for a leave of absence, which is fine as far as his superiors are concerned. They have been getting a very bad press, as you can imagine. Five hundred and one. Who is next? Who is the remainder man? Or woman? He or she may be on the other side of the world. Interpol is doing its best. The problem is that this is the world's most extended family. Cousins by the score. Then an aunt turns up in Denmark. Then an uncle in Cuba. It's maddening. Six hundred and seven and still counting. There is a huge sum of money involved. Billions. But this must be the most murderous family in history. A computer analysis finds that there are still over a million relatives. It turns out that the detective is related to the family. So are his superiors. The Queen of England is a relative. Scotland Yard has its suspicions. The F.B.I. is looking into the President's family tree. Could the Queen be the last, surviving remainder woman, or the President of the United States the last surviving remainder man? The Queen dies under suspicious circumstances. A-ha! Then the President falls off a balcony. Mmm! The Secretary of the Treasury was standing directly behind him. But he drops dead of shock. There is only one potential remainder person left, an unborn child whose mother, who is not in the blood line, is considering abortion.

## Wilder than Wilder

The Town Crier came by crying, "Time to get up and trash the day." Nonsense, the Town Crier is not an alarm clock, but the Town Crier is an alarm clock of sorts, so the townspeople rose and immediately prepared for the monkey war of all against all. While they were having coffee, they scowled at one another. A sister threw porridge at her little brother, the little brother pulled the cat's tail, and the cat scratched the dog. It was a typical morning. The Town Crier went home to his wife. "I have done my duty," he told her. "I have started the whole thing again." "One day," said his wife, "I am going to refuse to wind you up." They scowled at each other. The Mayor came to see the Town Crier. "I'm going to fire you," he said. "If it weren't for you waking the town every morning we shouldn't have all this strife." "I have a contract," said the Town Crier. "You have no authority to give me the chuck." Then the Doctor visited the Mayor. "What we must do," said the Doctor, "is to make the town sleep through the Town Crier's cry. I shall put a powerful drug in the water." "And the town will sleep peacefully all day long," cried the Mayor, seeing the merit of the Doctor's plan. So they tried it, and the town slept right through the Town Crier's cry. All but the Mayor and the Doctor and the Town Crier himself, who never drank water. The Town Crier came to complain to the Mayor because he couldn't wake anyone up and felt that he might lose his job. On the grounds that he was being neurotic, the Mayor sent him to the Doctor. The Town Crier stated his case, and, to his surprise, the Doctor agreed with him. "The fact is," said the Doctor, "I have no patients—no broken bones to heal, no blackened eyes, no split lips, nothing to do all day. And the City Contractor is upset. He has nothing to repair. Let's go and have it out with the Mayor." So the Town Crier, the Doctor, the Fire Chief, and the City Contractor went to see the Mayor. The Mayor refused to see them, so they trashed his office, and, finding him hiding behind a file cabinet, they dragged him out into the town square and threatened to hang him. By this time everyone in town was wide awake. Quickly, a mob formed, ready to hang the Mayor. A riot ensued, and the town was torn apart. The City Contractor was very pleased. And when the mob set fire to the town, the Fire Chief was pleased to be busy again. "You tear it down, and I'll rebuild it," said the City Contractor to the Fire Chief.

The Doctor said, "There will be injuries galore." A wife said something hateful to her husband, a sister to a brother, and a cat scratched a dog. The Town Crier cried, "Hear Ye, Hear Ye!" and life went on much as before.

*Elizabeth Jacobson*

## A Seam In The Ether

How can I say that what I see is what is seen? While alone in my room, foot up on a stool, one hand rubs lotion into the skin on my calf, the other, into the skin on my thigh. Whose third hand is it that I see come out of a seam in the ether to rub the lotion into my knee?

On the corner of Galisteo and Alta Vista, just past the Rose Park, it was the stunning pair of trees that roused me as I turned the corner. The mountains in the background dissolved into the busy road, and the busy road was not a road but a grey rush of water, a river whose flow was traveling along with everything else, as everything was moving or standing still at the same time.

The hands of one tree were reaching up while the hands of the other reached down in ceaseless approach, and while one was crimson and the other gold, the splendor of each was the other—the center of everything that was going on everywhere, and that raw feeling, that empty feeling so full of the self and what it is missing, what it has lost and wants back, what it doesn't have, was at that moment not anything but one of the continuous specks in the surge of it all, one of a zillion small sequins, at this moment, not caught in the light.

Each/night  
a battle  
a wail  
one owl  
screeching at its/same/and/different/self  
uuuuup uuuuup uuuuup

Affection used to be sleep, not little fists sparring with each other hurly burly behind parched eyes. Just after daybreak rain pours down from the sky in the distance as if it were lengths of long gray hair at the back of a woman's head, while I am opening throat for muggy breath, facing forward into a sliding door that is not closed, waiting for the sky to shake its head over my little plot of comfort. At the top of the staircase a gift of tail feathers, more orange-tipped than red-tailed hawk, spiral down while a yellow breasted finch hooks feet into the top of a finished sunflower head, bobs for seeds as the sunflower head sways back and forth. The finch's mate lands on her back, jumps up and down as he wrenches the flower head frantically, forward and back, forward and back, loses his balance and quickly flies off, the little drip of his seed seeping like a nap back into the layers of down. How long does it take to wreck the good things we are given? Not long, it turns out. A dog dies in a few days without water; we can go on longer, eat grass like a horse without throwing it up, scratch in the dirt for grubs, fold the giant gilded self in half like a piece of paper, and then into quarters, and then into eights—all the time praying open, open, another soft word for you will disintegrate anyway.

Brigitte Byrd

## Think Like A Blue Rider

Each day, you walk at the end of a leash, key ring wrapped around one finger, metal pressed against your palm between flesh and plastic handle. Flaubert, your love, struts ahead, harnessed in green hemp atop grey coat. You check the underground burrow for news of Professor Lidenbrock. You touch the air heavy with rain. A green symphony seizes your bodies on their way to the lake. Roads shift into steep asphalt slabs plastered onto red clay, and your feet jump to safety in the grass. A white tail deer emerges from the woods like heat shimmering on tarmac roads. Flaubert stands still. You stare at the trees. *Anything becomes interesting if you look at it long enough.*

One day, you walk at the end of a makeshift leash, string stretched tight like a drum head, steady burn in your hand, eyes glued on the taut noose lassoed around your deer's delicate neck. She pulls you away from the bank of the lake, hops gently in front of you, pauses from time to time, turns her head to make sure you keep up with the pace. Each time a car drives by, she stops in her tracks, ready to zigzag her way out of danger. Hooves pitter-pattering with the thrill of escaping, you leap into the woods and land in a painting.

“Are you trying to intensify your feelings?”

“They are the organic rhythm of all things.”



*Jordan Zandi*

## On My Pony Life

No one gave me a pony. I want a pony, so someone could lead me around. I have endured. On my pony I would carry a lolly, its colors in a spiral. Not all the colors, but those at least of the rainbow. Someone would say 'How smart you are' as they began to thread ribbons in the tail.

## On My Plane Life

All of us were headed north. I was in a plane — I felt the all-around bounce of it. Being in a plane, like love, may require you get close to someone you sometimes hate. I couldn't wait to go. I thought of love and planes, and love on planes — then slept, coasting among white clouds, and mind was my atmosphere.

*Laura Ramos*

## Your Tumor Thanks You

The tooth of your malignancy is asking for some sweetness. It purrs, Sugar your coffee, love. Feed me some cake. It needs insulin to grow, and so it sits at your dining table, a clean white napkin tied around its neck. The lesion eats slowly. You want to send it home because it's getting late. But that would be rude. Instead, you dip your sugar spoon into your grandmother's old dish and offer it seconds. In another room, your family eats the sour flesh of unripe fruit from plastic bowls.

# Bullet

- A typographical mark, more like a cigarette burn or a puncture wound than a torpedo shape. Not a teardrop dipping, not a dash saluting “Sieg Heil!” But still an order-barker (“do this, then that”). Editorial crutch. The nagging bitch of punctuation. Nanny to a sadist’s instructions. A group of gangsters lined up against a blank margin, waiting for the first gunshot.
- Capiche? Then a laugh was what got Anders his bullet in the brain and the memory of his baseball field.
- “The shot heard ‘round the world” refers to the Bobby Thomson home run that gave the Giants the National League pennant in 1951. The shot is also tucked in poem by Emerson and folded in the bloody uniform of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.
- The Scottish band Franz Ferdinand included the song “Ulysses” on their third album.
- The ball rolled down to her as if it understood. Every bullet has its bil-let, Joyce wrote.
- Joyce’s Dubliners received 22 bullet letters before it was published. Bullets are also sent to writers of prose that cross-dresses as poetry. Let us smarten this up with some anaphora—
- This bullet was conceived by the pressing of two keys in the backseat of someone else’s car.
- This bullet secretly envies the asterisk its sluttiness.
- This bullet issues a bulletin: More bullets ahead.
- This bullet was bitten.
- This bullet stores gold bullion in a ballotin.
- This is bullshit.
- In a murder-suicide, this bullet shoots itself in the face and all the other bullets after it.

*Dan Coffey*

## Unwound

Why was I him when you knew he was dead, bullet in the chest, locus of the crime scene that tore him out of his studies, his coastline, his games, his you, his you heart, the heart he fell on top of the way you fell on top of me to smother my voice whispering “I love you,” my voice heart not listening, your weal heart screaming louder, screaming, “why are you him, why are you not him, where’s your blown-open chest?”

Why do I still carry his bullet in my chest, wake up in the middle of your reverie with a snapshot of you, and never dream of you; I could conquer this in a dream, but I’m on solid ground with these memories that I can’t plant, can’t dig up, can’t burn, can’t disturb the crime scene, he’s face down and will always be in the grass in the night, why can’t I be selfish enough to ask the question why couldn’t you have taken that bullet?

*Piotr Gwiazda*

## Empty Stadiums

\*

America has always been hospitable to risk takers, fame seekers, creative geniuses, nonconformists, engineers and scientists, the world's highest IQs in the humanities, etc.

Also to religious zealots, starving artists, celebrity magicians, heavy drinkers, overthrown tyrants, fugitives from the future. (Welcome to the Soft Parade.)

