

The Raw Art Review:
A Journal of Storm and Urge



Spring 2020

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COVER ART:

The Lane

by Brad Daulton
Ambrotype photo

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GRIEVE

An accident at half past this moment.

His hands were just in hers, before they
were only just away. Steps across. As

seconds abrade him into cuticle earth
below a rosary of thought.

Alone, into the reflection
of the hard winter rhyme that befell her skin –
She let her breath become engine:

Wailed the newborn from her throat,
and through that vibratory horn, all disconsolate
down upon her, now apart on the wood-grained floor.

by Leon Fedolfi
(Winner, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

COLD SALAD

In a cold winter thought
I grabbed the earth by its head of trees
and ripped upward to free the firmament
beneath.

No earthworms or other secrets.

Human figures entwined
in angered roots.
Limbs reeling from the intimacy of my seeing -
hands clutched fast
tools of the last human epoch:
greed, violence and blindness.

In this new Anthropocene,
I sip tea by my digital thinking machine,
powered by sun, wind and water.

My fingertips are flesh in this cyber-soliloquy,
which strains me from my past
and shakes the trees
so holy,

the old and many me
fall from their roots into a waiting colander.

I plan to rinse them,
and lay them down in a bed of greens.

by Leon Fedolfi
(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

GRAND AND ROEBLING

Radiant and verdant,
the Sun adopts one half of what I see.
Light reflects from the willow leaves and
bounds forever towards infinity.

The other half - a masterpiece of green.
Fallow, bold, needy and giving –
a lull of nature that I could fall into
without speech -

A grand sleep.

I see my digital hand beside it,
surrounded by red geometry – inside,
the roots of math sprouted into
a simple house plant of
wires and dissonant.

From there It shines a singular authority
- it speaks.

When I crossed, I counted my steps
and the movement lifted me.

by Leon Fedolfi
(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)



Snow in the Field
tintype
by Brad Daulton

Rosalba

the name
means rose at dawn
budding rose at sunup
innocent gentle rose
fresh like a baby
Rosalba
every cliché ever written
splitting the rising fireball
like fact
her name Rosalba
in the diaries
Nabokov would have said *Ros-al-ba*
twenty-six years of journals
the one I happened to pluck from your shelf
after you left
our daughters
and your things for me to pack
ever loyal like sunrise
the diary from the year we fell in love
our month January
her name Rosalba
February Rosalba
wintry lovemaking with Rosalba
Rosalba evenings in your apartment
keeping her promise to wear nothing
under her tiny-waisted skirt
the same day of our own naked hours
steamy sex in Rosalba's parked car along the Arno
disfigured moon in eddies
Rosalba when I met your grandmother
then Rosalba in spring
through puffs of pollen from cypress trees

framing the cemetery on the hill
where we'd bury your father twenty-three Mays later
Rosalba at midnight
Rosalba when you'd charmed my parents
earlier that afternoon
a birthday visit to Italy and to meet you
soft sex
the diary reads
with Rosalba
words she whispered in your ear
gifts you exchanged
Rosalba at dawn
when she crept away from her young son
and troubled marriage
daytime hours she stole from work and motherhood
would I satisfy you enough
you ask dutiful pages
were my tits the ones you wanted or
might they be the wrong shape and size
you wonder on the train platform
outwardly bidding me a loving farewell
after our week together by the sea
would I truly know how to gratify
your rightful appetite
like Rosalba
the diary echoes your uncertainty
blameless and inquisitive before a new day
like a newborn rose
there's no remorse or shame
at most you wink into your dear diary
at the close calls when I showed up unannounced
Rosalba had just come
from the beginning I was there to serve you
to ensure you were fulfilled

properly
through summer dawns
Rosalba
those weeks I doubted in Assisi
seat of your undeserved namesake
when you came to visit and cast your spell anew
plans to meet Rosalba in Florence littering the diary
as you flashed a vulnerable card from inside
your deceitful pocket
in the city of Saint Francis
everlasting Rosalba
as I began addressing your parents with “tu”
the familiar
Sunday lunches at their table
and later that night Rosalba
Rosalba as I learned your family tree
Rosalba through the changing leaves
as the *vite americana* turned crimson in Chianti
your father naming every tool
collected above the open fireplace
in the centuries-old house
daybreaks we spent there as I trusted
my heart to you
Rosalba in the wings
waiting in lace and boots
to fuck you when we got back to town
Rosalba as dawns became crisp with frost
as I let you in and in
Rosalba
petals falling open inside my chest
Rosalba
as I loved you
as I fell in love with our future together
Rosalba

as your union coursed in parallel
Rosalba
as you wanted a baby together
Rosalba è finalmente incinta
Rosalba is finally pregnant
reads the faithful diary

by Lyall Harris

(First Runner-up, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

Likes

my daughter adores
like
her image
like
on a small screen
like
she poses
like
flips her hair
lip synchs
like
flirts
lace straps
like like
peeking
like
midriff flashing
like
made-up
eyelashes batting
like
to the beat
like
she thinks she knows
what she's after
like
but what will she do
like
if he's like
her father
like
a protector
and like
a perpetrator

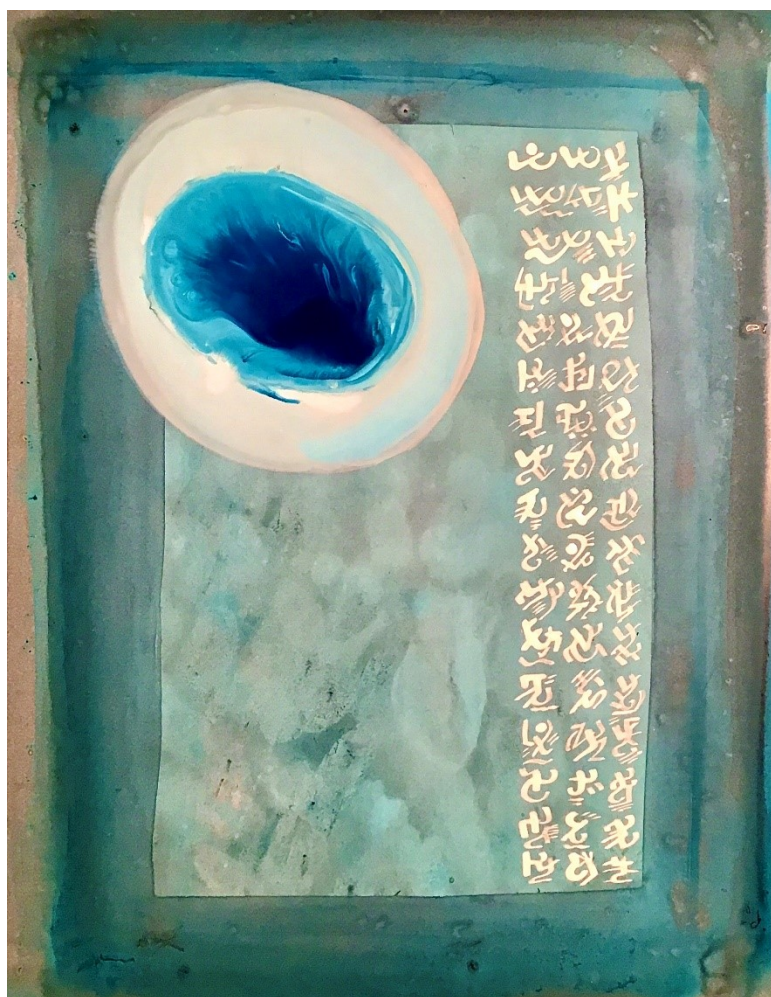
by Lyall Harris

One-wingèd

your single wing was beautiful
sometimes
like the song thrush on the forest floor
this morning
confined to the understory
one wing taut
towards impossible sky
I was fooled by the handsome array
mistook lopsided shadows for my own
dark ravens cawing in the canopy
folded bones and feathers in bed
snug against a side of you
I watched your chest rise and fall
the chest that filled with what we thought
was love
and the chest that crushed it

by Lyall Harris

(Honorable Mention, The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry)



Blues for Twilight
by Sylvia Van Nooten

Places I Have Known

Of this place
I wish to remember everything
the green out cropped islands
left to wildness
stony ruins jutting over the thin division
of land and sky
with light diffused in gathered clouds
from a low sun

Hamlets less claimed by civilization
the inflection of words;
and the staccato of foreign tongues
in teeming streets;
bridges trolled by the unwashed
for another coin in their cup

We still hear the music rise
to our open window in the night
to carry away our sleep
as we unravel a mournful dirge
from this lands brutal past

of you my love
I know vast tracks
I've known your taste
when need was everything
the slope of your shoulder
and the measure of your taken hand

the uptilt of your chin
just before you speak
and the topography
of your ear as you tuck a wisp of hair behind it

yet I may catch you
in an unguarded moment
after clearing dinner plates
and I can see the wine
has carried you
to archipelagos of darker thought
that are foreign to me where
I dare not take
my clumsy step
so I touch your cheek
and then you flash a smile
to say you've returned.

by Gary Beaumier
(Runner-up, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

Cold Season

The snow melt unburied the carnage
from the cold season
willow ash and maple's stripped branches
soaked in winter's blood
crooked themselves beseechingly
for a little more of the sun's nourishment

There were such hobgoblins
in the winter's nights
nibbling at the edges of thought
such catastrophes of the body that
I nurtured a wish to simply
be torn away in my sleep
in a strong gust of dreams
--one breath then no more—
and scattered amongst others I'd known

but now I rise at first light
to put to fire the conquered bones in the garden
letting the burning scents mingle
in my hair and wools
and when I return to you
you bend to kiss the top of my head
inhaling a smoky aroma
and then wipe a smudge of ash from my forehead

by Gary Beaumier

July 10, 1939

(On my parents 80th wedding anniversary)

This is a day set in the amber of memory
...the day that set everything in motion

neither could see the coming war
he only saw the white veil
of this 23 year old he'd take

they did not imagine the four
—a girl and the three boys—
evenly spaced until the last

she only saw his blue eyes behind the glasses
the thickness of his oiled hair

they only heard the old priest
in the bright vestments
who prompted their soft replies
with the candle scent of beeswax
in the church's acoustics
that seemed to swallow their words

she only saw his gleaming car
that would take them to Yellowstone
he only felt their awkwardness
and pretended it was normal
as he loaded their luggage in the trunk

there were no strokes or heart failures
or joblessness that darkened the house yet
only this scatter of days

in relief against the tapestry of their futures

so when the car radio lost all the signals
he sang Alouetta in the French of French Canadians
and she laughed at the funny sounding words
and she slid across the car seat into his gathering arm
as he glanced at her he could see the flecks of light in her
green eyes

and later maybe there was hope in the flecks of light in
the night sky as they leaned against the car
in the motel parking lot
even as she felt irrevocably far from home

and she gripped his arm and said sing
“Red River Valley”
his sweet baratone notes enfolding her
her eyes with such promise

by Gary Beaumier



Untitled
by Zai Pacardo

For Such Are the Rules

How was I to know I would not recognize the
signs I had been given until I was nearly old?
How we grew up surrounded by Indian ruins?
How those of us whose family came here
Early have no collective memory of them. I
have one arrow head, some kind of ochre-
colored hammer or weapon, a grinding rock,
and a chunky stone found in a spring by a
stream—now someone's pond. I stood in the
skunk cabbage in the middle of a swamp and
pulled out of pristine water swamp artifacts so
important the science teacher had to cut one of
them in two, the same kind of destruction we
inflicted when we arrived here limping in our
tight shoes, asking for help to survive the
winter. Here, we said, let us cut your rock in
half even though it perfectly fits the pestle
found in that spring by a little girl who left her
house early in the morning to avoid the
ramifications of the night before, who would
have shared her breakfast or blanket with
anyone she found in the woods on that spring
morning, for such are the rules of hospitality.

by Sandra Kolankiewicz
(Runner-up, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

LAST RITES

It rained cottonmouths for 30 days after you died.
They wore proud boots and took over the streets,
slithered and kicked through the steel-plated doors.
They sat coiled or casually drooped in your special recliner.
They ate the last Tyson's chicken in Arkansas—they did!
and then ravaged the okra and bean patches out back.
Then they took the tomatoes and purple-hull peas,
cutting a swath like Sherman's army marching to sea.

Their white mouths turned a deep heliotrope purple.
We plied them with offerings of heavy red wine
and they turned all purple and died. We swept snakeskins
for weeks. Next the bats came, echolocating what we
humans heard only as a series of slight erratic clicks.
We developed a decoder that could read bat-tongue for us
and learned that they repeated through the walls a gossip chorus:
"You know he heard the wind chimes just before he died, a music
that played so hauntingly on the listening ears of time."

We banged every pot and pan in the house like a marching band
starting off a Fourth of July parade with John Phillip Souza's brass
until they gave up their roost, a lonely, leaning excuse for a chimney.
When finally we wept and muttered a flood of desolate words
over your cavernous deep rhombus in the earth, a dark hole really,
an aunt we barely knew said to me, "Give me your last skinny-back
wishbone hug and tell us how thin we've become."

by Pamela Sumners
(Runner-up, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

Revelation of a Poet on the Highway

A hood rises like a space-junk
samara from the tight traffic several
cars ahead, and he thinks, "it doesn't
look bad." Humming and tapping
with the radio a mile or so back,

he had pondered why we say "broken
down motel," as if such a place

is like a car smoking in the emergency lane. Clearly motels don't break

down—cars do, yes, chemicals do, people do, order does. Resisting

the narcotic sun's call to sleep,
he had allowed it to hold him

within this tether-less musing
until the hood flew up as singular

as a severed metallic phoenix wing. An iamb
comes from either within him
or outside him. He wonders why
everyone is parking on the road,
why he can't hear his car is taking a turn left,
But at last,

it is as simple as a decoder ring clicking into place. The startlingly

illuminated hood explodes
with rays. They envelope him.

by J. Ross Peters
(Runner-up, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

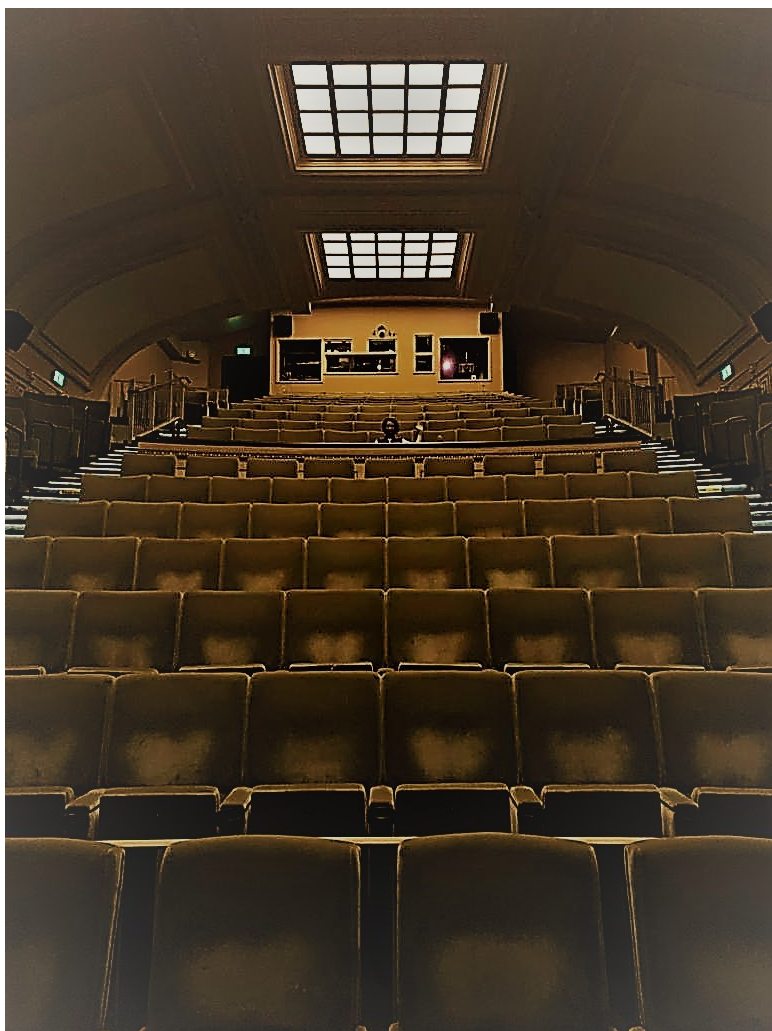
Rise Young Woman

Rise young woman,
daughter of mountains
and olive scented rain
shed the ashes of your brokenness
build your rib-cage anew
and stitch together your open pomegranate veins.
Rise young woman
you with the trembling voice
and fear scarred hands
scorch a burning path
through their carefully crafted
prisons of shame and fear,
thunder through the ravages of
displacement, hunger and oppression.

