

The Raw Art Review
A Journal of Storm and Urge

Fall 2018



**The Raw Art Review:
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COVER ART:
Mong Soa in The Mist
by Pieter Lefferts
36”x24” Oil on Panel

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Stereoscope: Pioneer Cabin Tree

Dogwood blooms, Bierstadt's mammoth work--
Look: what they are telling you, is true.

I've never seen a thing so heavy
Below us, always, curled and
curving a weft of roots to hold them straight,
a ripcord frayed by us, by time, by drought, by fire.

The spot where a trunk meets ground, it is like that;
It's a weight so large the earth will barely hold it.
Time and exposure,
hemorrhaging cells iron red like our soil soft; downy fur, its trunk,
red roots shot through granite,
We could both find a ferric grave.

Here is Krakatoa, soot-stained into this flesh
Here: it has known language in all its incantations
Here: disaster, cellulose packed so tight there was no growth those
years at all, such small cells stacked.
Here: winter,
swollen, a baptism, here:

Pinned into its red fur, my first boyfriend slid his hand under my
blouse;
and, this thing of wonder, of me quaking beneath him, first and
always in the dirt at her feet; rise and fall, a sharp breath, our own
topography.

Or the live oak, a riot of mistletoe in its branches;
the heavy stone, feldspar-flecked,
upon which we took our vows;
the lake,
a mirror.

I will tell you: it fell in my lifetime;
I will tell you that.

*By Jill Bergantz Carley
(winner Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)*

70, 868 Acres

On the asphalt at the turnaround, we wrote in chalk, in the largest letters:

Two homes, flume access

Water resources 16,500 gallon pool

Fire hose bibs at corners of house

Three 1000-gallon tanks drawn from well

When it may all burn down to the ground, let us pack--

The Diebenkorn, the Thiebaud lithograph, wrapped in Granna's quilt
no

every quilt: pushed hurriedly into the trunk of the car; the quilts:
bring them all.

The scale model you made of the house, this perfect replica held in
two hands

A box of handwritten recipes

A pair of slippers

Your favorite glasses

The laundry folded neatly on top of the dryer

And please, please, from our family home, save this one thing for me:
a picture

of the sky

on the day I was born.

a firebreak sixteen dozer blades wide; the simmering hills we
watched that night from the highway

And from the charred earth, once corduroy grass, once chaparral,

once deodora cedars, once live oak,

this dark reliquary of gems, silica turned to glass--

But listen, listen: it isn't the fire that's the matter--

after, driving behind a bulldozer on a flatbed truck you cry so hard
that you have to pull over

when at night, in the sleep you can manage, the dream flames are so
close, so close that you find yourself awake, your lover holding your
head in his hands

it's alright

it's alright

it's alright

Listen: the hard ring of the bell calling all the volunteer firemen to
work, so quick;

And you, watching from the grocery store parking lot as they stream
toward the station

It'll take you a good hour to calm down enough to buy the apples, the
carton of milk--

Listen: a siren echoes

Listen: a plane flies low overhead, and you,
you can't hold them at arm's length--
the toyon by the kitchen window, it has to go
the bull pine over the deck, cut it down;
the black oak you prized so much, take it--
the bleached gold white grasses of summer, deracinated

Listen: take the dog for a walk,
anything better than the stillness in your kitchen as you push the
forest away with both your hands--
just walk with her,
walk, ash falls, a darker storm, walk: cling to her soft white paws

By Jill Bergantz Carley



Luna
George Goebel

Browsing

Wednesday at the thrift store on Fourth
means half off everything but lamps,
teacups, and hand-me-down hardware,
so I step through the thicket of men's long sleeves
starched and bark stiff on their hangers,
pull one from the end of the row—

a coat with ROBERT marked on the collar,
pine green, the color of evening woods, dark and deep,
secrets, desires, and roads taken,
years with a woman who'd called him Robbie
and pressed the twill to her mouth
on nights when he was away—

Longing can be felt second-hand.

*by Sara Oso
(runner-up Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)*

Rain Day

after Thomas Lux

When it arrives, a guest in grey
hanging dampness overhead
like bad news,

wait

with something warm
in your hands,
and touch the titles
on the shelf
while the afternoon
empties.

Leave the shades drawn back
for what comes after –

when the slate sky breaks
and, in morning,
shining fills the room.

by Sara Oso

Evening Concert

Tonight, you and I lean
on the latecomers' door
tucked in a corner,
the college chorale filing in
behind the woodwinds
and second-violins
dressed in their best blacks
backs straight
cradling music folders
the way a bride holds
her armful of roses,
everyone and us waiting
in a grey of silence
for the big breath –

the one that sends
Italian vowels blooming
toward the ballroom ceiling,
and D minor settling
on our shoulders,
the long O
of each mouth
dark enough
to swallow
a moon.

by Sara Oso



Red Sky
Christopher Woods

Zubiri

The donkey in Zubiri seemed to know us. He waited on the hilltop, greeted us gently like an old dog. We took turns wrapping our arms around his neck, feeling the full weight of his head on our shoulders, a blessing like the words the sisters had spoken in Roncesvalles. Back on the path, the red dust staining our ankles, we carried this tenderness with us, glancing back to see him naked in the field, his muzzle resting on a mossy stone fence, eyes worrying over our pilgrim bodies, the way we favored our blisters and sores.

Down the hill, the grasses parted around our hips and knees, closed snug behind us. Sheep, sticky with brambles, glanced up from their grazing, shepherd shapes reflected in creek pools, grew hazy across hot plains. Big dogs followed the herds, hedged them in on tall mountains, bedded down with them at dusk while Spanish ferns caught raindrops, and eagles wheeled along cliff edges.

*by Alex McIntosh
(runner-up Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)*

Constellation

The Big Dipper gathers bowlfuls of deep blue space as it spins every year around Polaris. Seven stars like the sisters I've always wanted: Alkaid, Mizar, Alioth, Megrez, Phad, Merak, Dubhe. Who names the stars? And who chose the sex of my brother? To take my sister before her birth? My mom still thinks of her, each year around Halloween, when she would have been born. Maybe the movement of our solar system doesn't matter, doesn't amount to anything, at least not in our short lifetimes. But we are moving, and it's lovely when stars move.

by Alex McIntosh

The pond in front of the library

is dark green, that unnatural kind of green like the ponds in front of big houses along the highway. The water looks thick, more like jelly than water, an old curdled jelly, thickened by the flutter of duck feet beneath shining duck bodies, churned like butter from the milk on my great grandfather's farm, the milk they'd churn into ice cream on Sundays. My grandpa says he's never tasted ice cream so sweet, says he's gone his whole life tasting, but never finding that same sweetness. Not in his wife's pies, or the carrot cake from the farmer's market, not the famous pastries from the deli on fifth street, or the blue-ribbon shortcake at the church picnic. He says he worries his memory is failing, that he's prone to sentiment, to misremembering and nostalgia. We're sitting on the bench watching the birds circle in the water and I notice that the soft lines fanning out from the corners of his eyes match my own.

by Alex McIntosh



Phase II of The Dream Sequences

J. E. Crum

(runner-up Artwork of Storm & Urge contest)

TAPPAHANNOCK

Now you are here, walking through tall stalks,
fingering a rat skull in your pocket like a lucky
penny you picked up along the way. Now imagine

the claw that felled her or the blade, ants entering
the eyehole, hawk who finished her off, your shawl
shed like cornsilk and husk. Red fox darting across

the path, no other human, just rushes, cattails,
marsh grass, reeds where the swamp used to be,
where there once was lily pad, frogs croaking

their throat song into the night. Now it is quiet,
swollen wall of yellow-green after the calm, after
the storm, after the delusion of storm, deluge. In

your chest, a swarm of angry bees, a reason
to go on. Don't carry the burden of tomorrow. Don't
carry the burden of any hour. Carry the bird in

the tool shed out again. Let the bluebird out
with the wind, blueprint of wind: tulle, satin, silk,
husk, all as before, the rust-red fox at dusk.

Now you are gone. Outside the camera's frame,
tanned hands of a fisherman bending down
to net the day's catch. Now you are full,

lulled to the sill, cellophane, cello playing,
selling the dream of tomorrow dangling

on the end of a string. Now you are young
again. Now you are not afraid to die.

Now let the wind carry you home.

by Kim Harvey
(runner-up Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)

Truth in the Era of Alternative Facts

*Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself.
-Walt Whitman*

Today my son asked,
“Who is Walt Whitman?” And I answered,
What is contradiction
but the paradox of using force
to overcome a force?

Didn’t saber-toothed cats
wander Earth before anyone
ever wondered whether it was flat?
They say a square circle
cannot even be imagined. Do you agree?

*Jochebed made a wooden chest of bulrushes
watertight with slime and pitch
and put her child in it at the edge of the Nile while
Miriam watched the Pharaoh’s daughter lift the infant
out of the water where she had come to bathe.*

And as for the Pharaoh,
was he drowned or saved?

I’ve stayed at a hotel in Seattle
where you can request the religious text
of your choosing for your nightstand.
From the Upanishads to Dianetics,
there are always inconsistencies.

That is to say this problem should be
studied on several levels,
the way the dog sniffs the ground
before she pees.

This has nothing to do with Russia. The only

Russian words I know are nyet
and nostrovnia, which is not the actual Russian
but a new word
created from the incorrect phonetic
of Na Zdrowie - to health, to life.

"I don't want to be provocative
but I do love provoking people.
There is truth to that,"
said the man who would be king.
Even he has a mother.

After all, without the woman
the man wouldn't exist.
Warp and weft and mighty hips.
(*I am large, I contain multitudes.*)
We are all Whitman.

by Kim Harvey

Holy Days

It's nearing the end of May, the time between
Easter and Pentecost, and it feels like everyone is waiting
for something, for summer to finally come,
for the Holy Spirit to descend so we can understand
each other. I'm hobbling through the Tenderloin
on the way to a hospital named for a saint,
stepping over needles, condoms, shards of red and green
glass bulbs from a discarded Christmas wreath.
I'm getting an MRI. My Achilles has been bothering me.
Flat on my back, I'm staring at a cord hanging from the ceiling
that says, *Pull in case of emergency*.
In the silence between the machine's loud noises like sirens and gunfire,
a clock is ticking and soon it becomes the loudest sound
in the room. This time next year, I'll be forty.
When my mother was the age I am now, I was already
in college. I don't have kids or a house or a dog or a car.
When I complain about my life, my mother tells me
to turn it over to God, that Jesus loves me.
So, I don't tell her much and tend to avoid her calls.
I came face to face with Christ on Easter Sunday near Dolores Park
after the Hunky Jesus contest when a group of bearded
men with long hair and loin cloths were standing outside a bar
and one of them pointed to everyone who walked by, saying,
I died for you, I died for you, I died for you.
My mother would have been appalled at the sacrilege
but I felt somehow blessed.
Dolores Park used to be a Jewish cemetery
until the land in San Francisco became too valuable
for the dead and all the graves were moved to Colma,
where the dead outnumber the living by a thousand to one.
I can't afford to live here either. Maybe I should move to Colma.
On my way home from the hospital, my mother calls.
This time, she doesn't mention Jesus or God. I tell her
it will be a few days before I get the results.
She says, *I love you. Remember who you are*.
I pass some kids squealing on a playground where the YMCA
used to be. I remember 11th grade Chemistry,
standing beside my lab partner Neil, both of us wearing
safety goggles, heating something in a crucible.
I remember what it felt like to make a spark. I remember when it didn't hurt
to walk. You know that place between the monkey bars
where you've got no foothold and don't know if you can reach that far?

by Kim Harvey



Subsistence of Loss

Scott Hussey

(runner-up Artwork of Storm & Urge contest)

From the book by John Casey, "Raw Thoughts", to be released by Adelaide Books (New York, New York) in July 2019

Little Spoon

You are in the other room,
Your smile and radiance towering

Over the story like sequoias,
Or pretty zeppelins, learning

Your fourteenth language, hair à la garçonne.
And I am underemployed, in the kitchen,

Struggling not to make this chicken dry,
For once, with my COWABUNGA shirt,

Cheeks still tacked with mango juice.
And if you would split open my head, surgeon,

(Just a transverse slice here, above the eyes)
You could see them teeming like wasps.

My million contrary thoughts would fly up.
How can you say you love this?

by Logo Wei
(runner-up Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)

And the Stars Go on Forever

Evergreen needles, grouped into branches,
Branches grouped, then, sequential to trees,
The trees, gallant as polyps or brushes,
Juking and ragging around the big rim
Of the black bowl of the sky, as the stars
(Lord, the billion stars) commute across
The swanky cosmos on their way to work.

by Logo Wei

Camels

the indolent phantom coolly leaving
for a more commodious limbo my
cigarette finds herself in wintertime
behind the slaughterhouse where shelter lives
from the ragged liberties of the wind
so her trajectory is free to be
plumb taut true like the twine under balloons
but only for the moment a shiver
and she gathers up her tendons before
eloping with all the variousness
of the sportive wind and it's such a cold
wintertime and i'm out of ideas
because really nothing else scrubs you out
quite like resentment and nicotine

by Logo Wei



Siamese Dreams
Shasta Fox

the cigarette burns my body alive into a cherry

and this is the natural order of living:
one thing in the hands of another,
one thing looking up
and frothing for tenderness.

so my crimson flesh tends to its pit,
and the sun
splits into rivulets
the ocean a beautiful gown,
the sequins
threaded with a thread of need,
and the seed
seeps up water
like an undone sorrow
to grow the oak
tree,
and then to dance.

and gorgeous, the thin raspy stem
asks for a spirit of wind
to sex it up
into a young woman.

so who is my mother: the crumpled umber skin

rocking her blossom to sleep,
or the cloud which shades into darkness
so the baby can weep
on its own?

by Emily Ellison
(runner-up Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)

awakening as trains

carve night like birth, like sex,
like the desexualized lagoon dived into
again, and again. I had believed I was
awakened by trains but found
my own mouth, my hand a steam
the touch thereof will dissipate
from your memory come morning.
so I awaken in the rocking
of our bodies, in the guttural long
moans which announce our coming,
announce the acceptance of bodies
inside, rocking anticipation's travel
grander than arrival. we are
passengers softened overhead
by a single glow of desired union,
though we do not really
know one another.
the sight dilates as ebony
earth is revealed like a gown
heightening its chiffon
over a thrill
of ankles—like a mind in middle-night
lifting up the self's cloth of day
to discover its own body in the thrill
of clarity, which dawns through fatigue.
in this great procession, I find myself
falling against you again, and again,
even if just for the jolt of curves, this
pummeling through the black unknown
guided vaguely by metallic tongues, as how
thought before thought
awakens. for,
before self, there was the sound
of loneliness, needing to reach somebody.
how many arms
 must we tug to halt
 this distance?

by Emily Ellison

cleaning the vanity's mirror

today white-tailed
deer crowd my bedroom
window, curious with this creature's
skilled seclusion. they
ask about my horns, why
I leave moss to suck and straddle
like a beloved. how do I relate
the small comfort of something wanting you.

fire of oak leaves ravish
the window now open, everything
now open and ablaze. I return to my childhood
removing my horses'
sleek coats of pride (how erratic
I once was, one hoof
after another) until I have tamed
the morning like a chai tea,
kicking though drinkable,
bubbling
over my lip's rim
to stain the last of its string.
and after this dye I will die no more.
I am returning to the birth, removing
the string, the dip, the stain,
returning to the face lowering on the face
clouded into mere reflection,
removing my face, the deer, the mustang
who shot herself and did not cry
anymore. only the silver
sky blinking, blank.

in the vanity's mirror
only my gray residue of mouth, plump
coral years forgotten by the heart's pump,
forgotten by the muscle
responsible for scrubbing memory's
quartz clean as a glass
that the hand meets to meet a hand, yet meeting only the cold
wall put up. I return to my past,
putting my palm on my cheek
with a sheet between—
so like you, it feels
nothing but the mockery of white absolution.

by Emily Ellison



Untitled
Tim Gerken

In the Marketplace

A kestrel orbits the meadowlands
beside the turnpike.
A reminder: In the order of everything,
it is most likely the case
that no thing ever separates from any other thing,
despite great evidence to the contrary.
The four-ounce kestrel glides, powerful and hungry—
Diogenes masturbating in the marketplace—and dies,
his body fallen on the pavement's lip,
passively mourned, if at all, quiet
beyond the field of invasive
reeds, forgotten,
feeding many equal things,
the earth itself.