Import/export. At the pier, another ship delivers human cargo.

### A BURIAL AT ORNANS

Burials are rare occurrences, yet they take place every day. (Hence realism.) So do terrorist attacks. (The ecstasy of a suicide bomber). So do hostage standoffs. (Lone gunman, death toll to rise.) So do football games. (There's nothing more terrifying than an empty stadium.) So do UFO sightings. (What's in Greenbelt, Maryland?)

\*

We haven't yet had suicide bombings in: airports, hospitals, libraries, churches, museums, hotels, casinos, shopping malls, amusement parks, train stations, movie theaters, waiting rooms, farmers' markets, restaurants, bars...

Shit and graffiti (Banksy). Toilets and ideology (Žižek). In America, statues of unknown soldiers function as another type of self-flushing mechanism.

\*

The remains of the victims mixed with the remains of the perpetrators.

\*

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure" (Jefferson). By the same

token, terrorist attacks, shooting sprees, energy crises, etc. are good for the national metabolism. (Where were you on September 11?)

Governor O'Malley orders flags to be flown at half staff. General Petroleum offers a rare apology.

\*

"Let's just say we are neighbors," says the visitor from space.

\*

Utopia, or "the stubborn negation of all that is." Utopia, or "the opposite of the forgotten." Utopia, and we're almost out of time.

A blind climber, Game of Thrones. Double entry bookkeeping. Brainwashed Russians, brainwashed Chinese. Pussy Riot.

We speak in figures to approach the unimaginable—hence our failure to visualize utopia. Above and below us, the all-reflecting blue.

1

We know about Martians, but what about Venusians? The Venusians are different: they have pretty faces and nice bodies. Be careful what you wish for though. They are prone to sudden metamorphosis.

2

They possess many kinds of intelligence. (The bigger the dumber.) They have an exaggerated sense of sympathy; they internalize one another's pain. Their hearts seem to be on the wrong side of their chests.

3

Averse to technology, they live in improvised cities. Inside their primitive dwellings they produce dazed newborns. Their only expressions are phatic expressions, which are universal expressions.

4

All in all, the Venusians are more gentle and peaceful than humans. When you stare at them for too long, they change into basalt rock. When you touch them, they emit a loud piercing sound.

\*

Is peace patriotic?

\*

Nothing ever gets fixed in that country. Pictures hang crooked on hotel walls (their painters, in any case, seem blind). Elevators remain out of service for years. The people can take a lot: a sudden doubling of subway fares, for example. Their labor supports a well-fed, well-educated minority. Still, next to Stalinesque statues one sees a highly developed graffiti culture. In the subway a future revolutionary is reading *Principles of Argumentation*.

\*

“Thus the discourse proper to Utopia is description: to draw out a representation. It consists in projecting a perfect and total presence into language accessible to the mind. For that the proper disposition and the right amount of time must be available, for a hasty sketch will not do, if for the simple reason that the description of an image is never-ending. The visible will always be in excess of the ‘sayable.’” (Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*, trans. Robert A. Vollrath)

\*

Europa, cramped Europa (vs. still spacious America). Europa, which is largely a state of mind. Europa, i.e. no future. Europa, or Lars von Trier. Europa, “I love my life.” Europa, what a mess!

The spirit of the carnivalesque pervades every political rally. Spanish ants among Roman ruins. A visit to Pessoa’s grave. Old Polish music.

\*

“Do what I say or face obliteration,” says the visitor from space.

\*

Americans, so easily wowed. Today, for example, 100 million people in the northwestern corner of the country were thinking “snow,” while 300 million in the northeastern corner were thinking “football.”

Americans, so easily duped. They commemorate their heroic drivers with crosses along the highways. They worship guns and flags. But most of their neighborhoods are barely serviceable residential areas.



Americans—exceptional, pragmatic, wasteful. Also, impressive mental athletes. “This is how I imagine heaven: things don’t change, there isn’t much to do, just a nice empty beach and the sound of the waves.”

\*

“Utopia is a city which cannot be founded by us but can found itself within us, can build itself bit by bit in our capacity to imagine it, to think it through.”  
(Italo Calvino)

\*

Designed in California. Assembled in China.

\*

One in five Americans believes that intelligent beings from other planets have made contact with humans on Earth. (Not confirmed by NASA.) One in five Americans believes that socialism is superior to capitalism. (Progress is lovely.) One in five Americans reports excessive sleepiness. (Who needs intellectuals?)

\*

On the red carpet. Afghan village. Speed limit enforced by aircraft. Ads for sunglasses. Flash mobs and banner drops. We no longer eat animals, but when will we stop eating people? (We named our fish Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.)

One ecosystem destroys another ecosystem. Those who remain satisfied with the status quo remain satisfied with the status quo. I can’t believe they bleeped him! During the Q&A: “So what is one to do? Go and rescue those women?”

*Jose Araguz*

## Field Mouse

For the black owl, the one hardest to see at night, his whole body is an eye. There are those who think he is inventing problems. How could one invent the black owl, he wonders. You would misplace it as soon as you began to count out feathers, black against black against black. Misplace the talons. Misplace the beak. How could one be so foolish? It is too much work. He makes out the first of the stars in silence, and braces for the rest.

# Clock Ode

The face of the clock is the house where time lives.

You tell time, time does not answer back: like a cloud that by being shaped forgets itself.

The clock holds still, indifferent to its meddling moustache.

Death will not come wielding a scythe but a clock: you'll be caught working out the math of the sudden hour.

Dust gathers on the face of the clock: crowds struck by the way these hands keep moving.

The face of the clock: shield of the antihero, marks on the surface tell the story of what one is losing.

An ant crawls across blank paper on the table, you worry the minutes have fallen.

# Lucky God

I know others have seen the god who looks like me by the way they play cat when they see me: the refusal to make eye contact, the turning away in the opposite direction or the walking right past me as if they had already left their scent on me. For a minor god, for he must be, he gets around. Lucky god. So many pass without seeing me, I could be a wall. So many pass, self-satisfied, I know they have met him in a paper bag or a stray ice cube on the floor. When I do find myself in conversation, it is small talk, palaver, and I am reassured of my penance: to placate and play along with the god-forsaken.

Ariana Lombardi

## Letters to Strangers

Dear David Hume,

You talk about things concretely. You say that a person truly knows only through experience. Here I assume that you're using *know* to mean assuredness (if we were to attach what you say to a feeling). You call this knowing an "impression," which I find laughable as the number of definitions of the word *impression*, the variations of meaning that any person can imbue an experience with, are endless and therefore ironic. Yes, of course. I must experience something to "know" it, as in: I would not "know" what a peanut butter and jelly sandwich tasted like if I never ate one. If I had never combined the three foods and eaten them only separately, I could offer only a description of each and could not properly give language to the sandwich form, to the trio. Very interesting, David. You have a point. I have to say, though, that this way of knowing does not allow the resonance or sublimity of anything to roam free.

And would you apply this knowing to people as well? Can I not "know" a person unless I've experienced him or her? And how would you define *experience* in this instance? Meeting physically? Or *understanding*? You are all about human nature—the human understanding. You are about what comes into a person's mind, what sticks there (the *impression*) and how that impression fits into or lends a hand to the etching of the nature of a human. But our brains are the things that limit *knowing*, that confuse it with feeling, and, while taking one for the other—knowing for feeling and feeling for knowing—stamp things as concrete, giving any *impression* definition and meaning. This has been my experience anyway. This is why in terms of *knowing* another person, assuredness through experience does not hit the nail on the head.

You see, David, everything you say raises more questions inside of me, and truthfully I already ask too many questions. I have been told this since I was a child. I've exhausted people. I've allowed dangerous combinations of thinking feelings and feeling thoughts to complicate my head. Things like: Who am I? Who are you? What is the consciousness of my own self-consciousness? How do I know what I am? How can I be sure of what I know? How will I ever know? Where do I end and you begin? How will I know the end if I do not know the beginning? And the best one of all: Why?

Math never made any sense to me because I was always told there was no reason to question an equation. The parts create an answer. They are factors. It is concrete, like you. But I need numbers to talk to me (which is impossible with numbers, because they are stoic and unyielding). My suspension of disbelief is very limited, David. I need to be sure of how things work and visualize them in my head so I can be sure of myself. I cannot have *assuredness* if I cannot translate the feeling of assuredness. So what about you and me? We've never met. How do I know you are real, were real, are dead even? I can't decide if *knowing* is a noun, adjective, or verb.

What if you and I invented an -ology for my being? That could help. What would you call it? Your -ology is *epistemology*—the theory of knowledge. (But David! This is the rub! A theory is a supposition. It itself is not concrete. Do you see what I'm getting at here?) What if my study were rooted in eccentricity? I'd call it *bizarrology*: the study of what is strange within me. A few years ago I was given the nickname Bizarri. Which makes *bizarrology* all the more appropriate. What do you think? I'll try to create an equation, like math, because I know this to be concrete:

Ari (short for Ariana) + *the effect of an epiphany on my face*  
(violent expansion of the pupils, recess of focus toward the  
back of my head, and swelling of my eyeballs to absorb the  
pulp of the thought itself) = *Bizarri*

What am I even trying to say? I *know* that wanting gives way to assuredness. What about needing someone or something? I need all these questions answered because the amount of coincidence in my life is too high to be happenstance. These ideas I have are so large. They make me feel like I am the second coming of Jesus, like I'm something to worship, in my own head at least. And I'm afraid of my power, of *the impression I make*. I want you to tell me I've finished with ideas; that I *know*. But I need one more piece to connect it all. I need you to tell me what to do next.

I will not leave you alone until you write me back.

*Gregory Kimbrell*

## The Advance of the Glacier

The habitants of Lesser Ransom, long acquainted with evil, looked up from their preparations for the difficult winter. The elder explained, The Prince of Darkness comes riding his chariot. Of course, the experimental balloonist heard precious little over the roaring fire that kept him aloft in the heavens. Instead, he observed the villagers kneeling as one in prayer. Perhaps he thought that they praised almighty God for the miracle of manned flight. All around them were strewn their antique implements: their reapers, their knives for slaughter—and on the air, a tang of guts, pigs' insides suspended from iron hooks that turned in the wind. The balloonist took off his cap and waved to the villagers, who could make nothing of the letters in gold on the side of his basket. They knew simply that from the earth, this infernal thing had risen and that to the earth, it must return via a burning door. Whatever the balloonist may have said then, as he fell, no one understood. He became lost within the brilliant folds of wreckage crowning a nearby hill. The villagers crossed themselves. And when the machine had finally grown cool, they heaped stones atop it—like, they said, the monuments once built by their heathen forefathers when terrible kings and warlords had been summoned to the halls of the death god in his mantle of white fur.

