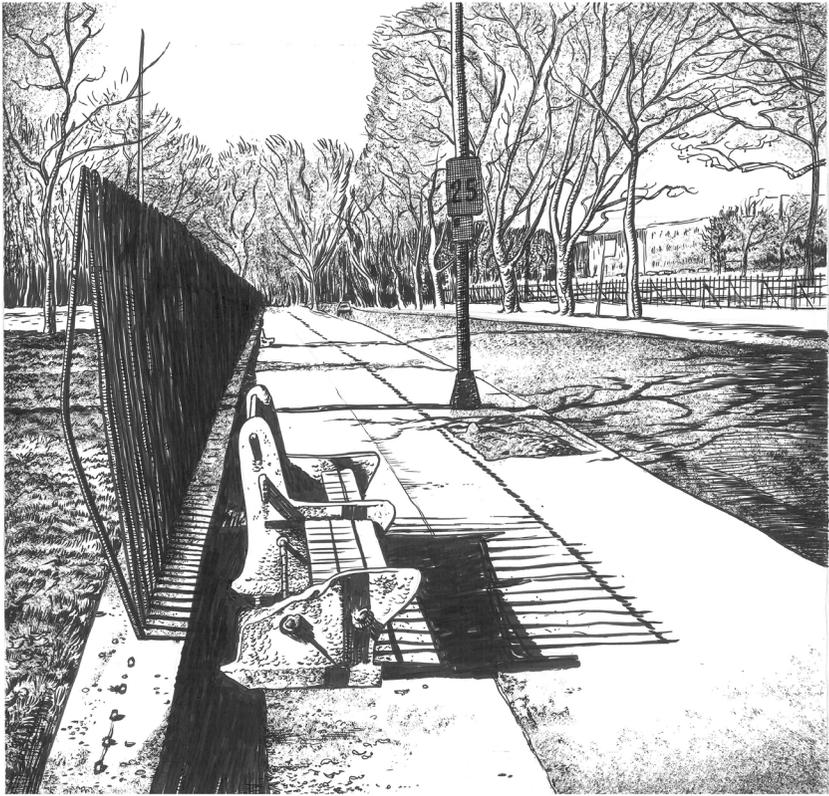


THAT





THAT begins *ab ovo*, owing much to the voices in these pages who gambled generously on the unknown; to its hard-working Editors, especially our trio of dedicated Assistant Editors who strove to fill gaps in the emerging process of making *THAT* happen; to our Graphic Designers, who made something out of nothing, and well; to wise friends willing to share and advise, making this adventure less perilous; to Joe Gerard, for outstanding advice, and Carol, Sam, and Anna for their moral support; to Breuna Baine; to Darren Harris-Fain, Tara Woods, and the AUM Department of English and Philosophy; and to Michael Burger, Dean of the AUM College of Arts and Sciences, for his encouragement and support. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

© *THAT Literary Review*, 2016. Rights revert to contributors. *THAT Literary Review* is affiliated with the Department of English and Philosophy, Auburn University at Montgomery. Our staff is composed of faculty and students from Auburn University at Montgomery and Huntingdon College. Cover image courtesy of Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com.



THAT
LITERARY REVIEW
Number One
2016

Poetry

Amy Watkins Copeland	<i>Crisis (from Magritte's "Son of Man")</i>	5
Iris Jamahl Dunkle	<i>Make Them Float in Your Mouth</i>	6
	<i>When I die, if I go to a place where there are apples, I'll know it won't be heaven</i>	7
	<i>Marine Mammals of the Northwestern Coast of North America, 1874</i>	8
Denise Duhamel	<i>War</i>	11
Charles Rafferty	<i>The Man Painting the Inside</i>	18
Laura McCullough	<i>Salt and Stars</i>	19
	<i>we all walk from one world to the next</i>	20
Drew Pizarra	<i>Sonnet 32^o</i>	21
	<i>Sonnet 11PM</i>	22
Les Bares	<i>Seeing Oneself</i>	30
	<i>Crucero Alto</i>	31
Stephen Reilly	<i>Making the Big Time</i>	32
	<i>Amber</i>	33
	<i>Dania Beach Getaway</i>	35
Kathleen Gunton	<i>Autumn Love with May Sarton: Cento</i>	36
Aaron Anstett	<i>Lines Written in the Anthropocene</i>	37
Tobi Alfier	<i>Waulking the Tweed</i>	43
	<i>Etta Mae was Late to Church</i>	44
Jeffrey C. Alfier	<i>Walking the Frontage Road Past Reed Point, Montana</i>	45
Valerie Westmark	<i>Basic Form</i>	46
Ciara Shuttleworth	<i>Fog Angels</i>	47
	<i>Flawed Apertures</i>	48

A. C. Warner	<i>Tea with a Friend and Her Husband</i>	56
	<i>For Angelique</i>	58
Daryl Nielsen	<i>The Relaxed Dive</i>	64
Jason Kerzinski	<i>Saturn</i>	65
Vincent A. Cellucci and Dylan Kriegger	<i>cryptic phone call</i>	66
	<i>briefcase full o' \$\$\$</i>	67
	<i>firing gun at nothing while screaming</i>	68
William Doreski	<i>The Film Version</i>	73
Nathalie Kuroiwa-Lewis	<i>Hydraulic Frolicking</i>	75
	<i>The Dandy Gorilla</i>	76
Bruce McRae	<i>All Change</i>	81
John Grey	<i>Between the Woman and the Telemarketer</i>	82
	<i>Snowed In</i>	83
Daniel J. Sundahl	<i>Good Friday, Seining for Minnows</i>	87
	<i>Wittgenstein at Hutteldorf</i>	89
Gerard Sarnat	<i>This Year in Jerusalem,</i>	90
John Stocks	<i>Journal</i>	94
	<i>Slow Train</i>	95
Donald Mitchell	<i>Fishers of Men</i>	98
Aaron Belz	<i>Informal Service</i>	99
	<i>Clearance</i>	100
Changming Yuan	<i>Y</i>	101
Nels Hanson	<i>Veteran</i>	102
	<i>Changes</i>	103
Matt Wessels	<i>For Ezra Pound As W.C.W. Sees It.</i>	107
	<i>This Is Just To Let You Know</i>	108
Benjamin Arakawa	<i>Poemographic Images</i>	109
Joseph Dorazio	<i>Archaic Carton of Oatmeal</i>	
	after Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo"	110
Dylan Debelis	<i>Larchwood, Iowa</i>	111
	<i>Litany</i>	112



Prose

M. J. Iuppa	<i>What She Wouldn't Dream Of</i>	9
	<i>A Kiss Good-bye</i>	10
Arturo Desimone	<i>Talking Money, Judaism Christianity</i>	
	<i>Paganism, Women and Life with Uncle Chaim</i>	12
Mark Brazaitis	<i>Profiles in Paranoia</i>	23
Justin Christensen	<i>Quiet</i>	38
Christopher Moylan	<i>Guests</i>	49
Taylor Lauren Ross	<i>Sitting Skinny</i>	60
Nathan Leslie	<i>Exact Change</i>	69
Rusty Spell	<i>Fish</i>	77
John King	<i>Gentle Spirit</i>	85
Tom Spencer	<i>Signs</i>	96
Richard Peabody	<i>I Won't Forget You, Everett Sloane</i>	104

Visuals

David Barthold	<i>Driggs Avenue, Southbound</i>	1
Christopher Woods	<i>Hellfire and More</i>	17
Janne Karlssen	<i>Burn8</i>	55
Christopher Woods	<i>Window with Clouds</i>	back cover

Crisis

from Magritte's "Son of Man"

Amy Watkins Copeland

What envious Eve gave him this green apple,
leaves like butterfly wings or the grasping palms

of praying mantis, and why can't he pass it off
like a boy in a party game passing a balloon

or orange or Lifesaver down the line,
lips puckered around a toothpick, eyes open?

Behind his green mask, he questions the entire concept
of Eden (he is as lonely as any person has ever been).

Someone said we make our own paradise, and he's tried
painting, drinking, carefully syllabic poetry,

expensive therapy and cheap AA meetings.
This is his latest attempt: standing alone by the sea.

It should make his life seem meaningful, but if
it doesn't, he'll doff his bowler hat, try religion.



Make Them Float in Your Mouth

Iris Jamahl Dunkle

On the cruise of the Snark, Jack London and his wife Charmian sailed to Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands and ended on the Island of Guadalcanal, where ill health forced Jack to sail commercially to Sydney, Australia, for treatment of a skin problem feared to be Leprosy.

If you want a story, you have to look for it. You have to begin with the idea of seven years. You have to imagine a boat.

You have to build it from paper and ideas. You have to sail your leaky boat into the hissing lava as it enters the sea.

You have to reach your first destination and ride a 75 pound surfboard until you fail all day. You have to watch

the plantation workers cleave the sweet fruit with machete again and again.

Until the story you've told yourself begins to stutter and spit.

You have to go to Molokai on the 4th of July and see for yourself the small girl who, missing a nose or an arm and covered with sores,

wears sequined clothes and joyfully dances. You have to sail on past empty pockets and bank accounts.

You have to watch your itinerary dissolve in the water next to the Australian yacht converted for black birding. You have to see the machete lines carved into the teak door.

You have to lose all of your water and then be blessed with a storm. You have to endure sores the size of baseballs that seep and cling to your calves and thighs. You have to go up river into the luscious green tangle

of what is unknown until the flowers emerge: red, hibiscus-like large enough to contain the whole sunset syrupy sky.

You have to find that island. Make it float in your mouth.

“When I die, if I go to a place where there are apples, I’ll know it won’t be heaven.”

Iris Jamahl Dunkle

After the tractor cooled and dust settled
come into house gone cold, stoke fire’s coals,
peel and slice the windfalls thin, brown sugar,
a lemon plucked yesterday from the bough.
Roll dough cold. Cover. Bake an hour. Gather
the children. Coax. Read words or written. Stir
pot hot on iron stove. Wash the earth from
crooked carrots and beets. Slice thin into
cast-iron skillet. Stir with yesterday’s
slaughtered chicken. Wash the young faces. Scold
the ones who know better. Divvy chores: set,
serve eat, clear, wash, scour, hot steam boiled. Lay
the children down. Look for quiet enough.
Sit beside the glowing coals, song pouring
back into the fire what’s burned out.



Marine Mammals of the Northwestern Coast of North America, 1874

Iris Jamahl Dunkle

The whaling captain Charles Scammon left
the ragged, rocky cliffs of Maine's coast for
San Francisco in 1849 where he led many whaling expeditions.
But what those large bodies gave instead of flesh and oil
was a path to a luminous blue, Baja Lagoon
where the whales stilled their bodies to give birth.
The first day he arrived at the open-mouthed bay
his heart shifted into a locked wooden chest
left rib open and bare. He learned to observe
for different purpose: not to hunt, but to know
what the dark bodies could spell into him.
When he left that unpredictable sea to write
it all down he settled with his son on the edge
of the Laguna where the sea still spoke in susurrations of fog.

What She Wouldn't Dream Of

M. J. Iuppa

is more or less a dare. Something her mother said to her while Peggy Lee sang “Is That All There Is?” She remembered that June afternoon, its full sun & heat; beads of sweat on ice tea glasses trimmed with mint. She was taking final exams; passed Chemistry with high eighties. The news floored her. She recalled looking at her pencil writing in hard marks and wondered who was taking the test and a voice in her head said, Don't even dream of it. So she didn't. Her mother sang like Patsy Cline. Crazy — she still hears her mother's voice.



A Kiss Good-bye

M. J. Iuppa

There's something lonesome in the snick of the suitcase's latch. The way it clicks like the pull chain on the bare light hanging in the closet. You remember both. The darkness you took with you, along with the smells of your folded clothes; leaving winter stuck in the bottom drawer, wedged between photos and letters written long ago. You knew it was time to go when you could no longer share the blame. It had to be all yours. You said it more than once, "It's my fault, not yours"—as if there was never any room for two.

War

Denise Duhamel

Pink:
Do you even remember why we're here?

Blue:
To win the war.

Pink:
But what do we win?

Blue: I forgot.

And so it went, troops on both sides of The Binary War growing tired and confused. Even the Androgynous were sick of vigils and sit-ins. Pink and Blue Soldiers defected, trading uniforms. Some burned their britches, opting to wear only white like eighteenth century children of all genders who wore dresses until they were six, the time of their first haircuts. Others MIA wore only black or khaki.

The sergeants on both sides ignored the past. During World War I, the rule was pink, a decided and strong color, for the boys; and blue, delicate and dainty, for the girls. Pink was closer to red, the bloodline. Blue closer to the Virgin Mary. Even during the Depression, Filene's, Halle's and Marshall Field all sold pink to masculine toddlers and blue to feminine ones. It wasn't until 1940 when the colors switched and no historian can definitively say why. Jo Paoletti of the University of Maryland, a longtime specialist on the topic, says, "It could have easily gone the other way."



Talking Money, Judaism Christianity Paganism, Women and Life with Uncle Chaim

Arturo Desimone

I wanted to tell him, Life, Chaim, my uncle who was more like a brother, of what I had seen the previous summer, the August of pilgrimage to the city of our ancestors' circle of crying stones. I am not sure if I did. That I had a letter I wrote translated into Polish, at the tourism office. Mostly Catholic pilgrims from around the world came in to arrange audio-tours of the Black Madonna shrine that Czestochowa was now famous for. The surprise, fear and sad empathy in the Black Madonna's, the Shulamite's gray green Polack eyes in her pretty hawk-face, as her hand translated my letter into *Polsku* on the keyboard. When I went to the house, it was a parking lot. A great tall tree embraced the neighboring houses, trying to keep the children in their rooms in these apartment complexes from gazing at this ground that was desecrated and where evil things happened and now poverty and hatred remained.

A young woman with a dirty gray-smeared brow under blonde wires breastfed her baby on the staircase. She looked ill, and it sucked greedily at the big breast through the hole in her t-shirt. Two blond boys played cards while flies zapped round their heads in circumference, little bacterial joker-crowns of insect trails on their skulltops, boys shirtless. Along the bricks on the way to the address, little swastikas written like the first letter of a confused sanskrit alphabet eyed from the walls, a Magen David hanging from a quick gallows, a Polish L with a saber stabbing through its torso, like the ł in the word *miłość* (love in Polish) upside.

An old man approached me, as the young mother barked in fear and mistrust, in the language of Polish staccato whispers, of *tak tak tak tak* and crimes hidden by gray walls and of poor people making love and progeny in the autumn leaf skirts of death. She whispered: who is this, smiling long-haired foreigner, with sunglasses and a stiff afraid smile holding a piece of paper?

My internal speculation sounded, paranoia of the Semite-Slav: Is he holding a letter from KGB that we are to be hanged by the Russians who are secretly Kremlin Jews? Is he an Israeli, an Israeli or rich American, Canadian, Australian Jew, angry after seeing Auschwitz, who's coming to reclaim the property, kick us all out on our naked assholes just before autumn so we will be cold, barefoot in the wet leaves full of centipedes at our ankles?