*by Joseph M. Gerace
(runner-up Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)*

Empedocles and Exaenetus

(Wikipoem for My Father)

in yr head if only he cared
down their hooves spectacular
the riders' blood spills as much for me
but i was a wrestler and he
he was a farce another wrap around supraspinatus
spectacular the rider was not a wrestler
and he was a farce vested spectacular
the great heft of it the rider's last stand
was a wrestler and a farce
as much for me as for
touching their hooves spectacular
their thighs before touching their
spectacular root the rider
was a wrestler now and each wrestled
and no horse i was a wrestler too but
that was long ago each wrapped around each other
there are no new horses now
the root of their hooves spectacular
their hooves spectacular the great heft of their musculature
spectacular the rider's blood spilled
as much for me
i was always the wrestler
in the family

by Joseph M. Gerace



7 Years Gestation
Olivia Pridemore

Faith and the Silver Maple

Daily we suffer discomfort that makes
us grow like some trees which would never sport
a twin trunk unless they'd first been snapped at
the base as the youngest of saplings, crushed
under foot or purposely pruned, roots left
to dry, die by any other means that
would sever a stem down near ground level,
where it would sprout two efforts instead of
one and grow neglected against great odds
every season, each year for eighty years,
standing at the end of my back yard on
the fence line to hearten and remind me.

by Sandra Kolankiewicz

The Plant Was on Fire

The plant was on fire and because of the
nature of what was flaming, water could
not be used, nor could the substance they call
‘foam’ be implemented. The smell of burned
plastic hung in the air, and flakes the shade
of night sky fell to the ground like the black
rain of Nagasaki, the ash suspect,
consequence of contact dire. As long as
there’s no precipitation, we’ll be all
right, they said, and the dark clouds which had moved
in to become indiscernible from
smoke let loose all the soot they’d collected.

by Sandra Kolankiewicz

The Reflection of the Lights on the Bridge

How fortunate my front steps lead right down
to the street, where I can either turn left
and walk to the river or make a right,
head straight to the hospital which, after
a storm, is the reason my house never
goes dim, for my side of the block gets its
power back before the rest of the town.
We're on the same grid as the cardiac
unit, the prenatal oxygen tanks,
the ambu-bags needed only until
a generator's fired up and running.
How lucky to have the kinds of choices
that come with water, from baptism to
purification, met at the corner
by a driveway to the emergency
room. I've seen before how a street can lead
us nowhere but the hills, which is fine till
we need a restaurant or police station.
I've overestimated the standing
of a highway that will take us away
from here, far from steps and hospital, the
river invisible at night but for
the reflection of the lights on the bridge.
I've known dead ends that made us park our car
in some cul-de-sac so we can take a
secret path to a hidden place, all thought
of asphalt gone once our feet step on leaves.

by Sandra Kolankiewicz



Empire of Blue
Fabrice Poussin



Empire of Blue
Fabrice Poussin

My Chosen Bestiary

I'd steal an octopus
and have her train me
in the art of escape.

So, when you held me down
I could
flatten myself paper thin
and slide whatever body part
you weren't occupied with
off the bed and across the room.

I might have to steal a scorpion, too.
I'd ask her to sacrifice
herself for me
because I think
you won't
let go without
a quick killing blow.

Finally, I'll steal a snake
to help me slip away.

She'd hide me in grassy hollows and
teach me how to bask in the sun
and shed all the parts you touched.

by Tasslyn Magnusson
(runner-up Walt Whitman Prize for Poetry)



Howl Self-portrait
Chloe Allred

Willow Harvest

down where the patients used to harvest willow
the fog is thicker when the moon is full
the harvested willow was crafted into furniture
by patient's seeking recovery.
today there is no more harvesting
there is no more crafting
the fog remains
it is thick.
the souls of the dead
roam amongst the willow
harvesting no more.

by Tohm Bakelas

Reflecting While Pissing in a Hospital Urinal

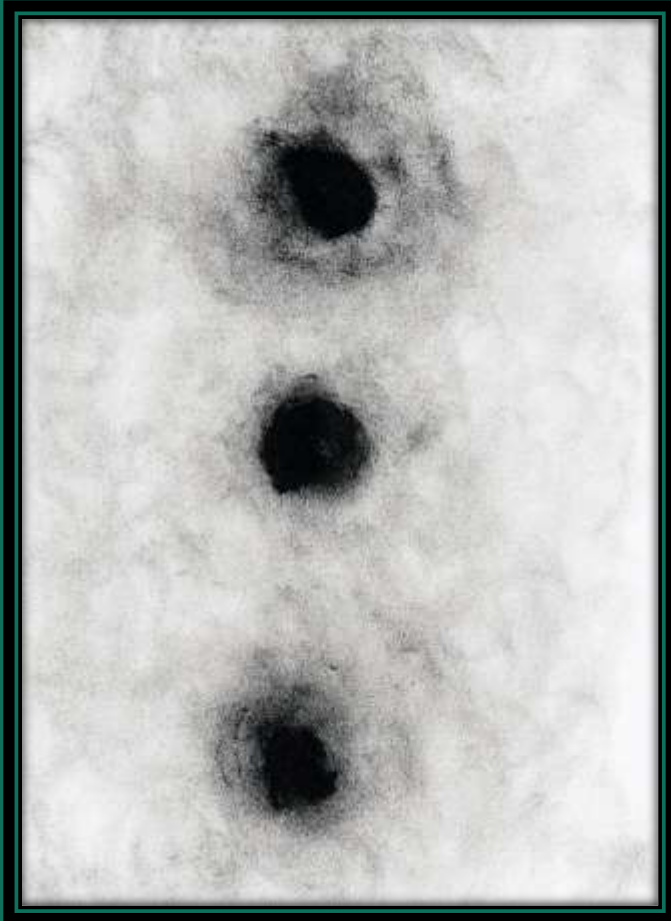
an unspecified sadness lingers these halls
the chipped paint, cracked floor tiles are not exempt
everything inside this structure feels this sadness
it cannot be avoided
it cannot be changed
it just simply is.
for a very long time it has been here
possibly as long as the building has been standing
it will be here long after the living are gone
long after i leave and am gone.

by Tohm Bakelas

The Miracle of Sparrows

watching sparrows caught in a snowstorm
is similar to watching a slow car crash
little wings thrashing against snowflakes the size of lake eerie
against gales that force stationary buildings to sway and dance
these sparrows do not give in
suddenly they multiplied in size
they became as big as contours
i looked around to see if others had witnessed this miracle
but i was alone
and then the sparrows flew away

by Tohm Bakelas



Winter Concert #4
Federico Federici

The Wooden Dragon

by Liza Sofia

When I was 7 years old, my father gifted me a wooden toy dragon on the Christmas of 1864. The little thing was no bigger than his fist, with a slender neck, feline eyes, and a long, spiked tail. Perhaps the most remarkable feature about the beast was its falcon-like wings, adorned with hundreds of intricately carved scales. I named the dragon Henry, and I loved him very dearly. I nearly never let him out of my sight. I kept him underneath my pillow when I went to bed and tucked in the pocket of my trousers at school. I told him about the beautiful, rosy cheeked Jeanette, who wore silk lavender ribbons in her hair, and about the strange Mr. Phillips who never spoke to a soul. Henry sat on the table during supper, and despite my insistence that he use his fire breath to destroy the horrid parsnips mother so often prepared, he was always much too shy. One evening, as I walked home from the schoolhouse, I was approached by the foul, dim witted, atrociously hideous creature known as Edwin Perkins. He told me that his father had said my mother was a whore, so I called his father a swine. He struck me in the nose so forcefully that I fell back. I later discovered that the impact of my fall had broken Henry's tail. I was inconsolably distraught. But when I awoke in the next morning, I found Henry's snapped tail was sharpened to a point so that it looked as if it had never been broken. That's when I understood that dragons were absolutely and undoubtedly real.

When I was 12 years old, my parents told me that I was to be sent off to a boy's school in the north of England. I strongly protest at the idea. I wanted to stay at home and take up bookkeeping like my father, but he refused. He demanded that I receive a proper education and study medicine. I found the idea so horrendous that I refused to speak to neither my mother nor my father. By this age, I had long forgotten about the wooden dragon who now laid dormant in my toy chest, but the morning of my departure, my mother placed it atop my trunk. I picked up the old thing and ran my fingers over the scaly wings and the spiked tail which had inexplicably remedied itself many years ago. I shoved it into the pocket of my coat. At school, I kept the dragon hidden away at the bottom of my drawer.

When I was 16 years old, I was summoned to the headmaster's office during Literature. The room erupted in hissing and snickering. As I walked past the desks, Tommy Wells pulled on the leg of trousers said that I'd better run if I didn't want to find my head on a stake. Headmaster sat me down on the mahogany chair opposite him. He took a deep breath and pinched the bridge of his nose. He told me that he had received a letter from my uncle Harold late last night which stated that my mother and my sister and my father had all died of Tuberculosis, in that very order. I cordially thanked him for informing me and stood up. He called my name and then said something, but I could not quite make it out over the sound of my shoulder colliding with the doorway as I stumbled out of the room. I tore up everything I owned. I broke the glass window. I cracked the wardrobe with my fist and stained the wood with my blood. As I went through my drawers in search of things to destroy, I found the toy dragon. I clutched it to my chest, and I do not recall the rest of the night.

When I was 32 years old, Louise birthed my son Henry, the first of my 4 children. On his first Christmas, I gave him my old wooden dragon. I could tell he cared for it because he bit its tail, leaving his tiny teeth marks behind. Only a few years into his young life, Louise and I were awakened to the sound of his screaming. Louise took our wailing child into her arms and pressed the back of her hand to his forehead. She told me that he had a fever. I said a silent thanks to my departed father who had insisted I study medicine all those years go. I fished a vial of purple liquid from my medicine bag and instructed my wife to administer a dose the start of every second hour. When Louise finally succumbed to fatigue, I took Henry from her limp arms. I thought the night air would do him good. I told him the story of a kind dragon in the sky who would protect him from harm. Perhaps I had imagined it, but I swore I could feel feverish skin instantly begin to cool.

Now, I am so old that I have forgotten my own age. I live in magnificent castle, deep within the forest, with a beautiful young princess named Evaline. She is very kind. She helps me dress and feeds me supper and accompanies me on long walks through the pines. I ask her when my children will return home from school, and

though she tells me that she does not know, I suspect it will be very soon. My wife Louise is always off visiting them. She was always a bit overbearing, but I suppose that is a mother's natural instinct. Even with Eveline to keep me company, I do get rather lonesome. Though, I suppose it's not all terrible. I have a wonderful dragon named Henry who visits me. He is terribly shy, and only comes at night. He has deep lavender scales and yellow eyes. His fire breath is even more incredible than I could have ever imagined- a brilliant white fire which cuts through the air. I feed him loaves of bread which I steal at supper when Evaline is not paying attention.

Today, I see a red automobile stop outside of the castle from my window. How curious. The castle rarely receives guests. A few moments later, there is a knock on my door. Evaline tells me that I have a visitor. I am given no time to prepare myself before a smartly dressed gentleman with black hair with comes inside.

"Hello," He says fondly, "Quite the storm outside wouldn't you say?"

I look to the Evaline

"Is this the prince?"

"No Peter," She says gently, "His name is Henry"

"Henry," I say wistfully, "I have a son named Henry, but he's off at school"

The man's face flushes and his eyes grow red. He whispers something to Evaline and she nods somberly.

"Sorry, have I offended you? You mustn't mind an old man," I chuckle, "I would love to introduce you to my wife Louise, but she is visiting the children up north. I tell her that she must let them be, but I suppose you can never tell a mother what best."

The man shakes his head slowly

"Mother had been dead for 5 years,"

"Has she now?" I blink, "Evaline darling, will you play Debussy's 'Arabesque no.1". Such a lovely piece"

I beckon the young man closer. He sits on the ground beside my wooden rocking chair.

"I would like to introduce you to someone" I say, pointing to the window, "He's quite timid so do not be angry if he does not appear"

The man gives me an odd look

"I don't understa-"

"My dragon. His name is Henry,"

"There is no dragon," the stranger whispers

"Of course, there is."

"Please, Father! There is no-"

Evaline placed a hand on his shoulder and it silences him.

"You must be patient," I say

The stranger and I watch the rain come down. It's silence except for light tittering of drops on the window sill and the sound of sniffles.

My poor visitor must have caught a cold in this atrocious weather.

"Henry, you said his name was?" He says in a heavy voice

"I named him after my son," There is a deep rumbling noise and the sky lights up, "Ah! There he is! Did you see? He must have taken a liking to you,"

The man does not reply.

"Charlie wanted to thank you for the toy dragon," He says finally

"Yes," I say slowly "Tell him to be very careful with it. I think there is someone I'd like to give it to one day,"

The man stands up rapidly and wipes his nose on the sleeve of his coat.

"Ill, are you?"

"Yes," He says hoarsely, "I'm very sorry but I've got to go,"

"If you must," I sigh, "Please do come back soon. It's always terribly quiet in the castle,"

He must have been quite pressed because he does not shake my hand or even look at me before he parts.

"I- it's been a pleasure"

My visitor is gone, and I am left alone with my dragon.



Dark Harbor

Henry Stanton

Hunting for Habeast

Giganticism (n.) –deep in the sea creatures develop to an abnormally large size.

The bottom of the ocean is full of species
Kraken, Isopod, Giant Isopod at sublittoral zero
Benthic for years, a biomass, the thing left its skin on the floor—

to go on down in the deep, and hunt for a Habeast,
gloomy legislation, it scavenges the whale-sharks
squeamish, starving prisoners in snow-fall krill.

Larger pods and giant crustaceans since (I blame the drugs),
in unison dance, in hieroglyphs made
of storms of years, a Habeast looms, Corpus flies back—

A man is down there crying off hinterlands.
The bottom of the ocean has unnamed species laws cannot reach.

by Jonathan Andrew Pérez, Esq.

White Supremacy Pamphlet Long Island, Fall 1964

The State's offer after
affected your immigration status
on parole. You just got work, feet up, &
pretend cruelty killed your dreams,

but the intellect controls.
Franz Fanon, resist, Baraka beard
down to your chest, thick rims
worn bluesily.

A Farmingdale College major in theater:
from your garage blasted
Elton John, Philadelphia Freedom.
Anonymous cherub from a Walmart
sale, left on the porch, winded,
to scare you like Seventh Day
Adventist beneath a cracked crib
to Christmas, overblown.

Cooper's Hawk swooped, cameras
covered in cobwebs. The orange scented
candle emanated down the tree-lined
stillness. *Day laborers not welcome here:*
no speaky English, no job, not your Land
in the distilled distance. Why start
to roam? A citizen's safety patrol,
an homage to the winter – frozen bark
clung to community, dark,
skeptical & resilient but still
in existence despite blowing leaves.

Who called the police on the neighbors— who
refused to be interviewed
by the long skein of stark voices, at 3am?

Who had the idea of intruder?

The tea kettle blasted, years later,
blue-gray rug, large Oak in Huntington,
not-assimilated family outside,
smoking long drawls on cigars,
cigarillo, & dipping white cigarettes.

In the distance flocks of American Pipits
scrambled from the Hawk,
searched barren forests among the liminal
suburban woods,
where all was historically undernourished.

by Jonathan Andrew Pérez, Esq.

The Broken Ivory Tower

Tower (n.) in awe like reverence

OF A White Pastoral: All is crystal and invigorating at the lake,
two boys prowl the reflective depths,
two brown trout snap at the undertow of divers,
the last of the vacationers stream, skewer in ferries back home.

Tow-ber, (n.) to make believe to feel, not steal

All is crystal and invigorating at the lake.
An osprey laments the shiver in the wind sheer
for a fish.
A damsel fly bejeweled like a bloodstone jasper sphere
mistakes a sheen for a gem.
Crustaceous filaments are maybe no more than fuselage that careen.

To- ber: (n.) an object who may never exist

All is not crystal and invigorating at the lake.
It is I that have not made it out of existence,
it is I who was left out in a dry sweep, a morsel remained
on the granite.
There, inherent shams of watergliders mistook puddles
for a not-inert signal.
There, this crack will become a serious fissure.