Rise young woman
daughter of warrior women
who fought for generations
against the oppression of men.

Rise young woman
and destroy the world
if you must
in search of your freedom.

by Hawzhin Azeez
(Runner-up, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)



Theatre of The Obscure
by William & Amanda Stanton

Leukemia

the doctor tells me

now

having discovered late in the game—
“myeloid leukemia”

What?

sounds like the title
of a sci-fi movie
not “milord”
not “plasma”
but a “fluid”

rhythm, like
anemia—
you don’t know
that it is there
and now you must
tune yourself in
to it very often

molecules of blood
follows when language fails—
you can’t hear them whisper
to each other while
they wait for the gate
of your marrow to open

how could you?

this punishment
is no innocence
think of what tainted
looks like inside
the body, an army comes
to invade, devouring
as it destroys, with certainty

think of the earth opening
its mouth below your coffin,
which will contain a doll
of your body, the water

will swirl under you
in a white froth, in dark
pockets, like marshes
on the loose wait
for a storm and rain
to rupture, afraid
of losing, the sky
will never try to make
the light stay

then

laughter sends a flood
of warmth up my neck
and into my face
like a branch escaping
in the wind, a big one
free falling, if it wants to,

crash

I feel my face go merlot,
my breath change, my palms
become a flood plain
the bruises on my skin
are not only the broken
vessels beneath the skin
but life heartaches,

I cannot roll the word
“leukemia” on my tongue
like a piece of chocolate
think of my childhood

woven with the present,
as I am likely to remember
a story I am told, as
I am the story I’ve lived,

I am a present person—
open to the moment,
responsive, centered,
apologize for speaking

my truth in outpourings,
unexpected and hurting
like time is the trigger, rhymes
with “explode,” rhymes
with “shattered heart”

by Ilari Pass

(Runner-up, The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry)



Bloody Nose
by Zai Pacardo

The Handle

Stumble back to the house you were born in your mother's voice calling the path out of crisscrossed lines in your palm re-enter the smooth black drive dive back into piles of leaves on the lawn all your yearnings swarm the entrance lights like insects your arm reaches out for the door whose handle is broken inside

The Handle
by Douglas MacDonald
(Runner-up, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

It's Not Like You'd Have A Choice

After a long day
you come to bed and drape a casual arm around me.

For the last two years,
I have been exploring the boundaries of consent
because I grew up thinking my body was barbed wired
and it turned out the defense was paper filled with blood.

You kiss me on the mouth
the way I like
the way that my bones turn into raindrops
and pool on to your tongue.

When I caution,
I'm not in the mood tonight,
you lay back down
and I thank you for your consideration.

And as night crawls into the window
through the open blinds and turned off TV
you say,
I'm stronger than you.
It's not like you really get a choice here.

by Lynne Schmidt

(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

Connection

This connection—

Can you hear me
in gray Seattle?

Yes, it is dark here

I see fireflies mating along the Ohio River

Four hundred million years ago

Cincinnati was an inland tropical sea

I found an ancient bone

a tooth of a dog shark

Meet me in Wyoming, love

We will rent horses

and talk about harpoons

by Dale Shank

(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)



The Lane, Late Afternoon

tintype

by Brad Daulton

Experiments in Time and Place

by Chris Neilan

I wake up as a hair. I wake up as a tree frog. I wake up as a vintage postcard. I wake up as underpants.

My waistband is too tight for her—I dig into her hips. I sit in the washing machine all day and all night. I prefer being on than being off.

I wake up as a bowling ball, I wake up as a tumour. I eat the cells around me to make more space for me. I eat it all up, I eat eat eat—it's a space-stealing game. I am the centre of a black hole.

I wake up as calligraphy, I wake up as a beer. A woman is drinking me from my bottle; I swirl and gurgle and work my magic inside. I mix with the others and take the chute to the pool.

I wake up as a man, I wake up as a woman. There's an aching inside me that even he can't touch, not for all the tea in China. Round and round the hours go, and what do I have to show? I remember doing cartwheels in the garden, and the things my father said. I wake up as a woman, I wake up as a man. I live in a cage of my own construction, but I've lost the key. There's a woman out there—I'm trying to pull her through the bars, but her shoulder keeps popping out at the socket.

I wake up in Berlin, I wake up in Seoul. It's a heady spring, and yellow dust swirls in the sky like the particles of dreams. It gathers on the windscreen wipers and in the guttering of sliding doors. Take my hand, I say to her, and we skip through the streets. We are infinite, we are immortal, we are candy-covered twin-kiss strawberry centres, you wouldn't believe the jokes we tell! We ask such questions of each other, such silly questions, but, you know. I wake up in Seoul, I wake up in Bangkok. We used to live

in that apartment complex, but these days it's mostly frequented by cats.

I wake up in my future, I wake up in my past. I have a joke I tell to the adults, go on tell us your joke they say, and I do, I say what did the wallpaper say to the wall? I don't know, they say, what did the wallpaper say to the wall? I've got you covered, and they give the obligatory laughs. I have a cloth that is my favourite cloth, I squeeze it on car journeys. I wake up in my future midway through an evening laze-in. The single duvet doesn't cover us both well, but we make do. We are yet to implode. Our foreheads touch.

I wake up as a forehead, I wake up as a capillary. My walls are one cell thick, and within a stripe of blood. A nail could tear, a cough could rupture, and out it would come. I am a miracle, really, when you think about me, although you never do. I wake up as an ear. You wouldn't *believe* the things I hear.

I am kissed. I am cold. Hairs grow from me until they're tweezered. All I want is to be covered in winter, and stroked tenderly on the sofa. That's all I need to make me truly happy. I'll produce just the right amount of wax, I promise. I'll never tell of all the things I hear. Never. I'll just store them quietly in brain, to be dredged up when necessary, or to appear in the fringes of dreams. Every dreamscape needs a full well.

I wake up as sexual lubricant, I wake up as toffee. I wake up as a stream of coffee, on its way to the cup. I find extraordinary comfort in the prospect of being drunk, and in the finite borders of cup. I like being in cup, I like being in mouth. I am made to be securely enclosed. Enclose me, and I will make your heartbeat race.

I wake up in Brighton. I used to live here, a long time ago. I construct a machine that allows me to see where

all the women I've ever slept with are right now, and what they're up to. I include a function that allows me to see us before we met too, the moments when we were in the same shop or bar or cinema, completely oblivious of each other, or the times afterwards when we were just around the corner from each other, or when we'd been in bedrooms no more than a few streets away, schtupping some other person's genitals, and if those people had been in the same shop or bar or cinema completely oblivious of each other. It's a hell of a machine. I soak it all up, then destroy the machine and its blueprints. No-one need know it ever existed.

I wake up as underpants. I can't see what she's doing, but I know I'm not on. I prefer being on than being off.

I wake up in Spain. The open window bears the sun, and the scent of the lemon grove below. Someone's having a fiesta, and I'm invited! I've heard my wife might be there, in the crowd. Vamonos, guapito! Live the life, no? I quickly invent a machine that punishes reminiscence by administering a sizeable electric shock, win the nobel prize, and head out to the fiesta. This new machine is going to make me a billionaire, I tell her. She has a forehead, and ears, and eyes like pomegranate seeds. Let me show you how to live, she doesn't say. No, she doesn't say that. We're not looking for that. What do you take me for? This isn't that kind of story. She takes me to the seashore and I find my sense of purpose. I'm not afraid to take charge, I tell her. I remove the machine, and offer it to her. She looks at it curiously. I decide not to tell her what it does, but to let her see for herself.

I wake up as an incident, I wake up as a dream. I am the path I follow. Action is character. I am defined by the choices I make under pressure. I begin work on a machine to prevent this from being true.



Leaves and Stays
By Belinda Subraman

The Owl

The snow whispers to me soundless

unlike the last
time we were together, hands clasped
as we ran, gasping amorous affirmations,
stumbling through these woods
away from the music and
the raucous laughter of those
not ready for goodbyes.
A bird screeched in the distance.

We interrupted the owl as she spread her wings
eyes fixed on an escaping rodent,
her lost meal
the price of our delight.

We fell against a sturdy oak,
mouths together
tasting the tang of words unspoken
more delectable in a moment
than our accumulated words
on paper. We basked in the power of

speechless expression.

The next morning
you lined up with the men in green
and you left. That night
I wrote a letter you never read
because another, sealed,
arrived at my door and the words
in *that* letter struck a piercing blow.

I gathered them all, tucked them
under my sweater and I ran
stumbling alone as the branches above me
dripped cold tears.
I stopped and
wordless sound escaped my soul.

I climbed
branch by
branch, until I arrived at
where the owl had been.

Here

I will leave every letter -

every mark of ink, indelible

compensation for her loss.

I listen to the silence.

by Josephine Pino

(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

*If we were to meet again
Up there in the world . . .*
Primo Levi

salt scratch in the mouth
touch to recapture
that dark breaking grab
cracked flash how I called out
like a woman
and then cried
as if pain were part

when I recall
that sad release
I see light
from the sun
covered rising
and wish blessings

could be a part
as well and finally
that the violence
could be stopped
in a slight bottle

capped and glass
heavy as strong as
can be conceived

by Alan Bern

(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)



Beauty Amid Chaos and Plague
By Belinda Subraman

If We Must Make Judgements About What This All Means

You said it feels presumptuous
even to be alive and conscious,
that it's arrogant
to believe in a divine kindness.
That faith, like pavement,
is eventually eaten up by the wilderness,
crumbled.

But my faith isn't concrete;
it's wild flowers.
Violets and black-eyed susan,
mountain laurel and bluebells.
Slender greenery rips through driveways,
tears up sidewalks.
I would rather err on the side of hope,
the divine melody that spins the earth
around the sun and knit our cells together
in the dampness of the womb.
The emerald river hops over pebbles,
monsoons replenish the soil,
lavender blankets hillsides,
and a solar ball of fire dances
colorfully in morning rain.

Instead of convincing ourselves
that none of this matters,
why not surrender to the wind,
the strong tide, the warm sun,
the great wonder of being?

by Alexandra McIntosh

(Honorable Mention, The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry)

Poem for Anne Bracewell

The old dog has buried his shit once again at the foot of the bed. This time, in a shirt bought for your mother when she was in the hospital,

one she'd never wear. Just like her—a man's blue flannel plaid, hung in the cardboard closet; only thing you took after a nurse let you close

her eyes, clip the plastic bracelet. Goodwill buy, last thing that lit those blue blue eyes. Old dogs get embarrassed, old ladies die. You read Jo

Ann Beard over and over, understanding as you do plasmasphere, plasmopause: Self-pity the one thing you will not do.

by Kate Cumiskey

(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

Florida love poem

What I want is to write
about the ocean, how the sand
meets it not far from the end
of Robinson Road, how white
sand coats your feet, damp
under streetlamp and whip
of sea oats in midnight.

Instead, I will make a body poem
with sliding next to my sleeping
husband, wake him almost up,
offer myself as I had not yet learned
to, all those years ago in his cottage
near Flagler Avenue—windows kept
open by lead weights on cotton rope,
pulleys. Salt rusting window screens,
mattress ticking on the living room

floor. How much more he loves
my body now: thickened, heavy,
scarred. Deliberate thing, to wake

a sleeping man, make love after
midnight with work in the morning.
It is the poem I write: the ocean
glowing and rolling under the moon.

by *Kate Cumiskey*

Just lately I feel my body settling

Just lately, I feel my body settling itself into the shape Mother's like a hand in a glove. Not gently, struggling to get there—tight, sometimes twisted and grasping like white gloves she used to push my hands into for church; pearlized button and loop on the back just where the wrist bent to shelter its most delicate aspect. Ribs of ruched cotton star bursting, or cutout daisies with tissue-thin skin showing through.

Bit by bit my body settles into age: fractious, screaming all the way down. Only in twilight sleep I feel my lower jaw shift, relax, offset to the right, the side I sleep on. My mouth clamps, thin-lipped, crooked, and settles for sleep into Mother's fighting look, the one she wears when she will not be moved. Then I can rest. And it feels good, Like falling into my own skin.

Mother is eighty-four. She lives alone, across two bridges and a causeway in the house my father bought to be close to his rockets, close to the sea. She leaves the front door unlocked. Back, too. Someday, I will open that door, cross the terrazzo, find her lying on the quilt I made, T.V. tuned to Rachel Maddow, wearing a new aspect. One I'll settle into as well, gently or un, one not-too-distant day.

by *Kate Cumiskey*



Dancing Feminine Releases Her Color
by Sylvia Van Nooten

lie n

ask for more
now
if you dare ask

for every little bit
starve this cold &
veer off

birdsongs style
steering into the sky
so many sharps

pockmarked landscape
turning treacherous
death by icicles

gasp little yelps
tasting ash &
sublingual tablet

hold it in tiny mishaps
muffled & yet
still crying out

these moments
pressed between pages &
broken brickbybrick

by Margaret Galey

(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

My God is the Godzilla of Gods

SOMETIMES I can tell whether a person gets their character from reliving childhood traumas or overcompensating for a much-too-wholesome life; but sometimes I also think I'm the only one right and everyone else is wrong. I guess I'm just confused with everyone droppin' \$200--like it's hot and actually on **FIRE**--to look like a 60s stripper.

I want to live in that Robin Williams movie--the one where he **GOES TO HEAVEN** and everything is made out of paint.. I really hope Robin Williams is okay.

The Catholic Church gets more living monetary donors **WHEN** they scare the living Christ out of each generation regarding suicide and birthcontrol. **IT'S** quite the booming business. The only church I would join is the Church of Euthanasia; **THE ONLY THING** they believe in is over population, and their motto is: "save the planet, kill yourself." They really put the tree-huggers in their place, if there are any tree-huggers **LEFT**. But unregretfully, they don't have that big of a following. I don't want to die yet though, I don't want to drink swamp water from a boot for the rest of eternity. *Do you want to get drunk off the blood of Christ?*

I find it terribly odd that people give flowers at funerals without the intention of giving a botanical representation of death.

by Ashley Cantrelle

Dream Caused By A Second Awakening

SEE HOW this war becomes a circus riot over the body **GOD** gave me. there are muck-munching men who like to project their own dejection (a feeling protruding from a still-born erection) in quixotically violent eroticism with the subconscious intent to rot innocent ascent. roundabout trauma **INFLUENCES** my mind to condemn itself to paranoia as it concludes that dying is just what it means to be living in **MANKIND**.

ONE CAN roar from the sky, shower our sinfills with bullets, and make our lonely **ONLY** oceans throw temper tantrums while phantoms admire our expiring existence through pomegranate-painted glasses; but we'll still be sleeping, dreaming to **IMAGINE WHAT** it would be like to never wake up. dreaming to avoid the screaming. until the sober buzz of an alarm grants us another recycled day that has had its memory swiped clean of the night terrors, a day that has forgotten the forgery of his own optimism and the ritualistic regret of lending the sun to such a **BEAST** of a species such as we feces of the lactose-intolerant galaxy.

we pretend everything's peachy keen, love like leeches, kill during gospel speeches, lick our own ego clean, and ask thy neighbor if they think we're mean. we govern us by shunning and gunning for them with a delusions (diluted with pride) of productive mayhem; and if we don't like our super-size, we simply metastasize. an elected masked man **REIGNS OVER** our swollen dwelling, we applaud as our king of bankrupted thought counts his blood diamonds. but only his closed curtains are exposed as he strikes a bluntly stunted pose of so-severely-sluggish-that-it-severs-its-own-adjectivic-definition cat burglary. His droning throne of economical flatulence is mounted on the bruised, mountainous back of **THE** tuskless elephant; and the masked wax-man is so high up in the **HEAVENS**, that it is in him we trust.

by Ashley Cantrelle

Use Your Inside Fists and Take Up Knitting, You Nutty Butter Ball

how do **I POLITELY** explain to you: even though i don't always know whether or not you're being honest, there are many times i can tell when you lie--it has the effect of raw fuming onions. my shadow absorbs a little of my **COLOR** every time; and i'm terrified of becoming it, always walking under someone else in the sunlight. multi-dimensional hearts like ours have chambers of violence that leave marks of violets.

someone i barely know is trying to talk to me about **THE WEATHER** as i'm giving you this monologue **IN MY HEAD**. it's raining, so i tell him, "you have to go through the storm to reach a strike of enlightenment." he regurgitates a nervous laugh, he must think i'm mental lentils, as no one really speaks in metaphors anymore except those pricks with soggy unlit cigarettes between their lips like a couple of engorged clits soaked in spit. i should knit you a sweater for the cold weather, **'CAUSE** it's gonna be more nippy than a witch's titty.

you tell me it's pretty hard for pretty girls to say "no." **I** say maybe you can dump your purse on dr. phil, and then you and him can both suck a fat fart because all your words slide right off the turd, it's all flatulence ripping with vengeance. **DON'T** mind me, humor is my only coping mechanism

i just wanna say that you hit like an inflatable gaping vagina. but my skin tarts like lemon acid when it feels **LIKE** you want me to return the slaps; but all i have to give is slapstick and gut screeching. great consequences leech themselves to wild confidence; and it's a **PITY** that you can't let yourself realize, the consequences of you rolling the dice with my affections have cut our chances.

by Ashley Cantrelle

(Honorable Mention, The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry)



Caretaker II
by Sean Muller

Marveling We Will Reign

Every day I turn over the stone of the world
ready to be surprised
run my fingers through the wet dirt, heavy
with the musk of unborn mushrooms.
Its slime is the slick flash of salamander,
who begins life in the swamp and ends
in leaf litter. I too,
came naked and dripping
from darkness to a skin of fire,
am crouching, muddling through the mud,
knocking against beetles, mycelia, duff -
all our singular lives
rocked in the decaying,
astonishing world

by Emma Wynn

(Honorable Mention, The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry)

Kernel

Inspired by Peter Wohlleben

After the drought
our beech trees break into prodigal blossom,
desperate for posterity and
faithless to the rain.
It is the battered
that burst most in bloom.