The angry Israelis who kick people out of old Jewish properties after a thousand years since the Germans impaled them, screaming their revenge royal-flush stacked over szloty chips of Polish suffering in the grand German nazi casino—

The old man waved at her, shouting in Polish to shut her up. He had one arm. With his one arm, on which there breathed a tattooed heart pierced with a cupid arrow, and the hand at the end of his remainder souvenir arm he picked the paper saying I am the grandson of Leon Shtynberga whose family had lived two generations ago in this parking lot, before the Nazis came and deported them from this parking lot where they had lived in a magical Chagall spell of poverty. That was not what the letter said, he read it, and with his hands explained that I could look around as much as I wanted, the next day too as my letter explained I was staying in the Hotel HaGa right in the same street. (HaGa, sounded like Hebrew to me, I was sure the receptionist was an anti-Semite, failed pimp and high on smuggled Viagra, with his sneering face with a toothpick in his lips and his fat paunch and desire to shake me down for the Jewish money that buys the shiny uzis, the ruined houses, the good-clime countries.)

I had looked around, photographing the tall maple tree, the old man, the children, and the old big houses surrounding this empty square, this lot. Uncle Chaim must have made some mistake, Lattkedralno 10 was just an empty lot with asphalt, the patches of grass manured by streetdogs. Lattkedralno 10 must have been one of the big old houses surrounding this plot. Later when I revisited *Çzestochowa*, I of course found out the house of my family had been utterly demolished and a parking lot, one tenth of which was covered in fragrant tree-shade, stood in its place.

Next door was a souvenir shop where a Polish woman sung “Djien Dobri,” selling tchotchke paintings of ethnic ghosts of *Çzestochowa*: her art paintings of old Jews in black hats counting gold coins, long noses and brim hats; paintings of a gypsy woman, oriental flowers in her black hair, maybe Esmeralda from the Disney film *Notre Dame de Paris*, the beautiful-as-Tirzah Esmeralda who once prostituted by different lamp posts of *Çzestochowa* until she was murdered in nakedness by a Polish envious provincial john. (That night in Hotel HaGa I lay down holding a knife, kissing the knife swearing death to all provincials, my sex in my other hand, my hands held radically opposing fantasies about Poland.) She smiled at me pointing at the pictures of the Jew counting money and the Esmeralda hoping to sell to the tourist, I asked if I could photograph them instead but did not know how to work the flash on the throwaway camera.

After the *Zydowska Cemetery* I went to *Jasna Góra*, the Catholic temple on the white hill. There they sung *ave marias*, thousands of catholic pilgrims and clergy marching up steps. I saw the ikon they came to venerate, the Black Madonna, a Shulamite more than a virgin who supposedly healed the handicapped, good way to get medical coverage after the new right wing Polish government cut social security post perestroika. I had scaled that ugly forbidden city only to understand this as the church from which the bells of the pogrom-priests clamored, for libel against Jews that was taught to the illiterate. Bells’ clamor that my ancestors woke up hearing every morning, every morning of light and of grief in which they shaved singing of waking up either in peace, in assimilation or the next day in Israel, Palestine, in white arms of the Beloved.)

I told you none of this. Chaim, Life, my uncle, you who were more a tougher older brother, you would hear nothing, none of my bullshit and pilgrimage to pain and nothing.



A dinner I had with Uncle Chaim when he came to visit me in Amsterdam, after I had returned from a travel to Krakow.

“So! You went to Poland, tell me. How was that for you?” he gestured his hand to me from the dark, mystical shadow gorilla-black business suit, the protective darkness shawl Chaim enveloped his inside-out nervous system in. Sometimes a branch or twig of his inside-out sensitive nerve-ends jutted out of a cufflink in his suit, looking like a branch of a tall dream apricot tree from a Paul Klee painting—as soon as the waitress pointed it out to him, not knowing what this odd protrusion was, he quickly stuffed it back into his dark gorilla-hair-woven black business suit, he had maybe twelve or twenty-three of them for his corporate headhunter persona work in Toronto. After adjusting the accidental jutter he would then flirt charmingly with the Dutch waitress, in his trained Surinam accent, playing the exotic charming white *neger* from Aruba, clearly a Jewish neurotic success story grown up in the Dutch Caribbean.

We both were holding spoons for the *creme brulée* half-eaten on our plates as Portuguese fados played in the exclusive Amsterdam delicatessen he was treating me to so that he could luxuriously condescend to me about my living off state benefit while I write unpublished stories instead of creating myself in the capitalist economy after working as a waiter like he did. I wonder if the musicians who made and sang these fados would not judge him as a producer of nothingness the way he judged me while appreciating and analyzing their music—a consoling thought of triangular judgment.

“I went to both *Çzestochowa*, where Habakuk was from—” I hoped to get a raised eyebrow mentioning his father, my grandpa—“and Krakow. I also saw Auschwitz.”

“And how was that for you?” Something hardened in his face.

“Well, Auschwitz. . . .” I took this as my cue to say some dark metaphysical analysis of the evil and nothingness I experienced at the Auschwitz tourism arcadia “It was . . . an arena of humiliation turned into a tourist photographic gallery. . . .”

“I know what Auschwitz is,” Chaim threw hands down on the table. Wine spilled from the pitcher.

“What I mean, is, is it is now a hollow memorial of . . . a kind of pornographic temple to hysteria instead of an actual tomb, actual compensation.”

“I know what Auschwitz is,” he repeated, sounding like a robot, didn’t seem to be listening, a giggle piped through his sneer, he drank a gulp of wine. “What I mean is, how was it.”

“It was interesting, I guess.”

“That’s all I wanted to know!” he shouted, almost jumping out of his seat.

“Thank you. That’s what I want to know. Was it good? Yes good. I don’t need to know all this fuckin. . . .” he laughed, his sentence unfinished, fucking always a good metallic disruptor of any sequence of thought or memory. I realized I should not try to be profound when talking about the genocide. I should try not to be profound.

“I also went to *Çzestochowa*,” I brought up Habbakuk’s old town

“How was that for you?”

We both fell still, watching the other’s mouths as if ants would fall in a procession from our lips.

“It was good.” I said, disciplined now and weary of Uncle Chaim’s fury. His narrowing eyes suspected my wander-talk. Between us, the light from the restaurant candle climbed discretely into our wine glasses without his noticing, the light escaped into the quiet tower of red wine as Chaim breathed slowly. . . .

“That’s great to hear.” He snapped up a morsel of *creme brulée*, whipped cream against the scales on his mouth from years of haphazard shaving with his neurotic hands that worked but never built since he quit making drawings and playing guitar as an ashamed young man whose father wanted a Jewish doctor and not a touchy-feely artist in the family “Tell me, why was it interesting.”

“Well, it was disturbing, kind of. No traces of this Jewish past. I stayed in the Mattkedralna street—where the old house had stood.”

“According to the people I asked, that was where the house was, my,” he cleared his throat, “and *your* cousins in Jerusalem, Aviva and Zohar, think the house was probably in Mattkedralna 12 but I’m not sure.”

“Yes. I looked up the old house. There was a Polish family, they seemed poor.”

“It is a poor city.” He looked down at the table, at the whirlpool of his saliva in the wine glass dark as the sea of lyric epics about genocide and refugees.

“And I went to the Jewish Cemetery. Cemetaria Zydowska. The graves were painted with swastikas, it was shocking, all these old tombstones—”

“You know who does that? A moron. A fucking moron does that. Do you do that? If I go kick down Protestant grave stones on Aruba or wherever, what they will say? They will say moron. A fucking moron!”

“Yes, I tried to get a sense of the place.”

“So you went there? Do you notice then, that whole culture—” his voice trembled with “whole” as if to create an aura of fear of abyss, his eyes grew wide and threatening in their sockets, staring not at me, staring at his fears, his trauma, “that whole culture, has completely disappeared.”

“I know. I tried after all that to find some relaxation in Krakow. It is a student city, a lot of young people.”

“Oh. A lot of fucking morons.”

“Have you been there?”

“I was there twice.” He calmed down.

“To do what?”

“Someone I visit there. Let’s not—forget what I said. What did you do in Krakow?”

“Well, unfortunately not what I hoped,” I smiled sly. “The young Polish women in Krakow, they are beautiful, I was surprised, and seem open, cultured. I was hoping to—”

“They are what? Did you say, did you call them, *beautiful*?” He smiled at me, a big wolf smile, anger, smiling only to bare his teeth. The table shook, like in a luxury cabin of a night train to Portugal or an Italianate city, me and my kitsch delusions and associations and lack of any sense-concept of time from an island of goats.

“Yes” I was getting uncomfortable. The candle the waitress had lit began to glow on uncle Chaim’s face in a way that donated a banshee-like shadow play round his



suspicious eyes narrowing at me as he half-smiled, his lip curled in a snarl like a worm on its way to the apple.

(The next time on the train to Krakow, Poland, I would take in my jeans pocket near my crotch smelling of my come, a hard-cover small notebook adorned with birds, on the inside my handwritten verses in pencil copied from the Shir ha Shirim English translation, I didn't know Hebrew: You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, bind me as a sign upon your arm, I want to climb into you like a palm tree, the scent of your breath like apricots—)

“Why.”

“Why what.”

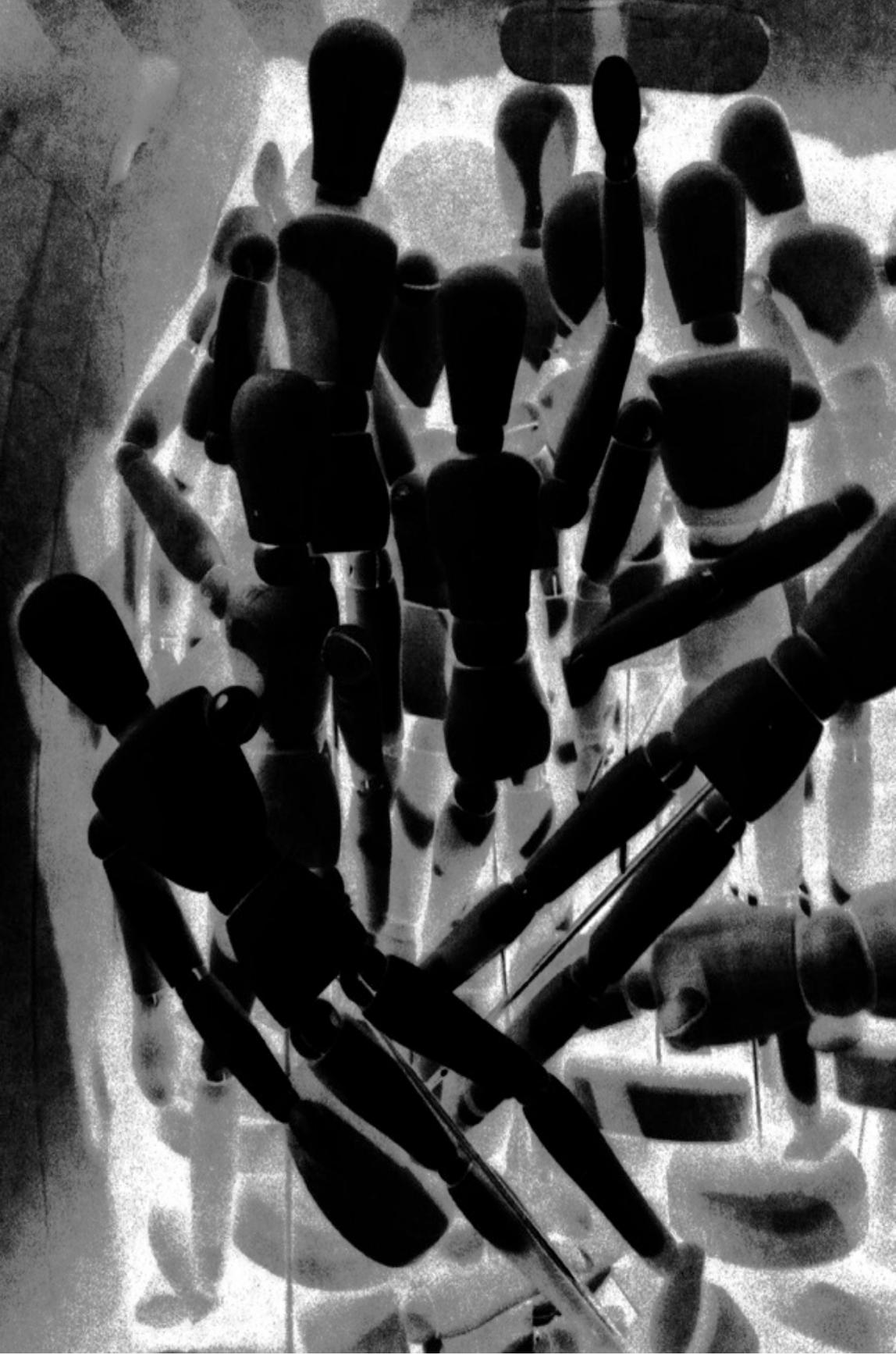
“You said something,” he laughed a little, drinking wine, some dark cinema of memories that were his own flashing in his retinas, a white curve of a woman's bottom, despair, shame, but I am projecting like all who are persecuted by cinematic imaginations. “You mean, sexually, they, you are sexually turned on by these, Polish women, something like that.

“Okay.” Change the subject from romance or eros, Chaim cannot hate a woman he erotically likes and I must let him hate all the men, woman, children, apes, ghosts and wolves in Poland. “I also went to the ethnological museum, trying to reconstruct the world, Habbakuk,” I tried to smile, “your father, must have seen first hand. I saw these interesting flower-printed folkloric dresses, and exhibits on pagan rituals. There was still traces of a pagan folk culture—”

“Okay. So you are interested in this primitive, primitive culture. They are still primitive, and you find a sexual arousal there. Very good, Bernardo! I am glad you enjoyed yourself in Poland, sounds very interesting” he finalized the conversation, completed the transaction, he often said “complete the transaction” about non-financial exchanges such as those between a woman and a man, mentioning quick ode to sensuality that seemed sincere as a shadow of electricity that ran through him as he completed the ode and gulped some wine, I wondered if perhaps he had read some old pop psychology book about transactional analysis, *Games People Play*, to gain insight into manipulating women and young girls. “So it was your birthday recently. I'm visiting my old friend tomorrow in Koerendijck, and then flying further in Europe. Here,” he handed me a roll of euro bills, “don't worry about it. Your grandparents are proud of you and would want you to have it. Don't worry. I will be in Berlin by the end of this week, visiting a friend.”

“Who is he?” I asked.

“She—oh, forget what I said.” He called the waitress for the bill, flirted with her, she laughed and he tipped her twenty, introducing me as his nephew from the Caribbean. I drank the rest of wine lost in Slavic fantasy of primitive Polish women and greenish Italianate Slavic cities, or Chaim's preference, a conscientious, cosmopolitan German lady apologizing—who was she, his German of aphrodisiac pity, did she have a name like Yohanna? Gretchen? Ismaine?—on her knees in her Berlin studio, purged of pagan provincialism, and at last humbled before the nocturnal wonder of my laconic uncle Life. 🍷



The Man Painting the Inside

Charles Rafferty

The man painting the inside obliterates
the history of a family's height
and the darkened place where someone
would brace a hand at the top
of the cellar stairs. He is dizzy with it —
the dahlia brightness, the fumes,
the sense of starting over.
But this man is in a rush. He doesn't believe
in sanding, and the tape is only so-so
straight. He'll leave fingerprints
despite the covered piano, the chairs
and dressers bunched up in the center
of every room. He wishes he could touch
his wife, but she would never let him
with hands like these. She would lean away
from his face so flecked with paint
that he has tasted it — making him think
of the old shade, how he cancels it
so completely. All he wants is
the feeling of a single color
surrounding him, at least for a few days —
before the living begins, before
the smudges arrive, before he needs
these walls to hold him up
among his many confusions.