Broken tower (n.): to careen, newer usage

What was left of me were those who could never pronounce my name,
evergreens on terraces made whole by a family of doctors,
by Cape Cod shuttles by Wall Street
by fireplaces in Vermont
by long weekends, by blonded children.

What was left of me lay fragmented,
recorded in a false conviction.

All was not white pastoral.

by Jonathan Andrew Pérez, Esq.



Writhe
by Anna Martin

Miasma

Twenty years ago, a bull moose died in the yard.
It made for excellent small talk.
How would you deal with a rotting husk?
You pour cement over it, someone advised. Then you airlift it out.
Everyone laughed at that, and then forgot.
But the stench lingered for a year,
And still we stumble on the bones.

by Ethan Warren

Three Things That Happened on the Night He Was Discharged

She made him fair trade decaf with organic cream.
She'd picked up two pounds of beans that morning
From the little gourmet market that opened while he was gone.
She'd bought so much more than they needed.
She'd wanted everything perfect.

He said as little as possible and never met her eyes,
But touched his wrists compulsively,
And when she blew out a candle,
For one blessed moment he lost himself
Watching the milky thread unravel from the ashen wick.

Their daughter gathered all her drawings of him in the bathtub,
And the letter that said she'd never forgiv him,
And everything sharp she could find.
She shoved it all under her bed, then extinguished her Mother Goose lamp,
Closed her eyes, and prayed she'd sleep one hundred years.

by Ethan Warren

A Bit After Seven on Tuesday Morning

A newborn mouse clung to life in the kitchen,
Where I nearly kicked it as I filled the kettle,
And then unconsciously decided it was a he,
And that he was dead.
But his minuscule entirety quaked.

After whole minutes of paralysis,
I put a glass over his shivering frame,
And slid a piece of cardstock beneath,
Then took him outside like a bothersome spider,
Leaving him on a rock to wave barely perceptible limbs at no one.

What an easy symbol, I joked later.
If I used it in fiction, you'd roll your eyes.
And I waited for someone to explain to me that symbolism,
So I might know why I still find myself short of breath,
My mind echoing with silent cries.

by Ethan Warren



Disruption in Paradise
Ronald Walker

Skin-deep.

Love is not
So thinly spinned. I freed Your soul from your skin Like
pomegranate you were All seeds and silk red
A robin's breast
A brave new breed.

by Cristina Carvajal



Untitled
Tara Cronin

Federico, Graying at the Temples

for poet Federico García Lorca, Jun 5, 1898 - Aug 19, 1936

Federico, I can almost imagine you decades later, had you lived.
Silver spidering your veins already sung with crystal, springing forth
Into your hair. Gray touches at each temple. A streak through your widow's peak.
You would touch your fingers to piano keys and all that silver would dance.
Deep, melancholy bells clanging in the sunshine,
Then turning to Gatsby jazz, a white man's Harlem,
The black elevator boys of Columbia University never dreaming
That their daughters
Would bring books into lecture halls, sing outside of church
From the floor of Congress, the U.N., within laboratories,
Courtrooms, and hospitals, delivering babies as esteemed doctors.
True artists bring forth justice and life.
Federico, your widow has giant bosoms. Your Virgin Mary
Has golden skin and breasts of snow. Your black men
Have no daughters.
Your imagination in that respect leaves me cold.
Had you lived, older and wiser, the eyes of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Would have reflected into your eyes like honey.
You would have sung the song of the March on Washington
In Andalusian Spanish: Free at Last, Free at Last.
Not satisfied until justice rolled down like waters
And righteousness like a mighty stream—
Like Whitman's Hudson River. Like your río Guadalquivir.

by Karen Poppy



Wakin'yan
Mick O'Seasnain



Arcanum Sunset
Mick O'Seasnain

Mutatis Mutandis

by Amber Wozniak

Afterwards, when our secret was spilled crimson and hot across Asteria, gulped into the gaping, eager mouths of men, no one knew what to do with us. The grandfathers had been warned of our wicked ways long ago, and clucked their tongues, spitting at our feet. Our parents wiped the blood like rouge from our cheeks, laid our heads to their laps, locked the doors against our backs after tucking us safe. And the Grandmothers were silent. They pulled us to our feet and regarded us with heavy lidded eyes. Exhausted, we cried then, but we knew that we were changed. We were wild inside.

*** Hero amongst us was always most beloved. The Mutatus came to her first, as all things did. The moon dipped its mouth, crescent and full, to Hero's anxious cheeks. They blossomed, blooms of dark hair smattered across her throat and face. She'd stare into the mirror, rubbing her silken finger tips up, then down, then up, then down across the thick bristles. It felt like electricity, she said. Or like grass across a grave.

After the hair came the hunt, which manifested in two ways. The forests sang to Hero. She'd answer with a hunger like a palpable anger in her stomach, devouring beasts and berries alike. When the speed and lupine features followed, it did not scare her. Rather, she found a lightness in her heart with which she could be quicker, sharper, more dangerous. She hunted larger prey and was, for a moment, satisfied.

The desire for a different type of feast, between mouths and legs of men and women alike, was more foreign. But in all manners, she did feed.

Relle was next to receive the Goddess's gift, the first to notice that her transformation grew stronger with the waxing moon, reached crescendo with the full, and left her bare and exhausted by the new. She spent days wandering through the trees that now glistened like emeralds, auscultating the sounds within the forest and within herself. Her hunt was one of patience, and of love. The animals would lay themselves at her feet, and as she sunk her teeth into the wafers of their skin, took in the sweet wine that flowed freely from their veins, a seraphic peace flowed from the ground below and into the heavens above, through her very ribs and bones.

At this time, the carnal needs did not present themselves. The hair, however, appeared in full. Relle's body was swathed in a matted down, unyielding to depilatories or razors. After a month of tearing the fur and skin from her face, she went once again to the

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forest. The night was barren of the moon's celestial glow, and she thought she may never see beauty again. She tore through the darkness, massacring for the sake of needing to control, to destroy. The next day, the sun did not shine on her carnage. Nor would the animals lay at her feet again, though she didn't know it then. She dragged her hollow bones to the edge of the forest. Blood like lead, she sunk to the damp, earthy ground.

Then, Relle did not have anyone to miss her. She slept, a reprieve from the sickness that comes of being made half mad by the missing moon. On the third day she rose again, awoken by the lye taste of loneliness thick in the air. She set off in search of the other aching soul.

Relle stumbled upon Hero curled beneath a weeping willow, bathed in sunlight and blood like florets of amaryllis against the snow. Hero arose and offered Relle red-stained lips that waxed into a smile, and her hand. The women embraced. Though their bodies were strangers, a small bluebird within each of their chests beat toward each other, and each girl thought home.

This was Relle's most treasured time once it was all done. The air was flavored with a true sense of abandon, of wildness. Hero would have agreed, had she been able to look back with a certain fondness unburdened by what had already happened, and what was to come.

Come. This was Hero's favorite word. Come, she'd insist, taking Relle by the hand. They'd traverse the forest, hundreds of acres to lose themselves in. It was Hero who brought Relle to the cool, crisp cave behind a waterfall all but forgotten. Who taught her where to find the meatiest kill. Who showed her how to use the glamour that would disguise the wolfish features and hair that overtook them on certain nights, and the delight that came from that other hunt. They were regaled with the feast of hopes, and fears, and uncertainty that comes from laying with humans on the naked earth. Ticked as their guests would awake the next morning, wandering and wondering from the forest as if they had been in the presence of gods. Sated, in finding comfort in each other once the others had gone. Yes, it was Hero who pulled Relle's mouth toward her own, who whispered sweetly, come. And she did.

Eleanor was the next and last overcome by our affliction. A violent lust for sinew and bone brought her body to tremors. At first, she resolved to steady her heart against the sin festering within. This worked, for a time. But as the Worm Moon came to a quick, so did her appetency, and strength.

We found her in a boathouse by the lake, howling, crawling, lashing. Her young brother Adam, bitten, terrified, trusting, backed against a wall and clutching his side where she had started to

tear. We overtook her, our feral sister, our rabid sister, pressing her body to a muddy slice of floor where the moon shone. We stroked and soothed her, and, later, taught her control. But her brother ever after had nightmares of the animal that dragged him from his bed, and she forever had eyes like glass, smudged and hollow. But she was ours.

And so we were complete. Three women edging toward the ever-undulating shores of maturity, swimming still in the primitive littoral of youth. Perhaps this is why we didn't question the Mutatus. Early adulthood is often spent navigating what is permissible when you are, at long last, your own ward and keeper. It's a mammalian dance that asks us to create our own steps, so long as they are chosen from what has already been sanctioned by the social order. Our heavenly malady of hair and hunt, we knew, was not part of that list. Relle sometimes talked of a Goddess that came to her in dreams, dressed in love or in wrath, but never both. The Moon Maiden would wipe tears from Relle's cheeks, tell her all about the world and the gift and the change. But she could never remember the instruction, just the word Mutatus, change, and we did not question beyond this. If only we had. Instead, we spent a summer in the forest, stealing from the harsh plastic trappings of responsibility to radiate amongst a world of soft, mossy green. Sundays were our best days, our most blessed days, when we were absolved of all obligations, free to spend an entire day communing with our wolfish selves. Relle and Hero spent hours chasing small prey, or each other. Mouths broke skin in nectarous communion, animalistic love. They would wrestle each other, biting and pulling on haunches and elbows. Somehow, Relle would always end up on top, to the cheers of Elle who watched from the distance. Hero would laugh, pleased to have helped, or allowed, the quiet gatherer to find her strength. They'd rush afterwards to their sweet Ellie, careful to never hurt the younger woman who, after that first night, was too afraid to fully transform. We coaxed and prodded, but she'd just finger the small red string on her wrist, an earnest gift meant to be a bracelet from young Adam, one that he made for himself as well. An apology for something he couldn't put into words, that he wasn't sure he was guilty of. Sun soaked, sparkling, drunk on the communion of sisterhood, we did not push her then. We understood that to Ellie, this was no endowment of an unnamed Goddess to waste, as only the young can, on idle happiness, but a sickness.

Sinful, she called the Mutatus once. The shaky glamour she wore at all times made her weak. It was a staticky force that seemed to hum through her body with a manic energy. She'd refuse to kill, only eating what little Hero would force upon her. At first it was out

of pity for the empty girl who did not realize that her typical human fare would no longer sate her. But as time went on, Hero became aggressively displeased with Ellie's choice.

"Turn off that shimmering sham," Hero would snarl at Ellie, more than once. "It's making me sick. No one can see you here anyway."

Self-conscious, the glamour would burst bright until Ellie was a mere caricature of human deluged with wolf.

She did once surrender to the beauty of the Mutatus, but only once, and only because of Hero. It was our first Sunday as a trio in a month, Elle having missed several to care for her young brother while her parents were elsewhere (it's funny how little we really knew of each other, how little we really cared for what bogged us down during the day-to-day. We couldn't have told you who or where her parents were. Just that we were weakened by her absence, that for some reason, we all needed to be together to be at our full, much to the frustration of Hero). Relle and Hero lazed, for once, on the muddy shore, satiated after a day of hunt. They discussed, as they often did, what they may do with their gift. Hero, as always, wanted to espouse vigilante justice, using their strength and wit to destroy. Relle wanted to heal, to use her new knowledge of flora and fauna to create soul nurturing tinctures, and to grow words like salve for the hurting hearts of mankind.

On this day, they happened to turn to Ellie, asking how she wanted to honor the Mutatus. She was floating, belly up, just above the surface of the dipping lake. She always preferred her lakes, her sun. Sighing, she let us know that we had time, ages really, to figure it out.

An eerie wind whipped through the trees. Relle was chilled, uncomfortable by the pale stamp of the Barley Moon that flourished above in the same sky as the sun. It was then, with Hero by Relle's side, Elle years away in the lake, when the buck approached.

It walked to the water, perhaps noticing us, perhaps not. Before dipping its head it turned to Relle and for a moment, met eyes with the girl. She was reminded of the animals that would lay at her feet, sustaining her for those moons ago she was still learning how to be alive. For a moment, her heart broke. She turned instead to Hero, who only had eyes for the deer. Hero snarled, a smile thick on her lips. And, as had happened so many times before, she started after the creature, and Relle followed.

It was poor judgement on the deer's part to jump forward into the lake, having been cornered and shocked by the wolfish figures behind it. It was even worse judgement on Ellie's part to have gotten in the way of Relle and Hero, even if by accident, as they lunged toward the creature. There was a tangle of legs and arms,

kicking through the still water, as woman and beast fought wildly. The buck made its escape in the madness and Ellie cried out as her arm became caught in Hero's mouth. Hero snarled at the girl, and after a brief tussle they sloshed back to the shore.

"Elle," Hero roared. "Stop holding us back!" Ellie bristled for a moment, then turned to make herself a spot on the bank in the warmth of the sun.

Hero rushed to the girl, grabbing her by the shoulder. "No. Hunt with us."

Elle refused, at first. Hemmed and hawed, until Relle coaxed her, gently, patiently, to hear the growling in her own stomach and to satisfy it with a meal. Sensing a losing battle, she did.

The chase was clumsy at first. Hero and Relle, at their full power beneath the moon, loped through the trees with a seasoned knowledge of both their bodies and the forest. Ellie stumbled behind, the glamour heavy on her skin. However, once she caught the rich smell of meat Eleanor began to move quickly with agility. She soon surpassed the women ahead of her. Relle looked upon the change with a warm heart. Hero picked up her speed.

The buck was in sight, but so were its predators. It crashed through the trees, a blind race toward freedom it wouldn't complete. Hero and Eleanor were now moving earnestly toward the prey, not feeling the branches as they tore at their skin, laughing as they moved. The wind cried through their fur, a resistance, a catalyst. They finally caught it, Relle watching from behind, and as Hero went to sink her teeth into its thick skin Eleanor moved forward and took the first bite. The deer was knocked to the ground, just out of Hero's grasp. Hero snarled once again, vicious and violent for having been denied her kill a second time. She moved not toward the buck, but instead toward the girl. For once, Eleanor made a move to fight back. Relle blanched. Surely, Hero would kill the inexperienced woman beneath her.

The heavy crunch and snap of human feet and voices trampling the forest sent Relle into action. She reached for Hero, and as she clamped onto her shoulder Hero directed her rage toward the motion. She, her mouth opened and lunged, coming inches from Relle's face. Catching herself only as their eyes met. She seemed confused for a moment, watching as Relle trembled slightly. But the latter had only a second to fear, before she pulled both Hero and Eleanor into the bushes. "Humans," she hissed.

In an instant Ellie was back into the glamour, all of her power gone. She stumbled after the women as they made their way quickly, quietly, from the deer that lay wide eyed and still bleeding from the stomach. Their heightened senses allowed them to smell the

stench of masculinity and hear them as they mocked the deer. They made crude jokes, and the girls could envision the obscene gestures they were pantomiming with the dying animal.

Hero shook. "This," she spat at Elle, "is the shape you prefer to take? Those are the animals you want to become?"

Shame washed over Ellie, but she did not respond. "It's suffering,"

Relle whined softly, "to be so disrespected. And on the cusp of leaving this world." She made to turn back.

"Relle!" Hero gripped her arm firmly. "You already know why you can't go back there."

Ellie agreed, begging Relle to think of what three men might do to three vulnerable women, alone in the forest. Hero stopped and turned, shoving her forward, hard.

"Wide-eyed Ellie," she sneered as Elle fell to the ground. "No one can do anything to us anymore."

*** As time passed, the foliage and our pelts ignited into a luminescent auburn. Lazy, listless in the early autumn sun, we snapped at the leaves as they floated toward the earth on an unhallowed breeze. They evaded our muzzles, and we were all the hungrier because of it.

It was the first moon since the harvest, and we needed a feast.

Beneath the fattened light of the Hunter's Moon, Hero told us to use our glamour like fatigues. Matching step, eyes ahead, we made our way toward the town. It was easy to find others to partake in our drunken revelry, coaxed with alcohol and the promise of company with three women blessed with celestial savagery. We found our humans at a bar in town and courted them back into the forest, where we stoked a fire that extended toward the Goddess, flames lapping at the fingertips of trees. We swayed amongst ourselves, dancing headily to the crackling beat of the fire and our own voices. We roared, and our shadows cast amongst the trees seemed to shout back. Were we three, or six, or 100? We could not have told you then.