*Curtis Mueller*

## Rubber Sphere

A perfect rubber sphere traveling at 5 m/s impacts on a wall. The sphere ricochets 14 meters backwards at the same speed, coming to rest inside a human being, just beneath an organ. After a time, the sphere is absorbed into the human being's tissue. The human being, now partially perfect rubber sphere, performs activities to a perceived lower standard of quality. The human being attends a meeting with a physician.

"I am suboptimal," the human being says.

"Tell me about it," the physician says.

The human being returns to normal functionality. Later, at the human being's place of employment, the human being turns to a coworker and says, "Jim, I have been through so much recently, could I convey it to you?"

Jim listens until the human being is finished conveying and says, "But where is the sphere now?"

The human being stares out the window. It is late afternoon. An early moon is in the sky. Leaves are changing color. Birds are finding their roost.

The human being had not considered this.



*Michael J. Wilson*

## Rhododendron

The front door of my Mother's parent's house never opens : you enter from the porch in the rear : the driveway leaves you under that great old maple that goes yellow in fall

In the front under the door are great rhododendron whose name means "rose-tree" means "dry" : bursting pink in springtime they are thick leafy green and waxy for most of my memory

These plants were considered weeds by settlers too big to see over but short enough to make a mess of twig : hybridization saved them in the hearts and minds of a generation

Saved them for this front door where I stand on a cold morning and look into the gray mountains lumping the horizon : the great rhododendron are dying : leaves brittle glowing gold and never pink anymore

Someone tell Thoreau : go draw in the dirt of his grave the words 'rose' 'dry' 'America' : the death of the house of memory : my mother's mother is dead my mother's sister is dead my mother's father is not but my father's mother and father are :

*Sherrie Flick*

## Joshua in Town

Joshua Stevenson harbored secrets—dark corners angled in his memories like rusty levers. Some days he knew this, but other days he lived his life as if nothing had ever happened to him. His tide of believing pulled and pushed. He kept his dark world organized. But still, images developed like a musty photo; they played like a crackly movie reel he couldn't get to focus.

Joshua knew Susan only by sight. She claimed the corner table at the cafe every Wednesday morning. Joshua poured coffee, cut slices of tart for customers. He watched Susan as she organized her manila folders, chewed on her pen tip, ate a wheat roll without butter, her dainty pinkie finger pointing upward with each bite.

One day during a lull, Susan stopped her fidgeting with this and that piece of paper and looked straight at him. Joshua's insides lit up. He smiled, and Susan walked to the case, leaned in toward his flip of curly hair and said, "Stop it, Mr. Counterperson." She tapped the glass twice, returned to her cluttered life, not looking up again.

"Do you think she meant the staring?" Joshua later asked Frankie, his workmate.

Frankie laughed. "I don't think she was talking about you cleaning the coffeemaker, man." Frankie nudged his thick black glasses up his nose, adjusted the zipper on his hoodie to mid-chest. "You're kind of freaky with your eavesdropping. Just don't look at people so much. I mean, either that or ask her out."

Joshua folded cake boxes, one after another, as he considered his possibilities. Days passed, and he didn't see Susan on Wednesdays anymore. He suspected she'd found a new cafe, moved to a new regular day outside of his schedule. He occupied himself with other people, thought about other obsessions and issues—like his inability to ask out girls he liked. Like his need to make friends with hipsters who annoyed him.

Frankie re-tied his sneakers, rubbed his eyes, the dark circles distinct and tender looking underneath. "Man, you just have stuff wrong," he said. "There are all these wonderful people in the world, and you just go right for the ones that fuck you up. I mean. What is wrong with you?"

Joshua knew what was wrong with him. The sum of his past made him instinctually move in the wrong emotional direction. Every so often he'd see a hand fly up in his hazy memory. A door slam. He'd smell bacon frying and hear a childhood whimper. Everything would fade to black, and then he'd take his 15-minute break. Outside, he'd smoke a cigarette. The opening of the pack, the pounding, the drawing out of a slender stick, made him focus on the simple world around him. He'd push the other problems back into their hiding places. Smoke. Push through the cafe's door; tie on his apron.

One day he saw Susan walking out of the grocery store on Third Street, two paper sacks crunched in her arms. Then she was in line ahead of him at a double feature. Always alone, this Susan. Head down, thoughtful, never rushing as she walked the river trail. Her life continued without him. Not that Joshua had been in her life—but still. Susan walking in the park, hands in the pockets of a red trench coat.

Joshua said hello one day, waved, tried to get her attention. Susan turned to him after she'd placed her order at the corner deli, and he told her he'd stopped what he was doing in his head. He said he'd taken her advice.

Susan looked thoughtful for a second and then said, "Important step." She fiddled with her hair, smiled, grabbed her sandwich, wrapped up neatly in white paper and fastened with a piece of masking tape. She walked away.

Eventually, Joshua quit the cafe, as hard as it was to leave the easy routine of opening the shop, pouring coffee, ringing up sales, chatting with Frankie, spritzing the glass case, flipping chairs onto tables at closing time. He needed to move on before he made a mistake.

For a while, he lived off savings. Just took a few weeks to think before heading out into the unknown. During that time, Joshua combed the streets. Susan's brown hair, her slender fingers scribbling notes. She'd disappeared. He walked the streets, nodding to old customers, sometimes stopping in the cafe to say hi to everyone.

His head cleared in those in between days. He had a kind of confidence he'd lose altogether in the future. He'd stopped it. Stopped everything. He could see firmly what his life was and was not. And then, one day, far off in the distance down an alleyway, Susan in her red coat. She crooked a tiny finger, pulled him in.

*Rosalynde Vas Dias*

## Gesturing

*I'm a private person* I thought. *How am I ever going to do more of this?* So I drew myself as an orphan. I drew a tower, the intricate, doily-like lichen dappling its flank. I put the orphan there in the tower. Or I put her in a big greenhouse, alone. She got dirty. She skinned her knees on the tower's stone steps. Her hair dreaded. But she invented her own language. Not that I could understand it. I moved her here and there. She grew up. I sent her into exile. I gave her a house with a library though. I gave her a city with a river snaking through its heart. I gave her all the birds in the sky and in the trees. All the meadows are hers alone. I doubt she would know what to do with others like herself. I doubt I could make another to suit anyway. She seems happy, muttering to herself. Gesturing into the air.

## St. Joseph

-After "The Annunciation Triptych," an altarpiece by Robert Campin

In another room there is the angel, Gabriel, his wings filling the doorway. He wants to say *lo be not afraid / you will be heavy with child / you will be heavy with tears*. And Mary's waiting to nod *I will be the lord's hand-maiden*, and she is already thinking about swaddling clothes and worrying about potty training. The table, with its symbolic lilies in a symbolic vase, is dangerously slanted toward the floor, and somewhere else there is a saint dying his grisly symbolic death, eyes supplicating heaven, as his spirit slips away from the torn net of his body.

But we want the workshop where St. Joseph is tapping together a mousetrap. He is not thinking of a trap for the devil, but muttering, the damn mice . . . and putting together the wire and sticks to save the matzos. The cheese is on his workbench, comic book yellow and smelling like his mother's breast, if he could remember it. He is thinking: *I'd like a loop on my pants to hang my hammer and deep pockets for the little wooden pegs*. He is envying the sandal maker, or wishing he had studied coppersmithing. There is no room in his shop for a child, not even a Messiah, no dream of angels saying *believebelieve*, not yet. Instead he reaches out and takes a crumb of cheese into his palm, lifts it to his lips, and presses it to his teeth with his tongue.

*Katie Peterson*

## All the Little Hells

I have a friend going through all the little hells. All the little hells, steps up to a frescoed church in the heat of a summer day in a country known for heat where inside the colors coalesce in beautiful faces.

He woke up and his wife had flown back to their native country; he checked the bill and the manifest and called the shuttle and it was all true, she'd gone that morning via the interstate through the peach orchards to the airport they'd been to so many times together.

I have been a person who said to another person, I would like you to cause me great pain. It was only when the other person said no that I started unbuttoning my blouse. Blouse – French, of unknown origin. Mine had rose buttons, rose colored but also carved in the shape of roses with two holes of attachment for thread the same color, a marvel they could stay on or that any needle could do that work. I think of it as a woman's word but in history it serves for a work shirt.

You open the door with your mind but you have to go through it with you body.

## All the Little Hells

My friend is a photographer and as soon as his wife left he got excited. He saw her unmade bed (they'd been sleeping in separate rooms for several months), the space for her head on the pillow, the outline of her ruffled bowl cut. But that wasn't what interested him, of course, what interested him was the kitchen table, the stereo. The coffee table with its local paper and a bright picture of river rafting in late season. He took out his smartphone and started taking pictures. The tube of toothpaste in the bathroom, a vase of flowers she bought with the stems turned to slime in the vase, that handful of branches once picked a florist on the avenue adjacent to the school where he taught, where she used to bring him lunch, a sandwich in the spring, and the winter a thermos.

It's kind of the worst meal of the day but the way my mother used to have lunch was to get out small pieces of bread and amass an array of condiments, mustard and relish and the leftovers of whatever splendid dip the local market had to offer. All standing at the counter, I remember wanted to talk to her about sex as the light once again seemed to make the window obsolete: California. It wasn't the same as wanting to talk to her about everything.

Without the body the mind could do anything. I can't  
say I like being released  
into the consequences of my actions but I like  
the feeling of being released. It's still  
a door you walk through.  
Softly let all true sympathizers come.

I sat down to write a destruction myth. Something the opposite of Genesis. I had an idea that on the third or fourth day God would start throwing silverware across the moon. But I had no idea what he'd wreck first.