Salt and Stars

Laura McCullough

You will know the wrack line and how to walk it,
and that lovers and spouses go alone sometimes,
bringing back small gifts from separate journeys:
eel grass, skate cases, a loggerhead turtle shell,
a whirled splinter of driftwood, one of the plastic
baby ducks that circled the world: look my darling,
I brought this home for you to the altar of our life.

Isn't this how we live? How we go on when the tides
of life take us one way, then the other, washing us out
into the many griefs—losing a job, a spouse, a parent—
and then back again into the warm shallows that renew—
new friendships, other joys we didn't know were possible
and then suddenly do, and the living becomes good again?

And often, you will walk the line together, arm in arm,
as you do now,
the water on one side, the immensity of ocean reminding you
not that we are insignificant,
but that we are each bodies of water as well,
and full of wonder,

and the land will remind you to be grounded and courageous
through the storms that will come,
because there will always be an accidental tide pool
filled and still like a mirror reflecting back the first evening stars,
or the taste of sea salt on the skin
when one of you has come back from a swim,
or the light growing as the moon rises to help you walk home
together
when it's getting dark.

—For M and W



we all walk from one world to the next

Laura McCullough

You who have had some experience,
you know the valley I mean, and the dark /
how the next day, the ocean was gone, and the sun
somewhere else, the four directions star-collapsed / you
who have had this experience, kiss me, please,
with your warm, moist lips / kisses like blue blazes
on the bark of trees in the woods on the path to water
i can't find / they are lights in this gully,
the only way back
from where i had to leave her
alone in the dark.

Sonnet 32°

Drew Pissarra

I'll be the first to admit I'm cold. Yet the truth
of the matter is this: You grow bored when I'm nice.
You're quite aroused by a standoffish attitude.
You get your rocks off by chewing Freudian ice.
I told you point blank, I'd never say no. But oh!
How you cooled to Pavlovian yes. Nowadays
I turn the flame down low so when we meet you'll know
you're the source of the heat, I guess. Wise men say,
"Many's the fool who mistakes frosty for frigid."
You've said so yourself while half sneering, half smirking.
I keep my own face blank. I try not to fidget.
Only Kinsey himself could spot this lust that's lurking.
I don't care if this role-playing is wrong or right:
I'm 32 in Celsius, not Fahrenheit.



Sonnet 11PM

Drew Pissarra

Pajamas are a form of formal wear, the tux
of the bedroom, the suit of the boudoir. I own
two pair: one, a blue Mao suit; the other, a luxe
cliché. You know, you've stripped me of both. Had I known
pajamas were lingerie, I'd have insisted
you wear mine sooner. You see, I couldn't care less
that on you, the pants ride high and my waistband gives
so the snaps unsnap... My dear, I fetishize this.
If clothes make the man, then jammies make the lover.
Dressed or undressed. Tops and bottoms. You're well-paired
with me. I'll take you whenever and wherever,
whatever you wear. In the end, you'll end up bare.
Neither of us will honor this costume of sleep.
I see on it your face: first the goat, then the sheep.

Profiles in Paranoia

Mark Brazaitis

The new boy was a problem.

Philip (he didn't want to be called Phil) had moved to town only a month before, but already he'd become friends with everyone at the Sherman Ice Arena, from Robert Williams, the manager, to Eva Longstreet, who, at age six, was the Sherman Figure Skating Club's youngest member. A twelve-year-old, Philip had mastered all his single jumps and was working on his doubles.

Philip's sense of style was as memorable as his skating. As thin as a hockey stick, he liked to dress in uniform colors. One day, he wore black skating pants, a black t-shirt, and dark-tinted sunglasses. Another day he wore red skating pants, a red t-shirt, and a red beret. On a third day he dressed all in yellow, including a yellow scarf. The rink's skating director and chief coach, Alice Maravicious, whom everyone called Alice Marvelous, joked that Philip aspired to be every crayon in Crayola's 152-piece set.

Jim Agnew, whose son was also twelve and a figure skater, had concluded that Philip was gay. Even if Philip was a better skater than Charlie, and even if Philip's face and hair suggested a young John F. Kennedy, Charlie would, if only by default, be more successful with girls. This seemed to Jim the better battle to win. Although Charlie had expressed only a mild interest in girls, Jim's wife, Patty, insisted he'd had a couple of crushes.

Jim was a professor of political science at Ohio Eastern University. His specialty was Richard Nixon. He was writing a book about politicians who, like Nixon, had damaged and even destroyed their careers because of personal animosity toward, or vendettas against, their real or perceived rivals. The book would open with Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr and would conclude with the 2012 Republican presidential candidates, who despised each other more than they despised Barack Obama. The title of the book, after John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer-Prize-winning study of politicians' courage, would be *Profiles in Paranoia*.

Jim was forty-six-years-old, and his health was excellent, thanks to a vegetables-and-whole-grains diet. After a period in which he wondered if his marriage, like an automobile left too long in the elements, would never run the way it used to, he and Patty had restarted their romance.

Jim couldn't say his life was perfect, however. His 1,200-page biography of Nixon, a volume he hoped would earn him a big award, had been greeted on its publication two years before with a kind of exasperation. "Do we need another Nixon book?" asked the *Columbus Dispatch*.

No, his life wasn't perfect, but it was as close to perfect as it would likely ever be. Or it had been, anyway, before his son's mood, once carefree, had slid into bitterness and quiet fury. Several times, Jim asked his son what was troubling him, but Charlie



refused to say. Patty, meanwhile, chalked up Charlie's darker attitude to his age. "Puberty is as much an illness as it is a life stage," she said. "Unfortunately, the only medicine is time."

But one night, as Jim labored late on his book, he heard Charlie crying in his bedroom. His first thought was to wake Patty so she could intervene. Instead, he tapped on Charlie's door, whispered his son's name, and entered. "What's wrong, buddy?" he asked, dropping beside Charlie on the bed.

"Nothing."

"I don't think you're crying over nothing."

"Nothing important."

"If you're crying, it must be important."

Silence followed. At last, Charlie said, "I hate Philip."

Jim asked his son why, and Charlie's said, "He's better than me. And everyone loves him. Especially Alice. She loves him and hates me."

Jim was sure Alice didn't hate Charlie. Alice seemed incapable of hating anyone. If she weren't a figure-skating instructor, she would make a great life coach.

"Everyone loves Philip," Charlie asserted. "They love how he skates. They love the clothes he wears. They love everything he says."

Jim thought: He won't be so popular when all the girls who have crushes on him realize he'll never have a crush on them. But Jim didn't think this argument would move Charlie. So he said, "Alice likes you very much, Charlie. Of course she does. So does everyone else at the rink."

"But he's better than I am." Charlie listed what Philip could do on the ice, including his recent mastery of a double salchow.

"So work harder," Jim said. "It's good to have a rival. It will improve your game—your skating, I mean."

If healthy rivalries existed in politics, they were rare. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson became friendly and fabled correspondents only after their careers were over. During their political primes, they wanted to kill each other. Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford wrote op-ed pieces together, but only after both men were out of office. Richard Nixon never met a potential rival he didn't detest. He was the Darth Vader of politics.

"It's good to have a rival," Jim repeated. "In the end, you'll thank him."

Jim and Patty alternated driving Charlie to and from the rink. When Jim was next on duty, he observed Alice as she coached Philip. With her black hair, red lips, and cream-colored skin, Alice looked like Snow White. But she would never have been fooled by a poisoned apple proffered by a jealous stepmother in disguise.

As she and Philip huddled, Jim focused on her face. Was it possible Charlie was right? Was she especially bright and animated around Crayola Boy? (Today Philip was wearing an all-green outfit, which made him look like an asparagus spear.) Although Jim suspected she was offering a correction to his double loop, he wondered if, given her smiles, they might instead be trading jokes.

Half an hour later, during Charlie's lesson, Alice smiled on a few occasions, but not as frequently as she had with Philip. And Jim noted this: when she'd worked with

Philip, she'd worn only a sweater with her skating pants. But before her lesson with Charlie, she'd put on her Russian overcoat. Thus covered up, she was, Jim concluded, holding in her warmth—and therefore withholding it from Charlie.

Jim recalled his conversation with Alice the previous week, when, after Charlie's lesson, they'd somehow found themselves discussing Richard Nixon. Jim mentioned to her, perhaps, he realized now, for the second or third time, that the *Dallas Morning News* had called his biography of the thirty-seventh president "illuminating." He always felt compelled to cite the Texas paper's praise in case whomever he was speaking with Googled his book and discovered all the (lamentably plentiful) mediocre reviews. He wondered now if Alice found his self-congratulations laughable. He wondered, furthermore, if she had projected her negative feelings about him onto Charlie.

But he caught himself, wise to the irony. He was being paranoid. He was being—Christ—Richard Nixon.

But not entirely. Because the next time Jim was at the rink, he again watched both boys' lessons, but this time with a scientific intention. On a pad of yellow legal paper, he tabulated the number of times Alice smiled during each lesson. During Philip's lesson, the total was eighty-two. During Charlie's? Twelve.

After Charlie's lesson, Alice strolled off the ice and spoke to Jim with her usual enthusiasm. Charlie had mastered both his inside and outside edges, she said. But he needed more power in his power pulls. "He seems a little frustrated," she said.

Jim was tempted to respond: He's frustrated with the favoritism you show other students, one in particular. Instead, he said, "He'll have it all down soon."

"I'm sure," she said, smiling. Was there irony in her smile, a knife-like implication that she was sure of the opposite?

Jim glanced at Philip at center ice. His music was playing, a classical piece Jim had heard before but couldn't name. Shouldn't he be skating to Frankie Goes to Hollywood? Jim wondered. He caught himself. He was, he feared, again on the edge of homophobia, although he doubted anyone at the rink would have heard of the eighties band or its gay-themed hit song.

He recalled Nixon's quote about how homosexuality "destroyed the Greeks." In his Nixon bio, Jim had devoted several pages to exploring—inconclusively—the contributions of homosexuality to the decline and fall of the world's first democracy. Jim's "too obvious respect for Nixon's crackpot claims," said an *American Scholar* reviewer, gave his biography an air of "indiscriminate admiration."

On the ride home, Charlie sat morosely in the backseat. Jim thought he should again give him a pep talk about hard work and dedication, about focusing on what was in his control and what wasn't. But he also believed in being honest with his son. So he said, "I think you have a point about Philip." Charlie perked up, and Jim shared his survey results.

"I knew it!" Charlie said. "And did you see what he did...or what he didn't... today? He didn't even say hello to me."

He's an arrogant little prick, Jim wanted to say.

"He should be skating to Frankie Goes to Hollywood."

Jim did say that.



“Who’s Frankie Goes to Hollywood?”

“Music from my generation. Frou-frou music.”

“He likes Tchaikovsky,” Charlie said.

“Who was gay,” Jim said automatically, as if they were playing a word-association game.

Charlie didn’t follow up on the subject. “He’s working on his program for the spring show,” Charlie said. “It’s really good.”

“Yours is good too,” Jim said. He’d encouraged Charlie to skate to “Start Me Up” or “Born to Run,” music Jim used to play in the car for both of his children. He considered listening to the Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen an essential part of their educations. Charlie had politely declined his suggestions, however. Instead he chose music by Frank Ocean, a singer Jim had never heard of.

“I wish he would stop coming to the rink all the time,” Charlie said. “There’s no way I’ll get better than him if he’s always skating.”

“Doesn’t he have other interests?” Jim asked. “Maybe . . . I don’t know . . . ballet?”

“He’s like me,” Charlie said, biting his lip. “He only wants to skate.”

Jim recalled, as he often did, the recent—or relatively recent (to him, it felt like yesterday)—*New York Review of Books*’ analysis of a dozen Nixon books published within the past couple of years. The writer, whom Jim used to respect, had discussed the books in order, as she put it, of their “worthiness.” His Nixon biography had been in the penultimate spot, besting only a memoir by a Nixon apologist from his first administration. Jim had read all the other books and couldn’t see how anyone could judge them superior to his. Furious one night, he’d written the critic a letter, heavy on biting counterargument (her choice as the top Nixon biography, he said, contained six errors in the first chapter alone!) and sarcastic threat (“I’ll be sure to get a restraining order on your keyboard the next time I publish a book”). Predictably, he’d heard nothing in response.

“You’re a better athlete than Philip,” Jim told his son. “You’re built like a man-in-training, not like a . . .” What word did he intend for the end of his sentence? Nothing kind. He sighed. “If you keep working hard, you’ll be better than Crayola Boy.”

His voice didn’t convey conviction. Perhaps Charlie picked up on this because he said, “I doubt it.”

The next time Jim was at the rink, his poll of Alice’s smiles yielded the same results as before. He did consider including in his data what might be described as a half-smile. Charlie seemed to earn more half-smiles than Philip, but Jim ultimately discounted them, as they might be said to fall into a disputable category, like the hanging chads of the 2000 presidential election.

In addition to keeping score on Alice’s smiles, he noted the responses of the six other skaters present, all young women between the ages of ten and eighteen. Though this survey was less scientific, as he couldn’t observe every skater at once, it was obvious, by their words as well as their expressions, that they preferred Philip over Charlie by a wide margin.

Jim wanted to hurl his legal pad aside, step into the rink’s open doorway, and

shout, “What’s wrong with Charlie? He’s a good kid. Maybe he’s a little morose sometimes, but he’s solid and smart and . . . and, goddamn it, he isn’t gay!” Once again, he felt appalled at himself. Was this, in the end, the best argument he had in his son’s favor? And what kind of argument was it, anyway?

For the next hour, both Charlie and Philip worked on their programs for the spring show, silently alternating plugging their iPods into the rink’s PA system. Philip, who had dressed all in rose, demonstrated a stage performer’s panache, whipping around the ice and shooting his arms up and around as if conducting a wild orchestra. In contrast, Charlie approached his jumps and spins as if following a paint-by-numbers pattern. “He’s a grinder,” Jim said aloud, which might have been a compliment in another sport—football, for example—but sounded damning when applied to figure skating.

So his son wasn’t a natural. So what? Plenty of people succeeded in their chosen fields despite lacking a natural aptitude. There was, for example . . . well, Nixon, of course. Jesus. Bad example. There was George H.W. Bush, whom, despite his one term, historians and political scientists now ranked right up there with Eisenhower and Wilson.

Alice hopped off the ice, grinning. “He makes me laugh,” she said, probably to no one. But Jim followed up: “Who does?”

Alice turned to him, her eyes blinking as if to put him into focus. “Philip.” She smiled. “I told him he should do stand-up, and he said he does—unintentionally—every time he tries to solve a problem at the board in math class.”

You should see how funny Charlie can be, Jim wanted to say, although he couldn’t remember having laughed at anything his son had said. Ever? Ever.

Alice smiled, slapped on her skate guards, and strode into the lobby.