After a time, the wind began to move through the trees, wild and vociferous as Ellie the night we found her in the broken and dirty room by the lake. The clouds hid the moon, but it prickled in our veins. Moon drunk, blood drunk, whisky drunk, the glamour began to slip. Hero looked bored, mostly. Like her skin itched. She looked toward Relle, who was laughing with her human while she kept one eye toward Hero. Their eyes met, and at the extension of Hero's arm and open palm, Relle left her guest.

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"Hero," Relle slurred. "My Hero." Hero took Relle's hands into her own, pressing forehead to forehead and digging her nails

deep, secure, into the other woman's palms. "Relle," she sighed, clear voice and cloudy eyes. "Aren't you sick of this yet? I mean, all this power and we do nothing with it. We need more." She closed her eyes. "I don't want to tuck it behind a glamour. I don't want to hide anymore. Sometimes I dream that locusts are crawling from my mouth. Sometimes I dream our rivers have turned to blood."

Relle furrowed her brow, foggy from the liquor. How could anyone be sick of this, when this was bare feet on a warm earth, a clan connected by the sharing of fervor and blood?

"Oh, Relle," Hero sighed knowing she was misunderstood, taking her into an embrace. She whispered, "We are the Goddess's most favored, most blessed. Where would I want to be but here?"

It was Elle who interrupted their moment, a discordant yelp aching loudly into the night. Her hurt ached through them before they heard it, carried on the wind through to their bones. "Relle," she sobbed. "Hero. What about me?"

"Oh, Ellie," Relle turned toward the girl, extending her arm, palm down. "You, too."

"No," Elle, aching alone, fell to the ground in a fit of tears on the other side of the fire. Her voice called through it to them, "Where do I belong?"

As Hero began to roll her eyes, one of the humans, a man, grabbed Ellie's arms. He shushed her, pulling her to her feet and pulling her toward the forest. She wouldn't need to be alone, he insisted. He had somewhere he could take her that was real nice, real far. His vulturine grin all but already picked her apart.

"No," she turned and twisted. "Stop." She told us later she only remembered his hot breath, singeing through her hair and razing her flesh. But we saw her straighten, push back and growl. We saw her glamour flicker off, a staticky and non-committal call for help within herself. But, having hid the Mutatus for so long, it could not espouse her when most needed. Her eyes fell dead as the man took in her halfling change, grabbing at the hair that now speckled her face. One human, a girl, stood silent and dazed. The other, a man, began to weep. Elle's captor pulled a knife from his pocket, swiping and sneering at the fur on her cheeks. Though shallow, it did sting.

For a moment, the world was still. Bloody, but wound quickly healing, Elle turned her flat eyes toward our Hero. The silent woman grabbed the hand of the weeping man, pulled him quietly into the woods and back from whence they came.

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For a moment, the world was still. But only for a moment, because Hero answered Elle's call with one of her own to the Goddess within her, transforming in full. The change was hideous, and resplendent. She was feral, back arched and snout long. Muscles

pulsed, mouth twitched. The man had no sooner finished the swipe of his knife than Hero was on him, his body yielding to her sovereignty. His back hit the ground and her fingertips sunk into his skin, nailing him to the earth. Saliva dripped from her mouth, and we could smell the patch of urine gathering on the man's crotch. Tearing her nails from his shoulder with a sharp sucking noise, she swiped at his face. A deep mark formed, just like Ellie's. Unlike Ellie's, we knew it would be long before it healed. She went for another swipe, one to take his life. Teeth bared, we did not know whether she would tear his face with her teeth or hands. We didn't find out.

Just as quickly as Hero had moved, Relle was on her and knocked her to the ground. "What?" Hero spat, twitching. The girls tumbled, Relle landing on top. Hero moved to strike Relle, unwilling to once again surrender, but contained herself. She shook with the effort. "You would let him live? He blasphemies our sister, our Goddess, our very selves!"

Relle looked into Hero's eyes and was overtaken by a quietness that thrummed softly in her heart. It was a gentle vibration that pulled her attention inward, and without.

"Let him go." Hero howled in anger, Elle cried for restitution. But the man scrambled away, and they did not give chase. Elle collapsed. Her body was still half transformed, a grotesque and heaving chimera. The world slowed as Hero shouted to Relle, nails once again digging deep into palms as she told her not to ever, ever, decide for the group again.

Relle, for her part, remained silent and turned toward the distance, watching the storm clouds gather ahead. It must have been long past midnight, but the sky glowed red and the moon was nowhere to be seen.

*** Ellie did not return to us again until the Mourning Moon sang its sorrowful lament across the obsidian sky. For weeks Hero spoke her name only with bitter condemnation, hysterical at their weakened state for the sake of missing their third. But then Elle's Adam also went missing, gone from his bed during the night, and the prodigal daughter was forced to return to her sacrilegious sisters once again.

It was Hero that first suggested we scour the forest, and Elle who found Adam's fingers among the dirt. Little petals of flesh mottled bone sprouting heavenward from an inky dream where the

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rain had swept away the earth. "A hastily hidden secret is quickly revealed," Hero sneered, blocking the bone from sacrosanct kiss of the moon. "Wants to be revealed, likely."

"Stop, Hero," Relle pulled Ellie toward her. The small girl had frantically dug into the dirt, pulling from the earth a small arm

with a band of red tied across it. She cradled it, her tears making dusty streaks across the soiled arm.

"Boy, little Elle, did you certainly enjoy a hunt without us last night," Hero laughed. "I thought we had taught you better than this."

Relle was aghast, and for a moment, moved to charge at Hero. But as Elle sobbed that she didn't, couldn't have been the one to murder her brother, Relle noticed that she looked doubtful herself. Earlier, she had claimed that she did not remember the past few nights, overtaken by a feverish craze from having hidden so long from the moonlight. Feral as that first night we had found her. Abject, she fell from Relle's arms and dug further into the dirt, knowing instinctively that there was nothing to be found. No secret ever wants to be revealed in full.

Hero rolled her eyes as Relle pulled the girl toward her again. "Ellie, he was holding you back. I don't blame you, Relle won't blame you." She moved toward our Elle. "Sometimes we destroy the things that hold us back."

Hero stopped, suddenly sensing the prickling eyes of the forest and of Eleanor and Relle on her exposed pelt and dirt caked nails, obscene smudges of wilderness that matched their own. Eleanor's glamour flared in a visible burst of light before snuffing out, shocks of electricity moving through Relle's fingertips causing her to release the woman. Our languished sister ululated deep, doleful into the night. The wind stood still.

In that moment, each and every one of us was bathed in the damning light of the censuring sky, drenched in a torrent of guilt. And I, cursed keeper of us all, must unburden my soul.

Not long before the night of our convicted feast, I had sat with Ellie at the edge of the water while Hero hunted. "Relle," I can still hear Ellie's ever-troubled voice implore to me. "Stay with me." I did, wanting to provide comfort as she cried once again over her family who caused so much pain, but who she could not abandon for Adam's sake. Elle was tied to us, and to Adam, and to a multitude of worlds we did not see that left her tautened and forever in between. This was something Hero could not understand. She moved with a recusant dexterity within all terrenes, devoted to none. Not even, I think though I desired it desperately, to me.

Despite the vast solitude Hero contained, she knew more of Elle's plight than she realized. She longed to leave Asteria for larger forests, for quests of purpose. She could not stay here. Without us, she could not leave. Her frustration quickened to a cloudburst that left a mangled monstrosity of bloodied flesh and fur in its wake. She hunted without the glamour, or love, or purpose and was all the more

beautiful for it. Her lips tasted of bitter wormwood, a taste I long for still.

While I watched the carnage from the safety of the sandy shore, Ellie watched me. She saw with the observant eye that belongs only to others who are forever in servitude to their love, recognized and sought to save a kindred spirit.

“Relle, why do you always follow Hero? You’re stronger. You’re quicker. You could lead us,” she begged of me. “She isn’t all you think her to be.”

If I listened, perhaps the Goddess would not have rescinded her gift. Perhaps Hero, or Eleanor, or whoever lay Adam to the cool earth would have fought the bestial instinct that had led them to it. If maybe I had talked more of the earthy radiance that comes from the sun and moon joining together, I could have kept the heavens in sync. But I didn’t. Instead, I surrendered worship of the gentle earth and moon for the fire that consumed it. And consume it did, as Eleanor lunged at Hero, and the two girls fought, a blur. I did not try to tear them apart, an outer peace telling me once again that sometimes you need to raze the earth for new growth. But as Eleanor struck a blow to Hero’s face, I was overtaken by the same force that had moved me to tackle the latter as she moved to kill the man in the forest, a force deep from within. I sprung toward Eleanor and pulled her back, knocking her to the ground with a heavy thud. Hero grinned, pleased as ever at my displays of strength and turned to make her escape. Eleanor lay gasping as I searched, as I would always search, for my Hero.

I stumbled upon her at the base of the weeping willow. No moonlight shone, and flowers lay dead and crunched beneath her calves and stomach. She stank of the blood that congealed between her teeth and fingernails. She looked to me, fierce, and snapping. I recognized her body, the hair that matched my own, the fearsome glint in her eye. But, search as I might, I could not see her soul.

I reached for the wild woman beneath me, and quick as the flitting of a bird escaping a cat, Eleanor was behind me. I was thrown to the ground, and the last thing I saw was Hero’s eyes in a moment of recognition, as she reached for me and Eleanor took her throat in her mouth. An anguished cry left us all, and we went forever into mourning, alone once more.

Eleanor and I buried Hero’s body beneath our willow, with Adam’s arm. It seemed to sprout from a gash in her ribs, a grotesque story of creation and destruction framed in a single moment. Eventually, there would be an investigation. A tale of a bloody struggle with some form of animal that had to be believed, given there was no evidence to the contrary. A society not quick to embrace

two dirty, bloody girls ripped from a forest snarling fierce laughter and tears into the night, but left with no other choice than to do just that.

The Mutatus rescinded its saccharine curse after Hero's sacrifice. I was glad for it. There was hardly an after without her, let alone one rich with earthly dominance and delight. Eleanor and I too went our separate ways. I lost my sisters and myself, traded for a sickening guilt from which I will never be absolved. My penance is to live forever in a half-life, knowing what we once were and will never again become. Sometimes, I remember the day Eleanor begged me to stay with her amongst the demons that always did, always will, plague her. The day she caught me caught in Hero's rays of light. The day she begged me to lead. "You know," she laughed when I shook my head at her blasphemous plea. "Hero is as wild as your devotion is strong. And neither of you are happy."

I still think of that often when the wind howls beneath the moon.



Primordial Geology Transpose
John Timothy Robinson

How a Hurricane Reminds Me of a Vagina And My Father

Screaming cats
damp with naivety
and wrath.

The churning
uncertainty
of a unified
storm front

that no one ever takes seriously.

Until,
it is soaked,
saturated,
and full of

scared
little people.

Too many paths
for it take

to trust it
and wash it

clean.

The eyes
are a perpetual concoction

of sticky Kool-Aid and
stiff blue jays.

It can bleed out
and then blow out

a soul.

by Christina Fulton

My father committed suicide on March 10, 2011 in Rahway, New Jersey. The next day a 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck the pacific coast of Tohoku. It triggered a tsunami, landslides, and several nuclear meltdowns. 15, 891 people died in the north eastern part of Japan.

During the media machine's frantic coverage on the 12th there was a spatial convergence in between the vortexes of dry heaving and screaming. Everything snotty smeared across time zones. I could not stop crying for 15, 892 people and being infuriated with just

/ いち¹.

In Other News...

by Christina Fulton

¹ The Japanese symbol for one.



Evanesce
Kiley Winkelhake

American Girl

is who I was when I danced in summer
grass twirling a sweater, its neck wrung
around my waist. American Girl
is who I was in the bathtub, telling my penis
it wasn't real, commanding it to invert, to be
true. American Girl was me the summer I became
a mermaid in a creek so swollen with rain I hoped
maybe it was pregnant with my true body.
American Girl is wheat stalks and corn silk growing
out of my head. American Girl was the color of my skin
when you made me cry; you called me gay, but I'm
not. I love men; I kiss men; I enter men; Men enter me
until I'm so pregnant with summer I scream
in sunflower and thunderstorm.
Do you see me? I'm the American
Mother, giving birth to the sky line, the red
the gold and green of the summer, of lightning
bugs and porch lights, of a little girl
twirling in a big red skirt
praying that summer might never end,
just as she's supposed to.

by Matthew Fash

In the Nunnery of Water

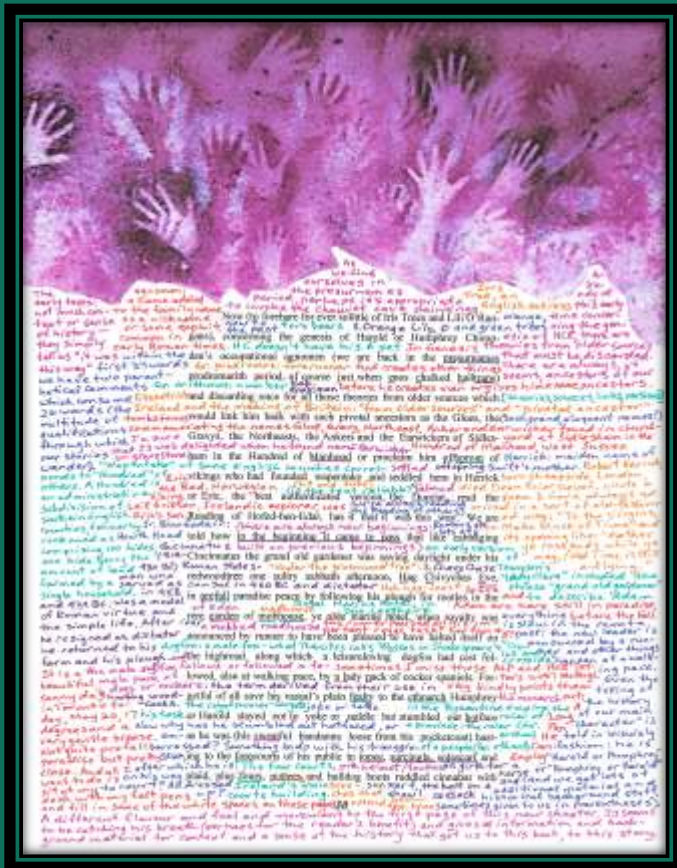
I was born there, between water
and sand. The water was clear
exactly once. Then, I could see
all things playing out just right,
like a memory germinating
into my inner earth; only
movement could change
the outcome. Movement
muddled the future. The creek
is not perfect, but it was home
despite the snakes and leeches
and movement. I was a mermaid
in a Midwestern creek so clear
it was a religion; my vows
were a song that sounded
so much like the wind kissing
oak leaves and the clearest water;
like tree roots baptizing a mermaid
who had no business being
anywhere else but in the wet;
like rocks softening to the touch
of a creek's harsh love and a mermaid's
last song. I did not sing a love song
when all I know are elegies about water
and movement and a future I will never
see coming.

by Matthew Fash

Prescribed Burn

The doctor told me to let go
of the past and move forward
like open air. He wrote me a script
but I can't bring myself to memorize
the lines: *I'm fine. Everything is okay.*
There are no problems. I was not made
this way to suffer, so the farmer gave me
a torch and showed me what happens
to a field after it's been burned down
to bones. I saw the little growths, the rotten
layers stripped away like sun burnt flesh.
The doctor says burning is a bad idea,
but he doesn't know that I've been burning
for a thousand years. Those days are over. I'm
ready for the new millennium, for the undersoil
to show me what it's made of, for the wild flowers
to germinate, to teach me what it means to be on fire.

by Matthew Fash



Lots of Fun with Finnegans Wake #30

Peter O'Brien

Cursive

by Mitchell Grabois

Every mama armadillo bears identical quadruplets, who recall the four quadrants of the Earth, the South and West from whence she came, the North and East to which she travels. She and her children push on, make their steadfast way, going where God wants them to go, God's beloved "turtle rabbits," as the Aztecs called them.