## All the Little Hells

I'll curate a lifespan with you if you go down on me, says the woman to the man over jasmine tea. Over a steak dinner, I'll give you a porch if you wear an apron in the kitchen, says the man. I'll give you another year's crop, says the earth. Then we'll see.

I made the part about the flowers up, the slime on the stalks. The elaboration of a detail contiguous with the truth is one of the privileges of thinking. I wanted him to have forgotten about some flowers.

I made up the part about him being my friend.

We just want to make doubles of things. We want to have extras. Buying is the disease of making for this reason, it's some trick, what the Buddhists call a near enemy. Someone told me all the windmills were being built in Denmark, every single one, because of a patented part. There's a great shame in not knowing how to cook, it's like not knowing how to fish. The little hell when he woke up and she wasn't there. The little hell when he didn't know how to buy groceries for one at the supermarket, didn't know he didn't need the big cart. Then you're in the middle of it and you think you've wrecked it but no, you have to correct it, at the checkout even, and that's so much worse.



*Erin Stalcup*

## Childhood Memories of an Adult Lefty

First Marxist thought:

At a carnival when I was twelve, my friends and I won bright prizes: tiny spinning tops, plastic men with parachutes, temporary tattoos, goofy eyeglasses, poodles and ducks and dinosaurs and swords. After I'd hauled it all home, when I was later readying to throw it all away, I realized that a factory made each thing. A machine existed to mold each object, and a person or many people ran each machine, and people made the machine itself, made all the metal parts to make the plastic toys that were shipped in a plane or train or truck, driven by a person, from somewhere else to me in Arizona. Another machine, run by another person, or many, made the boxes it all was shipped in. All that labor for a thing I didn't really want or need. All that labor for each and every thing.

First racist, and anti-racist, thought:

I knew that non-white people were treated differently in my country. I knew that it hadn't been okay for people of two different races to date and marry and have kids, but that it was becoming increasingly accepted. When I was about five I figured the solution would be that more and more people would marry people unlike themselves and eventually all the babies would be the same shade of brown, so racism would disappear.

First humanistic thought:

When I was six I told my mom, "If Adam and Eve were the first humans, then we're all descended from them, which means we're all brothers and sisters."

First feminist thought:

At about age eight, in my nightly prayers I thanked God for making me white and American and middle-class, because I understood those things would make my life easier, even though I didn't like that that was true. I also thanked him for making me a woman. I was glad everything wasn't going to be easy for me. I was glad something was going to make me fight, and learn compassion. I had solidarity with others who were oppressed. I later covered that pink wallpaper, patterned with roses, with posters of sports

stars and rock-and-roll bands, and filled my shelves with books.

First patriotic thought:

I prayed when I was about ten years old, “Thank you, God, for making me come from and live in a country that has never lost a war.”

First pacifistic thought:

At about eleven I understood that what happened in Vietnam couldn’t be called winning. Or in the Civil War. While colonists won the Revolutionary War against England, they’d fought and killed and taken land from native peoples long before that. By the time Desert Storm happened, the first Iraq War, Afghanistan, the second Iraq War, I was suspicious of all I’d been taught.

First scientific thought:

I prayed when I was about seven years old, “Thank you, God, for making me a person, not a panther, or a rock.”

One of my last scientific thoughts:

Someone said to me when I was in high school, “Wow, you want to study physics! That’s so rare for a girl!” and I thought in response, not sarcastically, That never occurred to me.

First self-conscious thought:

When I was five I asked my mom if everyone could talk to themselves in their minds, or just me. She assured me we all hear voices.

Second feminist thought, precursor to many later self-conscious thoughts: Shooting water guns in the summer with my brother, both in terry cloth shorts but him without a shirt, I asked why boys were allowed to go topless but girls weren’t. My chest looked like my brother’s but I had to keep it covered. My mom said it was okay to show boys’ nipples, but not girls’, and it was hard to explain why. She didn’t explain I wouldn’t always look like my brother.

First agnostic thought:

Why did God have to kill his own son in order to forgive humans for sins? I didn’t think that until I was about sixteen.

First rebellious thought:

The two ladies who always sat together in church, when they said the Nicene Creed, they called the Holy Spirit *she*. And I realized I could disagree with—and assert my disagreement with—whatever was printed in books.

Danielle C. Deulen

## On Prognostications

Still, the attempt persists: to read the sky as we might a book, or scattered runes on the floor of an approaching disaster. *Disaster*, from the Greek, meaning “bad star.” *In the atmosphere, there are bowls with the hollow side turned toward us, in which the bright vapors are collected to produce flames, which are the heavenly bodies*, an ancient scholar writes of the credos of Heraclitus. All those dense planets

and meteors spinning in their lonely orbits out in the black cold. All the people on earth walking into and out of umbra, unaware of the tumors swelling inside them. Whole cosmos of cells. If only they’d think to look up or go to their physicians, who can peer inside them, divine a forecast from their inner constellations. Cancer settled for the second time in the breast

of a friend who died in autumn. She heeded all warnings, suffered radiation, surgery, chemo, but at every stage the doctors gave a new prognosis: *good*, then *poor*, then *it’s unlikely she’ll live to the New Year*. She was an Atheist, who sang in a choir because she liked the vibrations of music in her throat, because she wanted to create something beautiful in the world, however fleeting.

Even now, in 2014, voices arise through the electric atmosphere, insisting the tetrad of lunar eclipses are blood moons of biblical prophesy. And there are people in the world who claim magic cures. At the century’s turn, I travelled to a shaman who lived on the periphery of Cape Town. Splintered wood islands lay purposefully in the dirt floor of his healing theater. Elements of his craft swayed lightly on twine clouds hung from the ceiling’s

exposed rafters: blackened honeycomb, nests of thorns, dried birds feet and bones, skins of animals, and a single gold watch like a pendulum at the center of the room. All along his shelves were powders and dusty vodka bottles filled with liquids of orange or green, or empty. He led me through his menagerie, explaining that cancer was a hex he could fix like all

ailments of witchcraft. He pointed to a bottle he told me cures colic, another an antidote for kidney and back pain, the third a remedy for anything and everything: *If this does not cure you, you are hopeless*. I told him nothing was wrong with me. He laughed replied, *Nothing you know of yet*. In the years after the buildings fell, in the airports of New York and DC, I often heard a calm,

disembodied voice floating over the crowds of passengers on their paths toward their terminals: *Code Orange*, meaning increased security, random arrests, the irradiating of each body before it flew from the earth. Comets in reverse. Bad stars. Dark matter spreading the universe wider, growing in all of us. The last time I pressed my friend's hand in mine it felt like the page

of a new book, so light and cool, then she looked straight at me when she said, without longing or spite, "Have a happy life." That was her way: always looking directly, even if into a wound, a void. In one distant fragment, Heraclitus writes, *A road up and down are one and the same*. Sometimes I dream of the moment she died, when she left her body like a chorus.

*Monika Cassel*

## Arrival

After the noise, pulse, stink, and power of the flights, orange plastic chairs in endless Kennedy waiting halls, jabs between competing elbows, cramped sound of my father's snoring, bus from Luxembourg and hefting of luggage into a taxi, the cabby's Mannheim accent clattering around drags on a dangling cigarette, smell and echo of the old elevator and stairwell (granite, wood, a memory of dust), a kiss on my grandmother's cheek – high up and surprisingly soft in the face with the stern eyes, forbidding lips – white-tablecloth lunch of Kassler ribs and sauerkraut on the balcony with a sip of mother's beer, barges puttering coal-smoke along the Rhine below, and a nap behind the rattling jalousies that admit only particles of afternoon light:

awakening in a cool room under a down-and-terry covered horse-hair bed, sheeted lime-green, to scrutinize in the twilight the dots, cross-hatches, and triangles of the wallpaper  
swimming like blue and grey sails in a lake of cream.

*Arianna Sullivan*

## Scene at the Beach

I am talking about big rocks and big men throwing them. I'm not talkin' refuting responsibility. I am talking about a whale, man. I'm talkin' where the fuck did the whale come from. Talkin' whales don't belong on beaches. I am talking about rocks. I'm talkin', where the fuck did the whale come from, where the fuck did the rocks come from. I'm talkin' white sandy beach, man. I am talking about, dead whales, do not belong on white beaches, and ten-and-a-half-pound rocks do not belong in big man-hands. I am talking about, the rocks were smoother than the whale, man. Talkin' river rocks on steroids. I am talking about the sweat on those men. I'm talkin' 'bout the smell of beer in the sand. Talkin' about, the sun was too fuckin' bright, man. I'm talkin' standing there watching. I am talking about the heft of the things. I am talking about big men, and big rocks, and a big goddamned whale on the beach. I am talking about my hands. Talkin', my hands crushing a tin can. Talkin' I couldn't drink that beer then. I'm talking how the hell are you supposed to drink a warm beer with white sand in your teeth. Talkin' sun in your eyes, with river rocks poundin' dead whale meat. I'm talkin' dull thud, man. I'm talkin' turning. I am talking about walking away from a whale-fuckin'-mountain, thudding on a blue fuckin' horizon. I'm talkin' crustaceans cracking. I'm talkin' about not saying a thing to those men.

*Craig Morgan Teicher*

## Fable

After it all I went to a stark place where the wind could carry my apologies the long distance back to their source, where childhood was laid like a bed of fallen leaves.

I opened my eyes again and again, awakened to my awakening, able to see home in all directions, too far to walk but better than when I couldn't see it at all. I asked the birds that were picking at the dirt to explain to me my dark guilt and they twitched like frightened surprises and scampered off.

It occurred to me to wonder why they didn't fly. The hour of my reckoning proved to be vague. Truly are the answers like this, mere metaphors as inscrutable as bricks, not even as familiar as the words in a dream?

So I walked and came out from under the shadow of a mountain, aware of my hope as a too-tight belt. I came to the edge of the place unsatisfied, wishing for better questions, for finality, as the next place rose up around me, somewhere I'd been as long as I could remember. I was beckoned nowhere.



## Waiting D3

Before is so much longer than now, like the climb versus the sharp, narrow peak, just a step really between the anticipation and the careful descent. I waited for this moment for years, not realizing I was also waiting for the moment that will follow it, and the one after and the one after that, the way the falling pulse waits through the winding line of dominos arranged in advance of their clacking diminution.