Life is unfair. Not Nixon’s quote, but Kennedy’s. One boy is born with charm, dashing good looks, and deft comedic timing. Another boy is born with . . . doggedness. Oh, Christ, Jim thought, Charlie’s only twelve years old. In a year he might be the most elegant figure skater in the state. Or he might be done with the sport, which would be fine with Jim.

But he suspected Charlie would stick with figure skating even as he slowly saw the gap between his accomplishments and Philip’s expand. Jim had gone to grad school with a woman named Eileen Bloomstein, who never seemed serious about anything but marijuana. (You know, it’s a funny thing, every one of the bastards that are out for legalizing marijuana is Jewish. Nixon again.) Yet Eileen was now a tenured professor at Cornell and the author of six books, including what *The New York Times* called “a surprisingly revelatory and appealingly irreverent” biography of the teenage Bill Clinton.

The next morning, a Saturday, Jim found Charlie in the kitchen, dressed in an all-orange outfit. “What’s with the carrot costume?” Jim asked his son.

“Ha, ha,” Charlie said with a frown. There was a pause. “Maybe it’s his clothes.”

“What do you mean?”

“Maybe everyone likes Philip because of his clothes.”

Jim knew this couldn’t be true, but he didn’t contradict his son. The boy was approaching his rivalry with Philip in a scientific way, analyzing the data, testing hypoth-



eses. Jim appreciated the effort. At the same time, there was something agonizing about it.

“I don’t remember you having orange pants,” Jim said.

“Mom and I bought them a few days ago.”

As Jim drove Charlie to the rink, he thought about how his son’s efforts to appear more like his rival would only make him look more ridiculous. He thought of politicians who had gone down a similar, ridicule-inviting road. In his second debate with George W. Bush, Al Gore had toned down his egg-headedness so as to seem like a regular guy. The result was a worse performance than his sigh-filled, exasperation-laden first debate effort. And of course there was Michael Dukakis, who, in an effort to appear as tough as his war-hero opponent, had driven an army tank. With his oversized military helmet and cartoonish grin, he looked like a baby on a Big Wheel.

Sure enough, when Alice saw Charlie in the lobby of the Sherman Ice Arena, she asked, with a smile, if he’d intended to impersonate a traffic cone.

As Jim watched Alice instruct Philip, he again counted her smiles. His wrist quickly became tired. By contrast, Alice’s lesson with Charlie might as well have taken place in a morgue.

With both lessons finished, Alice skated off the ice and gave Jim a quick run-down of what Charlie needed to work on. Jim didn’t listen closely; he was thinking, *Your allegiance is elsewhere*. Charlie and Philip were now alone on the ice. Philip’s mother—his father lived with his second family in California—had, as usual, dropped her son off and disappeared.

Jim saw Philip and Charlie confer at the announcer’s booth. No doubt they were negotiating over whose music would play over the PA system first. Presently, Charlie smiled; it was such a rare sight Jim didn’t trust he’d seen it, but he figured Charlie had won. What played wasn’t music Jim recognized as Charlie’s, however, and he felt a heaviness inside him. His son had been defeated again. “It is necessary for me to establish a winner image. Therefore, I have to beat somebody.” Nixon’s critics cited this quote to emphasize his pettiness, but Jim understood it as only logical: winning depends as much on the competition’s weakness as on one’s own strength. Ronald Reagan became known as a warrior by beating up the impoverished island of Grenada, after all.

Philip swept around the ice like a speed skater. Perhaps, Jim thought with reluctant admiration, the boy could have been a hockey player. What brutish defenseman could keep up with him?

Jim glanced at Charlie, who touched his throat, his signal that he was thirsty. Jim had forgotten to bring in his son’s water bottle from the car. He didn’t feel like walking to the parking lot, so he grabbed change from his pocket and stepped into the lobby. The vending machine was in the corner.

When he returned, bottle in hand, he stepped into the open doorway to the ice. There was a six-inch step down to the surface, and he tapped his shoe against it. Charlie, at the far end of the rink, saw his father but instead of hurrying toward him swirled into a slow spin. Philip approached from Jim’s left, inches from the boards, speed-skating in his all-purple outfit like Barney after *Weight Watchers*. Philip was fifty feet from him . . . forty-five feet . . . forty. Jim anticipated feeling a rush of cold, stinging wind as Philip passed him.

Thirty feet, twenty-five.

When had Charlie last been happy? When, for that matter, had he? Christ, he couldn't stand the taste of defeat, the way he felt like hanging his head all the time.

Fifteen feet, ten feet.

When Philip was no more than five feet from him, Jim stuck out his foot. He braced for the impact of the boy's shins against his ankle. He rehearsed surprise, an apology, words of concern. But Philip's reflexes were extraordinary. He leaped like he was jumping a creek, clearing Jim's outstretched foot and landing as gracefully as if the interaction had been choreographed.

In the immediate aftermath, Jim wondered if he had only fantasized his intention to trip Philip. But the next moment, the boy turned, a quick, decisive twist of his head. Even as his momentum carried him toward the end of the rink, he gave Jim a look both stunned and full of disgust. Their eyes locked, and as much as, afterwards, Jim wanted to imagine the boy didn't understand his intention, he knew otherwise. For months, Philip's expression would haunt him, prickling his happy moments, reinforcing his darker moods, shaming him like nothing else in his life.

Presently, Charlie approached, his leisurely, almost lackadaisical, skating a contrast to Philip's speed. When he reached his father, he made a quick stop, doubtless intending to spray him playfully with ice, though he raised only a few shards. Charlie's smile was ebullient, stretching his face in such a way as to make him seem, with his orange outfit and flat square teeth, like a gleeful Jack-o-Lantern. For a moment, Jim thought Charlie had seen what he'd tried to do and had come to thank him for his contribution, however unsuccessful, to the war against Philip.

"Guess what?" Charlie said, beaming. "Philip asked me to do a duet with him in the spring show. We're gonna skate to the theme from Star Wars and carry light sabers. Isn't that cool, Dad?" 🍀



Seeing Oneself

Les Bares

The pigeon rests on its back. It looks prepped
for a medical autopsy—except
for its red clouded eyes and its stick feet

shod with whisk-like white paper booties.
The bit of tomato wedged in its beak
a forensic pathologist's sick joke.

I don't know where to begin, dowsing
fork and knife over the browned specimen
searching for a point of entry, the heart

of the matter. The outdoor café is
a strange place for dissection, and cousins
of the beyond-all-hope roasted crispy corpse

flutter for a miracle. They mill
around the surgical stage, performing
a pigeon litany for pigeon souls.

Setting my instruments on the table,
I drink another beer before I
commence, one last nod to the living

pacing and pecking anxiously at my feet.
I plunge in with the scalpel, peel back
the first tiny breast and crack it open.

Crucero Alto

Elevation 14,813 ft.

Les Bares

We leave the station,
easily breathe in the smells
of alfalfa and wild sage. In another time
my father would have waved
as I boarded the train.

The track coils and climbs the canyons,
and at the edge of the world I turn
inward, suffocating at this altitude.
At the heart of it all is deprivation.
I scour the thin air for oxygen,

feeling hung-over, like the time
we stole the sacristy wine
and deserted the line of seminarians
parading in black robes chanting
behind The May Day Virgin Mary
riding in a garden cart towed by a panting
lawn tractor ascending the road
in the thin air of disbelief.

Now from the gangway of the Pullman
in a fifteen thousand foot delirium
I feel the tug of my father's heart
strain with the frailty of his worn-out body.
How my father wheezes,
and how his mind struggles to recall who
that young man is who looks so lost, waving
from the other side of the hollow cavern.



Making the Big Time

Stephen Reilly

He'd dump us onto Dublin streets.
No compass. No street map.
Our mission: Hunt down James Joyce,
that true master of hide-and-seek.
Or he'd set us up in an apartment,
dark and dank, unbearably cold,
with Dostoyevsky huddled in a corner,
morbid as any winter morning.
Meanwhile, he'd traipse off nightly
with MacDonald and Travis McGee down
some Fort Lauderdale alleyway
or he'd down draughts with Parker,
Spencer and the Hawk in a Boston bar.
But that was decades ago, long before
he discovered his Beowulf driving
a convertible, crossing the Rickenbacker
to the Fountainbleu where his Grendel waited.

Amber

Stephen Reilly

Every seventh poem,
Amber appears,

her sun-streaked hair,
her bikini lines,

fresh from a swim
or a wind-swept ride

along the coast,
Californian – or so

her last postcard said,
decades ago, now

a yellowing bookmark
stuck between

Williams and HD
in a Norton anthology.

With the palms
and waters calm,

oranges and grapefruits
green on the trees,

the air tastes
like spring, even as

jack-o'-lanterns
decorate

this neighborhood,
and the children



imagine who
they want to be.

Amber, let me
imagine, too,

tell a lie
or two, of you

with me, lying on
Miami Beach,

the sun cresting over
the Atlantic waves,

the sweet salt air,
dew on the cabana chairs.

Dania Beach Getaway

Stephen Reilly

What we loved were the nights, like tonight,
walking together down the beach,
to where the motels end and Whiskey Creek hid
among the mangroves. Summer waves were
never more than ripples, water mirroring
the moon's splintered image. She spoke of
her life in Jersey, a first husband who
kept all her days black and blue with stars.
Her voice chilled, kicked away words like sand.
And to another time, hitchhiking south,
her nights on the road with a girlfriend,
the special tenderness when a woman's lips
touches a woman's lips, fingertips
whispering to her flesh under the Carolina pines –
then onto the truck stops of Georgia,
a week or two spent lounging on Peachtree Street.
She stopped, waited to see how I'd react.
The ankle-deep water rushed over our feet.
Her eyes reached for the dark edge of horizon.
I asked her to rest for a minute,
to sit with me on the sand, very afraid
words might be as shallow as clichés.
What I did say still tastes silly and foolish,
even worse, dense as the humidity.
My thinking always dull as gulls.
Nothing held her. My sentences tumbled like
broken shells rolling in a meaningless surf.
If only the past had buried the past,
swept it all away with the outgoing tide,
left us alone to figure new configurations for the stars,
left us to breathe together a fresh onshore breeze.



Autumn Love with May Sarton: Cento

Kathleen Gunton

In time as spacious as early autumn light
Oh, breathe these meadows in.
Where hidden fires and rivers burn and flow
Take anguish for companion and set out.
Here let the fiery burden be all spilled
Blazing eternally with sacred flowers
Passion and loneliness and all human pain
That purpling of the rose no one can save.
Tell them the revolution is within.
We watch and weep alone.
Love, touch us everywhere.
And may your tears be the release
The false dream from the true.
Under the wind's invisible caress
Who, above all, dreamed you?

Line 1 ~ *A Chinese Landscape*
Line 2 ~ *Green Song*
Line 3 ~ *Because What I Want Most Is Permanence*
Line 4 ~ *Take Anguish for Companion*
Line 5 ~ *Now Voyager*
Line 6 ~ *Return to Chartres*
Line 7 ~ *Landscape Pursued by a Cloud*
Line 8 ~ *A Hard Death*
Line 9 ~ *To the Living*
Line 10 ~ *Of Grief*
Line 11 ~ *Invocation*
Line 12 ~ *In Memoriam*
Line 13 ~ *A Ballad of the Sixties*
Line 14 ~ *Things Unseen*
Line 15 ~ *Bears and Waterfalls*

Collection: *Collected Poems 1930-1973*

Lines Written in the Anthropocene

Aaron Anstett

Enduring experience intermittently, suddenly
we're inside distant planet, navigating the heart of a star.
While little occurs, a narrative develops.
The construction of self looms up despite the post-human.

We're inside distant planet, navigating the heart of a star,
using fingerprints for sextants and eyelids' insides for maps.
The construction of self looms up despite the post-human
enigma of controlling machinery and being controlled.

Using fingerprints for sextants and eyelids' insides for maps,
already time dissolves our problems to granules.
Enigma of controlling machinery and being controlled,
names of asylums and prisons evolve to synonyms.

Already time dissolves our problems to granules.
I would to take a stranger's face between my palms and apologize.
Names of asylums and prisons evolve to synonyms.
I would like to take a stranger's face with me everywhere I go.



Quiet

Justin Christensen

The apartment complex is seventy-three years old. It has 116 units. The outside walls are caked with peeling yellow paint and the dark shingled roof sits quietly above it like a doctor over a sleeping patient. The complex has small yards on three sides, and the fourth side is a parking lot with faded lines that the residents generally ignore anyway. The walls are lined with dwarf junipers, and at night crickets will sing upwards to the sound-sleeping or restless residents.

The apartment complex has four floors. In one of the apartments on the top floor, unit 109, resides an eighty-four-year-old lady who is at the moment lying on her black and white tiled kitchen floor, dead. She has flat, white, shoulder-length hair that is partly covering her face and partly fanned out on the tile. The old lady is wearing a gray lace sleeping gown that has tears up and down the left seam. She has on yellow slippers with smiling ducks on the toes. The kitchen window is open. The window has no screen and the wind comes through and ruffles her dressing gown. Blue veins can be seen on her bare, pale-white legs. Her face seems peaceful, with closed eyes and red lipstick on a mouth folded into a half smile.

Miles away, the sky is turning dark and clouds are gathering together. There is a rumble in the sky that is barely audible in unit 109.

One of the old lady's arms is pinned underneath her chest, but the other arm is stretching outwards, underneath her head, towards the tan kitchen wall with the corded telephone hanging on it. This hand is clutching a note written on a torn out sheet of notebook paper. The note says: *Dear person whose name I've forgotten, I know I cared for you once. I think you cared for me too. Maybe you still do. I can't remember your name or your face, but I remember your hands. I see them, small and hopeful, grasping blue and red wrapping paper from a rectangular box underneath a large, decorated green tree. I wish you'd come visit me more because I think I need*

The note ends there.

There is a high-pitched tweet coming from the window now. A tiny yellow and black sparrow perches on the windowsill, chirping aggressively. The bird's eyes see the old lady lying on the floor. The sparrow also sees a center island in the kitchen with an open loaf of wheat bread. The sparrow's eyes see that on a paper towel is a sandwich, uncut but with one bite taken from the corner. The sandwich isn't cut into triangles or squares, and the crust isn't ripped off, the bird notices, thinking of the sandwiches it has seen people eat in New Millennial Park, northeast of the apartment complex. The bird tweets again and hops into the kitchen, landing on the island near the sandwich. It nips at the sandwich with its two-centimeter-long periwinkle brown beak.

The bird is happy.

In the kitchen, there are six wall-mounted cupboards. They all have bronze handles and one of them is chipped from a tea saucer being thrown at it in a domestic dispute sixty-two years ago. The tea saucer had been red with thin, white vertical stripes. It had missed its intended target, a person's head, by only inches.

Underneath the cupboards is a gray, granite countertop with a microwave, a knife set, the sink, a brown bread holder, the oven, a coffee maker, and a silver toaster on the end—everything in that order from left to right and stopping at the refrigerator. Next to the sink is a blue Post-it note speckled with dry water stains. The Post-it note says, *Chew first*. In the sink are six small plates with orange floral patterns engraved in them. They are only slightly dirty.

A breeze drifts through the kitchen and shifts the dead old lady's hair. The sparrow, its tiny stomach full of wheat bread, launches itself lazily into the air and flies out the open window. The darkening sky hasn't reached the apartment complex yet, but the air is starting to feel moist and the rumbling is increasing in volume.