Recklessly, sap swells the spindle buds
and the leaves unfold naked
of the usual defenses,
no power left to poison.
The beech leaf miners bite once
and full of sweetness, ravage.

By fall, burrs peel back
from the gloss of nuts drying and
cracking open in the shade.
But a nail splitting each triangular shell
reveals nothing. The heart of this
wild effort, empty.

To be emptied is to be full -
to be battered without bitterness,
to bloom spacious
at one's heart
and nourish, unknowing,
the lives of others.

by Emma Wynn

Tory Hill

Even the locals stopped to admire the twin oaks
on the sloped field, left standing because they were too hard
to shift, when horses and men cleared the field, built cabins
out of lighter woods and left them, proud Yankees,
leaning on no one. The way they stood was
the way they fell.

Did traitor roots, out of sight, lunge for each other,
tips swollen with unshared sugars, spoiling for touch
and the taste of another?
Was it the heat without shade or the hurricane winds full
across the flat ground or those roots all lopsided yearning
that finally brought them down?

The way they wanted to lean, roots and branches, on each other
we denied. In the fever dream of our nation - the strong
finally absolved from all allegiance to the real, the dependence
declared by our bodies inhaling the out-breath of trees,
the fruit of immigrant sweat tart on our tongues.

Yet the split wood knows.
While the golden mighty stretch proud to the sky
to break brittle against the wind, those of us less singular
tangle underground in the close darkness -
grow reliant, long and green.

by Emma Wynn



Intimate Imitation
(from A Choreography of Another Life)
by William & Amanda Stanton

FOR YOUR LEAVING

It's a nice night for trains,
for traveling,
for insects that fly by the stars,
but I know nothing of trains.
I know the long solemn tracks
that unfold for me in my long dreams,
and in my long dreams I have paused
for that pedestrian love
which should never have overtaken me
at the crossing gates of this (my brief
my little) life, but poets I think
should know something of trains.
So I listen. I watch the tracks.
My great grandfather, they say,
built the tunnel through Lookout Mountain
sheltering tracks that ran
from Chattanooga to Vicksburg
and during the Civil War
Bragg's men fought off the blue
in the tunnel my very Southern
Alabama rebel ancestor built.
But that is all my knowledge of trains.

I have stood by Moccasin Bend
and dreamed of heroes on the tracks
and wished I had made this river,
laid these tracks, with my body
for a spade hollowed limestone
and left my purpled shadow dying
on the walls of the tunnel.

I have prayed for some knowledge
of trains, of journeys, prayed
and strained to hear the sound of the tracks:
dissonance and steel.

If I knew of trains I might know
why you watched your dreams
blast-capping themselves, might
drive the spike of some better lines
for you. But I am ignorant.
Nevertheless this is for you;
my seal is on it, plain and frank,
like you. These words are not praise
dropped in the church-plate for guilt's
sake, but well-spaced ties, because
the audacity of your fiber
flows into me like dreams, or rivers.
We will make our way alone, carving lives
from piles of tar-pitched timbers and stone.
I give you this because your bones
have a typography theirs alone. They make me wish
I were a traveler of trains,
an architect of tunnels or possibly
some bright fixed point in the heavens
decisively spinning its mortality out,
coming again and again to dragoon passengers
through storms and lead them through the dark,
a conductor of trains, arranging our destinies
along these tracks, always going at night, following
the lead-car headlight of our brightness gleaming,
ignoring the vicarious freeloader of a
river that runs below alongside our route.
We would know only urgency and longing.

I know nothing of the greater urgency
and secrecy of trains, why they go at night,
but I have heard that once in Arkansas a maniac
was almost caught by the police even
as the train came by, that he escaped
by jumping over the tracks just before it came,
over the tracks and into the swamp.
So I know a little of the saving grace

of trains, how they take pity sometimes
on the pursued and the pursuer and
sometimes leave us to breathe
our own days to their deaths, in muffled
sleep, to bear alone the slow progress
through clutches of Loblolly, hearing lonesome
hushed continuities of winds in trees.
I do know a little piece, enough, perhaps.
I know that sometimes, left prostrate
by so many choices, a train can come.

In the season of my innocence
I have played chase with trains, played Christ
with trains, asking if there is a way
for one to pass me by, a way to jump
in front of it and cross to the other side,
to hear the crack of my foot on leaves
on the safe side of the tracks
and know that it is past, that every sound
of leap and branch pronounces the shortness of time.
I wish trains had never stopped to claim me.
I wish I had never thought of trains,
never known grief, never despised
this self-eating depravity of passion.
But that is not the nature of trains
or a watcher of trains; we must
follow the little length of lonely track
just ahead and not wish to have made it.
We must be blameless and we must not blame.
I don't blame you, boarder of trains,
night-traveler. I make my little peace
if you will take a little pity.

by Pamela Sumners

(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

HABEAS CORPUS

The year when it rained All or Nothing
we waited outside the gates
with our pails, and caught only
the one that got away, pale drop
translucent on our slackened tongues.

The men who ran the government
said we needed pencils to apply for relief
but some misheard and brought pistols
instead. Complete this paperwork,
they said. We need your signature
on this warrant. What warrant is this,
we asked. "You mean you don't know?"
The men with the badges smiled together:
This is your warrant against self-incrimination.

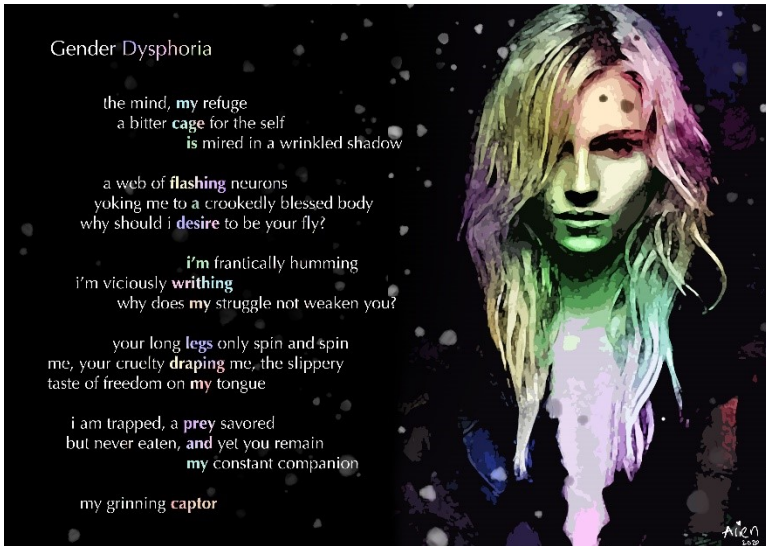
We are guilty of nothing, we said.
"That's why you sign. It's just a formality."

Take your papers. Just stand in this line.
Is this where we vote, we asked.
No, silly. You don't even have your pistols.
This is the unemployment line.
You signed the paperwork, remember?

What line is *this*, we asked, the next time.
The bread line, the grocery line, the rations line.

What line is this again, we asked, the next time,
in a cold white room that was not home.
Don't you remember, they asked. Look at it.
You signed the warrant. You know this is
the end of the very last line, like we told you.

by Pamela Sumners



beauTiful bodies #8: Andreja Pejic with Gender Dysphoria poem

by Arien Reed

BLUE BRICKS

wet summer grass
reaching up green
through the ether,
a gray-purple sky
overhead cut into
slices by cris-

crossing telephone
wires, with sordid
pigeons perched
on them staring down
at me roughly
with dark swirling

eyes while I
tend my potted
cactuses which are
stacked on a
three-tier

orange rolling cart
and the tan dog
in the yard barks
at the black dog
in the next yard

and the houses
apartments
lights
fences
grow up out of the

ground all around

me... the wind
lays quiet
still and the

B L U E
B R I C K S
are flat
on the
ground
in a line

beckoning me
to sorrow;

a place
I do not want
to go.

by Jonathan Carter
(Honorable Mention, *The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry*)

maybe like me

you lay awake
at night
in the dark
listening for rats
when there aren't
any, listening for

soft whispers
over the sound
of your own
heart beating
in your chest,

listening to the sound of
rain soft and cold
like razor blades,

ignoring the
truth lying
in the blood
rushing back
and forth
beneath your
paper-like skin,

not realizing that

behind the smoking eyes
spilling out from the

wings of blackbirds
there is a pyramid,
golden and shining,
a sunflower centered
in your forehead,

opening
to a crystal
sky blue
beyond understanding
your soul

breathing deeply
through the
firmament,

that there is peace to be found where
you are,
right now.

by Jonathan Carter

POEM 119

thumb tacks rattle
and roll in the thunder,
falling down my
throat in the night,

eating back all those sharp things I
said.

hummingbird minds
flip back and forth
between one bright
object and the next,

orange, yellow, green, red, pink.

paper swan souls
look real enough at
first before sinking
in a lake of real emotion,

swooning sadly to nothing in nowhere.

cowards stand at the edge
and never know for sure,
never jumping and never being
rewarded for their pragmatism,

and no one ever cares when they die.

the best love is a little tainted,
pure insanity tempered by
uniqueness and sustainability,
a flare for the unreal grounded,

and somehow the wildness always stays.

so I ate all the sharp things
in the house and thought of birds
and of love and of facades while
lightning strikes shot down all around,

ignoring death crawling closer.

and while bums are screaming in the
alleyway at cats and at shadows
I am daydreaming constantly,
never seeming to graze reality,

but I'm still here and I still breathe,
too.

carrying myself through my head,
relaxing
in a hammock eating grapes off a
fresh cut vine, getting sun on the
patio
of a mansion dipped in gold, with

a machine-gun reptile guarding the
front door.

and to think that I was a bum once,
too.

by Jonathan Carter



Duck
(from A Choreography of Another Life)
by William & Amanda Stanton

The Ghost of Mother

If there's an oasis for weary travelers along
the silk road, I've yet to find it. I wander
like an outlaw trying to bag the sun.
Memories scattered, bits & pieces, here
& there like breadcrumbs. I hand-feed a dream
that's clearly dying. Everything I touch turns to dust.

Once Upon a Time, I made soup out of stones. Mixed sugar
with raindrops in an old honey jar. Too young for Kool-Aid,
or half-baked suicide, Grandma's. After her death, my rape
abortion, miscarriage, two live births, then you, heavy,
with vernix. A complex shield made up of lipid-rich butter
that lingered in the folds of your skin as if to say, "I am not you."

23 years later, I reminisce on the caustic nature of mother.
Try to recall the warmth of you. I can't. Was it the drugs?
They flowed through me, branching out, unraveling in triple time.
Triggering something deep & mournful. "Sorry, Katie, I missed
your call. Dead phone." I wasn't ready for another suicide, yours,
mine, or separation, now 4 years long. Grief, leading nowhere.

Split open, more alone than I've ever been. I am losing myself,
searching for you, this house, crowds, that coffeeshop on Sunset
where I got you to crack a half-smile for a photograph that sits on
my desk. It's all I have left. Motherhood haunts me like a ghost. I google
your name after every disaster. Who am I, if not mother? I began
in a backseat, couch, alleyway, in a room with a knife to my throat,

weeping until the cops came. "Do you have somewhere else to go?"
Out the window with Bob, my punk rock boyfriend, living/dying
in a garage, stealing morphine from his mother. Her cancer dark
& thick, low dust cellular insulation, blown in. She died. We lived.
Now Bob peddles sobriety on TV in the form of redemption. He has
3 kids & 500,000 Instagram followers & I have a beautiful blank wall.

by Sheree La Puma

(Honorable Mention, The RAR Doug Draime Prize for Poetry)

Little Bird

i watched through my window, in the
shadow of spring.

memorizing

the shape of her breast,
round, sweet dripping with
song. little bird,

i listened like a

newborn in love

with its mother.

i took notes

before the
shedding of
skin,
carried
dreams

in my hips like honey.

a child bursts
through you like
a scar

creating a new landscape. wings
outstretched; my daughter left me

beautifully disfigured.

by Sheree La Puma

When Talking with An Ex Husband, Who Has Died

When Talking with An Ex Husband, who has died
It's best to clutch a wedding picture to your chest, lest he
forgets who you are.

No longer bound by the ways the world, take note:

Past & future are different now,
he may point his skull skyward
if you question him -
on life or death.

He may reach for clouds or stars,
or cosmic dust.

Don't be foolish,
leave aside
regrets, remorse, reassure him
that there are no
immense hands that shuffle
the universe.

Love him. Caress the bones
in his face. Remind him that time slips
from the hands of the angels -
into the hands of -
mathematicians.

Love more.

Do not reflect on the ways of the world,
politics, sex, dreams both tender
& hostile. Everyday life

is too small to be distinguished.

Know when it's time, the silver thread
will fray, then snap & he will drift
away from you. Point him home
to urn or moon.

by Sheree La Puma



Keep Away
by Tony Murray



Crow Woman Fading
by John D. Robinson

Late Spring.

No rose until today, no rains to speak of.
No prizes and no awards.
No lovers.
Too few letters
and not enough smooching.

My friend Charlie recently turned seventeen,
and his mother gave him a phone for his birthday
and that's going to cost him fifty bucks a month
but now he has the means to text, to apply for jobs,
keep appointments and arrange assignments.
The boy is very busy, says he's changing a lot this Spring,
says he's changed his mind and changed directions
several times, radically; says it's all good though.
A few days ago Charlie received a text from a friend
who wanted to meet to discuss what he called "a
proposition".
Turned out the boy, a year older than Charlie,
had decided to come out to Charlie—
to whom this coming out felt like an honor,
a conundrum, and another one of those things
a tender youth would rather not know—
an unjust burden society thrusts upon
queers and youths and any sympathizers.
The night after he heard his friend's proposition,
which he was bound to keep a secret
(except for me, he figured),
was a sleepless night for Charlie.
One night more and Charlie had the conundrum resolved,
he advised me that all was well and I need think no more
on it.

Charlie's a reader who wants to write and knows what good writing is.

His predicament is that he lives in a house
whose plumbing is not good enough for him to take hot
showers,
and consequently Charlie stinks, he says.
And so, he stays away from school and goes to the library
and easily gets depressed.

The world is full of blues. Orphaned children refugees,
Slaughtered boys and abducted girls, villagers hacked
down--
the staggering ravages of war and greed and poverty,
the numbing meanness of political ideologues, bigots, and
xenophobes:
purveyors of fear and hate world without end.
Not to mention domestic blues
sung by single moms, forsaken young'uns, hard-luck dads,
worried grandparents, downhearted lovers and poet-also-
rans.
Blues up the wazoo.

Charlie's susceptible to literary blues,
the kind you get for aiming to rescue fragments
along with Conrad and the best of storytellers.
And he tells me he's prone to lose his head in lust for
redheads,
he aims to avoid this deadly sin if he can.
And the boy is big and bulging with muscles,
he smiles with pretty white teeth

and he's so black and handsome he's bound to be seen in a crowd.

ii.