This sense of foreboding is just an attempt to put on the breaks, as if, scared, I'll wade more slowly into time, as if it held off its passing until I went along.

I do determine its speed, in a way, if I refuse to have any fun--time does drag on, or it'll fill the awkward space of its unhappy container, my long day: the kids tug me from the bog of sleep toward breakfast, coffees, drop-offs, the commute, the monitor's careless glare, the way home, more food, then sleep.

It's a trade, a price to pay, and not a small one--happiness for a long, boring life that lingers like an ache after Advil. Fun demands a different description, syllables that slip through the words' nets. No one wants to write about it.

*Arielle Greenberg*

## The Girl from Boston

“I’m a little behind on my drinking,” she says, and that is not something she and I have in common. I mean, I am extremely far behind in my drinking for this culture, considering I never began, never began on coffee either, I’m so far behind, but she, this other girl, makes conch-shell shapes in the margins of her notebook, and we have that in common. Where is this common of which I speak? Boston has a common, and this other girl and I have both lived in Boston (we have that in common). There’s a third girl, too, another girl who lived in Boston and I recently wrote to this third girl to say, “When you say common, you must be specific. Not everyone has lived in Boston. Lots of towns have commons.”

Boston—a drinking town with a fishing problem. I am so far behind: me, girl one (or am I girl two?). The whole time I lived in Boston I felt I had nothing in common with it. I didn’t understand its clothes or its cafes, its traffic circles or its sports teams or its sports team fanatics.

When someone makes a joke about drinking, my most common response is laughter, as if I am in on the drinking joke, though I am not. Sometimes I feel left out, wonder what it would be like to meet at the bar, go out for a drink, order a bottle for the table. What would it be like to have that jokey common-law marriage with alcohol? I have a lot of friends in AA—in recovery—and I have nothing in common with them, either, in this sense, but I laugh too at the jokes about steps and the addictive personality. But really I am out of all the jokes. I have nothing in common with drinkers or former drinkers or reformed drinkers, because I just tend not to drink. I am oddly neutral to drink in this culture, a culture not neutral to drink.

When I meet someone else who is neutral to drink in this culture, I am awash in relief for how we have this in common, this small, odd thing which is actually, I would imagine, less odd than being non-neutral about drink, at least in a theoretical sense, but statistically does seem to be odd and rare in this culture. Our non-participation unites us, our non-interest. Right now, though, I walk a bit behind the other girl, the first or second girl, awash in relief at how, because she is a little behind in her drinking, she and I will have a little more in common tonight when we go out.

## I Was My Competition

“Are you writing poems about availability?” the dinner guest asked me when I was my competition. And was I writing those poems? Because I was my competition and not myself, I hated to talk about myself. As myself, I loved it. But here I was, fork in hand, fork in thigh, my competition, and under the table my lower right leg was shining brightly like a bad lamp, and further along the path into my body a slice was cut out of my stomach lining in the shape of a smile. I functioned highly, eating everything on my plate, but the rubber-band nerves shot and shot where no one could see, not even the interviewer. I swallowed my terror without a trace. That was something me and my competition had in common, I discovered.

*Matthew Cooperman*

## A Little History of the Panorama

for Simonetta Moro

*I: Claude Nicholas Ledoux, "The Creating Eye," 1804*

A thought of human scale, of the Cité Idéale, though it is late in the night of the eye. Evolved toward salt, an architecture always more detailed, more colossal. The eye radiates, apse and gate. One day it is stalls for taxation, and the next comfortable seats for the polity. Whose neighbor, what neighbors, always the whinny from the sky. It is a new carnival and the gates are perpetually open.

# A Little History of the Panorama

## *VI: The Georama, Cross-Section*

From this height note the preponderance of Atlantic stuff (jet stream, spoutings, the Portuguese fleet). In the same year the word was originally coined, and the screw changed directions into the earth. The stairway is like a nautilus and gives out a salt effusion whereby entrance into another world can be said to be a perfect number. Men in top hats, women in whale-bone corsets, there is a fashion to viewing that remakes the world's eye.

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*Linwood Rumney*

## A Complex Negotiation with the Dead

I used to think that the advantages of death, while not numerous, were nevertheless quantifiable. When I am alive, I never have to speak to anyone I don't like, so long as they are dead. Conversely, when I am dead, I never have to speak to anyone ever again. I consider this the most elemental form of free market capitalism--the invisible hand of exchange powered by the relentlessly renewable incentive of Inevitability and Sacred Wish! But now I hear from a renowned scholar that I am forever engaged in a complex negotiation with the dead. Yes, the dead have risen, but not in a literal sense. Don't panic! Peacefully resting, they nevertheless have union organizers and lobbyists, picketers and pundits who stagger grotesquely through the recently evacuated cities of our culture. They arrive, by some incomprehensible intention, at the rundown farmhouse of our language where we must make our last stand. It might take hours or years, depending on our production company's budget and on general public reception. And, we are armed with a language that was never our own and a shotgun loaded with tautologies that only ever seem accurate in the present. When projected into the past or the future, they always miss their mark.

## A Complex Negotiation with the Living

Just the other day I was dead tired, so I lay on the floor in my room of mirrors and crossed my arms over my chest to suggest that I was embracing my current state. Or death. Or myself. An appearance of serenity inexplicably passed over my face. It belied my inner turmoil. Just then I thought that seeming seemed to be becoming being. But suddenly there was a knock on the door! Now my arms crossed on my chest revealed that I was detached, and a little cold. My mysterious solicitor called out, hoping to acquire the dead's perspective on all manner of issues affecting the living. I implored, "What for? And aren't you at all curious how things are going on this side of the door?" "Not at all," he replied, and, "It's so the living might go on living comfortably." Just as I marveled how like the living it was to do everything in reverse order--I was becoming a real chauvinist! My crossed arms now felt like wisdom!--he passed on. To where I do not know. Then there was a second knock at the door.



*Kimberly Parko*

## John and She

*The eating of seeds*

Last night the clouds turned a yellowish green and were sickly across the sky. She asked John if he'd ever seen a tornado. She started spinning around on her toes. The kitchen was a whirl of appliances. John had seen a tornado, but the details were unsettled to the point of where he asked himself, "Was it I saw the tornado, or another?" Sometimes his very own experiences seemed to belong to another. But who was the other? He couldn't quite make out if the other was his high-pitched side, or his deeply reverberating side? Or was the other so far from him so as to be a non-human? He often watched sparrows in the yard and thought, "What in the world are they doing?" He so could not get into their mindset. Although, the eating of seeds seemed pretty straightforward- something anyone could identify with.

*What it means to be deciduous*

In the yard, there was a delicate greening in the lower branches. She was talking to John in her high-pitched voice about leaf out. She had learned so much about trees- about their veins and channels and the endearing way they woke up after their long, winter naps. "We need to understand what it means to be deciduous," she proclaimed. John had been learning about other shapes, and her voice was a tinkling bell in his head. He had a book hanging just beyond the tip of his nose. The book had diagrams that he could trace with the edges of his mind. He was on the verge of understanding them. But when she spoke of new leaves and tender shoots and late frost, the tinkling in his head became consonants and vowels, phonemes and intonations, and the edges of his mind rustled in the breeze.

*Space is fundamentally ungrounded*

The stars were overhead. John was milling about them. There were deep reverberations coming from the earth of him. She had fashioned a funnel to try and channel the reverberations upward, to his head space. “Space is fundamentally ungrounded,” she was often heard saying. John was roaming the heavens- the orbs became blinding the closer he got to them. They crisped the edges of his hair. “How can I stay equidistant from each orb, enjoying their warmth and light, without risking utter incineration?” Below him, her high-pitched voice and the deep reverberations collided through the funnel and emerged as chant.

*Kimberly Parko*

## Now Time

In a different time, there would have been a bigger eye coming out of the center. There would have been the kind of hair that feels. But it is the now time, not a different time, so the eye coming out of the center is small and the hair is the kind that can be coifed nicely, but can't feel.

Future times have whatever is at their disposal, be it rubble or dwarf trees growing elegantly and compactly or house flies sprouting more wings than needed to ascend.

Past times have already used up their rations and are growing smaller to the point of vanishing within their own pupils.

A different time exists in the hedge of the now time. It is not enough to just go to the hedge. You must risk the barbs that poke through to the bone. That draw deep pinpricks of blood, slowly, from the vast blood reservoirs. If you are up to the task, if you are willing the deep infections that never break the surface, then you can part the hedge-growth. You can gaze upon the big eye that in turn gazes upon you. You can brush the feeling hair, gently.

Lucy Corin

## Dream House

My wife and I finally chose an architect we'd admired for years, a guy who had gone to our college, though we'd only known him from afar. He impressed us. He'd always been artistic. He did the drawing and we did the dreaming. Natural efficient everything, modest and modernist, we wanted that balance of cutting edge and built to last. We were excited and scared—we had good money, but it was still a lot. We told friends over dinner about our plans, going over the idea, couple after couple. We ended up describing that house at practically every restaurant in town that we liked. Real estate, figurative estate. I just thought of that!

We'd had friends fuck up in process. One couple bought a house, turned out to be made of stuff called *hardboard*. Well, they learned via lawsuit that it was not *designed* to hold up in the *rain*. Thirty year mortgage and ten years life expectancy on the *siding*. Just imagine all the replacing you're expected to do on a dream like that. What is it about cells, they all slough and replace within seven years? I once thought of a reason why that must be an urban legend, but now I forget. It must have been right before falling asleep, or that instant waking up, disappearing and reappearing to myself. Don't worry, we didn't split, we're fine.

At these dinners we described the blueprints. We drew on napkins. Our friends kept saying, "People want the master bedroom to be a suite. People want a garage. People want a stove the size of a tank. His and hers everything." At dinner, I'd say, "but this is *our* dream house. It's not *people's* dream house."

Later my wife would say things she never would have said before. "We should have a real laundry, we should have a proper foyer." In a marriage you learn to see it the other person's way. We'd spread the blueprint across the table in the rental. Her eyes going over the lines, my eyes going over the lines. I was placing our belongings in the house, and I could see her placing little people-friends walking around in there among our belongings. Lines such as countertops. Vessels such as vases. I ran my eyes along my wife. It was inevitable. Are you my dream, are you mine, what are you, who are you for?