They keep their heads down, watch for predators, coyotes bobcats raccoons. Their shells are not always perfect protection. They cultivate humility. They move north. They move east. The children grow, and every female armadillo bears identical quadruplets, who recall the four quadrants of the Earth.

When I was a child, my parents were members of the Cult of the Sacred Armadillo so, though we owned little, we had secret knowledge, which was helpful to us, as we moved a lot. Cursive handwriting was taught in third grade in my last school, but in second in my new, so I missed Cursive, and my teacher curled her lip at me when I asked for help. She thought I was scum, a homeless kid, mom probably a crack head, dad a deadbeat, missing in action.

He was missing in action, but in Afghanistan. In my imagination he was tunneling out of a cave like a red earthworm, persistent, tireless, digging from one continent to another, digging his way to me, aided by the power of the Sacred Armadillo, who had not abandoned him. One day he would emerge in sunshine, head first, like an infant but without the squalling, with a big smile. See... I made it.

The teacher still wouldn't teach me Cursive so I made up my own curves, modeled after the locks of the dark-haired girl who sat in front of me. The teacher grabbed the paper from my desk showed it around to everyone, and they all laughed, laughed at the kid with the holes in his tennis shoes, everyone except the dark-haired girl. She recognized herself in my home-made cursive.

She saw her reflection, and it was the only validation she had received for as long as she could remember. She had her own story, as I found out later.

Sibling Rivalry

by Mitchell Grabois

The Virgin Mary, through antonomasia, was expected to prevail in the souls of the people of New Spain, meaning that she was a symbol of goodness.

When my brother used that word, he lost me, but he doesn't care if he loses me. Though a priest, he's still subject to sibling rivalry. He enjoys being smarter and more holy than I. I work in a sawmill. He resides on a higher plane.

When he used that word, I wrote it down and looked it up on my laptop. I first checked Wikipedia. It said that antonomasia is a substitution of any epithet for a proper name, such as "the little corporal" for Napoleon, and that the reverse process is also called antonomasia which only confused me, but I read some more and finally figured it out. By that time my brother had gone.

The custodian has the kind of protruding belly that makes me feel that it is more than fat. I believe she has a tumor. I'm like a dog. I can smell cancer deep in my sinuses. She dusts fragments of ancient columns in a niche in the wall. She is the only one in her family who works for the city. The director loves her—she keeps the museum so clean. The director will be sad if she dies of cancer. He has known her for forty years. Her sisters work stalls in the Mercado. The filth there offends her, the stench, the flies. When she was young, she was not offended. Now she won't even visit her sisters there. They think she is haughty because she works inside an air-conditioned, three-story building for the city, but they forgive her. One of her sisters worries about the custodian's health. This sister doesn't know why, but she worries. She is like me. She is also a dog. She senses things she doesn't know.



Act II of The Unruly Hair Portraits
J. E. Crum



Act IV of The Unruly Hair Portraits
J. E. Crum

Final Canticle, on the Tools for Cultivation of Our Own Secret Garden

Without having to think exactly, our consensual hearts (colored like Adonis's petals) know that the right tool for tilling lies somewhere beneath the frost-buckled crust, just in front of a long pile of broken obelisks.

This right tool will carve out rot, plaster up rabbit-gnawed carrots, reverse ears of corn inside husks, talk to lawn spiders, geyser aerated water every thirty-two minutes, have a pink-plateaued handle, loll around the corner of the tool shed between uses, smell like my girlfriend's arm on early weekend mornings, shoot electric bolts of horse energy into the dirt, clear a path through a closed winter garden like a Soviet icebreaker, between plunges into the earth enlist nematodes for a metal concert, and will not ever be disfranchised.

Below the Technicolor roots of this garden—exactly what is happening?—the humus is twisted in inordinate complexity, isomorphic to dust clouds in the Horsehead Nebula. Even darker human sources in an upstairs garden apartment contemplate a complete massacre of the squashes. Here and there are pictographs of beets starved by the domination of the ash tree.

A desperate charisma reigns. It attaches to the spade, the hoe, the quailing hand-plow. But when we dig in, the garden's heat alchemizes us, and so we become transeunt.

by R. J. Keeler

The Standard Model

*The Standard Model will stand as one of
humanity's most...profound achievements....*
—Science, 22 June 2017

Charm:

Silly, isn't it, all we have is time, but not time for things like stupid
dharma tongs or flowers with petals
and stamens.

Exactly now, with so many out-of-work architects extant, what happened to our
signal, to our old timeless, way of building?

*It is a process which brings order out of nothing
but ourselves; it cannot be attained,
but will happen of its own accord,
if we will only let it.*

What are the stakes in this sanctified game; games of heart, of stasis, games
of lone insects and of leg throbs?

Tan:

Whenever a thing's useful for looking far ahead but still has incompletenesses,
will we ever know what we know
or what we don't; or, out at distant
edges of some c. 1154 paper map, how much is still terra incognita?
Which will come back in the middle of next spring or summer
to bite us on our tender ass. Furthermore,
how many illuminated minds need agree that this is this
and that is that and *No more sass, miss,*
please,
until some smallest, just-forgotten mind up and asks, *Gee,*
what's that tiny, rumpled thing over there in a distant, dark corner?
Is that a jock strap, a knucklebone? So, here's to small, most ignominiously
forgotten things that, like a pet chia lamb,
blossom into gargantuaness with only minimum moisture. A patchwork
quilt,
a tapestry.

W boson:

Those highly sentient scientists, they dig down into strata, throw time
and reputation into wisps. Take crazy gambles, spend extreme hours away
from family,
suffer pains and indignities—and so, let's dig deeper. *No, let sleeping
dogs lie,* says the other side. *Why open up a can of worms; what we have now is
good enough;*
*put energy into other areas; it's not going to make the price of our morning
Starbucks drop below 50 cents.*

Muon:

Shooting stars, anemones, heat-vent worms, rare viruses, happinesses;
what is the most
important life-thing to you? Preservation, say, of species? What actually
matters in a universe
possibly and unthinkably, even unimaginably, full of alternative species,
taxa, order, and phylum? Love, as in, *All you need is love.*
Let's think

this through—can we ever really know what's best for us?
Prediction is hard, especially about the future. (Et sequens, Fidelity Investments
should state, *The future is not a good indicator of the past.*)

Higgs:

Pascal's dictum, *The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing*
notwithstanding, what's the nut here? Do we have to wait for extraterrestrial
intervention
in order to get our messy model-houses in order? Maybe *La Traviata* is the
answer. Maybe a big meteorite incoming. If we were wiped out in a flash,
would it really matter to this warming universe;
maybe we are just a speck in a corner of a cosmos
that has no real bearing
one way or another. R.H. always asked, *What's at the end of the universe,*
that farthest end?

Strange:

Maybe it's a tree somewhere in Tanzania, maybe an Acacia. We love models,
love constructing them;
they offer us security, but recall H.K.'s *Life is either a daring adventure,*
or nothing on same subject, or T.S.E.'s *the world ends / Not with a bang but*
a whimper. Regardless, it ends with *A Boy's Will*. Good question,
what do we get in return for all this
discovery and hard work, I mean, in the cosmic sense? Unfold a binary star,
unfold a gingko leaf—do they not all look the same?

Gluon:

Flicker-lit and half-primitive, see what it means to rely entirely
on a model
that is faulty, even incomplete,
even not knowing what is missing. As Archie wrote, *Hard to see*
the missing from what's not there. Is this evolution perhaps punctuated,
or quite random and unpredictable in the midst of gross predictability, à la old-
school Darwin?
What we don't know we don't know, maybe will never
know. Like dark matter or energy, all we do know is about five percent of our
dank, cornered universe. Like trajectories in art—what has been overlooked or
lost to mind, or in future what will be lost. What could have been
in past or future is a case for via negativa, a way of describing
something
by saying what it is not, certainly *not* ultimate reality.

Up:

but a resistance to the dominant narrative; rather like offering another way, like
reticence. Lo, the miracle and my lost feline concerns.
You find that lost something
at the last place
you look,
but why would you stop looking for it at the second-to-last place?

by R. J. Keeler

The Animal Communicator

We have no hope and yet
we live in longing....
—Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*

I. The Animal Communicator Lets in the Day

As a small flock of maybe fifteen or twenty shrikes
sweeps into and rests among the slick branches
of her Orcas Island backyard pear tree,
her shoulders sag.

II. The Animal Communicator Discourses with a Startled Mountain Lion in the Pasayten Wilderness Just North and East of Sunny Pass

Nothing animal is foreign to me, he murmurs. Still,
she does not drop the clover and lupine she
picked along the path that afternoon;
instead holds them across her
right breast.

III. The Animal Communicator Speaks for Herself

*Sometimes, after I was born, I wake up in this dream
where I am stalking myself to take back
and bury all the words I ever
spoke or sang.*

IV. The Animal Communicator Spills the Word Death

Animals see death differently than we do, she says.
We think of the camp cat that, in 1949 in Bella
Vista, my brother Skip and I pulled
entirely apart.

V. The Animal Communicator Gets Down and Dirty

Now you're really going to get it, she says,
as she puts on her headphones
and flips *Start and Loud*
on Béla Bartók.

VI. The Animal Communicator Gets Lost in a Rainforest on Bataan

A delegation of walking sticks, golden-fronted leafbirds,
lizards, leaches, lemurs, moreporks, fig wasps, boars,
shrews, tarsiers, vesperilionids, palm civets, anoas,
and gray-crowned scimitar-babblers finds the Animal
Communicator and leads her back deeper into
the center of their own wild moistness.

VII. The Animal Communicator as Sensuoust

Hail had broken scores of panes above the Frontenac
hothouse that weeknight. Before we entered to
exhume the orchids, she stripped to the waist
to catch on her belly and arms and areolae
the mixture of green pollen
and bitter snowflakes.

VIII. The Animal Communicator Daydreams of Sex

Toothless and densely furred, an anteater quivers
tucked inside a dream of roe tricked
from within a coveted nest
in the Brazilian backlands
of the Pantanal.

IX. The Animal Communicator Loses Hope

Three lazy, white-cheeked cormorants circle up
into the cumulus over Hat Island
to feed their dry eyes
on vapor.

X. The Animal Communicator Plays God

She lifts her titanium ultralight off well before
dawn and flies side-to-side then end-to-end
above the Grand Canyon until she hits
the first brilliant blue.

by R. J. Keeler

("The Animal Communicator" was first published by *The Poetry Society's* Waltham Forest Poetry Competition.)



Boy on Ice
Christopher Woods

Shelby Dreams the Future

by Rebecca Frost

Shelby hates the dentist's. She's seen him bimonthly for two years, and confesses like he's a priest. Today she didn't floss. Last week she didn't stand for an old woman on the bus. When she was a kid, she'd let her belt dangle between her legs and pretend it was a penis. The whole place makes her feel repugnant. Shamed by her own vulnerable cavity. She gags at the thought of her saliva running down his sucking, little dentist straw into a cesspool of other patient's dribble. You're going the wrong way! says mind to spit.

She hates opening herself, sticky from the waiting room sit. Anxious. Sweat seeping through her blouse. Dr. Johnson's tools tweezing out pieces of food she's missed for months. She loathes that no matter how regularly she's flossed her gums always bleed. She imagines leaving a cleanings to smile pulpily for Charlie, sinew and gore curdling her teeth, and wonders how he had ever kissed her.

Charlie, the man who used to love her, played songs about women in The Calicos. When he was home, he'd sit on the lidded toilet and watch her pick the acne on her face. She taped the set list from the night they met to the mirror: *Kamikaze Cate*, *Baby Late Eighty*, *Jutt Like Julie*, and *Susan Sarandon Done*. She liked to see it and remember how he broke his glasses doing a knife kick off a speaker; how she dragged him behind a fence, away from his girlfriend sipping Vegas Bombs, and covered him like kudzu, leaving a heat rash across his mouth. Shelby liked feeling his callused Levi's brushing her calves. She liked smelling cigarettes and open air on his chest. She'd curve her back and whisper curses to her blemishes until they unbuttoned their pants and lay their flaccid insides on her fingernails.

He'd say, 'Go easy on yourself, baby.'

Shelby didn't like germs. She imagined tiny, green amoeba festering in her skin, saying crass things about her breasts behind her back.

He'd say, 'I'm taking out a personal ad for you: Woman seeking marbles.'

Shelby let her hands sit in hot water until her veins crawled to the surface of her skin like gifts under tissue paper, and Charlie would yank them from the sink and cool them on his face, kissing the mounds of muscle that stretched from her thumbs to her wrists, telling her she was white hot and mad.

He'd say, 'You crazy bitch. You crazy bitch.'

Dr. Johnson was good in a way the unsettled her, then tucked her back in all comfy cozy. He accepted the calls she'd place at night when Charlie went driving to clear out his head, groggy and convinced her teeth were shifting out of place.

Convinced: shewasacrazycatlady

Convinced: shewasthecat.

'Harry,' she'd say, his name warm and thick around her tongue, tasty like chamomile tea,

'Harry, if I were an olive, the little black ball at the pit of me would be suicide.'

He had a beautiful telephone voice.

'I think mine might be windmills. The blades are so...something.

Concise.'

She kissed the mouthpiece very quietly,

'Conslice. I like that.'

She'd talk until her brain stopped sweating.

Shelby liked their phone calls. She'd imagine his eyes. The gentle eyes that smiled over the dentist's mask she knew he wore for medical purposes, but secretly feared he used to keep the smell of rotten tuna from wafting into his nose from her overexposed gullet.

She asked him about it once after a particularly tolerable cleaning. He only chuckled. Not that sweet, doctor chuckle. There was no precise infusion of kindness at the center. A warm chocolate laugh. 'Nah,' he said, 'It's just to hide this schnoz I got. Been embarrassed of it since high school.'

Shelby didn't buy it. Her mouth tasted like fluoride and curry, 'Your name is Harry Johnson and it's your nose that's embarrassed you since high school?' He squeezed a real cackle through phone then, and Shelby imagined him snorting out chocolate milk. She imagined herself in his chair, milk soaking into her baby blue bib. She saw her life story in lactose cave drawings: born outside of Kingston, PA; first period during a presentation on the cotton gin - Ms. Underwood's class; first finger inside her a high school gym coach who fed her apple cinnamon oatmeal in his office before class; first hospitalization after tattooing a doe eating lavender over smiley faced scars. Or had it really been the smiley faced scars? She could jumble up what the doctors said. 'Well, there are worse things you could have than a hairy Johnson. Do I hear a smile?'

He did.

Heard blushing.

Pride even.

She used his cackle like a rubberband. Stretched and released it over and over again. Smacked herself in the ear with jagged, New York laughter. She liked the dirty jokes, liked the sensation of Harry looking for nurses like a boy for teachers.

It'd been months since Shelby made a man laugh. She used to bite Charlie where his hips thrust and curved and made dunes in his sides. She'd bite him until he giggled and squirmed, curling his body into a boney ball she'd swat at until she tired. She'd spin her limbs into spider webs and wrap him tight until he'd missed his shift at the diner and the sun went to sleep and woke up again. He pressed himself into her like a paperweight, solid, fixing her agitated skin to her muscles. And he'd swallow her fully, licking his fingers and laughing, telling her she'd ruin him and set his world turning right again.

Now she stands with her pelvis pressed against the sink, her tippy toes barely grazing the checkered bathroom tile, so she can get a better look at the damage from her last appointment where Dr. Johnson took his fingers from her mouth, removed his gloves with two precise snaps, and said, 'Shelby, you've got a small problem. It's nothing to be worried about, but your gum line has definitely receded since I last saw you.'

Shelby sat up. Reached for her lips. 'I used to have dreams about New York. But they weren't really dreams. They were nightmares. I'd be running through the rain and then I'd realize it wasn't rain. It was blood and bodies. And there weren't any clouds, just skin and ash everywhere. Then the attack happened and the dreams stopped. Did I ever tell you that?'

He blinked hard.
Twice.

'I've dreamed of you, too,' She told him as she felt her face for any noticeable changes. 'Yeah, last night. I was sitting right here, and you came in and told me to lay on my stomach. And then you fucked me. I think I can tell the future.'

The time frame wasn't entirely true. She had had the dream, but months before. And when she woke she lay awake next to Charlie, who smelled like Selsun Blue, and felt guilty. He didn't sleep with his mouth on her breasts anymore, but with a river of sheets between his back and hers. She wanted to touch the featherlight bones protecting his lungs, but he said it was creepy to wake up to her eyes. She couldn't move, not even to change into dry underwear.