And then whamo! before the day's light is done, the rains come!
A rosebud appears, then two; then the next day it rains, and the next day too.
And before you can say *Jack Robinson* a prize is won!
And then there is a naked man in your bed;
your abdominal aneurism report is better than you hoped for;
and, hallelujah, it's summertime and school's out.
As the visible universe egresses from Pisces to Aquarius
all things change in due season,
including my friend Charlie
who has a list of things to do when he becomes eighteen:
he wants braces and his pretty teeth to stop hurting all the time,
he wants a room in New York City where he can learn the ways of the world
and be anonymous.
He wants his mother, his peers, and everybody else
to leave him be and let him be free—
as, indeed, Charlie (and my lifelong plague of seventeen-year-olds)
would naturally expect in The Age of Peace.

by Thomas Johnson



Deafening
by Zai Pacardo

Returns

by James Roderick Burns

HE THOUGHT IT might be a couple of hundred miles, three or four hours at most. Over a breakfast of cheese and rye-bread she traced it out with her fingers, thumb and index finger creeping across the stiff plastic map, and grudgingly agreed. They left at ten, all the luggage piled in the back seat of the rental car, and inched through the brownish-grey Berlin suburbs towards the autobahn. As they left the city behind, the little silver Ford soon picked up speed, and they rushed through a hundred miles of trees in no time at all. At the Polish border a heavy-set guard, his woody fingers curled around the butt of a pistol, leaned in and scrutinised the interior of the car – she sat back stiffly, thinking of the worry lines cut permanently into her grandmother’s face – but the moment passed. and they were waved on into the Polish countryside.

A few kilometres beyond the border the smooth tarmac petered out. Between crumbling post-war hamlets, dotted about like coastal bunkers in the fields, the road ran haphazardly mile after mile, its concrete verges crinkled and stained, the surface strewn with potholes like the bed of a pinball table. Every few seconds the car was squeezed to the side by a lorry. Other cars were infrequent; when they came up behind he could see their drivers in the mirror, hunched over the wheel, smoking and peering at the traffic as though seated in an optician’s consulting room. Now and again a juggernaut would sound its horn, the deep note interrupting the road’s endless dull rush-and-thud. Every hour or so they pulled off onto the grass verge to consult the map.

‘Are we even halfway there yet?’ he asked, a whine building up in his voice. The kilometre dial had clicked over hundreds of times, more, but he didn’t believe it. It was like drinking litres of beer – untrustworthy, somehow. He could feel the rising heat of the engine under his feet. ‘We *must* have gone that far, at least.’

‘Just hold on.’

She folded one portion of the map back on itself and turned on the interior light, angled the surface so it sparkled like quartz. ‘No, we haven’t. About a third of the way, I think – look.’ Instead he looked out of the side window and cursed, punching the horn and revving the engine.

By two o’clock they were half-way there, then eventually tipping past two-thirds. While he drove in silence she turned on the radio and flipped from station to station. A babble of strange throaty Polish alternated with pop songs from the eighties, an extended tribute to Princess Diana – English words and names buried in its flow like eggs in a pie – which seemed to migrate the whole way across the dial. They passed a McDonalds, bright and shiny against the darkening plain, then pressed on to Warsaw, rounding the outskirts of the city in flat brown light. An hour beyond, dusk fell and they came to a railway crossing. There was no traffic so he parked in the road while they looked at the map once more. They were about ten miles from their destination, it seemed, and he felt able to relax. He sat up and peeled the backs of his trousers away from the seat, yawned as he stretched out his locked arms and cracked his knuckles. She peered through the twilight to the other side of the road.

‘Look over there.’

She nudged him and he looked. On a crooked road sign hanging from a post were two arrows. The left hand arrow pointed north east, the direction they needed to go, and listed two or three small towns along the road, one of which was theirs. The right hand arrow was rusty and said simply, *Treblinka*. ‘Come on, let’s go,’ she said, sniffing and snapping off the interior light. He put the car in gear and took the left hand road.

*

The village was low-slung and gloomy, its rows of slope-roofed houses hugging the ground in pools of darkness between irregularly placed street lights. At the far end, the mansion house rose above it in tiers of pastel stone, windows white and sharp as icing, gates lit up like spiny winter ribs by the headlights as they swung into the driveway. They appeared to be just in time. A man in a green jerkin was coming through the heavy oak door, a fat bunch of keys in his hand.

‘Hello,’ the husband said, getting out and crunching over the gravel. ‘We’re here for the hotel?’

The man shook his head, then smiled thinly. He raised his hands in front of him, fingers turned outwards in a gesture of apology. The keys shifted beneath his fingers with a thick rattle.

‘Hotel?’ he repeated, pantomiming sleep and yawning extravagantly. Then the man smiled and nodded, beckoning them to the door. Inside the couple creaked after him across a polished floor to the reception desk. A young woman with ropes of dark hair bunched on her shoulders was tidying papers by the light of a green desk lamp. Mounted animals ranged behind her on boards; smoke-blackened pictures peered down out of the surrounding dark. The man in green handed them over and disappeared through a side door. She looked up and slipped the documents she’d been examining into a binder.

‘Hal-lo,’ she said.

The husband smiled. He touched his wife on the arm. ‘Hello. We’d like to stay in the hotel, if that’s possible. Just a couple of nights. The guide book said you had rooms attached to the rear of the place?’

The woman smiled crookedly and shook her head. ‘No English. Sprechen-ze deutsche?’

His smile faded. 'I'm sorry, we don't speak German' – a shrug – 'or Polish.' He took out a pocket phrase book and gestured sheepishly at the introductory phrases: *I am very sorry, I cannot speak Polish*. She read the words and laughed, then shrugged her shoulders and looked at him. A grandfather clock chimed somewhere. He desperately tried to dredge up something useful from their week in Berlin – an overhead snatch of conversation, perhaps, or words gleaned from a poster – but nothing came. He remembered some character in a novel saying *Ja, bestimmt*, emphatically, but that was no use. His wife held up two fingers and gestured around at the hallway, but the young woman just looked at her. Then it struck him: *zwei nacht!* The first word sprang from films he'd seen about the war, people being counted on the parade ground or herded into streams, the second from some dusty memory of 'Silent Night' printed on a hymn sheet in the original. It made him think of holly, and berries.

'Er - zwei nacht?' he said. The woman nodded. She turned round the registration book and slid it across the desk, pointing out the boxes in which they were to list their details. While he put down their names, London address and passport numbers in what he hoped were the right places, the receptionist handed a bundle of brochures and a price sheet to his wife. She saw their stay would cost 89 zlotys, for both nights, and that a tour of the attached agricultural museum was thrown in for free. She showed her husband the cartoon tractor under the total and he nodded stupidly. The woman behind the desk rapidly locked up her files and turned out the lamp. They moved outside into dwindling twilight.

She led them around the west wing of the mansion to a door fitted into the stone archway. Unlocking it, she gestured for them to follow. Along a short stone hall, single-stepped down into the sleeping quarters, were five or six beds set on platforms, a staircase leading up to the bathroom and a ground-floor annexe containing an ancient woodstove. The woman pointed to a small fridge and a table covered with oil-cloth, then bent to start a fire

in the stove. The logs inside began to spit and crackle, and she pointed at the hot water tap then back again to the stove, lifting her eyebrows to see if they were making the appropriate connection. The couple nodded and smiled again. Then with a short bow and a jingle of her keys she left them alone. They collapsed onto the nearest bed.

‘Settled at last!’ she said.

‘I thought we’d never get here. Honestly, I did. I’ll go out and get the bags in a sec.’

The whine had disappeared from his voice. He gazed up at the wood-panelled walls, the tall windows curtained with white filmy gauze drifting like mist about Castle Dracula. They gave onto the gravel drive and surrounding railings, and beyond that, the blue-black sky, a distant row of dense silhouetted trees. ‘Glad I remembered a few things, you know.’ He smiled, and lowering himself down crossed his arms contentedly on his stomach.

‘What? Oh, that,’ she said. ‘*Zwei nacht* indeed! D’you want to go out and get something to eat, or should we just have what we brought and turn in early?’

He laid back like a sultan against the pillow and domed his fingers.

‘*Ja, bestimmt,*’ he said.

*

The next morning, before they’d had a chance to roll back the covers, there was a loud knock at the door.

‘Who’s that?’ She hastily pulled on a dressing gown, knotting it tightly at the waist, and padded over the stone flags to the

doorway. She opened it a few inches then leant back into the hall. 'It's the man from last night. He – what?' She disappeared outside for a moment then came back in, pulling the door behind her. 'He said we have to go and take the tour while the lady makes up a fire for our baths.'

'What, *now*?' He peered at his watch and groaned. 'How d'you know that's what he said, anyway?'

'He showed me on a piece of paper. He'd clipped the words out of a phrase book and stuck them down. With glue.'

'Oh well – that's better than we managed. Give me a minute and I'll get some clothes on.'

On their way out they passed the man gathering wood from a lean-to behind the house. Today he had on a coat the colour of tobacco, and a small dog with a salt-and-pepper coat was dancing round his heels, disappointed it seemed at the lack of sticks. The man's face looked pale and kind in the early morning sun.

The young woman was determined to show them the whole of the exhibition, though they had no common language, and only a smattering of shared words washed up like jetsam from TV and magazines. Talking in a high-pitched, enthusiastic voice she whisked them around a splendid collection of soviet-era tractors and farm implements, a wall-mounted agricultural history formed from scythes and smocks dating back to the seventeenth century, then an avenue of reconstructed peasant dwellings, each gaining in space as they progressed from medieval grimness to early twentieth century relative comfort. In each was original furniture and clothes, implements, cooking pots and string nets, odd forked household objects with prongs and hinges, hand-bellows laid out on the hearth as though ready to take a breath. By the end of the tour they were charmed and exhausted. She escorted them back to the room, where someone had made up the

beds and lit a fire for hot water. Steam wafted from the upstairs bathroom. They both thanked her effusively and as she left, looked sheepishly at one another, then went upstairs for a bath.

Once they were dressed they went straight out to catch the rest of the day. On the main road they noticed a one-story hut sitting in the trees beyond the wall of the estate. It was built out of thick wooden planks, the bark still evident in swirls and knots on the outside walls; the only hint of modernity was a bleary neon sign, *BAR*, lashed to the roof, its cables snaking away under the eaves. Along with *sklep*, seemingly a generic word for shop, and the tangle of consonants which meant thank you, it was the only Polish word they could understand, in their ignorance. Along the highway, bars cropped up every few miles, the gravelly car parks half-full of tiny eastern European cars waiting for their owners to finish buying groceries, or presumably have a rejuvenating nip at the counter. As they drove out of the village on the curves of the Treblinka road, it seemed this was the main place for locals to drink.

The sun had come out through the spindly branches of the trees, and lit up a yellow plain as they passed. Nothing much grew in the plots of farmland, thin and sloping and separated by long trails of wire. They passed piles of rusted agricultural machinery nestling up against the fence on both sides of the road. The landscape gradually fell away to a spur of forest in the middle distance, then tiny red points and the accompanying lines of a railway crossing. As their tyres bumped over the rails he turned his head.

‘Are you sure you want to do this? I mean, we can go another day, or just take off back towards the village and up to Bialystock. You wanted to see that big church, remember?’

She shook her head, placed a hand firmly on his arm.

‘No, I want to go. Let’s just get there, okay?’

He nodded and cranked down the window. The smell of wild grass and wood smoke filled the car. She turned on the radio and suddenly Katrina and the Waves was bouncing happily from the speakers. The car coasted down a long hill to another junction, where a sign pointed them across a bridge and up onto a railway track. He nudged the wheels over the bridge and stopped as close to the sign as possible.

‘Does that really mean we have to hop onto the tracks to get to the other side?’

‘I think so.’

She wound down her window and stretched out her neck to get a better look. In blocky navy-blue characters the sign depicted a car travelling along the railway ties, with a reassuringly small train on the far side waiting politely for it to finish its journey. ‘Looks like we take this way up and over to the track, over there.’

Her husband peered at the sign for a few more seconds then swallowed and put the car in gear. Up on the trestle he gunned the engine as hard as he dared. The tracks hammered by underneath them and he grinned.

‘We’re going to make it!’ She gripped the door handle.

They were almost across when she heard a heavy noise behind them, and something like a whistle. ‘Go, go!’ He pressed down harder on the accelerator and they shot down the ramp on the far end, barrelling into the mouth of the turn and skidding to a halt on a dirt track. They both span round in their seats, breathing heavily, but there was nothing behind them. Pale blue sky, a black bird landing on the railway sign. They laughed.

‘Oh well,’ he said. ‘We made it this far.’

The track wound up through the forest in loose, sweeping bends. They passed a working saw-mill, clouds of yellow particles puffing up beyond the front office, a garage housing long green trucks with trees painted on the sides. Someone was hammering behind the largest truck, and they could hear the drilling whine of a power tool cycling up and down. The road flattened out for a while then stopped at a low barrier with a sign in Polish. As he got out to move it to one side, a plane flew overhead. Down a final section of track, now surfaced and painted with a broken white line, and they were there. He pulled up in front of a pebble-dashed toilet block. Marked spaces stretched away from the toilets like soldiers on parade. There was another car four or five slots down, and he swung around to pull in beside it, killing the engine.

‘Well, here we are.’

She got out of the car and stretched, then wandered over to a sign at the edge of a clearing in the trees, leaving him to lock up the car. It had the same text in Polish, German and what looked like Russian, in smaller letters, relegated to the bottom. Down one side was a map with numbered circles pegged to bullet points in the text. From the starting arrow she recognised the toilets, and traced a finger up through green ink trees to the top of the hill.

‘Come on,’ she said. ‘Let’s follow the map. Looks like we need to start over there.’

They walked across the clearing and down a shallow incline to a bowl-shaped depression in the grass. The first of hundreds of concrete sleepers straddled the depression, with a stone marker and flat raised bed erected alongside it, almost like a platform. The sleepers marched up the hill away from the marker, and the couple followed the route through an overhanging tunnel of branches pockmarked with sunlight, round a bend and up the slope of a broad hill. The trees fell away from them as they

climbed, until near the top they were walking over bald grass and concrete slabs. The sleepers stopped abruptly on the crown of the hill. A path trailed down the far side towards a circle with some kind of monument at its centre, and a second circle formed from ragged stones set jaggedly in concrete, the points of the circles overlapping slightly like a Venn diagram or a magician's trusty rings. They stood for a moment on the crest of the rise and looked around. The sky was a cold blue, intersected by strands of returning cloud. The bank of trees below clung to the smooth hillside like fur trim on a uniform. Then they looked at one another and started down the scrappy, foot-worn trail to the monument.

Up close it was a fearsome sight. Plain and square at the base, it rose up fifteen or twenty feet into an agony of rough carved shapes, stone arms flailing at the sky, thrashing against one another, and yet completely still. The blunt tips of the fingers formed a rough arc below the clouds.

‘Look at the shape of it,’ he said, pointing up. ‘The fingers rounding, making it seem whole. Is that supposed to mean what I think, do you suppose?’

‘Wholeness out of fragmentation, order from chaos, that sort of thing ?’

They hadn't spoken on the way through the trees and her voice was surprisingly sharp, almost scathing, in the silence. He stood back and looked at her.

‘What? I just thought – ’

‘Don't you do enough of that at home? You can't read this place. Just *look* at it.’ She took his arm and dragged him over to a corner of the monument. Hundreds of candles in crumpled tin holders had been jammed into the fissures of the rock. Waxy streams and patters marked its face; more candles clustered

round the base. One was still alight, its small flame burning evenly. She walked across to the overlapping circle. Each crude stone bore the name of a village, a town whose people had been uprooted then erased. ‘And why is it so damn *quiet*?’

She stood for a moment. Through miles of trees and the overhanging sky no sounds whatsoever came. The sawmill was gone, so too the hammering and the quick high-pitched bursts of the electric drill. Even the wind seemed to have died in the trees. She felt like an insect under a bell jar and began to weep.

‘Hey, hey – come on. It’s alright.’ He ran across to her and took her into his arms. ‘I’m sorry, I didn’t mean anything by it. It’s just a habit, you know, like putting on my glasses. I didn’t think. I didn’t think it would hurt you.’

She could smell wood-smoke in his jacket, the musty scent of wool. ‘I just don’t want to think about it, not like that. It’s not something I want twisting around inside me.’ He folded himself around her, stroked her hair, whispered sorry over and again in her ear. By the monument the candle drank the last of its wax, guttered and went out. A bird flew silently past.