Programmatic inflation, our architect called it, when he'd redrafted according to what we'd heard about these buyers our friends imagined. We

built the house. It was over budget, but you know that going in. We didn't fight about what happened to our dream house, but we definitely alluded to it. "Where are his *boundaries*," she'd say about some guy at work, and I have to believe we both felt the house in there. "What did you dream?" I'd ask her in the morning. I knew the house was in what I was saying. A couple of times, alone in the house we built, I've even felt the real house like an invisible balloon around me. One time I felt it I really laughed at myself because if there's one thing I have ever excelled at in life it's being in this institution we call marriage. Another time, I remembered following my mother on a tour of a great house in some state, not where we lived—probably Monticello. Suffice to say, my parents did not have a marriage like mine. It had been a long drive on a very hot day. My dad was so angry he was not joining us, he was waiting in the car. In the tour group I was at everyone's hips. I almost fell asleep walking behind my mother's bottom to the tour guide's speech, my mother's bottom in her summer pants blooming white up the staircase toward the great dome.

*Lauren Camp*

## Scraps

One morning in his apartment, I slid under his bed for a fact that might have fallen in sleep, but found only piles of pressed long-sleeve shirts (—blue, why always blue?—) and a box of receipts. Since then, I have not looked for more.

My father shoves his words into pockets and pulls them from his wallet. When his new name smeared on the old, he was left with pieces of syllables that no longer answered. Now he says at the same time about death and deeper inescapable danger.

*His mother will never stop washing the chicken, her hands lifting raw skin at the faucet. She'll never stop smashing the clove, slicing the onion, never stop stewing squash until tender.*

My father has grown a beard. The back yard is filled with dirty snow. With scrawny shrubs. We are at Maple Avenue, eating the eggs from the white to the yellow.

*Renee Ashley*

*from Her Book of Difficulties*

[Because the door] closed behind that one she thought he was gone  
All night the phone rang of him She said It's a promise it's not real  
Said Those are beautiful dreaming horses & Every cloud looks like a  
plane coming down When she answered the door it was the moon  
again Oblate moon on the doorstep transcribing the light She thought  
The mind does not get over itself like reflection and the ripples there-  
of She thought A night like this night could only give birth to a bear &  
she was barely holding on The pigeons were fucking on the power lines

## *from Her Book of Difficulties*

[Soon after she] dreamt the velvet of young bucks upholstered the bark of deciduous trees behind her house There was a fusillade of sunlight She knew that a soul was just a tale the body told but the fortress of wisteria was real—that may have been the thing that saved her Ah Bride of Dirt & Bride of Sea dreaming of what's overhead The light looking as if it were water & some part of the largest sky about to break out A fault line quivering Pennies tinkling inside her skull Her terrible wakefulness All that had to put bees in her veins



## *from Her Book of Difficulties*

[She's turned] to the Hanged Man Reversed—poor asshole's hanged straight up by one foot He's snake-wrapped His hands sign vagina It's clearly not the deck for her Serpent & the violet pothole he stands in The thin lilac winds tracing the unclear moon behind his head His hair rising like thatch She knows the card's a bunch of crap & that Crap-in-the-Night should be its name He's so fucked-up he can't even be hanged right & the painting's bad to boot She knows meaning is built from a fistful of starts Knows her heart is held in place by something she can't see A fiber of hemp pulled tight in that dark by the kind of a secret you'd tell only a stranger

*Mathias Svalina*

## Texas

Before Texas was a state it was a country & before it was a country it was part of an empire & before it was a part of an empire it was part of a kingdom & before it was part of a kingdom it was occupied by many plants & before it was occupied it was beneath the sea & before it was beneath the sea it was rocks deep beneath the earth & before that it was a smoldering mass of planetesimals & frozen cosmic stuff & before that it was an idea of a future without permanence, a bit like a smile or a translucent seedpod. The point is that no Texan is a human. In Texas every person has four or five people to them, on their shoulders, in their t-shirt pockets, etc. The point is when a Texan makes a purchase all people feel money. And there is a drum in the center of the sun & someone is beating rough-hewn mallets on the drum's skin.

# Vermont

Darkness is disgraceful. That's why the brothers Ver & Mont founded Vermont. There is no darkness in Vermont, only a nice salted-caramel light. Nobody likes Vermont, yet it is, without doubt, the greatest state, like how the more you know people the more you see the obsolescence of the boner. Soon after founding the state the brothers Ver & Mont married the sisters Mont & Ver, & I know what you're thinking, but emotions are inconsistent: everyone gets a haircut, all day long. If you want a mountain for your troubles there is a mountain for your troubles in Vermont. If you want a field of thick grass & tiny moths wrapping around your every step then there it is in Vermont. You don't even have to wear a shirt or hoodie that says VERMONT in Vermont, people know. Everywhere you look in Vermont another piece of bit-off tongue lies beside the sidewalk, still squirming, still trying to say WASSSSSSSSSSSSUP! In Vermont when someone asks you How you doing? you say Structured or you say nothing at all.

# Virginia

Not only can I not tell the story of Virginia, language does not exist. Nothing has a name. Humans do not exist & already they are shamed by silence. The mountains of Virginia are the tallest mountains that the earth would know, if the earth could know, but the earth only knows my room with its tapestries & highbacked chairs. I am in Virginia's garage. I have given birth but I don't know why & I drag the baby by the cord. It is difficult when reality has no name. It is difficult to call a piece of land Virginia, to remain so pious. I lay my body down by my mouth. How perfect is each wrong direction. My Virginia, I drone for you, a monk's tongue, a cadaver in a gated community glistening.

*Paul Dickey*

## About What I Do Not Know

What I do not know never pays the check, wants to leave the tip, and stiffes the waitress. It is embarrassing. He is always bumming off what I do know, thinks maybe we'll take him to the movies. He whines. Nothing is ever his fault. He says *I didn't know*, thinks that handles it. All day, what I think I know must tell what I do not know what's what. I know, they say what I don't know won't hurt me. It is just that I fear someday I may hurt him. I know what I know and what I like. I tell myself I have reasons to believe all I know, even when what I do not know says I don't. I say *if only* I knew then what I know now. But I could write all day about what I know and it would never be good enough. Sometimes I go home and write two poems, live two lives. One poem is about what I know. The other is about what I do not know. The one about what I do not is always better.

## What My Characters Should Have Said

My characters don't show up so I go on without them. Forgive me, but there's always a story that must get told. I construct a coffee cup with images and words and fear I'll spill it. It's a good start. An empty wine glass recites a sonnet just to warm up. We'll be fine, I say. We will just call it a prose poem. Outside, taxis full of theatrical actors threaten to come through the door. I block their aggressive advance, turn on the television. Checkmate. The poem admits to being naked, asks me if I want her. Embarrassed, I say perhaps a light will help. In the fridge, the cheesecake left over from last night's romantic dinner sings Ave Maria. And then it is when the absent characters say whatever it is they say. But before everything happens too fast and the night runs away with itself, I look everywhere for the story.

*Claire Bateman*

## A Bedtime Story

Once there was a country whose people accrued an enormous collective sleep deficit because they were always at work, enduring perpetual bleariness to keep productivity high.

But when their fatigue finally became so irresistible that they would occasionally find themselves starting to drift off into the sky, it became clear to the Committee in Charge of Emergencies that something had to be done.

And so a retrieval team trekked to the Storehouse of Sleep and braved its darkness, only to find that the great mounds and drifts of unused slumber were not only rotting but had metamorphosed into tiny translucent worms.

In the face of this disaster, what could the travelers do but scoop up samples of these creatures and carry them home to be placed in a viewing tank?

The citizens, all hanging onto each other in case of sudden buoyancy, waited in line or a glimpse.

“Alas, our sleep, our poor lost sleep,” everyone sobbed, as the worms shriveled as though ready to die.

But after a brief season of this apparent desiccation, the specimens began sprouting what seemed to be thread-like tendrils or filaments, also translucent, which grew swiftly until the tank was webbed with this substance that could not be identified as vegetable, animal, or mineral.

Now the people began to be afraid.

After all, no one truly understands the nature of sleep, and this mutation that had sprung from it—very possibly comprised of all their undreamt nightmares—was even more mysterious.

Contained, the stuff was probably harmless enough, but what if it were to break through the glass to send out toxins or smother the population?

The suggestion arose—and was quickly suppressed—that perhaps they all deserved such a fate, having interfered with the natural order.

After agitated deliberations, the Committee in Charge of Emergencies decided to take preemptive action: the substance would have to be destroyed while still in this nascent phase.

As if the tank was filled with incubating flames, it fell to the fire-fighters to unseal it and reach in, no doubt because of their enviable, state-of-the-art protective gloves.

The webbing itself was so silky they could scarcely hold onto it, but as it slipped from their fingers, instead of wafting off into the breeze, it plunged to the ground, emitting an eerie keening sound and attempting to burrow into the soil, for it experienced this alien realm of light and oxygen as a kind of torment.

The crowd took a few steps back, horrified, but the head of the Committee cried out in jubilation: suddenly, he had a plan!

And now the sleep-webs are cultivated, harvested, and processed, so that clumps of it can be stitched into fabric casings which are then attached to the citizens' shoulders.

Ceaselessly questing downward, the web-stuff counteracts the anti-gravitational effects of chronic exhaustion.

Its uncanny lamentation continually fills the air, but nobody minds, since any noise one hears without respite soon becomes, for all practical purposes, inaudible.

Thus, everyone remains both permanently awake and successfully terrestrial, maintaining quotas.

Wings to keep people on the ground! See how even the most intractable problems contain their own solutions?



## Afterword

*John Gallaher*

With several people I used to know I'm trapped in an elevator, and it takes hours to get to my floor. When we get there, I realize I'm not dressed for it, as everyone else has the flowered shirts and carnations, and here I look like I'm on my way to a funeral. And then they all get off on my floor, still paying no attention to me, as if I weren't someone they used to know, and know well. Remember the soda shop? I barely whisper. Remember the drive-in? When we all get to my door we stop together. How long can this go on? I think. Remember the livery? I want to shout. Remember the OK Corral? They all have newspapers they're appearing to try to hide behind as they have to keep peeking out to see where to go next. When they follow me into my room, I ask if they are thirsty. They don't respond, but make as if to be looking at the ceiling tiles or at the angle of the window. When we get into bed I can barely breathe there are so many of us. Does anyone need an alarm set? I ask. As they all pretend to be asleep.