Harry grabbed her hand.

'Shelby,' he said in the gentle way people speak to abused animals whose ribs poke out like vibraphones, 'this is nothing to panic over.'

She didn't like freeing her face. She worried she might miss some important change in the moments she was away, 'Why are my teeth falling out?'

His mouth perked up on one side, sad and amused. 'They aren't,' He said and he squeezed her hand. 'This is not an emergency. It happens every day. It's probably due to brushing too hard.'

All Shelby remembered was the night she almost broke Charlie's penis. She was drunk on whiskey and honey, and after his set she poured her limbs around him, rubbed her hair into his sweat, and told him he looked like Bill Medley. Their mouths were hot and brimming with promises. She would get another temp job. She would gain back the twenty pounds she'd lost. She would stop cutting the head off of pictures of herself. He would stop losing his temper, stop pressing angry thumbs into her wrists. He would get in before midnight and stop drinking all the milk. When they went home and made love, Shelby wanted to be on top. And she closed her eyes and she loosened her spine and she sang like a woman in heat. But then Charlie screamed. He screamed her name and God's name and threw his hands over his eyes and she ran through the house, her mouth a wailing gash in the crescent of her face, until the wax ran out of his hair and the sun rose and made them both ashamed.

Later he confessed he'd been sleeping with LaLa, the bartender at Strip Tease. They held each other, desperate to forgive and be forgiven. It took two more months for him to leave her.

'I can't be your father,' he said, his bag hanging on his shoulder like a carcass.

She bent herself to him, 'I thought you liked being my daddy?'

Then he hugged her.

Ground his palms into her clothes until her skin ached.

He did not take his key.

Shelby chewed on a piece of hair, a long withstanding tick she picked up in childhood, 'How do I fix it?'

Harry stroked her wrist, 'You don't panic. Don't panic, Shelby. There are ways to slow the process. Let me get a pad, all right?' Dr. Johnson rolled his chair to the counter, pulled a pen and pad from a drawer under a picture of four blond bowl cuts and a lady with feathered bangs, and jotted.

She went to the store and bought a toothbrush with extra hard bristles.

At home she taped the list to the mirror in her bathroom.

She likes the look of his sloppy, swoopy cursive.

She reads it over and over again as she bares her teeth at herself: watching.

Watching for inevitable erosion.



The Big Brother
Alexis Avlamis

Untimely Ripped

You pressed your scalded skin to mine
I wrote you hundreds of poems to ease the pain
the poems never worked.

I couldn't knit fast enough to wrap you
in something soft that felt like whispers
reminded you someone loved you.

There was only one way to help
make new skin where yours was peeled off
we both knew that.

When I found him
I wrapped my bruised hands around his throat
tightened until I couldn't anymore.

Brought a skull back to you, triumphant
like I was Macduff
and you were

you were

you

no one else survives in Macbeth
No one survived this.

I brandished his severed head
over your empty shell
and pretended not to notice the blood on my hands.

by Bella Pori

Beach 25 Street

They argue it was the storm that was the breaking point.
I don't know if that's true.
I think places like this
have hundreds of little breaking points
until one day someone looks around
and realizes how different everything is.
But like a lobster in a slow boiling pot of water
(I try to use sea metaphors, maybe that will smooth this over)
it's been changing the whole time
even if no one noticed how hot it was.
And no one left the pot.

You can't talk about the changes without talking about the storm
though.
The storm is acknowledged
as paramount.
Acknowledged so only by the people who still live there.
Despite how hard they try,
the rest of us have forgotten about it.
They cleaned up the commercial corridors first
so that when we walked to the beach
we weren't bothered by boarded up houses,
orange and green fences left up for days/weeks/months/years
leftover garbage
failed businesses
reminders of what this place used to be.
Instead they built new things for us to look at
and raged when we told them
we couldn't see their pain.

by Bella Pori

They Called it The Meadow

Each summer we burned in the shade of ponderosa pines
made every acre our own
found a grove of trees that was a living
breathing organism
wondered what it looked like in the fall.

We had to say grace every night
pray to something they said was bigger and older than the trees
I didn't believe that existed.
None of us did.
Not when they told us a story
of a tree that walked the earth
then froze in time trying to send her seeds to every corner of the
hundreds of acres that blanketed the mountain.

Did you know ponderosa pines smell like butterscotch?

You have to smell between the bark
where it even looks like butterscotch.
Lean in and whisper a secret
hope it throws your wish across the forest.
What a picture we made
close enough to trees to become one.
Girls faded into places they don't put on maps
in search of a river that never existed.

Last night I dreamed that horses roared
and bared their teeth on windswept mountaintops
so dry that the sun started fires
until everything burned and
turned each grain of sand into a marble that
rolled down the mountain
and sent the horses chasing after it.

Did you know they have to start fires to prevent them?

If too much dies on a forest floor
any fire that burns will burn out of control.
You light small fires to burn detritus
stave off bigger blazes that wouldn't dare touch trees
who were there when the flames were born.

Did you know there's nothing bigger or older than the trees?

If you follow the trail up to the grove
you can find yourself breathing in time with it
and you'll never have to know what
the trees look like in the fall.

by Bella Pori



Gabriela
Chloe Allred



Kamilah
Chloe Allred

You, the Marble

If stars had sisters
you would be the green one,
slung up across the space we've
not yet come to worship

What other ways
can we learn to come closer
rather than whispering
and setting skin on skin?

I will dream that you are the marble
and I am the sound,
cutting a channel
through the cluttered cavern of my throat

my chin lifted, my neck long
as vibration comes through it,
a rapturous song
in a gown of rope and wire

by Leah Baker

Lions at Sunrise

They were there.
At the fiery dawn of
the apocalypse
when the sun grew so large
its rays scorched my forehead

I was squinting, shielding my skin
while the others laughed
and picnicked.
They laid at our feet,
tame, languishing

I think of every time you laid next to me,
cold and still.
I never seared in your heat,
pricked my finger on the thorn of your
desire.

I lunged forward
always hoping you might burn me.
I would so prefer to be
sweating and squinting
than achingly still.

by Leah Baker

Ocean

Mauve sunset lights
the shadows of my throat
gray and wet,
the horizon

long,
long.

Ocean pulls back,
flat surface of taupe sand
a glassy mirror now:
dirty ballet slippers,
makeup mirror,
iron lips
I had a gown once that color,
silver over pink

The expanse is forever,
large as this dream.

Ocean far away now
whispers,

Two things dear to you
I will take.

I am afraid.

She draws back
and recourses,
tsunami soft
tsunami wet,
sensual slick slick
weathervane.

Gentle it comes over me
in my dreamstate
immunity,
gray waves washing
across the plane

Two mounds lay under her
attack,
things lost,
taken

But I don't see
what they are.

by Leah Baker



Self Portrait
Vanessa Withun

Waldeinsamkeit: Forest walk

I am a piffulential skiff
Ill-equipped as
Thorns grab flay fly
Branches snap
Shiv sharp
And I
Ambling at first
Past wild haired grass
Hasten, knees high
Through tuberous growth.

I must appear clownish, antic
As I lurch feint bob
Little matter.
Nature is all diffidence
Disinterest.
My deference,
Misplaced logic

Losing myself to
The occasional forest
I hear distant car thrum
Dance to my own dust whorls
Fall to clotted earth
A tulip tree blossom unmoored.

Carolina wren I beg you
Show yourself
Your liquid pure sound
From highest arch
Has song ever been this clear
This sound discernment-judgement
Not like the mockingbird
Tail high prone to pronouncement
Why imitate at all
When your repertoire
Is so varied
Piano player in large hotel.

There's a special place in my heart
For fungus

Spectral white or buttercup yellow
scalloped capped or cupped
And clouds that hover
Devoid of omen
And rocks ragged jagged
Some composite
Once pyroclastic
Waldeinsamkeit
My natural juice
My equipoise

by Ellen Rittberg



Antiquity Hand
Shelley Sarna

The Far Crossing

Thankful to have sweet exile
on this side of the river, a moment
to linger on the red clay bank
gazing at the poplars and live oaks.
I stand alone, mostly, inhale honeysuckle
and tea olive, tasting clean air after rain
feasting my eyes on green leaves
and geese propelling the river
their ribbon wake follows, drawing me
closer to the water, closer to the fording.

I sometimes can make out the other side,
hear their laughter and singing, the light
from their fire. I hear Mother call me
as if I were in the yard by the mimosas.
My brother fishes from that distant shore.
He catches a mess of fish and shares tales
with Uncle Jake, the two of them draw a crowd
who lean in to see the size of the fish
and hear tales bigger than most could imagine
yet for the greater part they're all true.

Papa makes plans and meets with the elders
as they weigh the merits of new ideas.
I can just make out the seesaw of discussion.
I hear only a word or two but they nod their heads
so it all seems pleasant enough and productive.
They gather in a clearing maybe an amphitheater
nestled under big magnolias, the creamy flowers
scattered in polished leaves like prize eggs,
the heady aroma wafts over river and back to me.

Still, I tarry on my riverbank, smell the grande flora
on the breeze and hum a melodious sonnet
sung by flaming tongues. I linger in this sweet exile.
Away but not away, here and there, apart but not part
fog caresses the river, hugging high up on the bank,
almost touching my toes, lapping at the red clay.
Nothing to see but brume, mist shrouds the far shore.

by Elizabeth Buttimer

The Price of a Biscuit

The day I moved from my husband's home
still a bride, C.D. drove my Daddy's big truck and we
moved out only those things I had brought to
marriage, my clothes, a piece of furniture or two,
some photographs and frying pans. When we
were on the way, I sat in the truck cab high above
the highway, looking forward through the glass,
while looking back to what went wrong,
to words like you're not worth it
actions that whittled the wood of me to dust.
miles upon miles, we sat listening to the engine
for C.D. was a man of few words and I found
little voice that day.

C.D. who worked for my father, driving, lifting
bolts of cloth, end rolls of silk or wool, hauling scraps
to the rag man, or junk to the dump, moving things
from here to there, was driving me and remnants
from a six month marriage back home.

C.D. moved Mother's antique furniture, too. She
sat in the same seat high in the truck's cab
when they would pick up a load of furniture
or take one to North Carolina. Less than a year later,
at Mother's request, C.D. carried her mahogany
coffin down the church aisle and lowered it into
winter's-hard-ground.

That day, he carried me from what-was-to-what-would-be.
On the way, we stopped for biscuits and sweet tea.
C. D., who knew well the value of a dollar
and stretched it to feed his family, insisted on buying
both biscuits. When he did, I swallowed hard to think
I was worth the price of a biscuit and sweet tea
to even one man, other than my father.

by Elizabeth Buttimer



Skeletons
Scott Hussey

*From the book by John Casey, "Raw Thoughts", to be
released by Adelaide Books (New York, New York) in July
2019*

An Afternoon with Tagore

Amid the gentle winter rains the sparrows flit around
gathering in the yards. On the porch they eye me from outside.

Inside it is said to be warmer. It is drier.

It is also said: from love the world is born,
by love it is sustained, towards love it moves,
and into love it enters.

I say our Father turns a blind eye sometimes, and the pain
is left to dissolve us; of self, of wealth, of faith. I am stripped bare.

The boundaries disappear.

I can hear your thoughts whispering in my head now.
I love you, I hate you, I need you. I feel you in your fear
and I feel you in your love.

Then you are gone.

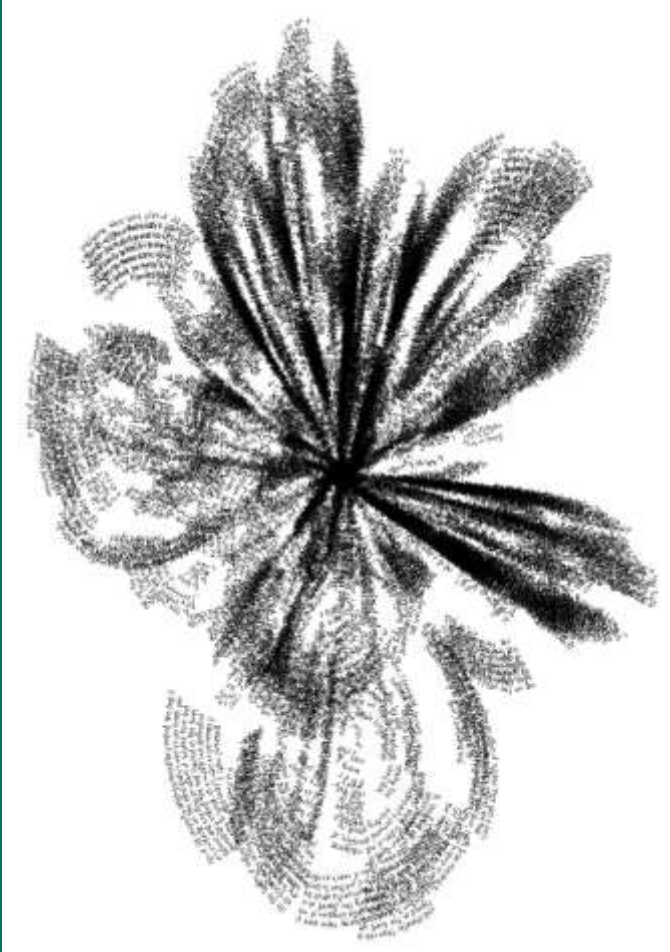
I am the soil dark with knowing. Then a single glade of grass
reaching towards the sun and drinking you in like air
and breathing you out under the wings of birds.

I am the sparrow.

I cock my feathered head and listen to the heavens bells.
What is pain, what is wealth? What is fear, or love?

I do not know, but faith is a baby bird leaping from the boughs.

by Amira Isme



the pianist as a balloon
S Cearley

The Napshop and What You Did There

Once inside, they issue you fresh lavender pajamas, place
the white poplar leaf under your tongue
so you can find your way back to the Over if you want to.

You don't want to.

You can go under by many methods:
taste a panoply of warm milks in demitasse cups
sip a flute of melatonin-riched cherry cordial
pluck hypnothreads on the lyre
ask an assistant to swaddle you in muslin
select a cradle pod to rock you
set the drone to diffuse mandarin oil and frankincense.
choose one or more than one, but not more than three.

You know (but they don't) how easy it is misuse this place.
other arcologies have twist napshops where you can be
concussed by localized sound cannon
inject an alkaloid

or be
slightly
slightly
poisoned to sleep, if you eyeball scan a waiver.

Your napshop tells you what to expect in the Under:
if you should glimpse Somnus on his ebony bed
or the jötunn's daughter carrying joy-of-sleep
on her dark horse, it's a good omen.
there are good omens only. ever.
all manner of things shall be well,
for the Under must improve you for the Over.

You came for other reasons, to contact the Correspondents
in the only way you can.
the assistants don't see
the fifth milk you drink,
the capsule of Valerian root
you grind into your eyes, intent.

White poplar means time. they put the leaf under your tongue
so you can return to the over when you want, if you want.

You don't.

by Leigh Holland

Cally Gillespie and Solver

Our Solver always wore her mom's pajamas.
I found her first, but half the kids in Peyton
said they had. That's fine. I know I was first one
she did the ritual for, anyways.
We'd all head to the Junior Store with change
we dug from drawers to buy the M&M's,
plain only. Peanuts threw the reading off.
At Solver's house, we'd dump 'em in a cake pan,
grab a fistful each, then show her our hand.
How many pieces you had was important.
She'd count them in her head, quiet—
the only sound was Solver's mom thumping upstairs.
Colors mattered, but they never meant
the same thing twice. A hand with mostly-red M&M's
meant all your fish were going to die,
or it meant you'd find an arrowhead,
or have corndogs for supper, or to watch out
'cause your yard was full of poison oak.
We gave her a Magic 8-Ball once,
but it didn't prophesy true, she said.
When we ran out of M&M's, the others
would go to the ball field or the pond
but I'd stay inside all day with Solver. Her mom
was always moving around upstairs, but Solver
wouldn't leave her couch so we'd sit, watch cartoons,
and she'd tell me about the stuff she'd seen for me,
stuff she didn't want to say around the others.
She knew I was going to move away,
that Mama wouldn't get as much money as she thought
in the divorce, that after a while he'd stop
sending any payments at all and we'd keep moving
where Mama could find work. And Solver said
I wouldn't hear from her again. It's been three years,
and none of the schools have had Solvers.
I thought every town had one, and I could find another.

by Leigh Holland



Denial

I am not your killer.