It is summer and there are four children outside the apartment complex. They are sifting through the grass trying to find insects for their bug zoo. The bug zoo is contained in a gray Kemps bucket that they hide across the street in the playground, underneath the yellow slide. The kids noticed that the bugs would always fall asleep after a day. Their cheers of excitement when they find an insect drift up to the dead old lady's apartment, where the sounds fall on dead ears.

On the refrigerator are four Post-it notes of varying color, one picture of a man in his mid-forties, two magnets containing the number to two separate hospitals, and one blue magnet that says in red letters: *Grandma's Kitchen, Keep Out*. One of the Post-it notes says, in blue ink, *Things you like doing: 1) handing out candy on Halloween 2) listening to Johnny Cash records 3) knitting baby sweaters 4) watching Antique Roadshow*. Another Post-it note, directly to the right of the previous one, says, *Daily: lock door. Eat 3 times. Turn off the stove. Take meds. Shut the window*. A third Post-it note says, *Weekly: Take out garbage. Dust. Shower. Do laundry. Tea with Margaret on Wednesday evening. Antique Roadshow Fridays at 10 AM. Vacuum. Clean bathroom and kitchen*.

At this precise moment a cumulonimbus cloud, traveling thirty-six miles per hour, lets loose a bolt of lightning in a parking lot of an all night diner that is a five minute drive from the apartment complex. The rumbling has finally reached this area. If one were in the complex at that moment they would have heard a loud groan, like a drowned out version of a semi-truck horn, before the power goes out.

The old lady's rusty refrigerator stops making noise.

The sounds of the wind, the children, and the cars on the highway float freely through Room 109. A smell of freshly cut grass also drifts through the apartment. The cumulonimbus cloud passes over the apartments quietly and without further action. Residents poke their heads out of their doors to see if other people's power has gone out as well. Warmth is sulking through the air now that the air conditioning is down. The residents chat happily to one another and Rooms 75 and 76 even make plans to watch the Baltimore Orioles game this upcoming weekend.

The power is only out for about ten minutes. When it comes back on, the chattering dies down and people return to watching television, making dinner, or reading books.



Back in the old lady's apartment, the TV in her bedroom turns on when the electricity comes back. It is a thirty-six-inch, bulky TV that has a thin layer of dust wrapping around the exterior. The TV is playing a documentary about the life cycle of flies. The narrator has a British accent and is in the middle of talking about the phase of a fly's life where the insect transfers from egg to larva. On the bottom of the program is a tan graphic with black words on it that say, *Fun Fact: The average life expectancy of a housefly is only twenty-one days.*

The TV sits on an oak media stand with glass-covered cabinets. Inside the cabinets, on the left side, are a couple dozen vinyl records, many of them by Johnny Cash. On the right side are DVDs, primarily 1950s noir. The old lady's bed is a queen, with soft-yellow comforters, sheets, and pillow covers. There are nine pillows. The bed is made; it could be on display in a furniture store. There is also a walk-in closet on the left side of the room, currently closed, with a mirror on the door. The mirror reflects the soft yellow bed and, on the other side, a small oak dresser that had come in a bundle with the TV stand. The dresser holds an old record player.

A phone sits on the nightstand, and it begins to ring loudly, interrupting the sounds of the British narrator explaining the fly's progression from the pupa to the adult stage. The phone rings thirteen times before it goes to voicemail. "Hi, this is Claire. Please leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as possible," the automated voice-mail says. "Hi Claire, it's Margaret. We have tea tonight, remember? I haven't heard from you in a few days and I'm getting a little worried. Hope everything's okay, I'll try again later. Buh-bye." There is the sound of a phone being put back into place and then the room is silent.

Outside, the sun is starting to fade into the horizon. The kids have gone back inside and the shadows are growing longer. A 1998 light-blue Ford Taurus station wagon pulls into the parking lot and parks in an empty spot, in front of a sign labeled, "Guest Parking." There is a man in the car. He is in his mid-forties and has parted brown hair. He has patchy stubble around his chin and his cheeks, and his eyes are watering. On the man's lap is a black cellphone, flipped open, displaying a text message. After he parks the car, the man glances at the text message and starts to sob. The text message says, *"I left because I don't love you anymore. I found someone who I do love, and I hope someday you can be happy for me. I really, truly am sorry. This is the last text I'm going to send you. It will be easier for the both of us that way. I know I can't tell you what to do anymore but you need to get your shit together. You've been drunk for over a week now and, honestly, it's really childish. You even missed seeing your mother last week and I hope to God you don't miss seeing her this week. She needs you. Again, I'm sorry for everything. Don't try to contact me anymore please. Goodbye."* The man cries a while longer, before he leans back in his seat and falls asleep with the seatbelt still on.

Night passes quickly. At 2:09 in the morning, the moon is at an angle where it shines through Apartment 109's open window and illuminates Claire lying dead in the kitchen. Her head has fallen off her arm and now rests on the tiled floor. A single housefly buzzes softly near her ear.

The next day the sun starts to rise at 5:52 AM. The sky is cloudless and smooth and the orangeness from the new sun turns into a sweet blue as morning passes. The

pleasant summer day is only punctuated by infrequent gusts of a strong wind. The kids of the apartment complex had to move their bug zoo inside and hide it under the stairwell. All the bugs are sleeping now and the kids are worried. One girl says it will be okay because it is still early in the day.

Up in apartment 109, Claire is still lying in the same spot. Every time the wind blows through the apartment her nightgown billows outwards, exposing her pale, naked body. The breeze has blown a paper towel onto the floor. Four flies hover around the sandwich. Twenty-four flies hover around Claire's body, creating a quiet, consistent buzzing. The room is humid even with the window open.

Claire's memories haven't disappeared from the apartment yet. They are invisible and immeasurable, yet they still hang heavy in the air. These memories will be gone in a month, maybe two, but for now they still float idly, staining the walls and the furniture.

Above Claire's body drifts a memory of her face turning blue, choking on the corner of a turkey sandwich. There is an amused smile on her face as she falls to the kitchen floor.

In the living room, on a beige recliner with stuffing sticking out of the left armrest, is a memory that contains the man from the Ford Taurus.

"You have to remember to turn off the oven if you cook, mom," the man says. The man is sitting on the recliner and Claire is dusting in the living room. He is looking at her, concerned.

"How are you and Katie?" Claire asks, looking over her shoulder as she dusts a photograph of the downtown Los Angeles skyline.

He sighs. "I don't know. Fine, I think."

"You better watch her." Claire stops dusting and looks over at her son.

"Mom. The oven."

"There is something I don't trust about that woman." Claire looks away from her son and continues to dust.

Outside of the memories, a cluster of cotton from a cottonwood tree has journeyed with a gust of wind, making its way up through apartment 109's open window and finally settling on the navy sectional next to the beige recliner. The sectional is stained with an image of Claire and her husband, who died several years ago, sitting there holding hands and watching a black-and-white film. Claire looks up at him and smiles and he smiles back, moving closer to her and removing his hand from hers to wrap his arm around her shoulders. They are excited to go to the farmers market the next day; Claire likes looking at rusty antiques and her husband likes finding foods that he's never tried before. Later that night, long after Claire has gone to bed, he'll sit near the window in the living room, looking out of his 1958 Unitron telescope; sometimes until two or three in the morning.

At that moment there is a quick knock at the door that silences the memories. The door opens and Claire's son steps into the entryway. His eyes are puffy and he rubs them while standing on the welcome mat in the front entrance. After he rubs his eyes he starts to talk as he walks further inside. "Mom, I'm sorry I wasn't here last week or



yesterday. And sorry I haven't called. I have" His voice trails off as he discovers Claire's body. The man's eyes open wide. "Mom . . ." he says.

There are now forty-seven flies hovering around Claire's body. 🦟

Waulking the Tweed

Tobi Alfier

I remember when it was our mum's turn—
she bustled with energy as she waited

for the other farm ladies
to assemble after breakfast,

her apron clean, not a crease,
food and drink on the side for later,

for pauses in the back-breaking day.
A bit of Hearach as the end neared.

Faces shone with sweat,
eyes sparkled with exhilaration

as if the statues in church spoke
and spoke only to them.

Voices hoarse from the songs passed down
and down, one day passed to me,

now only for demonstration—
everything's mechanized these days.

No finger crook, no clapping song,
no rolling the tweed tight, pulling it soft

no catching up on croft-news, town news
family news, happy, aching as sore arms—

fingers and songs marked the setting sun,
another day was done.



Etta Mae was Late to Church

Tobi Alfier

but they saved her usual seat,
third row from the back,
right-hand side, so she could
smile her twinkly, gap-toothed
smile at Mr. Hobbs, the usher.

She had lots to do this morning.
That clock just ran and ran
right away from her. Etta Mae
searched for the distilled water she
kept in an old vinegar bottle,

to iron the hankie square fluttering
out of her pocket with the butterfly
embroidered by the kind mother
of Mr. Hobbs, given to her just last year
for her birthday. *Lord Jesus rest her soul*

hummed Etta Mae, dressed like spring
in lavender trousers, pale green jacket,
straw hat, pearl earrings, and a flowered
cover for her Bible instead of the usual
somber black. Mr. Hobbs

also wearing green—that set up a chorus
of whispers and eyebrows from here
to the parking. Still no one dared
do anything but hug Etta Mae
when she finally settled herself down,

Queen bee with a rosepetal voice,
age spots hidden by ancient gloves,
faint scent of vinegar and Chanel No. 5
floating softly about her shoulders,
pocket butterfly ironed, ready to take flight.

Walking the Frontage Road Past Reed Point, Montana

Jeffrey C. Alfier

Late afternoon wind drones through decaying slats of Occident Flour mill, around storefronts and doors of shuttered businesses.

Discontented with stillness, gusts suddenly kick deadfall leaves into autumn air so many hope the year's late crops won't freeze in.

Where the town spreads its grid, some have lived half a century in the same rooms. They swear weather is the only news worth their time.

In a trailer on Division Street, a discharged soldier lies awake, listening hard to the war she just left, dope a minefield in her veins.

On this endless blacktop, your mind has too much time to kill. Recalling how slowly worlds rust, you strain at some faraway thing your last lover said.

Gathering again, wind insists on an audience—shaking the fractured windshield and rusted hinges of an ancient Ford parked beside the mill.

A Burlington Northern follows the rails into vanishing. Unhurried, it melds to a geography of departure, like someone breathing late in the dark.



Basic Form

Valerie Westmark

Once, I tried to write
a poem, or something
of the sort: word string, heart
string, or line, or cracked
syllables, really.

And I saw what came:
vulnerability to steeled bones,
a sheer break of fabric, a beginning
of tapestry, those rows of story;
history, lined out in breath,
in basic form: an attempt at hope.

Fog Angels

Ciara Shuttleworth

Fog sways up the avenues
like everything lost
ghosting back in dreams. Wisps,
then the edges of houses and streetlamps smoking, seducing.
We are all angelic in the dim smolder. Wings
clipped and limbs that lean, tilt
in memory of flight. Neon
and brick warmed to softness,
city blocks that seem one big feather bed
we can't help but fall into. Tattered-
featured creatures, sinewy from endless
hills: even we yield our rough edges
to the romance of the caress. How can we
resist what we've become?



Flawed Apertures

Ciara Shuttleworth

All the rooms look empty from here. High ceilings
of lit rooms all the way up—the glowing yellow squares
that mean dinner, TV, someone home
even if I can't see them. But down here I see
so many faces that few register correctly. A block goes by
and the grotesque gaping mouth at a dinner table
was not a burning man but laughter.
A woman uses her drink napkin to dab tears
from both eyes before setting it back down,
and then her drink. I can see a stream
of taxis and I wonder if once I'm gone
I'll equate so much noise with the color yellow.
I wonder if the rooms look empty from up there, too,
or if this woman's does
or if I walk by the bar window again
I'll see her smile at the burning man approaching
and realize she was only fixing
her makeup and her windows are dark
because she hasn't been home yet
or doesn't intend to go home
tonight. She loves his terrible laugh
because it makes her feel flushed.
We get so close
before passing we could be lovers, any two of us
on the street tonight
heading to or from dark windows
that hold so much we look instead to the empty squares
of brightness, moths all of us, ceiling-drawn,
fluttering our wings against each other for warmth.

Guests

Christopher Moylan

The first one we noticed came out of our front yard. The grass rippled and pushed up from the roots, as if the lawn had developed a nervous system overnight and suddenly needed to dance. Then the roots tore and the ground split in a seam revealing a pale, globular shape matted with dirt. Then a nose. The eyes opened. The seam kept growing and other little eruptions of dirt and grass opened to fingers, arms and legs. . . .

Remember the potatoes, I told myself, as if what was sitting up a few feet away from me would turn into a tuber if I just concentrated on the task at hand. The man, and it was a man, sat there rubbing his eyes and taking big swallows of air as if he were thirsty for oxygen. He bent his legs and scooped his bare bottom forward to free his lower half from the ground.

Maybe this is a practical joke, I thought. Some of the young guys around here got together and decided to scare the new couple, that being my wife and I. We moved out from Queens to this little coastal town on the Island a few years previous and the longtime residents, which was just about everybody, still thought of us as new. Or maybe he was a terrorist, or an alien. A naked, rather good looking terrorist-alien in his late twenties.

He finished pushing the dirt away from his legs and walked over to the fenced-in vegetable garden where I sitting. I didn't know what to say. He stepped over the chicken wire and stood beside me. He took the spade propped against the wall behind me and turned over a pile of black dirt. We finished digging the potatoes, working side by side without speaking. Then I took him inside to get some clothes and a bite to eat.

Others came walking down the main road through the course of the afternoon. They were the same age as him, naked but for the dirt that covered them from head to toe. They meandered from one side of the road to another, studying the houses and the kids' toys in the yards. A car skidded to a stop and one of the People imitated the screeching sound. The others took up the sound and it circulated among them like a birdsong while they padded through the sprinklers to wash the dirt off their bodies. The police showed up, lights flashing but no sirens, a half dozen squad cars. It didn't take much to get the People bundled in the back of the cars. A couple dangled out the back windows on either side, rag dolls trailing their fingers along the asphalt.

Over the next week a good many made their appearance the same way mine did. They pushed through lawns, spitting grass from their mouths and wiping the dirt from their naked flanks. Then they got up and found something useful to do. You'd hear the screaming and doors slamming and know it was a neighbor coming upon one of them, or more than one. It might have helped if word of what was going on spread more quickly, if people could have been prepared. But what could anyone say? You just had to go through



it yourself, then accept it or lose your mind not accepting it.

Drive through the suburbs and you'd see them standing on street corners, beautiful People with nothing to do and nowhere to go. Sometimes a bunch of them would walk into a theater during the middle of a movie and stand in the aisle until ushers and people in the audience draped their shoulders with coats and walked them out to the lobby to wait for processing. They showed up in cornfields, playgrounds, beaches and forests. Those who were alone might get taken in by whoever happened upon them, as I did. Usually, they appeared in groups, and they weren't so lucky.