## Contributor Notes

**Robert Alexander** is the founding editor of the Marie Alexander Poetry Series at White Pine Press. He has published two books of prose poems and a book of creative nonfiction about the Civil War, has edited three anthologies of prose shorts, and is currently working on a fourth.

**Nin Andrews** is the author of six chapbooks and five full-length poetry collections. Her next book, *Why God is a Woman*, is forthcoming from BOA Editions.

**Jose Araguz** author of three chapbooks including *Corpus Christi Octaves* (Flutter Press), is a CantoMundo fellow. Hailing from Corpus Christi, Texas, he has had poems recently in *Salamander*, *RHINO*, *Hanging Loose* and *Poet Lore*. He is presently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Cincinnati.

**Robert Archambeau** books include the collections of poetry *Home and Variations* (Salt 2004) and *The Kafka Sutra* (MadHat 2015) and the critical studies *Laureates and Heretics: Six Careers in American Poetry* (Notre Dame 2010) and *The Poet Resigns: Poetry in a Difficult World* (Akron 2013). He teaches at Lake Forest College and blogs at Samizdat Blog.

**Renee Ashley's** most recent book is *Because I Am the Shore I Want to Be the Sea*. She is on the faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson University's low-residency MFA in Creative Writing and lives in northern New Jersey.

**Lea Banks** has published in several journals including *Poetry Northwest*, *Big River Poetry Review*, *Slipstream*, *Diner*, *Sweet*, and *American Poetry Journal*. She is the author of *All of Me*, (Booksmynth Press, 2008) and lives in Western Mass. Banks is the founder of the Collected Poets Series in Shelburne Falls, MA.

**Hadara Bar-Nadav** is the author of *Lullaby* (with Exit Sign), awarded the Saturnalia Books Poetry prize. Her chapbook, *Show Me Yours*, was awarded the 2009 Midwest Poets Series Award. She is also co-author of the best-selling textbook *Writing Poems*, 8th Edition. She is currently Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

**Mary Biddinger** is the author of four full-length collections of poetry, including the forthcoming *Small Enterprise* (Black Lawrence Press 2015) and *A Sunny Place With Adequate Water* (BLP 2014). Poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Crazyhorse*, *Guernica*, *Gulf Coast*, *Pleides*, *Sou'wester*, *Forklift*, *Ohio*, and *Denver Quarterly*, among others.

**Lucy Biederman** is the author of four chapbooks, most recently *As Yet*, available as a free PDF at [countrymusicpoetry.org](http://countrymusicpoetry.org). Her poems and stories have appeared in *BOMBlog*, *The Literary Review*, *The Collagist*, *subTerrain*, *Denver Quarterly*, and others. She is a Ph.D. student in English Literature at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette.

**Joe Bonomo**'s most recent books are *This Must Be Where My Obsession With Infinity Began* (essays) and *Conversations With Greil Marcus*. A four-time "Notable Essay" selection at Best American Essays, he teaches at Northern Illinois University and appears online at No Such Thing As Was ([www.nosuchthingaswas.com](http://www.nosuchthingaswas.com))

**Peter Burghardt** lives in Oakland, California, where he works as a poetry editor and book designer for Omnidawn Publishing, and co-publishes the book-arts imprint speCt! ([www.spectbooks.com](http://www.spectbooks.com)). His work has been published or is forthcoming from such journals as *BlazeVox*, *Death Hums*, and *Witness*.

**Lauren Camp** is the author of two books, most recently *The Dailiness*, winner of the National Federation of Press Women 2014 Poetry Book Prize and a *World Literature Today* "Editor's Pick." Her poems have appeared in *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Linebreak*, *Redivider*, and other journals. [www.laurencamp.com](http://www.laurencamp.com).

**Brigitte Byrd** is a French-American poet, author of three poetry books, including *Fence above the Sea* and *Song of a Living Room* (both by Ahsahta Press). Her most recent work is featured in *Sentence*, *Solstice Mag*, and *Ampersand Review*. She lives in Atlanta. <http://www.brigittebyrd.com>

**Julie Carr** is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *100 Notes on Violence*, *RAG*, and *Think Tank*. A chapbook of her co-translation of French poet Leslie Kaplan's *Excess-The Factory* was recently released by Commune Editions and is available as a pdf here: <http://communeeditions.com>.

[com/2014/06/08/excess-the-factory/](http://com/2014/06/08/excess-the-factory/)

**Monika Cassel** is English Department Chair and teaches American literature and poetry at New Mexico School for the Arts. She is working on a manuscript of poems on her German family's WWII history; her translations of the poet Durs Grünbein are forthcoming in *Asymptote and Structo Magazine*.

**Maxine Chernoff's** 14th book of poetry is *Here* from Counterpath Press, Denver, 2014. She is a 2013 recipient of an NEA Poetry Fellowship and the 2009 winner of the PEN USA Translation Prize. She chairs the Creative Writing Department at SFSU.

**Ewa Chrusciel** has two books in Polish: *Furkot* and *Sopilki* and two books in English, *Strata*, which won the 2009 international book contest and *Contraband of Hoopoe* with Omnidawn. Her poems were featured in *Jubilat*, *Boston Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Lana Turner*, *Spoon River Review*, *Aufgabe* among others. She is an associate professor at Colby-Sawyer College.

**Dan Coffey** Dan Coffey hails from Buffalo, NY and has made the Midwest his second home. The librarian for English and World Literature at Iowa State University, Dan lives in Ames, Iowa with his wife and son. He has had poems published in *Poetry Bay*, *Kennesaw Review*, *MiPoesias*, *Dirt*, and *Kiosk*.

**Matthew Cooperman** is the author of the text + image collaboration *Imago for the Fallen World*, w/Marius Lehene (Jaded Ibis Press, 2013), and *Still: of the Earth as the Ark which Does Not Move* (Counterpath Press, 2011). He teaches in the Creative Writing program at Colorado State University. He lives in Fort Collins with his wife and their two children. More information at: [www.matthewcooperman.com](http://www.matthewcooperman.com)

**Joshua Corey** is the author of four books of poetry, including *Severance Songs* (Tupelo Press, 2011) and the forthcoming book *The Barons* (Omnidawn Publishing, 2014). A novel, *Beautiful Soul: An American Elegy*, is out from Spuyten Duyvil Press. He teaches English at Lake Forest College.

**Lucy Corin** is the author of the short story collections *One Hundred Apocalypses and Other Apocalypses* (McSweeney's Books), and *The Entire Predicament* (Tin House Books) and the novel *History for Girls* (FC2). She's a recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Rome Prize in Literature.

**Jon Davis** is the author of three collections of poetry: *Preliminary Report*, *Scrimmage of Appetite*, and *Dangerous Amusements*. He is also the author of five chapbooks, including *Thelonious Sphere* and *Loving Horse*, and an art book in collaboration with the artist Jamison Chas Banks, *Heteronymy: An Anthology*. He is director of the low residency MFA program at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**Sean Thomas Daugherty** is the author or editor of 13 books including the forthcoming *All I Ask for Is Longing: Poems 1994- 2014* (2014 BOA Editions) *Scything Grace* (2013 Etruscan Press) and *Sasha Sings the Laundry on the Line* (2010 BOA Editions). He works in a pool hall in Erie, PA, and tours for readings.

**Danielle Cadena Deulen** is a poet and essayist. Her collection of poems won the AWP Prize in Creative Nonfiction. Her poems and essays have appeared in journals, including *The Missouri Review*. She received her MFA from George Mason University and her PhD from the University of Utah. She is an assistant professor in creative writing programs at the University of Cincinnati.

**Michelle Disler's** work has appeared in *The Massachusetts Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Gulf Coast*, *Fact-Simile*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Seneca Review*, *Glass*, and *Columbia* among others. She is a recipient of the Virginia Woolf Essay Prize. Her first book is *[BOND, JAMES]: alphabet, anatomy, [auto] biography*. S

**Paul Dickey** published his first book, *They Say This is How Death Came Into the World* (Mayapple Press, 2011) and wrote *Wires Over the Homeplace*. His work has appeared in *32 Poems*, *the Potomac Review*, *the Valparaiso Review*, *the Superstition Review*, and many other journals. Dickey teaches philosophy in Omaha, does poetry readings, and conducts a prose poetry workshop throughout the Midwest.

**Sherrie Flick** is author of the novel *Reconsidering Happiness* and the flash fiction chapbook *I Call This Flirting*. Her work has appeared in a variety of anthologies and journals, including *Norton's Flash Fiction Forward* and *New Sudden Fiction*, to name a few. She lives in Pittsburgh and teaches in Chatham University's MFA program.

**Jean Frémon/Cole Swensen** Jean Frémon is the author of over 20 volumes in several genres. Cole Swensen is the author of 14 volumes of poetry, most recently *Gravesend* (University of California, 2012) and a collection of critical essays. She is a translator of French poetry, prose, and art criticism. She divides her time between Paris and Providence, RI, where she teaches in the Literary Arts Department at Brown University.

**Arielle Greenberg** is co-author of *Home/Birth: A Poemic*; author of the books *My Kafka Century and Given*; and co-editor of several anthologies, including *Gurlesque*. She lives in Maine and teaches in the community and in the Oregon State University-Cascades' MFA. Arielle writes a regular column on contemporary poetics for the *American Poetry Review*.

**Kate Greenstreet** books are *Young Tambling*, *The Last 4 Things*, and case sensitive, all with Ahsahta Press. For more about Kate, visit her site at [kickingwind.com](http://kickingwind.com).

**Piotr Gwiabda** is the author of two books of poetry, *Messages* (2012) and *Gagarin Street* (2005) and of a critical study *James Merrill and W.H. Auden* (2007). His translation of Grzegorz Wróblewski's *Kopenhaga* appeared in 2012. He teaches modern and contemporary poetry at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC).