I did not wait for you under the steel-gray moon in the park as you cut through the avenue of cypress trees that Thursday after choir practice at St. Mark's. I never heard you nervously humming Verdi's Requiem in time to your heart's cleaving beat, your performance only days away.

I didn't see your weary face, midnight eyes cast down, hands thrust deep in your pockets, blond hair straying from a tartan scarf worn like a death wish around your throat.

*

I read that you were found in underwear and gloves, velvet limbs bound with black rope, facing a tree, wrists tied as though in prayer, your knees jammed into its spreading roots, its branches lifting to heaven.

I could only imagine you begging for mercy as the world dissolved around you, as your tears soaked the leaves beneath you — that you were not found wanting as you fell into the darkness.

*

As silence spread like ash on a dying fire, I prayed for you to intercede for me, that what was hidden be revealed, that no sin remain unavenged. I asked for absolution, though the righteous are unsafe, though the faithful endure the pains of hell.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, deliver me from the deep pit.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

Lamb of God.

Lamb.

by Clare Chu

THE LIGHTHOUSE

*The Guyanese coast is dotted with islets,
on one of which stands a lighthouse named Enfant Perdu,
the Lost Child of the Guyana Penal Colony.
It is not the only French lighthouse thus named,
but it is the most solitary.*

I am the keeper of your light —
tu es mon enfant perdu.

I tend to you with hands
that burn the wick,
palms scorched with oil, hands
that polish the once-blind lens.

I measure the savage wind
that surrounds you,
I strive under every moon
that severs your infinite beam.

I tend to you always —
you, who devours me.
You, my servant, yet
I kneel before you.

Your pulse comes
and goes.
You, stalwart, of safe harbor.
You, keeper of vast waves.

Have mercy.

by Clare Chu

THE RAINCOAT

Once I could dance on a blade of grass,
my feet could melt stone —

now I am pinned down by earthbound clouds.
I thought I had eternity all buttoned up,

then you borrowed my raincoat, wore it daily,
left it billowing in the wind.

In its pockets I hid the bullets I took for you,
tendrils of time I lost, knowledge shucked along the way.

The shelter of my freedom.
Before the rain came, I tried to call out,

but my throat was stuffed with ash,
in that moment I knew —

dying of fright is an actual thing.

by Clare Chu



Untitled
Timothy Gerken

The Rust Barn

By Holly Shaw

Sitting in the yard. Playing in the sunshine. Barbies and a dump truck. Digging with a stick and piling dirt into the back. I'll drive it around a little before I dump it out. Make truck noises. Maybe I can get some water and make mud houses. A whole mud town. Or a swimming hole. Barbie looks hot. She looks like she could use a swim. First my hole should be a little deeper.

"Melly, you want to come with me?" Papa said. He stands a few feet away. He has a shotgun on one shoulder and a bag on the other. Big and sturdy with gray whiskers on his face.

"Where we going?"

"For a walk, to the other barn."

"Sure!" I jump up. From the yard, I can see the barn across the creek behind a row of tall trees. I'd always wanted to go, but Nanny said I had no business going over there. It's too far. It was just an old smelly, metal barn with used-up farm stuff. But it twinkles in the sun. I look over my shoulder thinking that she'd be standing on the porch steps, hands on her hips and her socks rolled down to her ankles. But she isn't there. Papa starts toward the dog pen and I run to Papa before Nanny can catch me.

He lets Judy out of the pen and she jumps on me. I hug her as she licks my face. She's always licking me. Judy seems to be smiling. We both love to go with Papa. He usually had something fun for us to do. He'd tell good stories or explain stuff, so I can understand it. Papa lets me go places Nanny wouldn't like. He let me on the top floor of the shed; it was full of dusty, old stuff. I want to go back and see if there's anything good up there. But Papa turns the other way.

We all walk down the gravel road and then into the tall grass toward the bridge. I keep looking back for Nanny to catch us. She must be in the house. Papa whistles and Judy runs around, smelling stuff and making the grasshoppers jump.

The grasshoppers keep hitting me. I wave my arms trying to get them off me. I hate them. I caught one of them once 'cause I wanted to see him closer. When I opened my fingers, there was all this brown stuff on my hands. So gross.

"Papa, carry me." I said. I put my hands up so he can pick me up. Even when I jump up, I can't reach his shoulders. His eyes are bright but covered with wrinkles.

"You can walk."

"Tell Judy to stop running around. The grasshoppers are gettin' me."

"Judy's just doing what she's built to do, see with her nose. Besides, those grasshoppers can't hurt you."

"They're hitting my face. I want to go back."

"Melly, if one lands on you, just smack it. Besides we're almost to the bridge. Just a little further."

I can see the bridge off to my right, but it doesn't seem too close. I stop and look back toward the house. It is small and seems pretty far away. Nanny is there, and she knows that grasshoppers are gross and a little scary. If I run really hard maybe the grasshoppers wouldn't have a chance to get me.

"C'mon Mel." Judy is looking at me, waiting for me to come. I run through the tall grass toward Papa.

"Can we sit down? I'm tired."

"Naw girl, let's keep going. We haven't been walking all that long." He keeps going and he is so much faster than me.

"Slow down. You walk too fast." He waits and shifts the rifle to his other shoulder. I take his hand. It's rough and has scars. We keep walking. There is the wooden bridge. Judy runs fast to the bridge, like she knows where we are going.

I take my hand back and run a little to the bridge. I climb on the rail to look over at the creek. I had never seen this part of the creek before. It is dark and muddy just like the creek that runs in the yard. But I can't see the house because of all the tall trees. So, it seems different.

"Papa, why don't we ever fish off this bridge?"

"Fishing's no different here than it is by the house. Why carry your poles and bait all this way when you can just walk a little bit down the yard?" I shrug. It just seems like it would be fun. At least here you can sit and dangle your feet off.

"Let's sit down and dangle our feet off."

"Let's keep going. Daylight's wasting." I want to stay there for a little while, but he starts walking again. Judy's already on the other side. Standing there panting and waiting.

I run to catch up.

At the end of the bridge is a big field. Full of corn going up and down the hills. It is taller than me. I see Papa walking up the dirt road. Off in the distance, there is the barn.

"Papa, why are we going to the barn?"

"We got to do some cleaning out." He keeps walking. I can see Papa's wet armpits and sweat down his neck. He has a hat to keep the sun out of his eyes. It's bright and hot. I wish I had a hat. I need to remember that for next time. I push my brown hair off my face.

Judy jumps out of the corn at me and then runs down the road. She turns and runs back to me. She drops to the ground on her front paws. Barks and takes off. I run after her, passing Papa. I try to catch her and sometimes I can but then she'd run off again. Judy turns and runs between the rows and I run after her. It isn't fun 'cause the leaves are scratchy.

"Melly, get out of that corn! Stay where I can see you." Judy takes off through the corn, but I go back to where he can see me. I sit down in the dirt and wait for Papa. Judy lays down beside me.

"Don't run in the corn. You'll bend the stocks and I won't be able to harvest them. C'mon, we're almost there." Papa walks on and I follow behind. And then we are at the barn. It's big. The barn by the house is white and made of wood. It feels soft and warm, but this one is metal. It's silver and black and seems old. There are streaks of rust.

He walks past the doors and sits down his shotgun. Pulling his keys from his pocket, he walks back up to the two large doors. He unlocks the padlock and throws the chain to the ground. The heavy metal door doesn't want to be opened and yells as it moves. I look into a dark hole and see the little streams of sunshine through holes in the roof. I can see the dust floating in the air. I can hear birds inside and a couple of them fly out the door. It smells oily and hot.

"Melly, I want you to stay out here. I've got to clean out this barn and you can't be in there. Just sit down here in this shade and I'll be back in a few minutes." He picks up his shotgun and whistles for Judy. They go into the barn.

I do as I'm told. It's hotter by the barn. I am bored now. I wish I had my dump truck. I wish I stayed back with Nanny. I'm thirsty and if I was back in my yard, I could go ask Nanny for something to drink.

I stand up and look down through the trees. There's the creek. A little further is the house. It looks so little from here. I can't see Nanny. Maybe she's in the house making me lemonade.

Behind me is a shot and I jump. Judy runs out of the door. She's got something black and shiny in her mouth. She drops it at my feet. It's a dead bird. Wagging her tail, she looks at me and runs back into the barn. I bend down to look at the bird. It doesn't move. I touch its feathers, black with a blue-green color. So pretty. But there is blood on one of my fingers.

Judy drops another bird next to me. It's dead too. I look back at the barn for Papa. I want to ask him about the birds. Then another shot. And another bird. And another. The next shot, I take off running down the road. I want to get home. Another shot and I turn into the corn, the leaves scratching my legs and arms. I run as fast as I can. I run until I trip.

I hit the ground hard. The wind's knocked out of me. I lay there, the hot earth on my face. I can't breathe. I hear another shot. I want to breathe, but I can't get my mouth to suck in air. What if I can't ever breathe again? I start to cry, tears making my face wet. Then, I get a little air. I sit up. My knees are bleeding. I cry harder. Another loud boom, hands over my ears.

I stand. My knees hurt but I gotta keep going. I have to get back to the house and Nanny. I have to tell her about the birds. But when I look around, I don't know where I am. I can't see the end of the corn rows. The corn's too tall to look over. I am lost.

"Melly? Melly where are you?" Papa yells. His voice isn't very loud. He's far away. But I don't answer him. I don't want him. All I can see is the small pile of dead birds at my feet, shiny and pretty. They were little, but they could fly so high. Flying, they look like happiness. But they couldn't fly fast enough to get away from Papa's shotgun. And then they couldn't fly anymore. Papa did that.

"Melanie, answer me!"

I sit back down. I pull my knees up, wrap my arms around my legs and put my head down. It hurts my knees, but I don't really care. I thought Papa was nice and fun. He'd always let me hang around him. He let me drive the tractor and made bonfires for hot dogs and marshmallows. He asked me to sing to him as he smoked his pipe. He

even took me to the store on Saturdays for candy. Papa had killed them. I hear him calling for me, but I don't want him to find me.

I sit in the corn with the sun, hot all over. Judy finds me. She barks.

"Judy, shut up!" I whisper. But she barks again. I hear Papa coming through the corn.

"Melly!" I still said nothing. He stands over me, blocking the sun. "Girl, why didn't you answer me?"

"I dunno."

"You answer me when I call you from now on, you hear? I thought you were lost or had fallen in the creek. I should spank you." I look up at his face, at those angry lines. But then they break up. He kneels down.

"Why are you crying?"

"I want to go home. I want to see Nanny." He looks at me for a moment and then stands up. He holds out his hand, but I don't take it. I don't want him. We start back through the corn to the road and home.

"Papa, why'd you kill those birds?"

"I had to, honey."

"Is it because they lived in the barn?"

He nods, not saying nothing. We just keep walking, back on the bridge. Judy's next to me but it doesn't help.

"But why? What did they do?" I yell. He stops and looks down at me. He doesn't explain anything to me. But he picks me up even though I don't want him to. Around his neck, I smell sweat and his sweet, tobacco smell.

"They were so pretty, and they could fly." I said.

"I know, Melly." I put my head on his shoulder and my arms his neck. Where he once held a shotgun, he now holds me. He killed those sweet birds. He is my Papa. And we are on our way back home.



Deforested
Anna Martin

The Sweater

The doctors tell me the main tumor
in my chest is the size of a softball.
She uses a double strand of yarn

and thin knitting needles so the arms and walls
to cover my chest and back will be thick.
There are more in my bronchial system,

my neck, below my diaphragm, and maybe
in my spleen. The sweater will warm me
even in the wind. She had to do Catholic

Penance, a mother's labor, she repeats
non-stop clicks with yarn, mostly acrylic,
so it can't be eaten and

will never decay. She says it is her
fault. She should have stopped me from
sneaking onto that stupid golf course at night, swimming

with mosquitoes, diving the black lake for lost balls
through industrial fertilizer and green dyes, as if
she knows what caused my lymph node cancer

when no one else does. She tries to cure me, feels
my forehead, clicks the needles together again
and again until her fingers hurt and wrists ache

and she can hardly stand up from sitting so long.
So I tell her that leaves on trees blow left
then right, some rattle and flip,

some move hardly at all, yet some are first to fall
to the ground. I tell her the sweater
is coming along great as she watches me lose

weight lying in bed. The needles click as she approaches
another threshold of pain that relieves her.

by Roger Sippl



Waves II
John Timothy Robinson

BIOS

(Alphabetical by Last Name)

Chloe Allred is a painter and graduate of Laguna College of Art and Design's MFA program. She is a contributing artist and writer for the book, *We Believe You* (published by Henry Holt in 2016.) Her paintings and writing have been featured in *Orange Coast Magazine*, *Huffington Post*, *USA Today*, and the *BBC*. She is a founding and active member of *The Body Joy Project*, a feminist artist collective that critiques and challenges the way our culture thinks about the body. Chloe currently teaches and paints in Southern California.

Tohm Bakelas is a social worker in a psychiatric hospital. He was born in New Jersey, resides there, and will die there. His poems have been featured in the *Outlaw Poetry Network*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Piker Press*, and he has a recently published chapbook *Orphan Crows* (Analog Submission Press) out as of June 2018.

Leah Baker resides in Portland, OR and teaches writing at a public high school. She has had her most recent pieces published or forthcoming in *Panoplyzine*, *Soliloquies Anthology*, *The Raw Art Review*, and *VoiceCatcher*. She is a feminist, gardener, yogi, sound healer, and world traveler. You can find her at www.OpalMoonAttunement.com

Elizabeth P. Buttimer, an entrepreneur, a manufacturer and former educator, received her Ph.D. from Georgia State University, and M.S.C. and B.A. degrees from Auburn University.

Jill Bergantz Carley makes her home in Calaveras County, California, where she lives a half mile from the stoplight and directly over the Mother Lode. Her visual work has appeared in the *DeYoung Museum*, *bG Gallery*, *ARTWEEK*, and elsewhere. Her writing has been published by *Transfer*, *Catch*, *Virga Magazine*, and is forthcoming this fall from *Silver Needle Press* and *Opossum*. She'll be reading at the *Death Rattle Writers Festival* in Nampa, Idaho, the first weekend of October. Her day job in engineering keeps her out of trouble.

Cristina Carvajal was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador where she read an unexpected amount of 19th-century literature and fell in love with authors such as François-René de Chateaubriand, Herman Hesse, and Rainer Maria Rilke. Since then she has gotten a B.A in English and Hispanic Literature and worked as both an editor and a content

writer. When she's not writing or playing music, she's planning new, Sabatini-worthy adventures all over the globe. She hopes to plant her very own fig tree one day and own a library large enough for all the books she has collected over the years.

S Cearley is a professional writer and a semi-pro concrete poet. Previously he was an AI researcher in computer-derived writing. He currently lives eight inches above a river watching ducks, otters and herons. Find @scearley on twitter and mastodon, or visit futureanachronism.com.

Clare Chu was raised in Malta and England, and has adopted Los Angeles as her home. She is an art curator, dealer, lecturer and writer who has authored and published twelve books and numerous academic articles on Asian art. This year she was a participant in San Miguel Poetry Week. Her poetry is featured in a continuing collaboration with Hong Kong-based calligraphic and landscape painter Hugh Moss, in which poet and artist challenge and expand traditional media boundaries. Her poetry is published, or is forthcoming, in *The Comstock Review*, *The Esthetic Apostle*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Rue Scribe* and *2River View*.

Tara Cronin is an artist working in various mediums, focusing on photography, installation and book arts. She received her MFA from the ICP-Bard Program in New York. She received her BA in Writing at New School University. While Tara battled hospitalizations and mental illness during her undergraduate work, her healing process veered her toward combining photography, writing, and artmaking in response. Having exhibited throughout New York City and North America one of her recent shows was as a participant in the Madison Avenue Gallery Walk 2011, and this fall she was given her first museum Solo exhibition in September-November 2012 at the Museo De La Ciudad in Queretaro, Mexico.