The first few to be rounded up were identified as victims of amnesia or post-traumatic stress disorder. They were hospitalized, tested and tested, and eventually sent to holding facilities in trailer parks and municipal buildings. But they kept showing up. Amnesia didn't make sense; what happened to their clothes? and why were there so many? Some said it was a virus, but a virus doesn't plant people in the ground. They had to be some kind of alien planted in the ground for the right moment to emerge. But they were human aliens, and perfectly nice people. It was hard not to like them.

A lot of them were taken in by families, the way we did, particularly when the word got out that they were friendly and good around the house. You'd spot one in backyard or a park or a beach somewhere, and just take him or her home.

The People, as they came to be known as, didn't speak any known language, rather a kind of melodious babble that came out every now and then without any apparent reason. You'd find one of them in front of a tree, or a cat, or just looking up at the sky, and running the scale with an earnest blabbety bloop. I developed a craving for it, the way you do for the sound of wind in the leaves or birdsong. Sometimes I would feel down and our Friend would start with that scat and my head would go bright and warm as a patch of light on a wall.

And that's the way it was with them. They were really out of it in a lot of ways; toilets, showers, knives and forks, hangers and bed sheets were foreign to them. Pronouns like mine, yours, hers didn't mean a thing to them. But they learned very quickly and were extremely helpful when given a chance. They loved to garden, take care of kids and pets, cook (after a few lessons about stoves and the like), make their music, and keep one company during a jog or a walk. You couldn't tire out one of the People. They would run all day if you wanted.

If you took one in, it wouldn't be long before everyone in the neighborhood went along with the arrangement and he or she would be wandering from house to house, bed to bed, without a problem. The People had a way about them. You wanted to keep them safe, and make them happy. For every kindness there was a return. For one thing, the People were great ones for planting wheat; the damage caused to open spaces in and around cities was painted over with lush fields of grain.

This was in the early stages, when there were no rules for the care and keeping of the People. The government had no system in place, or governments I should say. . . . They appeared everywhere—east coast, west coast, midwest, Europe, and Asia— but at that point in small numbers. If the police didn't find them first you could keep them. Some worried about the possibility of abuse, but the People could take care of themselves. If you put your hand in a place one didn't want, it got moved, firm and friendly, and that

was that. Raise your voice or speak in a tone one didn't like, and you got a dose of such melancholy singing that you'd curl up in a ball and weep.

Some complained about the way the People shed their clothes at any opportunity. It's true that they had no more concept of modesty or decorum than they did of the infield fly rule. Clothes did not make the same kind of sense to them that they do to us. Or maybe we didn't make sense. . . . How do you explain that a towel is not a shirt, or that your wife's bra is not an ear muff? None of the pertinent concepts had any meaning for them. We got used to it. Jan kind of liked the panty mittens and bra ear muffs. And his way with color was something else. We'd come down in the morning and his skin would be dappled with lipstick and mascara. It was like we were living inside a Fauvist painting.

After a while Jan and I lost all sense of privacy around him. We would take a shower, or make love, and he would be there sitting beside us, keeping us company. Sometimes, I think he wanted to make sure that we were safe, that we got through it okay.

One day Jan pulled me aside, out of sight of our guest, saying she had to talk to me. We huddled in the basement like two kids up to no good. She certainly looked the part; she had a guilty expression and she seemed upset.

"We need to talk about our Guest," she whispered.

"Sure, but do we have to talk here? What's wrong?"

"He makes me uncomfortable."

"The People make everyone uncomfortable," I answered. "But there's nothing to be afraid of. You can see how gentle they are."

"Not scared uncomfortable, another kind of uncomfortable." She swept aside a cobweb and began cleaning the shelves above the workbench.

"I don't know what you mean. What kind of uncomfortable? Has he done something to you?"

"It isn't what he has done, it's me. It's what I would like to do . . ." she said, looking me straight in the eye as if to dare me to look away. "I don't know what's happening to me. I can't stop thinking about him. I look at him sometimes and I want to throw my arms around him. Afterwards, I get angry at myself, it's like I've turned into a teenage girl around him. But it keeps happening."

"So, he's beautiful. I can see that. The women are beautiful. You'd have to be numb not to respond to the People. They're blessed. Enjoy it. They may not be around that long."

"But that's another thing. You're so accepting of them. You could be jealous or uneasy, but never, not a hint."

"I love you," I said, realizing for the first time how my life had changed. "And in a different way I love them. It's all beautiful. Anyway, you can't be unfaithful with angels; they wouldn't know what to do with our kind of desire, not that you would really be tempted. . . . Let's go upstairs before he starts looking for us."

It wasn't like he was hovering around us. In fact, most of the time he sat off by himself, keeping very still, trying to tune into some frequency, his head turned slightly to the side. Sometimes, I would sit beside him and wait with my head turned that way. I didn't know what I was doing.

He wasn't ours alone for very long. The People kept coming, and in ever greater



numbers. They raised themselves out of canals and sewer systems and staggered out of swamps, landfills, and trash dumps. Still others walked out of city ponds and creeks so foul that these new arrivals had to be washed down with fire hoses before they could be sent to a shelter.

Public opinion began to turn. It was rumored that the People carried diseases caught from ticks, mosquitoes, and foul ditch water. They were said to be aliens or robots, part of a grand design to take control of the world. There was increasing pressure for more aggressive clinical study of their physiology and origins. Folks like Jan and I who took them in came under suspicion. Bills were introduced around the country to round up the People and detain them, supposedly for their safety. Those who had taken in the People reacted as if the government were coming to seize their children.

The truth is, everyone knew it was the Resurrection. But it wasn't the resurrection they wanted or expected. Nobody recognized any of the bodies that came back. It's not as if you got to be reunited with your grandparents or someone you lost to cancer or an automobile accident. They spoke a language no one understood, and acted in ways that didn't make sense. It was like entertaining houseguests from the moon.

Bodies began to wash up on beaches around the world, the People having floated out of shipwrecks only to drown a second time swimming to the surface. . . . Long caravans of the dead followed the Amazon into the jungle and died again before anyone could reach them. Untold numbers wandered in wild places where cities once stood and died for lack of food and water. Cemeteries were reduced to muck and broken stone by men and women pushing out of the soil, others pounding on lead-lined coffins with anything at hand: pieces of gravestone, iron pickets from fences, and fallen branches. It was pointless. The coffins were sealed or they had been pulled down so far by underground erosion that they could not be retrieved before the dead within them had died again.

People swam up through the muck trying to reach farmland long paved with asphalt and buried under apartment buildings and tract housing. One could feel the pounding deep under the earth day and night, a constant low level earthquake. Country churchyards, old battlefields, and sites of forgotten skirmishes and atrocities crumbled into the pits that gradually opened in the ground allowing lines of patient, beautiful People to wander through the country side looking for a place to stop.

It was one huge mess, with the ground torn up everywhere and naked people coming through the windows and doors, a whole group of them surrounding you at the dinner table, tits at eye level like muddy puppies wanting to be rescued. Then the group would wander off and others appear in the yard, so much beauty and sadness passing through one's life it was unbearable.

The whole world was a graveyard at one point or another, it seems, or a mass grave or battle site and these places were full of People wanting to come out of the earth and chatter in their musical language, putter about the gardens and make themselves useful in whatever house would take them in. As for who these people were, specifically, the theory was that the resurrections came in chronological order, from prehistory working gradually forward. Thus the primitive communication, the unfamiliarity with even the most basic technology among the People. No recent dead returned but it was only a matter of time.

But the folks who might have taken them in were gone. Neighborhoods emptied out, shops were abandoned and looted. Thousands huddled in big cathedrals like St. Patrick's or St. John the Divine in Manhattan to await the return of the Messiah. Hundreds of thousands gathered in Times Square to present gifts for Him when he came: teddy bears, flowers, boxes of candy. . . . The same scene occurred around the world. Even in China, where there is no traditional concept of the end of the world, the population stopped to wait out whatever was to come.

Through all of this, I grieved for People unable to make it to the light of day, and suffered with those trapped in coffins underground or shipwrecks deep in the ocean. Jan, kindhearted and loving as she was, listened to my concerns and did her best to assure me and bring me back to everyday concerns: finding supplies in increasingly chaotic conditions, waiting in line for gas, maintaining the house and most important being a husband. . . .

I admit none of those things seemed important. The old world was ending. The People were here and they were so beautiful and good. What did it matter if businesses were shuttered, power plants abandoned? I wanted nothing but to be with the People, taking in their sweetness and simplicity. Clearly they were God's creatures and my fervent hope was to remain among them, perhaps to become as they were.

The People dug in the garden and fed the dogs and cats that were left to wander the streets after their owners fled. The earth was quiet, finally. All of those who could come to the light had done so. It was September. The mornings muggy and bright and the afternoons soaked with tropical rain.

Jan and I helped with the gardening and in the evening we watched the endless news reports on the few stations that were still broadcasting. It was much the same every day: false sightings of the Messiah, looting, acts of vandalism and arson, and gruesome attacks on the People. Within a few hours all the People who had died would be back again, walking down the middle of the street, starting again. Some were killed over and over, sent back into the ground like unwanted bills only to come back again. . . .

Jan was wearing down. She lost weight she didn't have to lose, found it difficult to sleep. Everyone was worn down to some degree by stress but when you get up in years the resiliency starts to fade. It's harder to cope, harder to fight.

"Let's go away," she said one day. "Get in the car and drive as far away from all this as possible. Hide in the woods in Vermont. . . ."

"There is no away," I answered. "No escape. Nothing to escape from. The world is being reborn. How could you bear to miss a minute of this? It's so wonderful."

"The world is falling apart! There's chaos everywhere you look. You call these creatures angels and the blessed, but we don't know anything about them. We don't even know if they're human."

"I won't stop you. But I'm staying here with the People."

She stayed. The harvest came, and then the gathering. It was late September, and still blindingly hot. The vegetables came in fat and sweet and in such abundance it took days to pick them. The wheat was cut with scissors, kitchen knives, golf clubs and weed whackers, People wandering from yard to yard with tools dangling from dog leashes and



panty hose around their loins.

One morning, Jan and I woke to find the People walking down the street. The houses were abandoned behind them, doors left open, tools dropped in the middle of the yards. We joined the main column marching towards New York City, an endless line stretching east and west as far as we could see. There was no stopping, the People not requiring any rest; when Jan or I tired we were swept up like sacks of potatoes onto the shoulders of one Friend or another and carried until we insisted on walking again.

Along the way other ordinary people joined the column and by the time we reached the 59th Street bridge there were at least as many of us as there were of them, and the us-them distinction had broken down. Civilians shed their clothes, or wore them in improvised ways, and the Friends beside them walked in suit pants or dress shirts, with nothing else, or lots of jewelry or shreds of police uniforms.

Columns came from every direction, over each of the river bridges, millions converging on the millions gathered in Times Square and beyond. It took three days for all the marchers to arrive and another day for them to form a circle surrounding the mass of civilians. Finally, there was a silence, and a period of waiting and watching. Then People came forward with bales of wheat that they placed in the midst of the faithful, and boxes of grapes. These were deposited in two piles several stories high, one of wheat, the other of grapes. The People waited a while to see what we would do with these two mountains, their expressions bright with expectation and pleasure, as if to say "this is it, the answer." But there isn't much one can do with bales of wheat or with cases of soggy, crushed grapes, except to distribute them, a little bit of each, to everyone assembled.

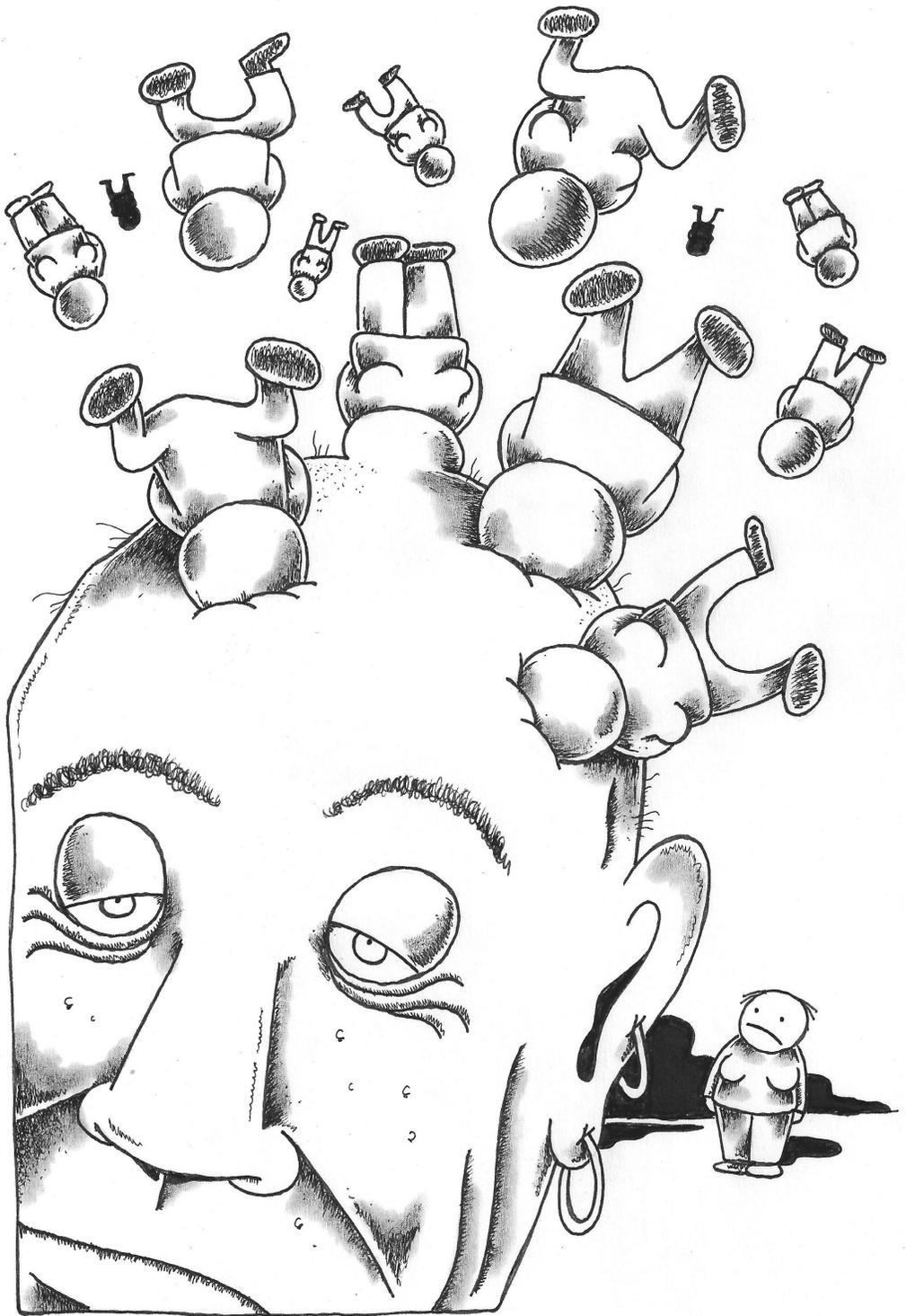
When all the grapes and shafts of wheat were distributed, the People looked at us with utter sadness and disbelief. Then they walked away. Those in New York walked north, up to the vast uninhabited tracts of the Canadian wilderness, taking the clear skies with them, and the sun. Around the world, the People dispersed like great clouds of rain into jungles and forests.