*

The mansion house was quiet and dark. In the woodstove, the last embers had cooled and turned to ash. Light from a single bulb on the gable end fell in slats over the oilcloth table, the teacups and crumbs scattered on their plates. A mouse skittered across the stone floor somewhere, or so he thought.

In the bedroom, the white gauze curtains bulged and relaxed in draughts from the half-open window. He sat up in bed, hearing another noise somewhere. She stirred then turned over in her sleep. For a moment he watched the faint white billow of the curtains, listening, then got out of bed. There it was again: a high keening from outside, like panic or grief in a woman’s

voice. He pulled aside the curtain and climbed up onto the broad windowsill to listen. The trees were black and motionless beyond the iron railings. Nothing moved, and he dismissed the noise as just his imagination. He got back down, tiptoed across the room to bed. He watched the curtains fill and empty, then tried to sleep.

He was almost out when it came again, this time louder and sharper, like someone crying out in fear. He shook her urgently awake.

‘Hey, listen! Can you hear it?’

She sat up groggily as he pointed at the window.

‘What?’

‘Listen.’ The sound came in again through the curtains and she woke to it.

‘What’s that?’ They went to the window and pulled the gauzy material aside, bunched it up on the sill. She pushed at the window till it swung open. ‘What *is* it?’

‘Do you think it could be an animal? Remember that time in college, the scrubland behind the dorm? You called me halfway across town because you were terrified? Some woman was being killed in the woods, you said, only it turned out to be a polecat yowling away for its mate.’

She listened again and shook her head. ‘No. It’s not that. Go out and see.’

He looked at her and started to shake his head. Then he remembered the silence on the hill, and slowly got himself up and over, let himself down onto the gravel. It was cold and hard under the soles of his bare feet. He walked slowly away from

the mansion house, taking tiny paces, listening intently. The treetops began to thresh in the wind, and he looked back at her small face distraught in the window. Then inexplicably, he began to laugh.

‘What’s the matter?’ she said. ‘*What!* Are you all alright?’

But he laughed again, beckoning her out out of the window to the driveway. Beyond the railings the bar door opened roughly in a burst of light; a customer lurched away, unzipping, into the dark woods. A brief snatch of ‘Jailhouse Rock’ followed him out into the night.



The Barn from Old State Road
tintype
by Brad Daulton

What The Rainbow Gave Me

I stepped out into the sunlight, and
made love with the clean streaks of color,
openly-
Plump blisters began to freckle like clovers
across a meadow, my pores wept
thick tartness; I burned-
The rays endued me, the rays cauterized
where I still wept for you, leaving flesh juicy and perfect
for plush light to sip on: hungry-
I let the coldness that is “too bright” slip inside,
from within
a whisper:
“We love the leech that is your ugliness”
The rainbow is the only thing that has ever seen me,
fully,
and still leaned in for a kiss.

by Aine Thompson

Notes On The Sun

It is time-

The blue dawn is swimming away and
the sun is rearing its darling crown up above the umbrella trees, blooming
soft pink petals
that both fall and spread into a calm ocean-

It is me: here, now-

I wish that my tiredness would leak out against this window, over these
flowers,
and meet the light halfway, meet
the pink and the red and the orange, and
let the light lay the purple of night down,

let it sleep,

let me sleep-

My eyes hold me open under the waves, and I catch
myself hoping, hoping
towards something bigger than me and here and now;
I hope

that in the end I will always come back, that I too
will always melt over everything
from a ladybug's smooth back,
to a dog's vicious muzzle,
to a child's sick wails,
with a defiant warmth and the
nauseating refusal
to be kind quietly-

I sit and cry and hope

that, in the end, I too
clutched life in-between the bodies of dead things
and chose to keep living in it, chose to keep

loving it,

not as a punishment but because the desire to touch and to be touched burned
past abstraction

and forged into something bigger, something bigger than me and here and now,
forged into something so close to tenderness that it bubbled and burst and
rippled,

that it tore open the thinness our world resides in: a declaration-

I want to be bright and have it mean something, I want
to turn and spill and pleat all over life
like I cannot be separated from it,

like I breathe it-

I want to know that I, somehow and somehow, got
as close to harsh selflessness as I could, that I
finally drank in the sick heat of fondness and knew it, that I
became,

even for a moment,

even for a lifetime,

just like the sun.

by Aine Thompson

“I Love You, I Want Us Both To Eat Well”

Well, I haven't eaten in a week, I
never eat the things I have been given
I sit them on my desk and watch them rot
I am watching myself rot
Last night, my mother interrupted my staring competition
with the living room wall to tell me
that pineapples are evil, to tell me
that she will never buy one ever again
I asked her if she will now give up upside-down cake and
tropical alcoholic drinks
She said that life always has exceptions
“Were the Hawaiians afforded these exceptions, mom?”
She goes back to reading too many articles online, and
I go back to being an ungrateful daughter

I never eat the things I have been given,
especially pineapples because they are evil
I sit things on my desk and watch them rot
I sit things on my desk and watch spiders unfurl from
the corners of my room and eat them for me
They watch me watch them
I am pliant and stricken, my face
a Goya painting, my face
the face of Saturn's son, my face
the face of Saturn

I never eat the things I have been given, so
instead, I bought an Alocasia houseplant, an
Alocasia Polly if you were wondering, and yes
it hurt to walk from the back of the store to the front, and yes
it hurt to hold its pot in between my legs while we drove home
I think I may have lied when I told you I don't eat the things I have been given
I eat the pretty ones, the ones
I want to become
I hate the way the green membrane holds the glossy spine perfectly, and I
hate the way I wish I could eat it

I placed it next to the window in the kitchen and named it “Degenerative” as punishment
I always write poetry in the kitchen so I am forced to look at it as punishment
I am in so much pain that I think I deserve it
I am in so much pain that I think if I could I would sleep
until the spiders ate away at me
the same way pineapple juice eats away at your tongue
Oh god, I think I let my love eat away at you
the same way pineapple juice eats away at your tongue

I never eat the things I have been given (unless those things are pretty) but
I go to the store and stare at fresh produce
the same way I stare at the living room wall, and I
wish you knew how I learned to cook
just so we could eat and eat well, not
at my desk but in the kitchen next to Degenerative, where
during breakfast, the sun could have warmed our waking faces and
during dinner, the dark could have boxed us in under the warm glow
of a candle I probably bought at the dollar store that afternoon
while the rain fell late and where I probably felt a chill slip
past and rest in the empty cavern your arm had left across my shoulders
that very morning
I could have missed you in a soft way

I never eat the things I have been given (unless those things are pretty) but
if you couldn't tell, I am just like my mother
I read too many articles online about pineapples and coffee and dairy and I
spend too much time thinking in front of fresh produce at grocery stores and I
care too much about things around others just so it looks like I am
participating in the same sort of life you are
I know that this is exactly what you hate about me
I know you would have just watched me watch the food rot on my desk
before telling me I needed to find better ways to cook
chicken and broccoli anyway
Maybe I should stop going to the store
Maybe you did the right thing when you stopped answering my texts and
maybe you have forgotten by now but the last time we talked I had been crying
as if you were really leaving this time
You asked me why and I told you I had spent all afternoon in the grass waiting
to be eaten alive

You asked me why and I told you it was because I couldn't
figure out how to vomit out the overwhelming need to feel loved
Things that bite need you
Things that bite love you

Oh god, did you ever love me?

I am sorry that I still never eat the things I have been given (unless those things
are pretty)

You are very pretty

I am sorry that I ruined it by making you eat them for **me**.

by Aine Thompson



Here
by Zai Pacardo

Los Angeles 1965

after they ran out
of beds at juvie hall
the LAPD took me
to the nearest
precinct.

the night admissions
clerk was probably
a rookie
on desk duty

i remember his
red hair and skin
pink as deviled ham

and ears that
stuck out like
fake orchids
at a noodle café.

after he booked me
for shoplifting
he took me
to the back room

and told me to strip
down naked
while he wrote up
his report:

juvenile aged 16
smells like he hasn't

bathed in a month
no visible means
of support.

Go ahead, he said
stand beneath the light
inside the circle
and lift your arms
as high as you can

and then he made me
parade around
back and forth
so he could watch

and keep on doing it
like the pole dancer
down the street
on a slow night.

maybe he thought
he was teaching some
mentally challenged
dropout a lesson.

but when he saw me
trying to look tough
as a lifer
with a gang tattoo

he started to laugh
and called
the other cops
so they could laugh

too.

and at that moment
i discovered that
nothing in this world
means anything

unless you can
set it on fire
by rubbing together
two stones of laughter

and let it burn down
to a single ash
hard as the thud
of a body
saying No.

by Doug May

The Yearning

sometimes when i
can't sleep
and keep staring
at the clock

a stranger with candy
asks me in a cool
sexless voice

to come outside
where the hay is sweet
and summer days
are long.

and i want to do it
but i'm scared
to fly

and my yearning
feels like
a symphony
waiting for
a downbeat

or like breathing underwater
where the sun
is only a rumor

leaving thumbprints
on a cracked mirror.

by Doug May

The Yearning II

I am walking down the long exercise hall
I am walking down the long medicine hall
I am looking for my beautiful boyfriend
I am looking for my beautiful girlfriend
They have given me a map to the sun porch
They have given me a map to the dead lawn
I hear the music behind the third door
I hear the music behind the fourth door
There is no joy or sadness in the music
There are no trees or oceans in the music
I have never seen my boyfriend's face
I have never seen my girlfriend's face
They are too far away from the earth
They are too far away from the stars

by Doug May



Black Painting II
by Sean Muller

Pretend You're a Dangerous Dissident

Got the coronavirus
shelter-in-place social-distancing
make-America-greedy-again
full-of-bluster blues?

Pretend you're
a celebrity leaker of secrets
under house arrest
or solitary Mandela stuck on Robben Island

or Rasputin the mad mystical monk
marooned in a Czarist monastery
or Thelonious Monk holed up in his Manhattan apartment
mulling deep mysterious musical thoughts.

Pretend you're
a dangerous dissident (a democratic socialist, perhaps!)
hunkering down hiding out
in a Silicon Valley safe house

waiting for the cool clear day
when all the parched people
call upon you — you of all people —
to slake their raw raspy-throated thirst.

by Robert Rubino

On Either Side of Broad Bay Wine Country Window

Soothing sights
of big bright yellow green red blue black birds bathing
in stone backyard birdbath in early autumn evening after hard day
soaring & singing ballads or protest songs or national anthems
except for those who crashed concussed
undeterred by kitschy decals of avian nests
DOA into bungalow's broad bay wine country window
beyond restorative recipes of Bird Rescue's best
while on other side of bungalow's broad bay wine country window
unsettling sights
of a long glass bong uniting with wine bottles uniting
with beer bottles uniting with whiskey bottles
recruiting a couple of laughing lusting stoned silly sullen drunken
restless roguish
friendly-fire-wounded armies of one.

by Robert Rubino

Crawlspace

Ginger-furred fox trots gingerly
down long-married couple's long dirt driveway
its preying ambitious its surviving ambiguous
while rosters of rodents bide their time
scratching screeching from within crawlspace in hallway
above & in-between wine country bungalow's bedrooms.
They'd disappear reappear disappear again
for weeks or months or years it seemed.

But rodents reappeared no doubt
this time having come to stay to live & die
holding hell-raising all-night Irish wakes
& making Olympic-like mad dashes down
afraid couple's frayed closeted clothing
hanging like executed prisoners
in separate bedrooms bedrooms separated
by sickly sweet death-scented crawlspace.

by Robert Rubino



Dystopian Love
(Previously published in *Apricity Magazine*)
by Steve Tutino

The Invented Years

by Cynthia Marx

Those many years ago at La Jolla Shores your cedar scent in my hair, I traced your absent smile with the soft tips of my fingers—brought you with me up the hills where crowns of burnt yellow fennel swayed in the breeze—skipped back down past the town to the hard, wet sand of the beach

where the morning mist obliged the hot sun
and withdrew.

I counted the days in minutes, and dreams of minutes until we'd be together again. We spoke for hours on the phone. Me in sunny San Diego, you in thorny New York. You asked me to join you, and I was soon on my way driving across the continent in my sky-blue Bug. But you never told me, until after we married

that you had also planned a life
with her.

This is how, my love, the invented years came to be. The never really there years. Decades, actually, when even after four children—you would not let her go. Those years (how fast they fly!) floated by as madly, as swiftly—as enchantingly in their own odd way—as the puffy white clouds mirrored in the hard, wet sand

of the shores.

As time rolled on, your cedar scent mattered less than the unrelenting day-to-day. How to cope with allergies and asthma, for instance. And our son's battle with ulcerative colitis. Schools. Unsteady work. And her. Always her. And your child with her, of whom I could not be other than fond. Even when the child moved in mother in tow.

What happened to us, my love? In another universe we built our desert retreat south of Temecula, didn't we? Where we taught music and art, yoga and vegetarian cooking, and, oh why not?—

how to attain world peace? The ideas of which—in this universe—perished during a desperate last-chance motel weekend in Montauk.

Not long afterwards, I smashed a set of china; threw it all over the kitchen, pieces of which surfaced months later under the toaster and other small electronic devices, and in the cracks where the cabinetry did not squarely meet the plank floors of the century-old house, where only a firm broom or an excellent vacuum could flick, or suck out
the shards.

But if my violence was directed at objects, yours was directed at me. You pressed me hard to the carpet. Fury rising in my bones as she left with our children to...to where? To the library, I think. In the basement, out of sight, you shoved your forearm into my neck jammed me against the wall. Your foul garlic breath
hot in my nostrils
as I choked.

Another time, you pushed me down the front steps. Losing my balance, I fell to the hard concrete and scraped my elbow. Next door, I appealed for help; nervous, because who wants a bloodied domestic violence victim in their living room? A useful thing, though, a cop for a neighbor. In moments, three cars swooped in
purple lights
splattering the night.

They took you away, my love, those many years ago. Daddy in cuffs. Mommy in tears. The next day, at the precinct (there to press charges), they told me you had been released. He's going home, they said. Would that you really were...Declaring fidelity from a humble heart, and I ready to forgive. But it was not ordained for me to be other than
homeless
at home.

A good friend said, "You're not safe. Take the kids. Go to a shelter." I had no idea what I was doing, what to expect, having missed out on the class, the program the pamphlet that told a woman how to flee with four small children. In those days—(Is it any different, today?)—a shelter was just another word for jail.

The security meant to protect—

All of us from all of you, though it only made all of us feel guilty for having been beaten down by all of you. My friend meant well, as did the hive of social workers in the basketball court-sized room. But only after three days of begging food, handwashing underwear in the bathtub, and killing cockroaches was I granted an interview.

I'd seen that look before—in the eyes of a watchful nun when I was a homeless teen.

How old are you? The social worker asked.

Forty.

Do you work?

I'm a stay-at-home mom.

Why are you homeless?

My husband's mistress moved in?

My hollow answer hung between us like empty word clouds above cartoon characters.

I had avoided the stark truth for far too long: our life together was over, my love. A story in which I could no longer believe.

The social worker sat back and considered me.

In spite of it all, you still love him, don't you?

I blubbered an incoherent answer.

I did, I mean I do.

Then to myself I said,

I only ever wanted you to love me, too.

Your children have a home, she said. Go home.

Go home? What home?

You'll figure it out, she said.

Easy for you to say! You're not threatened by another woman who'll step in and take care of your children if you leave—as if you never mattered!

Call an attorney, she said, and she closed my file.

Confused and defeated, I called your father, who though angry with me, took his grandchildren home.

Bereft, I stayed with a friend on the upper West Side. She was raised by musicians though she wasn't one herself. Two Steinway grands filled her living room, and I sat, nose to cold windowpane, staring out at Riverside Drive as Juilliard students trooped in to play Chopin and Schumann.

If only you could have heard the music, too.

My love.

Who owns the house? My attorney asked.

Another woman.

The other woman?

No, another woman.

So, you rent from her?

Not really. She doesn't ask us to pay rent. It's complicated, I said.

Lucky you, he said. What are you? Hippies?

Something like that, I said.

And not for the first time I wished I did believe in free love. My predicament might be more plausible, if not bearable.

Move back in, he said.

But she's still there, I whined, upstairs in the room where we used to sleep.

Do as I say, he said. What other option do you have? And then he paused.

Yes? I said.

Look, he said, falling in love is not a crime, and you're not a criminal.

I'm not? I mean, I know I'm not, I said, feeling very much like one anyway.

I checked, he said, You're clean. Keep it that way.