**Leslie Harrison** is the author of *Displacement* (Mariner Books, 2009.) Recent poems have appeared in journals including *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *The Kenyon Review*, *FIELD*, *Subtropics*, *Pleiades*, *Orion* and elsewhere. In 2012 she joined the full-time faculty at Towson University. She divides her time between Baltimore and the Berkshires.

**Rochelle Hurt** is the author of a hybrid collection of prose poetry and verse, *The Rusted City* (White Pine Press, 2014). Her work has been published in *Best New Poets 2013*, *Mid-American Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, and elsewhere. She is a PhD student in

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**Darren Jackson**'s poems and translations have appeared in *Circumference*, *The Pinch*, *Smartish Pace*, *The Offending Adam*, and other journals. He has received a Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee in 2013. Press in the *The Planetary Turn: Art, Dialogue, and Geoaesthetics in the 21st-Century*.

**Elizabeth Jacobson** is the author of the poetry collection, *Her Knees Pulled In*, a finalist for the New Mexico Book Awards. Elizabeth has taught writing in New York at CUNY, in New Mexico at the Santa Fe Community College, Warehouse 21, The Youth Development Program, and as a teaching artist with ArtWorks. She has an MFA from Columbia University.

**Russell Jaffe** Russell Jaffe is a teacher at The Chicago Free School. He has one baby, Celestine, and two books, *This Super Doom I Aver* (Poets Democracy, '13) and *INTROVERT // EXTROVERT* (Punk Hostage, '14). He collects 8-tracks.

**Christopher Kennedy** is the author of four collections of poetry: *Ennui Prophet* (BOA Editions, Ltd., 2011) and *Encouragement for a Man Falling to His Death* (BOA Editions, Ltd., 2007). Kennedy's work has appeared in numerous print and on-line journals. He is an associate professor of English at Syracuse University where he directs the MFA Program in Creative Writing.

**Gregory Kimbrell** is the membership and events coordinator for Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Libraries. In 2011, he received his MFA in Creative Writing, with a specialty in poetry, from the VCU Department of English. He has worked as associate production editor and lead copyeditor for *Blackbird*: an online journal of literature and the arts.

**Gerry LaFemina** is the author of 2011's *Vanishing Horizon*, three books of prose poems, a short story collection, and *Clamor*, a novel. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, he directs the Center for Creative Writing at Frostburg State University where he is an associate professor of English. He divides his time between Maryland and New York.

**Dana Levin** Dana Levin's latest book is *Sky Burial* (Copper Canyon Press). New poems have recently appeared in *Poetry*, *The American Poetry*

*Review*, and *Boston Review*.

**Ariana Lombardi** was born in New Jersey and currently resides in Santa Fe, NM. She holds a BA in Creative Writing from Santa Fe University of Art and Design (formerly the College of Santa Fe). Ariana is a teacher of English as a Foreign Language. To read more of her work and learn about *Letters to Strangers* visit [homeisalonelyhunter.wordpress.com](http://homeisalonelyhunter.wordpress.com)

**Gian Lombardo** Gian Lombardo has published six collections of prose poetry, the latest of which are *Machines We Have Built* (Quale Press, 2014) and *Who Lets Go First* (Swamp Press, 2010). He teaches book and magazine publishing at Emerson College where he directs the Literary Publishing Certificate program.

**Christina Marrocco** is an assistant professor of English at Elgin Community College in Elgin, Illinois. Christina holds a BA in English, an MA in Professional Writing and Rhetoric, and a PhD in Rhetoric and Late American Literature with a certificate in Women's Studies, all from Northern Illinois University.

**Todd McCarty** is a poet and freelance writer, who lives in Chicago. His poetry and reviews have appeared in *Conclave*, *DIAGRAM*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Court Green*, *Verse Daily*, *OmniVerse*, and *Gently Read Literature*. His first chapbook, *Fall for You*, was published by Blue Press Books.

**Phillip Metres** Philip Metres is the author and translator of a number of books and chapbooks, including the forthcoming *Sand Opera* (2015), *abu ghraib arias* (2011), *To See the Earth* (2008). In 2014, he received a Creative Workforce Fellowship. He is professor of English at John Carroll University in Cleveland.

In the first grade, **Curtis Mueller** won a prize in the school science fair. His project worked around the hypothesis that a balloon would inflate after heating the air inside. Mueller has been winning prizes by augmenting many sorts of things with warmth. In 2013, he graduated from the Santa Fe University of Art and Design with a BA in Creative Writing and Literature.

**Amy Newman** *On This Day In Poetry History* is forthcoming from Persea



Books in 2015. Among her other books are *fall* and *Dear Editor*. She teaches at Northern Illinois University.

**Sherly Noethe** grew up in Minneapolis, MN and New York City. Her poem, "Broken" came from an experience of being part of a group reading of local state Poet Laureates. She has published five collections of poetry, including a teaching text.

**Kimberly Parko** is the author of the book *Cure All* (Caketrain Press) and *The Rest of the World Seems Unlikely* (Achilles Chapbook Series). She lives in Santa Fe, NM with her husband, daughter, and spirit dog. She is an Associate Professor at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

**Chad Parmenter** is a creative writing fellow in the PhD program at the University of Missouri. His poems have won contests in *Hotel Amerika* and *The Black Warrior Review*, and have appeared in *Harvard Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *The Best American Poetry*.

**Olivar de la Paz** the author of four collections of poetry. His most recent book POST SUBJECT: A FABLE, was published by the University of Akron Press. He is the co-editor of *A Face to Meet the Faces: An Anthology of Contemporary Persona Poetry*. He is a member of Kundiman and teaches in the MFA Program at Western Washington University.

**Katie Peidersonff** is the author of three books of poetry - *This One Tree* (New Issues, 2006), *Permission* (New Issues, 2013), and *The Accounts* (Chicago, 2013), winner of the Rilke Prize from the University of North Texas. She teaches English at the University of California at Davis and she was born in California.

**Robert Andrew Perez** lives in Berkeley. He is an associate editor for *speCt!*, a letterpress imprint based out of Oakland. He helps curate readings at the *speCt!* studio and University Press Books. Works can be found in *The Cortland Review*, *The Offending Adam*, *The Awl* and *Omniverse*. Poems forthcoming in *DIAGRAM* and *Manor House Quarterly*.

**Laura Ramos** is former magazine editor who lives north of Chicago. Her work has appeared in *Weave*, *RHINO*, *SLAB*, *elimae*, *Kugelmass*, *Southern Indiana Review*, *B O D Y*, *The Prose-Poem Project*, and elsewhere. In 2013,

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**Linwood Rumney's** poetry, nonfiction, and translations have recently appeared in or is forthcoming from *Ploughshares*, *The Adirondack Review*, *North American Review*, *KR Online*, and elsewhere. He currently lives in Cincinnati and serves as Editorial Assistant for *Black Lawrence Press*.

**E.M. Schorb's** latest collection of prose poems is *Manhattan Spleen*. His novel, *A Portable Chaos*, is out in a revised edition after originally winning the Eric Hoffer Award for Fiction. Recent poetry collections include *The Ideologies and Other Retrospective Poems* and *The Journey*.

**Erin Stalcup's** fiction has been published in *The Kenyon Review*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *The Sun*, *PANK*, *Novembre* (Switzerland), and elsewhere. Erin holds an MFA from the Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. Erin recently joined the creative writing faculty at Northern Arizona University.

**Arianna Sullivan** Arianna Sullivan holds a BA in Creative Writing and Literature from the Santa Fe University of Art and Design. She writes poetry and creative non-fiction. She currently lives in New York City.

**Mathias Svalina** is the author of four books, most recently *Wastoid* from Big Lucks Books. He is an editor for Octopus Books.

**Craig Morgan Teicher** is the author of three books and the chapbook *Ambivalence and Other Conundrums*. He is editing the selected writings of Delmore Schwartz, due from New Directions in 2016.

**Amish Trevedi's** poems are in *New American Writing*, *Golden Handcuffs Review*, *Mandorla* and forthcoming on *Kenyon Review Online*. His chapbooks include *Everyone's But Mine* and *Museum of Vandals*. Reviews he has written appear in *Sink*, *Jacket2* and soon in *Pleiades*. He is the editor of *N/A* ([www.nalitjournal.com](http://www.nalitjournal.com)).

**Keith Tuma** teaches at Miami University, where he directs the Miami University Press. His books include *On Leave: A Book of Anecdotes* (Salt, 2011) and *The Paris Hilton* (Critical Documents, 2009).

**Rosalynde Vas Dias** earned an MFA in Poetry from Warren Wilson College's Low Residency Program for Writers. Her first book, *Only Blue Body*, was winner of the 2011 Robert Dana Award. Her poems have appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *West Branch*, *The Pinch*, *Laurel Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Christina Veladota's** poetry has appeared in literary journals, including *The Journal* and *Mid-American Review*. She currently serves as an associate professor of English Composition & Literature at Washington State Community College in Marietta, OH.

**G.C. Waldrep** most recent books are *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral* (Ahsahta, 2012), co-edited with Joshua Corey, and a chapbook, *Susquehanna* (Omnidawn, 2013). Waldrep lives in Lewisburg, Pa., where he teaches at Bucknell University, edits the journal *West Branch*, and serves as Editor-at-Large for *The Kenyon Review*.

**Michael J. Wilson** lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He teaches at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design and the Institute of American Indian Arts. He also writes poetry reviews for *Publisher's Weekly*. A movie based on his work was filmed in 2014.

**Sam Witt** is poetry editor of *Jaded Ibis Press* and author of the poetry collections, *Everlasting Quail* and many publications. He has taught at Harvard University and Whitman College and is now Assistant Professor of English, Creative Writing, at Framingham State University.

**Joshua Young** is the author of *The Holy Ghost People* (Plays Inverse Press), and three other collections. His work has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *(PANK)*, *Puerto del Sol*, and others. He is Editor-in-Chief of *The Lettered Streets Press* and Associate Director of Creative Writing at Columbia College Chicago. He lives in the Wicker Park neighborhood with his family.

**Jordan Zandi** grew up in the rural Midwest and holds an M.F.A. from Boston University. Other recent work of his has appeared in *The New Republic* and *Little Star*. His first book, *Solarium*, was chosen as the winner of the 2014 Kathryn A. Morton Prize and is forthcoming from Sarabande Books.