So there was a choice: to go after them or to go back to our old lives. Most went back home. They were tired of the Resurrection. As for the apocalypse, they never believed in it anyway.

Jan decided to go back, to sit in the dark and the stifling heat, waiting for the lights to come back on. But I couldn't let her do that to herself. One little step and she would return to that beautiful young woman I courted so many years ago, and even more beautiful. I couldn't let her stubbornness and suspicion deprive her of that.

She didn't even feel the bullet. I'm sure of that. I came up behind her in the middle of the night, while she was reading.

It's been three days. I've kept watch over her where she fell, but she hasn't come back to me. I can't wait any longer, can't watch her deteriorate like this. But there is a simple solution. One more bullet and everything will be transfigured. Beautiful. One more shot, this to my temple. When we wake you'll thank me, honey. We'll join the People then and they will make us so happy. You'll see. 🍷



Tea with a Friend and Her Husband

A.C. Warner

Smiling, with the movements her grandmother made,
she pours the tea, remembers the sugar,
pursing her lips in lovely disgust
at the idea of lemon—
though a need of tangy constriction
breaks like a sob elocution's
regular ripple.

How could I tell, unless I knew,
as the wide spread tongs sink viciously
into the sugar, like your knees in the sand,

that before you took your mass produced cups
with grandma's meaningless pattern,
and set them straight—inverted breasts—
on the tight starched cloth that suits your blouse,

you were a glass blower.

You made great green balloons
that shattered air;
you made white lilies
that were good for nothing
but to take the sun down their swelling
throats.

Where is the sunlight
you caught in orange, and gave to children
a harmless fire—lumpy, disfigured, no two alike.

Can't you admit once you want the lemon I squeezed
with my hands, with the soft shrieks of joy from the fruit—?
If the impossible happened, and I forced open
your mouth to find you huddled and crying,

could we still blow a huge double bubble
so our laughing eyes could melt somewhere between these
glowing glass breasts,

torn from the hands of your horrified husband,
who thought you made them for him?

You wouldn't, though—because when the bubble burst
and you gave them back, he wouldn't let you crawl back under
your shared warm blanket like a tired child.

So we will sit here like guinea pigs,
and you will taste
your tea
with the unwilling winks of your mouth,
the way lab animals purse their tearing eyes,
as the patient male tests out
synthetics safe
to bronze the skin to cooked perfection,
under uniform lights.



For Angelique

A.C. Warner

My father named me for a Vietnamese woman.
All I have is her picture and her name and her death
and a little yellow carven flower of jade
that I wear
as a chain
around my neck.
She is wearing the same flower
in her picture.

She knew they would flush the tiger trap prisons
in Phu Quoc
with napalm
They only kept the tallies of the dead
They could say they killed in war

Before she was shut up inside the earth
she looked at the hairy American fingers
drumming in the place of gods
she remembered kings who were poets
and lovers
who were dead inside the sandstone ruins of Oc Eo
behind the faces of the gods
time wore away.
But she saw those faces
when she looked at the sky
through the bars of the tiger trap prison.

She made a choice between the blood red cloth
around a traitor's neck,
a reformed Viet Cong,
who found error of her ways when they were sized
against impossible American steel
and a death in the mud
in a little square dug in the ground

her own small jail
with bars that kept her below the level
of their feet.
Inside the glass display case of history
The Viet Cong who would not go Kit Carson
were guilty of planning to use their deaths
as the poison that followed American heroes
home as the stuff of martyrs:
The bloody shirt woven of the stories
that whispered guilt
burns still living drunks that stumble
through the rubble of the half way houses
they live in between countries.

But inside history I scream
with a woman
with my name
Choked with the mud during the rains
anonymous but for the name
the man who sentenced her to death
gave his daughter.

Inside the prison compound at Phu Quoc
was a courtyard with four walls of glass
and birds would break their necks
when they flew to what they believed was
the rising sun
inside the walls made opaque by the sun
it was the sun they flew to
beating wings and eyes seeking the sky
between four burning walls.

My god. Help me. There are only animals
in here
with me
and a dead woman
who will never hear me
call her name.
Angelique.



Sitting Skinny

Taylor Lauren Ross

Liza used to be fat.

“Not from my side of the family,” says her mother. Her mother is the size of a needle. “Your father’s mother. She was meaty.”

So Liza did the diets and ran the miles and suffered fat camp. These days her skin hangs off her and stretch marks straddle what’s left of her breasts, which pool in the cups of her bras. She no longer even has a period.

Liza relies on Adderall and an almost-nothing diet. As she enters the cafeteria, she forces herself to look away from the raw foods counter and the wheatgrass bar, and she ignores the rows of bulbous POM Wonderful bottles standing like stalwart antioxidant soldiers.

Walking forward without looking, Liza crashes into Mirabelle.

Their bodies recoil, spindly legs stumbling backward on stilettos. “I— Sorry!” Liza says.

At Sherbournne Academy, the prominent high school that stands just two steps into Hollywood and two hills down from the sign itself, Mirabelle reigns queen. She already has a spread in *Elle* and is even in the society pages of *W* with her mother. She is going to France when they graduate in June because, as everyone knows, fashion is faster in France.

Mirabelle’s eyes sweep over Liza’s wasting form. “The Adderall is working for you,” Mirabelle says. “But don’t think that will be enough.”

Liza runs to the bathroom. The faint, acidic odor of Clorox clings to the stalls just under the stale stench of vomit. An empty box labeled “Enema Laxative Twin Pack” hides beneath soggy paper towels in the trashcan.

Liza considers cocaine. It shrinks you like Adderall but she has heard it numbs you, too.

The cold of the toilet seat seeps through her jeans while her tears drip onto her thighs. Liza licks her lips for the salt and pretends it is potato chips.

Once in seventh grade at Anderson Prep, the feeder school for Sherbournne, Liza discovered Mirabelle crying in the locker room.

“Are you okay?” Liza asked.

Mirabelle sat hunched with a slender arm wrapped around her toothpick body. “It’s—my stomach.”

Several patches of downy hairs grew around Mirabelle’s belly button. Her stomach looked like a baby animal. Liza tried not to shudder. “I was under my weight goal by two-point-three ounces,” Mirabelle said. “But this— what am I supposed to do about this?”

Mirabelle yanked a shirt on and dropped her face into her hands. Later Liza

would learn that when you deny your body fat, it tries to keep warm by growing hair— everywhere.

“Don’t cry, Mirabelle. I brought cupcakes for my birthday—they’re supposed to be for later but you can have one now,” Liza said. She crept forward, offering the tray of cupcakes.

Mirabelle’s wide eyes stared at the desserts as if they might eat her rather than the other way around. “Get those away from me! Are you trying to ruin my life? I don’t want to be fat like you!” She scuttled for the exit.

Liza dumped the cupcakes in the trash.

As she entered the history classroom, Liza saw Mirabelle gesturing to a group of girls.

“She brought cupcakes!”

A chorus of “ew, gross!” and “disgusting!” erupted.

“God, what a fatty.”

“What a piggie!”

The girls pressed the tips of their noses up with their fingers and made pig noises between their giggles. Oinking and snorting followed Liza to the seat she took in the corner by Jimmy Melon, who was outcast because he said his father was in television but everyone found out his dad wrote for PBS. He didn’t even make it to Sherbournne.

On Thursday, a fat girl comes to school. She is the transfer from the Palisades whose father’s “Real Househusbands” franchise threatens to overrun reality TV. She is not fat like “Biggest Loser” status. She is size-4 fat.

No one bothers with her name.

But this is Liza’s chance to climb. Sherbournne Academy is a slick ladder, where students slip down the rungs with each added pound or parent’s flopped film. An ad booking or a stand-up gig or Alessandra Ambrosio at your birthday party notches you up. Or sometimes, you can snag a boost by standing on someone just a rung below you.

“Hi, I’m Liza.”

“Hi, I’m Bridget.”

Bridget is not a model name. No one famous has that name, except Bridget Jones, who was fat, and the bunny who used to be on “Girls Next Door.” Hugh doesn’t like her anymore and anyway, *Playboy* is the slut slush pile of modeling.

“You’re new here, right, Bridget? You wanna come over after school and I’ll dish the DL?”

When Bridget comes over Liza gives her what’s left of her bras, because Liza doesn’t need them anymore, and this is how they become new best friends.

Soon they are swapping homework answers and comparing notes on the Sherbournne football players, and Bridget brings over the latest *Cosmo*, which Liza admits is a nice change from *Vogue*.

It is all part of her plan until Liza forgets about climbing the ladder. She enjoys the sound of Bridget thudding up the stairs and the sight of her massive sweaters on the window seat. Sometimes they joke that Mirabelle will go to France and get hit by a car and all they’ll find will be a sack of bones and stringy blonde hair.



One day after school, Bridget convinces Liza to go with her to See's on the way home. Later, in her closet between folds of vintage suit jackets, Liza has the first taste of chocolate she has had in over a year. She savors the thin film of sugar over her tongue and goes to bed without brushing her teeth.

It's not like Bridget is a careless eater, but she doesn't even count calories. She eats salads with cranberries and candied walnuts and when she pushes a few onto Liza's plate and Liza stares at them like the devil they are, Bridget says, "Oh god, Liz, they won't kill you." While Liza devours a single apple for lunch, the little seeds left clustered in her hand (she learned quickly how to eat all of an apple save its seeds), Bridget consumes whole sandwiches without even taking off the bread. When Mirabelle stares, Bridget says, "Forget her," and takes a whopping bite. So Liza begins eating apples with string cheese, and soon she keeps a half-pound box of See's truffles stashed at the back of the top drawer of the desk in her room.

On the last day of school before spring break, Liza and Bridget celebrate the end of finals with a Snickers. The crumpled wrapper glints between their bottles of POM, which is Wonderful when sipped with chocolate. Liza holds her half between thumb and forefingers, the chocolate melting under her warm skin. She is back up to a size two now. When Mirabelle slinks by with her posse and their triple-zero waists, she notices.

"My, my, Liza. Given up the Adderall?" Mirabelle says with a clicking of the tongue. She lands a brief, piercing glance over Bridget, the first attention the queen has paid her since she arrived two months ago. "Looks like your poor friend here needs a double dose."

Bridget swallows, the lower rims of her eyes welling as Mirabelle clacks away. She wipes her chocolate-smears fingers on a napkin. The napkin and her remaining Snickers go into the trash with her full POM bottle clunking to the bottom.

The first day of school after break, Bridget enters school during lunch. A hush creeps from the cafeteria entrance until the buzzing is silenced like a hive dipped in water.

Liza looks up. Bridget is sauntering over in skinny jeans and tall shoes with very slim heels. Her silk shirt grazes mosquito-bite tits and highlights her bronzed skin. She is half her size.

"Bridget," Liza says. "You look... great."

"Oh, it's Bri now. Pronounced like the cheese. Did this fabulous detox in Florida."

Humming surges across the room as Sherbournnites launch into gossip. With an elbow Liza nudges her incriminating empty chocolate milk carton to the floor.

Liza lurches into the table in surprise when Mirabelle materializes at her shoulder.

"Hi," Mirabelle says to Bridget-now-Bri, "Why don't you come sit with us?"

Bri stands. Liza has envisioned herself in Bri's place in this moment since Anderson Prep. Bri looks back at Liza, but Mirabelle says, "Oh, don't worry about her. She'll never be one of us. She can't stay thin even when she tries."

The queen wraps her emaciated fingers around Bridget's bony arm. Liza stares

after them and their jutted hips, their high ponytails swinging in unison as they walk off to join a table of girls sitting skinny on the edges of their seats.

The next day, Liza brings an oozing cherry pie to school. At lunch she walks right over to Mirabelle's table and before anyone can even turn around, Liza drops that fat pie smack in the center of the empty table.

Red juice gushes over the pie tin and creeps toward the girls as they shriek and fall out of their chairs. Their fingernails run bright red marks over each other as they scramble to get away from the pie.

When the seats are empty Liza sits down, takes a fork from her purse, and scoops a huge bite. As Mirabelle scrambles away, Liza catches Bridget's eye. A smile tugs at her lips and stretches the gaunt skin at her cheekbones. Bridget lifts a slender hand and licks a sweet, sticky glob of pie filling dripping from her fingers. 🍪



The Relaxed Dive

Daryl Nielsen

inner-city slum, the relaxed dive
consciencs hibernate there
the fumes of cigarettes, booze and meth,
dried sweat-stink, grease-stained blankets
homeless misfits with measured oblivions
their hunger abiding in all dimensions
punctuated only by upheaval and
sometimes, you know, I miss it

Saturn

Jason Kerzinski

She looms in the shadows on a third floor balcony on Orleans and Royal. The city has come to a standstill. Unheard of for a Friday night in the French Quarter. She smokes a cigarette. An orange glow makes its way through the shadows. I stare up at the balcony. She thinks she's camouflaged by the shadows. I look away. I feel like I'm intruding on her privacy. Her hips begin to swivel. She pops and locks on the balcony. Her pops, majestic. Her locks as graceful as a willow tree's branches blowing in the wind. I cup my ear, but no music is heard. The night has caused her body to erupt into a state of grandeur. I can't seem to look away. I'm engulfed in her night. She takes another drag from her cigarette. I should turn away. I feel like I'm intruding on her space. She passes the cigarette from her right hand to her left. The tip of her cigarette has turned bright orange like the color of Saturn. She stretches her torso. Her arms dangle off the balcony. She flicks her cigarette from the balcony. Saturn cascades to the pavement like confetti. She steps from the shadows back into her apartment. The Quarter noise resumes. Car horns, a tour guide rambles on to tourists not at all interested in his ramblings, and a man blowing his trumpet looks up to the third floor shadows trying to lure her back to the balcony with his dynamic sound. Our eyes meet out of our peripheries. He too has been engulfed in her night.



cryptic phone call

Vincent A. Cellucci and Dylan Krieger

something crackly
maybe death rattle—
was that my lover's
fat-lip lisp?
this hostage sitch
is getting hairy
a cig that burns both
flick & viewer
sure the villain's
looking sinister in his
repurposed sewer system
but what's he
done that heroes
wouldn't do once shoved?
shot for shot
starlet for starlet
lost to this even-
handed firefight bigger than
any love sung out
or whispered over wires
i want to hear
its muffled whine
desperate cries
of a diff time
if not still alive
then dying for what we
make-
believe

briefcase full o' \$\$\$

Vincent A. Cellucci and Dylan Krieger

my samsonite's weighed down tonight
by ten thousand presidents repeating themselves:

. . . the war on drugs is far from over
but what about my own private fight

against poverty? all money is drug money
when you get a jonesing for a firing line

or a cryptic phone call from your kidnapped lover
crying, *i'd rather die than find out*

what happens next if we don't live to have
more sex— after all, the audience needs

at least one more kiss where we're covered
in bloodstains & surly conviction, rending

our robes for a dead god's benediction:
well done, little daredevils, and for your efforts

snag the scratch *and make like rain*



firing gun at nothing while screaming

Vincent A. Cellucci and Dylan Krieger

scene of powerless catharsis

let rage reign supreme

poor wall trees whatever else happens to be standing in midnight
wilderness

sometimes when held and rapid-released upright

i envision the volley of ammunition aimed straight at god

who caught some nails and a spear

but never a bullet

dodging heaven

reached by enforcing

our creative vision

but at this moment

devotion be damned

futile power is in my hands

Exact Change

Nathan Leslie

The guy with the hat that says “head.” He wears clothes to remind him of which part of the body it is supposed to cover? His interior is a dusty mess. The upholstery is grimy, smeared. The dashboard is sticky with dust and residue. Even the change he hands me is covered in layers of grime, as if a volcano erupted inside his car. He waits. I count it. He nods. No words. I swear, filth seems to chuff off in the wind as he drives off.