I went home. Let myself in. Saw her red paisley cloth draped over the sofa. Yanked it off. Flung it to the floor. Felt displaced. Unreal. But our invented life improbably rolled along, like the puffy white clouds mirrored in the hard, wet sand. I slept on a foam mat in a room downstairs. Kept a baseball bat nearby just in case. (As if I'd actually use it against you!) Became a receptionist. She moved out.

I hired a babysitter, who, more than once called to tell me the kids were with her.

Always her.

She has to leave us alone, I said. I don't want her to take care of our kids.

Or, what? You said.

And then—the saboteur!—she moved back in.

Surely, your attorney didn't tell you to do that! I said.

Hell, if I'm moving out, you said.

Hell, if I'm moving out, I said.

It wasn't long before two cops came around again.

Good liar that you are, you told them I had trespassed and wouldn't leave. But this time, I had a plan. I arranged our wedding pictures on the dining room credenza for all to see—that time, you remember?—in the glass chapel when I was five months pregnant and

we took vows

in front of God?

Next to the wedding pictures I placed photos in delicate frames of our children on their birthdays and at Christmas, in that house, with us. Smiling images of the invented years; the never really there years. All of us trying to look genuine in our appointed roles. Not unlike the cops, thumbs tucked into their gun-belts, chuckling as they left,
"Can't make this stuff up."

We were in and out of court for a year, my love. The woman
who owned the house, feeble and fed up, asked us to pay rent.
But I had other plans. You had firmly shifted your scent of cedar
to her, the mother of your other lovely child. So, I left with our
children and went west to where our story began, and we ran free
in the hard, wet sand
under the puffy white clouds.



Self-Portrait with Genetic Idiosyncrasies
by Sylvia Van Nooten

Manx Pride 1986-1992

for Alan Shea & Allan Bell

1

Pride & Protests

Swirling in a cesspool of their own making

Imported police injustice from *across*
God's right & righteous hand spreads
its hate all along the promenade.

Wimps & perverts infect society further

Bell's striped trouser suit outrage:
yellow-legged bigotry, ignorance
& hypocrisy in awesome sight.

Bum blasters, dirty filthy buggery.

Shea's striped pyjama protest:
three-legged cadets taught to hiss,
dark-glassed police finger-stabbing.

I would birch homosexuals.

Oake's Stasi-style off-beat cops
house raids & cottage arrests
threats & promises of suicide left.

Pink & Blue

blank sheet of paper / waiting for
an informer's pink ink / blue hounds
sniffed out twenty queers / a three-day
toilet-flush / in '92 sting

*we're going for a cigarette
when we come back, we want a list,
names, those known homosexuals
or never see your family again*

three blue fingers point / & tap
ringing the ears of your wife /
the pavement spat / one car smoked
phones hated each hour / every night

when blue came back / with three fags dead
in their own hands / the blank sheet left

3

Death & Debts

after William Camden

an old manx custom	of claims settled
where creditor laid	with his back
upon a grave	with his face
towards heaven	with his bible
bare-breasted	clutched too tightly
protesting so	lord's earth-bound
executors would repay	debts that stood
the unpaid sorrows	the ritual reclaims

unlike night-glass police	gods in lawful crimes
our demands clenched	to squeeze apologies
we kneel, not lie	facing self-made tombs
of gay men	they did not go to jail
who passed straight	to their grave instead
without prejudice	of freedom

by Simon Maddrell

Gilead

after Esther Nelson

A wreck of griefs nothing can stave
woes — woes — untold — leaves
snap — for which no balm grows —
in Gilead town of haunted blood.

A tree of suicides nothing can stave
tears — tears — unshed — leaves
scars — for which no balm grows —
in Gilead the Raven said *nevermore*.

by Simon Maddrell

Teddy Bears Slept

Fisherman hanging with his nets
while teddy bears slept —
waving for help — that attic echoes
in bouncing mental health.

The Farmhouse's stomach poisoned
while lambs & piglets slept —
crying for help — a bathroom drowns
in shallow mental health.

An orphan — flat-lining —
care system abuse —
memories linger long
in wars of self-worth.

Drug-worker — flat-lining —
social media abuse —
memories linger long
in wars of self-worth.

Young man on the threshold of out
trapped by God's coppers —
before the court can listen
poison swirls a car's lung.

Husband in the threshold of a cottage
caught by spying bobbies —
before the wife's dawning
a shotgun scatters his eyes.

by Simon Maddrell



I Should Have Removed My Pants
(from A Choreography of Another Life)
by William & Amanda Stanton

Mirrored

Kennebec River at high tide
flows inward and outward,
confused and certain.
The current's choppy surface
reflects apricot clouds,
its currents dawn-glazed.
Nothing here of clocks,
the desiccation of telephones,
the dead indoor air of meeting rooms—
only the spice of balsam,
mineral scents, flowing water.

Your jay-feather eyes,
your silk scarf blushing
with hand-painted trout
flash their colors far from
this dark river,
these silver sturgeon jumping,
this hovering osprey
with fiercely masked head,
wings spread wide,
knife-talons poised to strike.

If you left behind concrete towers,
elevators, hotel rooms
and found me here
my scent mixed with pine
my body mirrored in water,
one hand blooming with flowers,
one hand glowing with lightning,
would you know me?
Then, stand
face to face,
exhale your breath
into mine.

by Deborah Rosch Eifert



Better Than This
by Zai Pacardo

From the Cabin Loft

Eye-level with the mounted deer head
whose antlers brush the vaulted ceiling
where light strobes from the ceiling fan

A spider rides a snail
on the back of a white plastic chair
The fire dies in the pit

A 2-foot plastic wrestler
rides a deer target
one finger pointed to the heavens

The baby's coos and cries drift up
along with my brother's drunken philosophies
You sit at the table
looking so young, eyes tilted up towards me
as his slurred proclamations drown on
You pull a two-fingered hand gun
and place it to your temple

Your lips purse and push out

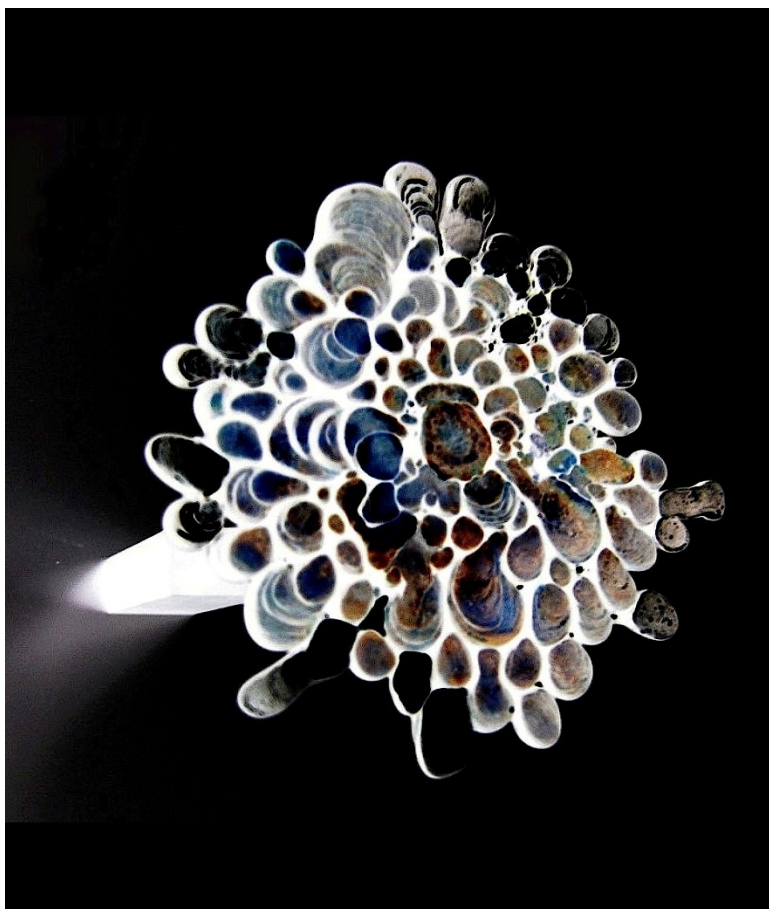
Gunshot

hand drops, eyes roll, head slo-mos to your shoulder

You smile

and I blow you a kiss

by Jason Melvin

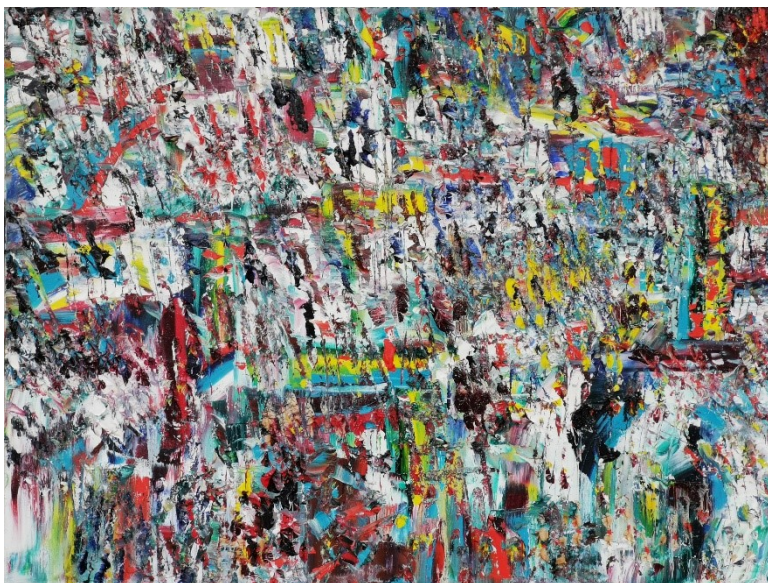


Form Over Function
by Tony Murray

Ivy

With the straight As and the Homecoming Court
I passed as some kind of Hallmark special.
But when the MRI detected no anomalies
the results said *not exceptional*.
Did they teach you about the Warm Fuzzies
and Cold Pricklies when you needed them?
Had you ever heard of sad mad?
In third grade we had a computer lab
for the first time and we had DARE;
Mrs. Carey taught us about abstinence
but not resilience. She said I would soar,
but I fell. The outcome mundane and perennial,
I thought I had wings but they were thin sheets of wax.
Down in the dopamine pits, down where the doves die,
falling seems less courageous than it feels.
They say you fall in love, for a scam, head over heels,
face first, risking it all and receding into nothing,
fading fast from focus, leaving yearbook photos
clinging like the traces of removed ivy
grammarly to the gray matter inside.

by Jennifer Sapio



Fragments

(Previously published in *TreeHouse Arts*)

by Steve Tutino

**at the fish market no less so
a haiku**

old women on bikes
you're a cheering sight to see
ride carefully now

**film grain and sound speeding
a haiku**

matroyshka in shades
procession smaller each doll
encapsulated

by Jerome Berglund

The hose is leaking

By the handle
Water spills out in great
Splashing torrents
Onto the rocks below
Little makes it
Into the garden
Where it's meant
To go
What a mess
How to repair...

by Jerome Berglund



Smokehouse
tintype
by Brad Daulton

5 Poems by Lily Kosmicki

(Originally published in Punt Volat, Issue 1, Winter 2019)

who

what if we ran out of
words?
all we have is our little
lives, this is how you
make a thing (i was once
made)
does it contain all?
on the originator's
birthday there is a static
full sound
from my rooftop
children's choir they
sing at the bats overhead
"i don't want you to not
be here" while some star
dictates true north's
skew, upon leaving
they sing
"bey be be bey bey," the
children don't know what
tuesday is
or does, instead
they chase a
luminary arch, cry
symbols
half of time is sleeping,
driving, playing,
schlepping,
sleighing, stepping,
draining, driveling,
dragging, slipping,
graying, making daylight
daylight was
measured by the
presence or absence of
mothers, grandmothers,
moonlight

was where letters
were
written backwards
upside-down entwined
inside
looking at the small
things,
consistently
in old men's eyes,
magnets
deny
then pull when reversed,
little girls
never see so many things
again
hundreds of whirring
sounds, iridescent
dust
possibly only visible to
little
eyes
i will whisper
prophetic words about
the end of music,
starboard facing

what

representations might as
well have been
real (they were real,
and they
were also
representations)
i was little
there was a class about
flowers
and there was a class
about
dinosaurs, there was
everything in the
world to learn, absorbed
through the
navel, exuding through
the
skin, there
were likes and dislikes,
laid out
in rows, morphed and
reversed over
time, cut cords, there
were
combinations
of children, faces melting
into each other, their
bodies back into
fetuses
boys and girls become
other
ambiguities
other people, other
auras,
auroras, but
why nourish words,
worlds?

to track
such transformations is
exhausting, an
unending
covert labor fueled by
diagonal spying,
helixes churning,
growing,
unfolding their
zoetrope
just imagine what they
mean: duncels
wharfs or quays, a
guilty luck
what i've forgotten i even
remember
i will be a two-masted
vessel by way of the
transitive
and intransitive, looking
at
the cargo:
the olsen twins, hotdogs,
something about
uncertain body
temperatures,
tiger woods at
the airport tarmac, cups
of
coffee,
graham crackers, i will be
Polaris

when

there was a first kiss
inside
an egg, (before cracking
open it
poisoned kids who still
play,
i play) then and even
now
much later
blue jersey shorts and
bears
emerged from empty
shells
and asked
for help on behalf of a
young woman typing, she
needed to
double space her letter
appealing to
the court, by then i was
a choir of rooftop church
children
unrecognizable as all
them,
the other
half of time was made of
tired slp, we were tired,
they
slp, tired, slp, tired slp,
tearing
splits, tired spit, tear, id,
slit
the dolly winch secretly
shaved her
legs shuffling
on the deck making
desire lines, skittering
back
to uncertain

when

there was a first kiss inside
an egg, (before cracking
open it
poisoned kids who still
play,
i play) then and even now
much later
blue jersey shorts and
bears
emerged from empty shells
and asked
for help on behalf of a
young woman typing, she
needed to
double space her letter
appealing to
the court, by then i was
a choir of rooftop church
children
unrecognizable as all them,
the other
half of time was made of
tired slptt, we were tired, they
slptt, tired, slptt, tired slptt,
tearing
splits, tired spit, tear, id, slit
the dolly winch secretly
shaved her
legs shuffling
on the deck making
desire lines, skittering back
to uncertain
growth, accustomed to full,
new attention
but it was a nice day
and getting nicer
backwards waves
uncrashing
shake away to eyes rolling,
finally
glorious puking relief,

a morning seasickness
my rooftop children's choir
narrate their
experience by growth
soprano what it's
like to be a baby, what
it's like to elongate your
limbs
they unfurl scrolls: wholly
unwritten body

why

incomprehensibility never
takes its leave on
our elongated way, we
thank you
you sincerely start
tomorrow,
mid-evening
hand, ark, mask, star, man,
war,
sad, which sounds means
goodness and
which its opposite? answer:
the song gradient
rumbles down with
reasons, blames
it on clouds, who weren't
meant to speak,
but learned the
morality
of language, decided to sing
instead

Moonslice

"I never chose to be trans; I feel like being trans chose me." —River Eastwood

held within bodies
few doctors study

we live inside a life that paints itself
new shades with each pushing throb
of blood as a broken arm swollen
with hours

the slow slicing redefines you
subtracting you to make you whole

the surgeon's paintbrush
flashing in fluorescence
is a streak of moonbeam
you can cup in your hand
and touch to your breast

can damage away
all you are hiding

we fear, we crave
the flash of moonlight
carving us into the closest thing
perfection will ever come close
to beholding

trans chose me too and did not change me
but mainly redefined me and relentlessly taunts
with a small, one-way stroke to a small slice
of almost perfection



beauTiful bodies #3: River Eastwood, with Moonslice poem.

by Arien Reed

Dreadful

Empty head

Half-empty bed

Dreadful

by Jack Hutchinson

Swan's Cargo

And once a crate of grapefruit spilled out across the sands, odd yellow globes never seen before by anyone except Mr Stow, proprietor of Stow's Stores by the Pulley; where in the world had they come from? —Laura Cumming, On Chapel Sands

Live by the sea and you learn to accept its gifts, whatever flotsam
rides the waves into an unplanned harbor. The objects that float,

that spring towards the light when a hull cracks open, that ride breakers
all the way onto sand. Bottles with space for air in their necks, buoyant,

sticks of cheap furniture. Mahogany only knows how to sink. A cargo hold
of rubber duckies, a punchline trailed across the Pacific Ocean; four right feet

in the same brand of running shoe, crime scenes dotting an eastern current
along the fjords. A man has been searching for the wreckage of a certain plane

along the Indian coast, south to Madagascar, waiting, leaving word.
His first find was a scorched triangle printed with NO STEP. Villagers

hear from other villagers of the white man who comes around
with ready cash for whatever they save. And would-be roof-patches

or thin griddles are preserved, held for his call, tucked between clothes
growing brittle with salt. Forty dollars he paid, once, for weak metal

twisted like it had been bent back over a table, black on one edge
with warping, that rode the water in, its broken body like a sail.

by Meghan Purvis



Syntax in Shadow Language
by Sylvia Van Nooten

Sunday Drive With Daddy in Hunting Season

Deer season the Remington lay across Daddy's lap,
Mom next to him in the front, the five of us kids in the back.
We drove the high country on logging roads.
He hunted from his '56 Cadillac, the green one
with leopard skin upholstery, dual pipes.
We climbed the rough dirt track through tall timber.
With one hand on the steering wheel,
his window rolled down, he scanned the woods
for antlers, for any movement in the brush.
Shushed to silence lest we spook the game,
we huddled low in the back seat .
I prayed for the deer hidden in the underbrush.
I could think only of the menace
of the gun lying there, loaded, at the ready.
In the deep quiet of the forest, the only sound ——
the car's deep rumble.

by Sigrun Susan Lane

Another Short Cut

The lake glistens ahead of us.
We are somewhere in the Sierra Nevada
mountains, everything is frozen

trees snow laden and still
nothing stirs
but the wind, lifting a few flakes.