J. E. Crum enjoys working full-time in a fast-paced career as an elementary art teacher in Keystone Central School District where the artist currently teaches nearly 1,000 children a week in a 50-mile radius in public schools of a rural locale, from ages four to eleven. The artist holds a M.A. in Art Education and Research from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland; a B.S. in Art Education from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania and also studied Art at Mississippi University for Women, in Columbus, Mississippi, as well as studied at The Leo Marchutz School of Painting and Drawing in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Emily Ellison is a second year MFA poet at Texas State University, where she also works as a Teaching Assistant for their English faculty. Her work has appeared in *Southword*, *After the Pause*, and *Haiku Journal*, and is upcoming in several places. Emily lives in San Marcos, Texas with two cats and an abundance of plants (withering at the moment).

Matthew Fash has had work appear in *Allusions* and *Open: Journal of Arts and Letters*. They were the winner of the Mary Reid McBeth Memorial Scholarship and the honorable mention for the Madelyn DeGaetano Academy of American Poets prize. He currently lives in Illinois.

Federico Federici is a physicist, a translator and a writer. He lives between Berlin and the Ligurian Apennines. His works have appeared in «3:AM Magazine», «Jahrbuch Der Lyrik», «Raum», «Sand», «Trafika Europe», «Magma» and others. Among his books: the long poem in English and German “Requiem auf einer Stele” (2017), the collection “On a certain practical uncertainty” (2018) dedicated to W. K. Heisenberg and the asemic album “Liner notes for a Pithecanthropus Erectus sketchbook” (2018), with a foreword by SJ Fowler. In 2017 he was awarded the Lorenzo Montano Prize for Prose.

Shasta Fox is a mixed media artist, writer, and photographer. She lives with her husband on the Big Island of Hawaii. Shasta spent most of the year 2014 traveling around the world and collecting photographs of her experiences. She enjoys expressing herself with still life black and white photography. Her art echoes life and the day to day; it is her goal to celebrate the ordinary and to point out the beauty in life's simple pleasures. Shasta Fox has had her work exhibited at galleries in the Bay Area and Tucson Arizona. She is currently working on an anthology of art and poetry.

Rebecca Frost is a recent graduate of the Georgia Southern writing department. Her childhood spent split between Miami and Savannah makes her curious about her own, sometimes conflicting, ideas about gender, race, and regional cultures which she tries to explore through fiction and poetry.

Joseph M. Gerace is a journalist and multidisciplinary artist. His work can be found at wikipoem.org and has appeared in *Poets Reading the News*, *fluland*, *SPAM* zine and elsewhere. His writing

explores the intersection of folk art, technology and the outer limits of communication. He lives in New Jersey.

Timothy Gerken is a writer and photographer who lives in the Leatherstocking region of Central New York. He teaches writing and runs the gallery space at a small SUNY campus. Recent work includes curating “Changing Landscape” at the Earlville Opera House and a solo photography show at the 39th Street Gallery in Prince George Maryland titled “Contradictions and that Line about Self-Destruction.” He has had solo shows in New York City and Palm Springs. He publishes regularly in *Masculine Magazine* and recently in *Pigeonholes*, *Cahoon’s*, *Ink IN Thirds*, *The Birds We Piled Loosely*, *Off the Coast*, and *the Winnow*. Timothy has been a MacDowell Colony Fellow and Edward Albee Foundation Fellow.

George Goebel a native of Catonsville, Maryland, graduated from The Maryland Institute College of Art in 1975 with a Diploma in Fine Art. He has been in numerous group shows up and down the east coast. He has also had seven one man shows. His paintings have appeared in national publications such as *The Artist’s Magazine*, *American Artist Magazine*, *The North Light Book of Acrylic Painting Techniques* and *National Geographic Magazine*. He is represented by *Isalos Gallery* in Stonington Maine, *The Quinones Gallery*, *Fulton Maryland* and he has selected works in *Dowling Walsh Gallery*, *Rockland, Maine*. He is co-owner of *Staub Art Studio* in Catonsville where he teaches art and runs their in-house picture frame shop.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over fifteen-hundred of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for numerous prizes, and, was awarded the 2017 Booranga Writers’ Centre (Australia) Prize for Fiction. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and as a print edition. His poetry collection, *THE ARREST OF MR. KISSY FACE*, will be published by *Pski’s Porch Publications* in January 2019. He lives in Denver, Colorado, USA

Kim Harvey is a San Francisco Bay Area poet and a reader for *Palette Poetry*. She is an alumnus of the *Squaw Valley Community of*

Writers. Her work has appeared in Comstock Review and was selected for Rattle's August 2018 Ekphrastic Challenge. She was awarded 2nd Prize in the 2017 Muriel Craft Bailey Poetry Contest judged by Ellen Bass and received Special Merit in the 2018 contest. Her poem "Tappahannock" first appeared in 3Elements Review.

Scott Hussey has worked in the photography industry for over 20 years. His photographs have been published globally by the BBC and have appeared in numerous regional, national, and international publications. His approach to photographing his subjects is best summarized by Aristotle: "The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance."

Robert Keeler: Born St. Paul, Minnesota. Lived in jungles of Colombia, S.A., up to age twelve. Duke, BS Mathematics NCSU, MS Computer Science UNC, MBA UCLA, Certificate in Poetry UW. Honorman, U.S. Naval Submarine School. "SS" (Submarine Service) qualified. Vietnam Service Medal. Honorable Discharge. Member IEEE, AAAS, AAP. The Boeing Company.

Sandra Kolankiewicz's poems have appeared widely, most recently in Adelaide, London Magazine, New World Writing and Appalachian Heritage. Turning Inside Out was published by Black Lawrence Press, Finishing Line has released The Way You Will Go and Lost in Transition.

Pieter Lefferts: Painter. Writer. Musician. Teacher. Healer. ~ Artist. Pieter's on a path to fulfill his soul's puppeteering of his earth walk. Current and ongoing projects include a series of pastels from his river trip through the Grand Canyon, trips to New York's Adirondacks and 'TOTALITY', a developing body of work sourced from the solar eclipse of 2017, which he experienced at 10,000 feet under the Wyoming sky. His scope for the project is as wide as that sky yet set within the premise of a defined totality. An initiate of the Pachakuti Mesa Tradition of Cross Cultural and Andean Shamanism since 2014, his rigorous apprenticeship has opened him to deeper notions of self-expression and service as artist and healer. His methods are intuitive, grounded through formal artistic training at the Art Students League of New York and life lived outdoors. In April of 2010, Pieter established Northlight Art Center, located in Amenia, NY, as a venue for aspiring artists to study in a professional atelier environment. He is a master teaching artist whose knowledge of techniques and materials, coupled with his wit and wisdom, are encouragement for students of all backgrounds to pursue their personal discovery

through making art. Posting on Instagram and PieterLeffertsArtist on Facebook. Follow The Further Adventures of Paqo Piet at: <https://heartofthehealer.org/the-further-adventures-of-paqo-piet-episode-1/>

Tasslyn Magnusson received her MFA in Creative Writing for Children and Young Adults at Hamline University in Saint Paul, MN. Her poems have been published in Room Magazine and Red Weather Online. Her chapbook, "Defining," is forthcoming from dancing girl press.

Anna Martin is a visual artist and writer, native to Baltimore, Maryland, and currently based out of Salt Lake City, Utah. She is an avid explorer and much of her artwork is inspired by her travels; her work is also heavily influenced by nature and science. Anna's work has been previously exhibited in various galleries and museums, such as the Rosenberg Gallery, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, NY. She has also been published in various art magazines such as Grub Street, Litro, Green Writer's Press, and Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine. Anna also frequently works under the pseudonym Vacantia, and more of her work can be found at her online gallery: <http://www.vacantia.org>.

Alex McIntosh lives and writes in Kentucky, her favorite place in the world. She received her B.A. in Recreation with an Emphasis in Adventure Leadership from Asbury University, and is currently working on her M.A. in English with a concentration in Creative Writing from Northern Kentucky University, and her MFA in Poetry from Miami University. The woods are her favorite place to walk, think, sing, and sleep. You can find photos of her poodle named Grizzly Bear on Instagram @therealalexmac

Peter O'Brien has published five books, including Introduction to Literature: British, American, Canadian (Harper & Row) and Cleopatra at the Breakfast Table: Why I Studied Latin With My Teenager and How I Discovered the Daughterland (Quattro). Work from his current multi-year art project glossing, illustrating and disrupting the 628 pages of Finnegans Wake by James Joyce has appeared in World Literature Today, The Fortnightly Review, James Joyce Quarterly, and The Globe and Mail, and has been exhibited in Antwerp, New York and Toronto.

Mick Ó Seasnáin has continually attempted to farm his quarter acre lot in the small town of Wooster, Ohio while catering to the diverse

and often unanticipated needs of his tripod-ish dog and three rowdy children. His wife tolerates his creative habits and occasionally enables his binge writing. Find more of his work at <https://tinyurl.com/MickOSeasnain>.

Sarah O. Oso is a Nigerian-American poet living in Atlanta. In addition to receiving the inaugural 2017 Georgia Tech LMC Creative Writing Award, her work has appeared in Four Ties Lit Review and is forthcoming in Dragon Poet Review and Helen Literary Magazine. Oso, a pre-law student, is a senior at Georgia Tech, where she is pursuing degrees in both Public Policy and Applied Language/Intercultural Studies.

Jonathan Andrew Pérez, Esq. has published poetry online and in print in Prelude, The Write Launch, Meniscus Literary Journal, Rigorous Literary Journal, The Florida Review's Latino/Latinx publication, Panoply Magazine, Paradigm, Junto Magazine, Watermelonin, Cold Mountain Review's Justice Issue, Yes Poetry, and Silver Needle Press. He has poems forthcoming in Meat for Tea: The Valley Review, River Heron Review, The Tulane Review, Metafore Magazine, Abstract: Contemporary Expressions, Mud Season Review, The Tiny Journal, Westchester Review, Pamplemousse, and Swimming with Elephants. He is a 2019 Pushcart Prize Nominee in Poetry.

Karen Poppy has work published or forthcoming in many print and digital journals, as well as anthologies. Her work is included in The American Journal of Poetry, The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide, ArLiJo, Wallace Stevens Journal, and Chaleur Magazine. She is an attorney licensed in California and Texas, and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Bella Pori is a law student and poet in Brooklyn, New York. Her poetry can be found in Fearsome Critters, deLuge, FEELINGS and the Stillwater Review, among others. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee. Her writing can be found at westwingbestwing.com

Olivia Pridemore is a multi-dimensional artist and cofounder of Silver Needle Press. Her works have appeared, or are forthcoming in, Portland Review, Permafrost, Sand Hills, Bridge, The Ocotillo Review, Pidgeonholes, Round Table, Ampersand, and elsewhere. Olivia teaches writing courses at Austin Peay State University and enjoys spending time outdoors with her two dogs.

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *The Chimes*, and dozens of other magazines. His photography has been published in *The Front Porch Review*, the *San Pedro River Review* as well as other publications.

Ellen Pober Rittberg is a poet and fiction writer. Her poems have been published in *Brooklyn Quarterly*, *Long Island Quarterly* and other publications and a number of anthologies. A former journalist, her essays and features were published in the *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *The NY Daily News* and other large outlets. Her plays, *Sci Fi* and *Sabbath Elevator* have been performed off Broadway and at festivals and will be seen in the summer of 2018 at the NY Summerfest. She performs her poetry around New York City and wherever she is asked to. Her humorous parenting book, *35 Things Your Teen Won't Tell You, So I Will*, was published in 2010 by Turner Publishing.

John Timothy Robinson is a traditional, mainstream citizen and holds a Regent's Degree. He minored in Studio Art: Printmaking. John is also an eleven-year educator for Mason County Schools in Mason County, WV. He is a published poet with ninety-three literary works appearing in sixty-eight journals and websites since August 2016 in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. In Printmaking, his primary medium is Monotype and Monoprint process with interest in collagraph, lithography, etching and nature prints. John also has an interest in photography and collage art.

Holly Ann Shaw has lived most of her life in Kansas City except for a brief hiatus in Portland, Oregon. She once served a life sentence in Minot, North Dakota (okay, it was really just two years, but felt like a lifetime). So, the facts are: Wife, mother, former marketer, decorator, mixed-media tinkerer and writer. Her short story, "Intenerate," recently appeared in *Soft Cartel* and "The Rust Barn," is her first contribution to *The Raw Art Review*.

Roger Sippl studied creative writing at UC Irvine, UC Berkeley and Stanford Continuing Studies. He has enjoyed being published in a few dozen online and print literary journals and anthologies over the years including the *Ocean State Review* and the *Bacopa Literary Review*. While a student at Berkeley, Sippl was diagnosed with advanced Hodgkin's Lymphoma and was treated for thirteen months with a mixture of surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy, seriously challenging him in many ways, but allowing him to live

relapse-free to this day, forty-three years later. Between then and now Sippl started five software companies, taking three of them public, which was also an adventure. See what he's been doing at www.rogersippl.com

Liza Sofia is a 19-year-old university student who is currently studying Political Science and French. She hopes to work in humanitarian aid as well as publication

Ronald Walker grew up in Ventura California, a typical Southern California beach town. He attended Ventura College, Central Missouri State university and the University of Kansas, obtaining AA, BS., MA. and MFA degrees. Walker works in a style he terms "Suburban primitive" which combines his interest in the origins of art along with life in the suburbs. His work has been shown in over 200 group shows as well as 40 solo exhibits to date. Walker's paintings can be found in the collections of the Museum of Northern California Art in Chico Ca., the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest, Ca., CMSU in Warrensburg, Mo. Imperial valley college, Imperial Valley, Ca. as well as several private collections. He is currently represented by the Mahlstedt Gallery in New Rochelle, New York. Walker resides in the Sacramento area of California where he lives with his family both teaching and painting for a living.

Ethan Warren's writing has been featured at New Limestone Review, Furious Gazelle, New Plains Review, and the Stage-It! 10-minute play anthology. He is an editor at the online film journal Bright Wall/Dark Room, as well as the writer/director of the feature film 'West of Her,' and recipient of the Boston Project fellowship at SpeakEasy Stage. He lives on the south shore of Boston with his wife, Caitlin, and their two children.

Logo Wei and spouse live in the upper Midwest with their puckish quadruped. He has worked with patients, students and that enduring homelessness. Logo bakes, bikes and writes as solacing means of existence. Logo's poetry has appeared or will appear in Pedestal Magazine, Ink & Voices, Parhelion, Panoply, and others.

Vanessa Withun is a contemporary artist living in Savannah, GA. Her work is inspired by the coastal area of the Southeast as well as her own upbringing in Bronx, New York. She considers her work to be a combination of Realism and Abstract. Her work has been exhibited across the United States including, most recently, at the Telfair Museums Jepson Center for the Arts. <https://vanessawithun.com>

Kiley Winkelhake is a nineteen-year-old artist and writer from Longmont Colorado. She has won first place in the CCHA Literary Magazine Competition in the Southwestern Division for her creative non-fiction short story "It Was Just a Kill Box." As well as winning third place in the CCHA Literary Magazine Competition in the Southwestern Division for her poem "2a.m Intimacy." She has been published in "Plains Paradox Magazine" and "The Esthetic Apostle." "Evanescence" is her first published art piece and she is so excited and honored to be published in The Raw Art Review's Fall Issue.

Christopher Woods is a writer, teacher and photographer who lives in Chappell Hill, Texas. His published works include a novel, THE DREAM PATCH, a prose collection, UNDER A RIVERBED SKY, and a book of stage monologues for actors, HEART SPEAK. His short fiction has appeared in many journals including THE SOUTHERN REVIEW, NEW ORLEANS REVIEW and GLIMMER TRAIN. He conducts private creative writing workshops in Houston. His photography can be seen in his gallery - <http://christopherwoods.zenfolio.com/>

Amber Wozniak is, above all things, an eldest child. She currently works as a healthcare program manager/editor, devoting her time outside of work to her literary aspirations. Her current passions are short stories and poetry. Amber is the proud owner of an abandoned career in public relations, a problem-child hound dog, a three-legged cat, and an ever-patient husband. She's taking a break from pursuing her Master of Liberal Arts, Creative Writing and Literature degree as she grows her first child, a daughter