You head the car off the road over the lake.
Suddenly we are alone on a mirror
in a world of white, snow falling.

No sound.
Then we hear the ice hiss, groan
under us like a wild animal.

From the window I see
ice crack, craze around us,
dark fissures

splintering out from the tires
in lightening strikes.
No telling how thick the ice,

how deep the lake.
The shoreline a distant tree.

by Sigrun Susan Lane

The Remington

In his blackest rages the Remington came out of the closet.
He held it in his right hand, pointed it
at his head as he paced and howled
into dark and sleepless hours.
The Remington lived like a snake
in the front closet behind the coats.
Sometimes I opened the door just to look at it.
It stood straight up in the corner,
wooden stock, steel barrel.
Always there waiting.
I never knew when it would come out,
take over, fill our house with its sorrow,
it's smell. Like a snake's lair
that stench.

by Sigrun Susan Lane



Psychedelic Sky
by Belinda Subraman

They keep asking

What's changed and may not return the same
And my answer today

Marching Bands

When can we have them again?
For semi-sterile handling tomorrow
I keep washing the little white gloves
I remember wearing in Junior High for Marching Band
Taking them off to better hold her hands
After practice— she neither gripped nor withdrew
Sitting next to me so much shorter than my own short self
And frowning at the field we both watched
And the little dark hairs on her knuckles
Surprised and aroused me
The little white gloves limp in her lap
Now there are so many pairs on the drying rack
Escaping the dryer that would shrink them
And not allow that most important
Semi-sterile handling tomorrow

by Alan Bern

COVERED CLOUDS SEE

Rat runs across my back down at the dump.
Awake? I know
I was that time in that other world
where sweet she whispered what became
my name. Though she wasn't,
neither was I. Who talked to whom? Ooom ooom.
Balding legs, holding arms,
my very old arms covered with small, brown bugs
underwater, I brush them off
they climb again
onto my arms,
burrow down. People call
me Dump Rat because I hang out there so much.

by Alan Bern

Lullaby

Wiegenlied

repeating

all long night

not dying

now but when

then choose it

to exit

perhaps I

hummed it when

Mother sang

it to me

late wife lay

in coma

then kid slept

one regret

I did not

hum it to

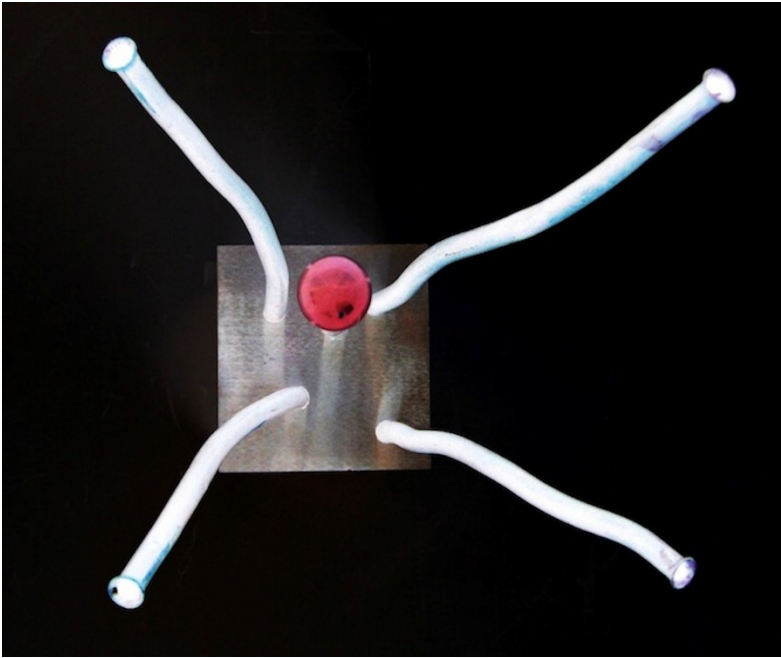
Mom soothing

Wiegenlied

her late sleep

as she went

by Alan Bern



And Then, It Was Betty's Turn To Dance!
by Tony Murray

3 Poems by Jessica Lee

1.

It must be the drugs, keep me on a plain of soft wheat.
Blow it all away
Crimson dirt, a child making mud pies.
It must be the boulder that sinks my canoe, taking me down now.
Fish scales spinning in the toilet.
Don't ever break my heart, it's beating like a freight train.
Let me go to the unknown.
Release that which slows me down.
Break the chain.
Wash away the filth.
Float softly away.

2.

Smell the iron leaking off lying lips.
I need you to feel my heart so we can finally die together.
Tobacco stuck on my thighs, blood soaked bra.
I ate everything up and digested it.
Flush away lies
Flush away toenails
My brain, you hold it in your hands lightly squeezing.
Checking to see if it is ripe, if the jade has made it too hard.
When the poison flows I promise I will follow

3.

When you died I painted your nails, long, thick, bright cherry red.
Your skin was still yours, slowly getting colder.
They asked me to leave and carried me out.
I drove my car to the funeral home, parked.
Stayed all night.
I wanted to be close, I didn't want you all alone.
They asked me to leave.
I sit on the grass above your body, I hug it, I talk.
Making sure to never step on you.
Lilacs all over, your favorite.
I want to keep you company because I am all alone.



In The Storm of Roses

(Previously published in *Apricity Magazine*)

by Steve Tutino

**I will continue to seek visions &
count on my friends to know everything**

I dreamed I was in 1962,
in a department store
dressing room w/ Lana Turner,
or someone who said she was, Lana Turner,
& who told me she had to adjust
her nylon stocking & did not mind
if I looked—and I awoke and remembered that year
I had been in a desk behind the cloak room in my
eighth grade English teacher's classroom
who hated me, and whose name I have long ago forgotten
I had been put there for being a smart ass
& was napping & Joanie & Janet, whom I had known
since they were girls, came back there,
but that year they were no longer girls,
& really did adjust their stockings
& they really did let me watch,
skirts hiked up & looking athletic
& as they pulled on the
black back seamed nylons on their legs
while hitching up garter belts, &
I knew at that moment,
there was something I had,
that would not go away

by James Ross Kelly

We awoke once

We awoke once
Having slept under the stars &
On a red dawn solstice
Lavender light
& walked naked
to edge of your
roof garden
as sun's rays became
another's midnight
& in a whirl
I saw us descendants
of a beginning incessant motion,
inhabitants on a small sphere
whose turning
lends music
from universe & spring
a little off key &
on the docket
recipients of circles
set in motion, then
figments to one another, now
figures to our heirs &
I did not know how
to tell you
before you left for India that
I thought pantheism
was a clever lie.

by James Ross Kelly

Being Trans or Disabled is Relentless

My favorite sight is him against me
My canvas-white the background
Surrounding his burnt umber ink
A beauty that haunts and surrounds
In a way who knew fantasy could?
The way its claws hook into you
Its teeth chewing away your plate
Mail armor, chewing away the voice
That says **no**, until all that's left is a
Compelling urge to give him your
Everything and not even care how
It will destroy you slowly, easily
His beauty a weapon you never see
Coming and which devastates you
So tenderly, so completely, you savor
Even the emptiness he leaves behind
And the clenching hollow of wanting
Because at least, for a single moment,

You had a chance to be nothing.



**beauTiful bodies #5: Aydian Dowling, with Being
Trans or Disabled is Relentless poem
by Arien Reed**

BIOs

Hawzhin Azeez is a Kurdish academic, poet and activist. I have had my poetry and writing recently used by the renowned American Artist Jenny Holzer in her South Korea exhibition. My poetry is mostly centered around issues of war, refugee, displacement and feminism.

Gary Beaumier has a degree in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has been a finalist for the Luminaire Award for his poem titled "Ten Cents" as well as a finalist for Joy Bale Boone Award for my poem "The Migratory Habits of Dreams in Late Autumn". His chapbook "From My Family to Yours" has been published by Finishing Line Press. His poem "The Rio Grande" was nominated for the "Best of the Net" award and he won first prize for Streetlight Magazine for his poem "Night Train to Paris". He was a finalist for the New Millenium Writings for my poem "From Certain Distances in Space I Still See My Brother". He was recently shortlisted for the Charles Bukowski contest from Raw Arts Review for my poem "Ghosting". He was a finalist for Wingless Dreamers contest for the poem "The Complete History of Our First Kiss". He won the the Love Poetry contest for his poem Night Forest as well as the Button poetry contest for Flying Ketchup Press and was a finalist for my poem "Places I Have Known" for The Raw Arts Review. He has been a teacher, a bookstore manager and a gandydancer for one summer a long time ago. He used to build wooden sailboats. He once taught poetry in a woman's prison.

Jerome Berglund had poetry accepted and exhibited in nine publications to date, including Abstract Magazine, the Dewdrop, Wild Roof, Lychee Rind, deLuge, Meat for Tea: The Valley Review, GRIFFEL, Cathexis Northwest Press, and Ulalume Lighthouse.

Alan Bern is a recently retired Children's Librarian from the Berkeley Public Library. He worked in public libraries in the San Francisco Bay Area for over 25 years in a variety of jobs. He is a poet, storywriter, and photographer and has two books of poetry published by Fithian Press: *No no the saddest* (2004) and *Waterwalking in Berkeley* (2007). A third book of poetry, *greater distance and other poems* (2015), was published by his own press, *Lines & Faces*, a press and publisher specializing in illustrated poetry broadsides, collaborating with the artist Robert Woods, linesandfaces.com. Alan was a runner up for The Raw Art Review's The John H. Kim Memorial Short Fiction Prize for his story 'The alleyway near the downtown library'; and he won a medal from SouthWest Writers for his story 'The Return of the Very Fierce Wolf of Gubbio to Assisi, 1943 CE [and now, 2013 CE]'. He was also a finalist in the NCWN's 2019 Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize; he won the Littoral Press Poetry Prize in 2015; and he was a semi-finalist in the 2016 Center for the Book Arts Poetry Chapbook Competition. Alan has poems, stories, and photos published in a wide variety of online and print publications, from which his work has been nominated for Pushcart Prizes. Recent photos published include: unearthedesf.com/alan-bern, wanderlust-journal.com/2020/07/01/around-the-few-blocks-nearby, and <https://pleaseseeme.com/issue-5/art/psm-5-artists-statement-alan-bern/>. Alan is also a performer working with the dancer Lucinda Weaver as PACES: dance & poetry fit to the space and with musicians from Composing Together, composingtogether.org/index.php/programs/composingtogether.org/index.php/sample-poetry-from-our-musical-storytime-performances/

James Roderick Burns' work has appeared in *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Flash Fiction Magazine* and *La Piccioletta Barca*, as well as a short fiction chapbook, *A Bunch*

of Fives, and three short-form poetry collections. His story 'Trapper' (*Funicular Magazine*) was nominated for Pushcart 2020. He lives in Edinburgh and serves as Deputy Registrar General for Scotland.

Ashley Cantrelle is an emerging writer from Louisiana, she's stomping the swamp with her witty-grit poetry and fiction. Above all, she believes that bold words tell their own stories.

Jonathan Carter is a writer residing in South Austin, Texas. He is an active reader and was a psychology major at Sam Houston State University before taking a break in 2019 – indefinite. Mr. Carter writes when he has time, between work and social gatherings. His work often draws off his past as well as his usual day to day experiences.

Kate Cumiskey lives with her partner Mikel in coastal central Florida, a few lovely miles from Cape Kennedy where her father designed rockets. She is the author of four books. Kate writes prose and poems about the margins between the spiritual and natural worlds, and reflectively dwelling there.

Brad Daulton lives in Northside, Cincinnati, Ohio. He is a self-taught artist and musician. An advocate of creative self-expression, he is not tied to a single medium or form. The photographs published here, were taken at his family farm, in Manchester, Ohio.

Deborah Rosch Eifert is a poet and clinical psychologist. Her poetry has appeared in anthologies and been published in Whiskey Island Quarterly, Persephone's Daughters, Esthetic Apostle and other small presses. She is a past recipient of the Cleveland State University English Department Undergraduate Creative Writing Award, a semifinalist in the 2018 Split Rock Review Chapbook Competition, and First Runner-up in the 2018 Esthetic Apostle Chapbook Contest. Her poems draw on the

natural landscapes of Ohio and Maine and the rich scenery of myth, folklore and the unconscious.

Leon Fedolfi is an aspiring poet. Much of his current work wrestles with dissembling and reassembling identity-relational frameworks in a format he likes to think of as a pre-poem. He does not know yet precisely what that means. Leon was awarded the 2020 Doug Draime Prize for Poetry sponsored by The Raw Art Review, and has published in Prometheus Dreaming, The Write Launch, High Shelf Press and others. He has a book of poetry, *The UnInvented Ear*, coming out with UnCollected Press this fall.

Margaret Galey is an Iowa-born artist & writer living in Lexington, Kentucky. Her work has appeared in publications such as *Hyperallergic Weekend*, *Drunken Boat*, *High Shelf Press*, & *Midwest Review*. More of her work can be found at: www.WantReaction.com.

Writer-visual artist **Lyall Harris'** poetry and prose have appeared in *The Minnesota Review*, *The New Guard*, *The Raw Art Review*, *The Dewdrop*, *Cathexis Northwest Press* and elsewhere, and her creative nonfiction has been featured in *The Montréal Review*. Her book *Barrier Island* is forthcoming from The Black Spring Press Group. Harris' poetry has been a finalist in numerous contests and was shortlisted for the 2020 Anne Sexton Poetry Prize. Harris' paintings have been widely exhibited and recognized with awards, including The George Hitchcock Prize from the National Academy Museum (NYC), and her book art is held in over fifty Special Collection libraries, such as those at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Yale and Stanford. She holds an MFA in Book Art and Creative Writing from Mills College

Jack Hutchinson is a misguided, youngish poet from Brisbane who is starting out. He has been accepted for publication in the forthcoming journal issue of The Raw Art Review.

"Rising Generation," "Late Spring," & "Termini" are submitted by **Thomas Penn Johnson** who was born on August 22nd, 1943 in Greensboro, North Carolina. In 1966 he received a B.A. in Classical Studies from then-Concordia Senior College in Fort Wayne, Indiana; in 1968 he received an M.A. in English from UNC-G, and he continued graduate studies in English literature and history at Syracuse and Wake Forest Universities. In 1992 he published a collection of poems entitled "If Rainbows Promise Not in Vain." In 2009 he retired from then-Edison State College in Fort Myers, Florida after serving for 26 years as an instructor of English and humanities.

James Ross Kelly lives in Northern California next to the Sacramento River. Mr. Kelly was a long-time resident of Southern Oregon where he grew up. And the Fires We Talked About published by Uncollected Press in 2020 is Mr. Kelly's first book of fiction.

Sandra Kolankiewicz' poems have appeared widely, most recently in One, Otis Nebulae, Trampset, Concho River Review, London Magazine, New World Writing and Appalachian Heritage. Turning Inside Out was published by Black Lawrence. Finishing Line has released The Way You Will Go and Lost in Transition

Lily Rose Kosmicki is a person, but sometimes feels like an alien in this world. By trade she is a librarian at the public library and by night she is a collector of dreams. Her zine Dream Zine recently won a Broken Pencil Zine Award for Best Art Zine 2018. Her work appears in GASHER, glowworm, where is the river, and The Fanzine..

Sigrun Susan Lane Sigrun Susan Lane poems have appeared in a number of regional and national publications including the *Amsterdam Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Seattle Review*, *Sing Heavenly Muse*, *Rain City Review*, *Malahat*

Review and others. She has received awards for poetry from the Seattle and the King County Arts Commissions. Lane has published two chapbooks, *Little Bones* and *Salt* both from Goldfish Press. *Salt* just won the Josephine Miles 2020 award for poetry from PEN Oakland for excellence in poetry.

Sheree La Puma is an American poet and memoirist whose work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Redivider*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *WSQ*, *Chiron Review*, *SRPR*, *The Rumpus*, *Plainsongs*, *Into The Void*, and *I-70 Review*, among others. Her poetry was recently nominated for Best of The Net and a Pushcart Prize, her micro-chapbook, 'The Politics of Love,' was published in August by Ghost City Press. Sheree has a new chapbook, 'Broken: Do Not Use,' due out in 2021 with Main Street Rag Publishing. She received her MFA in Writing from California Institute of the Arts and lives in Los Angeles with her partner and their two rescues.

Jessica Lee

Douglas Macdonald works in a native plant garden in Illinois. Two years ago he was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Simon Maddrell was born in Douglas, Isle of Man in 1965 and now lives in Brighton & Hove, UK. Simon writes through the lens of living as a queer Manx man, thriving with HIV. He has had poems published in various anthologies, including by *American Poetry Journal* and *Black Mountain Press*, as well as in publications such as *The New European*, *Morning Star*, *The Raw Art Review*, *Brittle Star Magazine*, *The Dawntreader*, *Paragon Press*, *The Coil Magazine* and *Impossible Archetype*. In 2020, Simon was first runner-up in the Frogmore Poetry Prize, highly commended in the Welsh Poetry Competition and long-listed for both The Rialto Nature and Place Competition and Poetry London Mentoring Scheme.

His debut chapbook, *Throatbone*, was published by UnCollected Press in July 2020 and was long-listed for the inaugural Poetry Book Awards, 2020. *Queerfella* was Joint Winner in The Rialto Open Pamphlet Competition, 2020 and will be published in 2021.

Cynthia Marx writes about survivors and surviving, mothering the mentally ill, moving and starting over, teaching in the Alaska bush, the Mojave and other places I've lived, loved and left. I am currently enrolled in the Stony Brook University MFA program and completing a memoir.

Doug May recently had a book published by UnCollected Press ("Songs From The Back Row") and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He has below average IQ and attention deficit disorder but has worked many jobs, everything from playing in a rock and roll cover band to shelf stocker, delivery driver, janitor, proofreader and home health aide. His poems have recently appeared in *Raw Art Review*, *Breath and Shadow*, *Wordgathering*, and *Rat's Ass Review*.

Alexandra McIntosh lives and writes in Kentucky, her favorite place in the world. She received her B.A. from Asbury University, her M.A. in English from Northern Kentucky University, and her MFA in Poetry from Miami University. Her first collection "Bowlfuls of Blue" was published by Assure Press Publishing in 2020. You can find links to her publications and pictures of her dog on her website AlexandraMcIntosh.com.

Jason Melvin is a happily married father of three children. He has been writing for years as therapy, the current therapy necessitated by the fact that he's getting older and his children are leaving to become adults. His work has recently appeared in *From Whispers to Roars*, *The Raw Art Review*, *Rat's Ass Review* and *The Beatnik Cowboy*.

Sean Muller is a writer, artist, and MA candidate in Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York City. His work explores what can be made of things once they've gone beyond the point of repair.

Tony Murray Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder, but in the eye of the imaginative" "Many a teacher told me to: 'Try and stay inside the lines', which today, thankfully, I don't"

Chris Neilan is an award-winning author, screenwriter and filmmaker. He was shortlisted for the 2016 Sundance Screenwriters Lab, and was awarded 2nd place for Short Fiction in the 2017 Bridport Prize. His prose has been published in the Bridport Prize anthology, One For The Road, Fur-Lined Ghettos and The Pointed Circle, and he is currently working on his first collection of short fiction, his second novel, and several narrative and documentary film projects. He also created and co-hosts the podcast Two Minute Stories, and is the founder of Gor Gai Films.

Sylvia Van Nooten is an asemic artist living in Western Colorado. Asemic art, with its pastiche of 'language' and images, allows her to merge texts and painting creating a hybrid form of communication which is open to interpretation. Her work has appeared in The South Florida Poetry Journal, local galleries and at the exhibition Mai Piu in Italy.

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sylviavannooten@gmail.com



Always Keep an Open Wound
by Sean Muller

Zai B. Pacardo is a contemporary visual artist based in the Philippines. Her body of work is comprised mostly of charcoal and acrylic pieces. Chaotic lines, a limited palette, and abstractions of the human face are the defining features of her art. A former realistic portraitist, she found herself in a cycle of dissatisfaction and at a lack of connection with her work. These are what drove her to seek her present artistic voice. Her art today is now a process of unlearning. It celebrates the captivating and transcending nature of imperfection. Still, she focuses on creating portraits — as this is her way of reclaiming the years of lost creativity for the sake of capturing likeness. But unlike before, she no longer frets over a miscalculated brushstroke. Her works now champion a plethora of these "miscalculated brushstrokes."

Originally from Maplewood, New Jersey, **Ilari Pass** holds a BA in English from Guilford College of Greensboro, North Carolina, and an MA in English, with a concentration in literature, from Gardner-Webb University of Boiling Springs, North Carolina. She writes primarily poetry, creative nonfiction, essays, the occasional flash fiction and short stories. Her new endeavor is to introduce readers of all faiths and backgrounds to a wide variety of Muslim children and families by offering Muslim kids an opportunity to see themselves reflected positively in published works, such as picture and chapter books, middle grade and young adult. She is a two-time Editors' Prize for Poetry recipient and a finalist for the 2019 Ron Rash Award in Poetry in *Broad River Review*; an Honorable Mention in the 2020 Spring Issue of *JuxtaProse Magazine*, and the 2020 *Cream City Review* Summer Poetry Contest finalist. Her work appears or forthcoming in *Brown Sugar Literary Magazine*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Red Fez*, *Unlikely Stories*, *Triggerfish Critical Review*, *Rigorous Magazine*, *The American Journal of Poetry*,

Drunk Monkeys, The Daily Drunk, Free State Review, Common Ground Review, and others.

J. Ross Peters' poems have appeared or will soon appear in TERMINUS, BIRMINGHAM POETRY REVIEW, BROAD RIVER REVIEW (Honorable Mention for the Rash Prize), AETHLON, THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POETRY, TWYCKENHAM NOTES and BROAD STREET. His first collection of poems is entitled, THE FLOOD IS NOT THE RIVER. Additionally, he contributed the foreword, afterword, and the photography for SACRED VIEWS OF ST. FRANCIS: THE SACRO MONTE Di ORTA (upcoming from Punctum Press) about a Franciscan pilgrimage site in Italy's piedmont region. He lives in Memphis, TN.

Josephine Pino was a child in Albuquerque, a young adult in many places, and currently resides near Portland, Oregon. She is a scientist by diploma, educator by heart, and writer by nature. She enjoys the intersections between all things that intersect. She has published poems in Cathexis NW, High Shelf Press, Tiny Seed Literary Journal, Anti-Languorous Project, and Raw Art Review.

Meghan Purvis received an MA and PhD from the University of East Anglia, and an MFA from North Carolina State University. Her translation of *Beowulf* was published in 2013 and won the 2011 Times Stephen Spender Prize for literary translation. Her poetry has appeared, among other places, in Magma, The Rialto, and The Interpreter's House. She is currently working on her first novel.

John D Robinson is a UK poet: hundreds of his poems have appeared in small press zines and online literary journals including : Rusty Truck: Outlaw Poetry: North Of Oxford: Tuck Magazine: Misfits Magazine: The Sunflower Collective: Winamop: Bear Creek Haiku: Chicago Record: The Legendary: Paper and Ink Zine: Algebra Of Owls: Full Of Crow: The

Beatnik Cowboy: The Clockwise Cat: The Scum Gentry:
Message In A Bottle: Horror Sleaze ,Trash: Your One Phone
Call: In Between Hangovers: Rasputin: Revolution John: Vox
Poetica: Hand Job Zine: 48th Street Press: Poems-For-All:
Philosophical Idiot: The Peeking Cat: Midnight Lane Boutique:
Underground Books: Dead Snakes: Yellow Mama: Bareback Lit:
Eunoia Review: Hobo Camp Review.

Arien Reed, a differently abled, queer, trans, Baha'i man, holds an MFA from National University and co-founded, and is currently the president of, the LGBTQ Allied Staff and Faculty Association at Fresno City College. His chapbook "The End" is forthcoming from Roaring Junior Press, and his poetry and art has appeared, or is forthcoming, in Oberon, Sonora Review, Red Wheelbarrow, Hippocrates, High Shelf Press, What Rough Beast, Raw Art Review, Common Ground Review, La Piccioletta Barca, J Mane Gallery, and others. His chaos can be witnessed on instagram @arienreed.

Since retiring from daily journalism in 2013, **Robert Eugene Rubino** has published poetry and prose in various online and print literary journals, including Hippocampus, The Esthetic Apostle, The Write Launch, Haunted Waters Press, Forbidden Peak Press, Cagibi, Cathexis Northwest, High Shelf Press, Raw Art Review, MacQueen's Quinterly and Gravitas, and in the anthologies Poetic Bond IX, Earth Hymn, Poets' Choice and Poems from the Lockdown. Before the coronavirus, on most Wednesday evenings he would be found at Sacred Grounds Cafe in San Francisco, participating in the West Coast's longest-running poetry open mic. Now each week he participates online. He lives in Palo Alto, California.

Jennifer Sapio was born and raised in Austin, Texas. She earned a Bachelor's degree from Barnard College, and a PhD from the University of Texas. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Nonfiction at NYU. She was shortlisted for the Doug Draine Prize for Poetry (2020) and the Writer's Advice flash

memoir contest (2019). You can see her publications at Medium, *The Write Launch*, *Sonder Midwest*, *Chattahoochee Review* (forthcoming), jennisapio.com, and elsewhere.

Lynne Schmidt is the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, and mental health professional with a focus in trauma and healing. She is the author of the chapbooks, *Gravity* (Nightingale and Sparrow Press) which was listed as one of the 17 Best Breakup Books to Read in 2020, and *On Becoming a Role Model* (Thirty West), which was featured on The Wardrobe's Best Dressed for PTSD Awareness Week. Her work has received the Maine Nonfiction Award, Editor's Choice Award, and was a 2018 and 2019 PNWA finalist for memoir and poetry respectively. Lynne was a five time 2019 Best of the Net Nominee, and an honorable mention for the Charles Bukowski and Doug Draime Poetry Awards. In 2012 she started the project, *AbortionChat*, which aims to lessen the stigma around abortion. When given the choice, Lynne prefers the company of her three dogs and one cat to humans.

Dale Shank's fiction and poetry have been published in: *The Raw Art Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Akros Review*, *Before the Sun*, *Croton Review*, *Joint Endeavor*, *Powder*, and *University of Portland Review*.

Henry Stanton's fiction, poetry and paintings appear in *2River*, *The A3 Review*, *Alien Buddha Press*, *Avatar*, *The Baltimore City Paper*, *The Baltimore Sun Magazine*, *High Shelf Press*, *Kestrel*, *North of Oxford*, *Outlaw Poetry*, *The Paragon Press*, *PCC Inscape*, *Pindeldyboz*, *Rusty Truck*, *Salt & Syntax*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The William and Mary Review*, *Word Riot*, *The Write Launch* and *Yellow Mama*, among other publications. His poetry was selected for the *A3 Review Poetry Prize* and was shortlisted for the *Eyewear 9th Fortnight Prize for Poetry*. His fiction received an Honorable Mention acceptance for the *Salt & Syntax Fiction Contest* and was selected as a finalist for the *Pen 2 Paper*

Annual Writing Contest. A selection of Henry Stanton's paintings, fiction and poetry can be located www.brightportfal.com.

William Stanton is a photographer and choreographer who often collaborates with his wife, Amanda Stanton, on found art/in the field projects. Their book, *The Choreography of Another Life*, is due to be published by Uncollected Press in 2021.

Belinda Subraman Belinda Subraman been published in 100s of magazines, printed and online, academic and small presses. She has a Master of Arts from California State University. Her archives are housed at University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. Her latest book is *Left Hand Dharma* from Unlikely Books, 2018:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/0998892572/?fbclid=IwAR1qTJ6tB6qippVEgYtjZNzc_N5e6E5l8lujDDV0sEe2DJ9Sp2qVQmovDYc In 2020 Belinda began an online show called GAS: Poetry, Art & Music which features interviews, readings, performances and art show in a video format available free at <http://youtube.com/BelindaSubraman>

Belinda is also a mixed media artist. Her art has been featured in *Unlikely Stories*, *Eclectica*, *North of Oxford*, *El Paso news* and *Red Fez*. She sells prints of her work in her *Mystical House* Etsy shop. <https://www.etsy.com/shop/MysticalHouse?ref=seller->

Pamela Sumners' work has been published or recognized by about 30 journals or publishing houses in the US and abroad from 2018-20. A 2018 Pushcart anthology nominee, she was selected for 2018's 64 Best anthology and has been included in several other anthologies. Her work has received awards in competitions sponsored by Pen 2 Paper, Streetlight, Woven Tale Press, Bayou, Heartland Review, W.B. Yeats Society, and Raw Art Review. She was also a finalist or semifinalist in several chapbook competitions. Her first chapbook, "Finding Helen,"

won the Rane Arroyo Chapbook Contest and is being released in 2021. Her first full collection, "Ragpicking Ezekiel's Bones," was among the winners of the Uncollected Press Book Competition and will be available from Uncollected Press in late 2020 or early 2021. Sumners practiced constitutional and civil rights law in her native Alabama and handled First Amendment, privacy, race and sex discrimination, and church/state cases, the most well-known of which was against "Ten Commandments Judge" Roy S. Moore. Now she writes full-time from St. Louis.

Born and raised in the piedmont region of North Carolina, **Aine Thompson**, who is 20 years old, spends a lot of time observing natural landscapes in their state and incorporating them in any art form possible. In 7th grade, they wrote a long, gorgeous poem about their hometown. It led to their teacher pulling them aside and expressing how much value it held. They remember shrugging it off, but at the moment, their teacher had planted a seed and nourished their passion for writing for years to come. They have been a dedicated pagan for close to five years and their spiritual connections to nature often influences the way they view and interact with wildlife; this includes writing. Poetry takes on a new meaning as they write because it's no longer just words, it's a declaration of their love for the wild. There is also a heavy focus on intertwining the spiritual nature of all living beings with their own horrible and traumatic experiences as a way to cope with them. Aine is a heavy advocate for the LGBTQ community and is both non-binary and bisexual, which comes up, both subtly and heavily, in their poetry. This is why the pronouns that are being used are they/them, although they do accept he/him as well. "Aine" is currently a deadname, although it was chosen to be used due to personal reasons. They go by Noire with close friends and on social media. Aine enjoys gardening and collects houseplants in their spare time, which is where specific ideas are birthed because they can get up close and personal with their plants. They also suffer from chronic nerve pain in their back which often flows through their poetry too. The pain stems from nerve compression caused by both a

herniated disc and degenerative disc disease, which neither have a cure for. At the moment, writing is the only thing that helps them from falling into the existential crises that mental and physical illnesses often bring.

Steven Tutino was born in Montréal, Canada, and is a writer, poet and painter. He is currently a graduate student at Concordia University in the process of completing an M.A. in Theological Studies. His artwork has appeared in numerous journals and magazines including TreeHouse Arts, Montréal Writes, Spadina Literary Review, The Montréal Gazette, The Indianapolis Review, Apricity Magazine, Wild Roof Journal, Unlimited Literature and Beyond Words Literary Magazine. Apart from painting, Steven enjoys reading, writing in his diary, going for long meditative walks and hanging out at the gym.

Emma Wynn received her masters degree from Harvard Divinity School and teaches LGBTQ U.S. History, Philosophy, and Religion at the Hotchkiss School. Her poetry has appeared most recently or is forthcoming in Coffin Bell Journal, Sky Island Journal (which nominated her poem for the Pushcart Prize), Prime Number Magazine, Waxing & Waning, peculiar, and West Trade Review. Her first chapbook, "Help Me to Fall," is a winner of the Moonstone Arts Center 2019 prize.



Coyote Runner
by Henry Stanton