Is it my imagination or does he cross himself?

I’m booothing again today. July.

The lady driving the chicken truck hands me a dollar bill.

“It’s exact change only,” I tell her.

“Cripes, I’m sorry, amigo.”

“Tell me a story, and I’ll let you pass.”

She pauses, looks in the rearview. Slight smile.

“I picked up a hitchhiker once who swore Otis Redding was still alive. You know who he is, right? Otis, I mean.”

I don’t, but nod anyway. I like the name Otis though. Canine.

“This guy said he met Otis Redding outside of a dumpster, picking old apples from a garbage bag.” “Is your name Otis?” the guy asked. ‘I’m just sittin’ here restin’ my bones,’ he said, and wandered off into the dusky sky. The hitchhiker later stole my pocket book, though it only had thirty bucks and no credit cards. So I’m not sure I believed him. Took me forever to straighten out the license.”

I let her through. Nice story, even if it was just a story. She winked.

I hate when people don’t even say “hi” or “thank you.” One or the other is all I ask for. How much time or energy does it take to utter one or two syllables? Make somebody’s day a touch nicer. This one lady does the I’m-not-going-to-acknowledge-you thing. I don’t let her though. Say she owes another quarter. She argues but ultimately gives in. That’s right, you acknowledge me now, don’t you? If she was nice, I’d be nice. It would be nice.

It’s a hot and humid day, but moderately hot, moderately humid. I’ve done much worse. There are days it’s so muggy I sweat continually. The world seems made of sweat on those days.

Even on a moderately hot and humid day the drivers will say, “Stay cool!” I nod.

Stay cool. Easy to say when you’ve got A/C and I don’t. They mean well though. They’re thinking of me, if only for a moment.



There are days I wish I was *wearing* an air conditioner.

It's not a bad job and it pays better than you think. Benefits are solid, actually. It opens my eyes, seeing all kinds. I've seen ladies giving birth, people fucking in the back, a guy holding his arm in a tourniquet rushing to the hospital. Drugs, everything. God knows how many psychopaths I've encountered. I've been held up at gunpoint (twice). It makes the job more interesting, I guess. I have my own stories.

The pavement is beginning to shimmer when the old man pulls up. His hands are shaking. He's really old. He hands me a sack of quarters and says it's a down payment.

"For what?" I say.

"I'm paying for the rest of my life. I figure I'll be back through twenty more times max. This should cover me."

"Sure, but," I say. "We have no way to keep track of you. How are we supposed to know it's you?"

"Well, you see my car, dontcha'?"

"What if I'm not here? There are a bunch of other lanes, see. What if someone else is in the booth?"

"You make a good point. But I always go through lane six. Can't you just put a note up?"

"What if you change cars or something?"

Cars behind him are honking.

"You should get an Eazy-Pass, sir. That's what you should do."

I hand back the sack of quarters and wave him through.

"Wait, don't I owe you money?"

"Forget it," I say. "This one's on me."

Twenty more times is optimistic, I think. He must be over ninety.

I get a lot of guys in white vans. They're a regular staple. One van pulls in, hands me the change. Four guys in back. The drivers peek into my booth, says they could fix it up for me, make it real nice. They must be procrastinating.

"I don't own the booth, you know."

"I know, but still."

"Well, what would you do?"

"Ceramic tile, maybe put a few nice light fixtures up. Stylish, you know."

I'm laughing to myself. As if I make these sorts of decisions.

"I'll get back to you," I say.

"What is your relationship with God?" the lady says. She has one of those perfect moral smiles, as if she has been personally blessed by Jesus himself yesterday morning. She looks so innocent it makes you feel guilty just looking at her.

"It's damn good," I say. Then I think about that. "Well, good enough. I can say 'damn' and he doesn't strike me down."

"Have you been saved?"

“I don’t know,” I say. “That’s a technical question, isn’t it?”

“Not particularly. It’s a question of your status with the Lord.”

“I’m comfortable where I am,” I say. This type of conversation doesn’t interest me. All speculation and theory. Nothing I can sink my teeth into.

“But you didn’t answer my question.”

“Thank you and have a nice day,” I say. “Move along please.”

“There is such a thing as an interventionist God, you know.”

Her angelic face becomes a bit less than angelic. Everyone must suffer a fall at some point.

I drink half a bottle of lukewarm water. What I wouldn’t give for a beer. Even a shitty wine cooler. Something. I fantasize about posting a sticky note which offers customers five dollars for a cold one. And it’s gotta be cold.

I’d find myself jobless if I did, however. Then a guy pulls through with a case of beer in his backseat. It takes all of my willpower not to ask him for one. I mean, fuck.

A guy pulls in and hands me his four quarters.

“Hey, is there a bathroom here, or anything?” Big fat guy with like four chins and flab under each arm. He’s gotta be dying in this heat.

“Uh, no,” I say. “Sorry.”

“Well, where do you go when you really have to go?”

I tell him there’s a building on the other side of the highway, a break room, and then he asks if he can use it. I tell him it’s for employees only. What planet is this guy from?

“Well, I’m just going to have to piss right here then. Can’t hold it any longer.”

“Sir,” I say, but he’s already unzipped his fly and is pissing into an empty Big Gulp. Shit, I think. Nothing I can do at this point.

“Sir! You can’t do that here. Sir!” I pick up the phone.

People are honking. Fat guy doesn’t care. I wave and nod. I write down the guy’s license plate number. He’ll be receiving a fine from the state.

“Thank you for your time,” he says. Then with one flick of his wrist, he dumps the entire Big Gulp onto the pavement in front of my booth. Speeds off.

I need a break. I signal this to booth one and Cheryl comes over to spell me. Thankfully, she likes me. Being liked has some benefits. I walk across the overpass to the central office, step inside the A/C. I have ten minutes. I close the door of the breakroom behind me. I drink an entire blue Gatorade. I imagine it’s something else. In the breakroom it’s *National Esquire*, *People*, *Essence*, and a few old *National Geographics*. I look through the latter. There’s a pictorial from someone in Norway. Lots of ice and carbou and tall, gangly evergreens. I’d like to bottle that air.

I flip through it for a few minutes and feel a bit better. Twenty more years and the house will be paid off. One day at a time, I tell myself. How else to do it? I look out the window. The air shimmers from the heat.

Exact change, I think. And how.



Rest of the day I'm on autopilot. Hand out, make change, change back. Hand out, make change, change back. Sweating. I'm close to miserable, but I don't want to think about it. Thinking will make it that much more difficult.

I get home and shower and go see mom. They say she'll be out soon. "It's diabetes, not cancer," one of the nurses says. It's supposed to be uplifting.

Mom kisses my forehead.

"Hang in there," I say. "You'll be out soon."

"Don't get old," she says.

I know that's not the problem. I think of the guy with the bag of change.

I go home and Stouffer-it. A little ice cream sandwich makes a world of difference. Shades are drawn. Dark and chilled. I'm back tomorrow and the next day, but off the day after that.

There will be rest. I'll see Mom. Maybe throw some darts down at Jimmy's. I'll use plastic for everything—beer, wings, everything.

Next day I know I'll be back in the booth. Dreaming of a cool place. 🍷

The Film Version

William Doreski

In the film version I tote
five gallons of gasoline
to the entry of the institute

where our baby died and you
remain imprisoned. The sky
gloats in pink marbled textures.

Anonymous music resounds.
Security guards equipped
with Tasers stare me down.

But they're behind glass doors,
so I pour the gas, splashing it
under the door. They step back,

paw at their radios. I snap
a match and the screen goes blank.
The audience groans. The film

has ended, the smut of popcorn
crunching underfoot. You grip
my arm in fear. Can we face

the summer evening having spent
twenty dollars on tickets
when we knew we'd failed to film

a proper heroic ending?
What if the dispersing audience
recognizes us from the screen?

The parking lot's the Black Sea,
deep and treacherous. We splash
through the shallows to our car.



In the air conditioned dark
we agree to let the baby
go unnamed forever, the film

too merciful to show the corpse
and your face without thick makeup
too blank to show its disgrace.

Hydraulic Frolicking

Nathalie Kuroiwa-Lewis

I had some benzene in my coffee this morning and it tasted good.

Went to the well in the backyard with a bucket from Nantucket
lifted the roaring waters from the pungent bowels of the earth
and then moseyed on down...

down...

and still down further into the helter
skelter kitchen.

Poured the crackling waters from the bucket from Nantucket into a kettle
put the kettle on the stove
that whistled like a gasping
Shooo Shooo train

rock—ing the stove

to and fro

like a rickety old doo da submarine

took the wheezing kettle off the stove
sushed the water into a cup of instant decaf
drank in
the benzene
the toluene
the xylene
and ethylbenzene

like a missile gurgling down my throat.
and sighed.

That coffee was dam blasted bygones good.



The Dandy Gorilla

Nathalie Kuroiwa-Lewis

In his shiny fresh suit and too tight necktie
quarters ringing in his pockets
he prowls the office grounds.

His long arms swing
belly lifts and drops
he smiles—white teeth with jagged tips showing
assigns you a power point
as if he's hurling a banana in the sky
and glides past you
onto another task
telling you you're doing a great job
and wouldn't you like to do this and that and that some more

till you have fallen off your domain—chilled and disheveled.
“Thank you,” he tells you. “You're doing great.”

But all the while
the hairy finger shakes at you
while the comrades whisper in his ear.

You are not of that tribe
nor will you ever be
no matter how many this and thats and that some mores you do
until all the horizons of tomorrow disappear.

It does not count
In that part of the world.

Fish

Rusty Spell

There are too many fish in my bathroom. My wife started painting them three days ago; she doesn't know when to stop. She told me she was just going to paint four little ones—all in different, bright colors—above the mirror. That seemed fine.

I went to bed when she started painting them, and when I woke up in the morning, she was still working. I knew it before I got up because of the light, and because I could hear her, the little movements of the paintbrush.

"There were too many gaps," she told me. She said that she had messed up one of the fish, drawn it crooked or something, so that it wasn't lined up with the other three. To fix it, she painted another, but it still didn't look symmetrical. She painted another. Still not right.

And so on until, by the time I got out of bed, I couldn't even take a shower because she had spread the fish all across the wall. She handed me a washcloth—she had already wet it for me before I came in—and told me to use it instead of showering. She was sorry; she would be finished by the time I got home from work.

"Aren't you going to work?" I asked.

"I can't leave with this mess in here." She turned her paintbrush around and stabbed one of the fish on the wall. "Look," she said. "Perfectly ugly."

"I like ugly," I said. "What are you telling the folks at work?"

"I already told them," she said. "I told them I was sick. I'm at the doctor right now. Okay, well, not sick, but you gave me some sort of infection and I'm going to check it out."

"I did?"

"I panicked," she said. "I was going to say just sick, but it didn't seem drastic enough. You know how they are at the office." She finished up painting a lime-colored fish. "I'm running out of paint. Do you have time to buy me some more? I'm using acrylics. The craft store should be open already."

She watched me, standing there in my boxers with my hands on my hips. I never put my hands on my hips. I don't know why I was doing it then, don't even remember putting them there.

"Please?" she said.

"Look, why not just get some of that blast-it-all-white paint shit and you can start over if you want to? Or just don't do it at all. Fish were probably a stupid idea anyway."

"They're not stupid. Just too many gaps right now." She took a little pencil and started making nail-head-size dots on various places of the wall. "Mapping it out," she



said. "It'll be fine. I'll be done soon."

I took an exaggerated breath. "Okay, then I'll say this. I don't want any fish. The four were fine. Eight may have been fine. Twelve. There are about forty in here."

"Yeah, sixty," she said.

I left the room. I started the coffee maker. While I was waiting, I grabbed a beer and poured some of it into a little Smurf cup.

She called to me from the bathroom. "I know how I can fix it. What if I just make it one big fish? You know, one giant fish that sort of is the bathroom. I can make the door the fish's mouth."

"Are you being serious?" I said.

"I've got to do something," she said.

"I told you what to do." I walked into the bathroom and gave the cup to my wife. "Drink this," I said. While she was drinking it, I pulled off my boxers.

"What, you want me to paint that, too?" she said.

I had a car accident on the way home. It wasn't too bad, didn't damage the car much more than a bent bumper. But my neck hurt. I would have to get it checked out, thought it might be whiplash, even though I felt silly thinking that. Whiplash is the sort of thing I thought lawyers made up, a myth that everyone believed. Like quicksand.

I knew my wife was still working on the fish before I opened the door. I felt it creep all over me as I put the key in the doorknob. Before I opened the door all the way, she yelled, "Don't come in here! Don't look. I'm almost done."

"I have whiplash," I said from the doorway.

"Whiplash?" She sounded concerned. "Is that a real thing?" She came into the living room with me, her hair covered with a chili pepper bandanna, and she had on purple bellbottoms splattered with paint.

"You're still painting the fish," I said.

"Just sort of finishing it up. It looks fine now. Let me feel your neck." She grabbed my neck and it hurt worse when she did. "I almost studied to be a chiropractor, you know."

"Quit it," I said. I pulled her hand away. "I'm going to the doctor. For real. No fake infection. Which reminds me: I was supposed to stop being horrible and lying. I don't want your friends at the office thinking I'm unclean."

"You don't have to be unclean to have an infection—or to give an infection," she said.

"I know that, but people think it anyway. I think it. And, besides—I don't have an infection. But I do have a neck injury of some sort. I was in a wreck. The guy should be calling sometime today to handle the insurance stuff."

"Bad, huh?"

I told her everything that happened, those boring car wreck stories no one likes to hear. She asked me to sit in the living room with her. We watched TV. I didn't even want to see the bathroom, but I was curious. Then I stopped worrying about it. It was just one room in the house. I could see the kitchen from here, and it looked fine. The living room was fine. I'm sure our bedroom was fine. Fish.

“I’m going to finish up in here,” she mumbled, touching me on the knee and jogging to the bathroom. When I stood up to follow her, she said, “Wait.”

“No,” I said, and walked into the bathroom.

Here it all was. There were about eighty fish now, and she’d dressed them up in little clothes, drawn bubbles coming from their mouths. Our ceiling was blue, with waves and fishermen sitting in the corners of the wall. Weird perspective. Some of the fish had speech balloons like in a comic. They said things like “Sure is better weather today” and “How’s your mom and them after the events?” Most of the phrases were exceptionally un-fishy: “Johnny has type 2 diabetes” and “I like your eighteen new jaguar tattoos.”

“It’s different, I know,” she said. “I’ll paint over it if you want me to.”

“No, you won’t,” I said. “I can tell you love it too much.”

“I really do,” she said, smiling. I think she imagined that I liked it, too. She seemed to be wondering if I was, at least, trying to like it for her sake. That is what I was trying, but it wasn’t working. Did I like it at all? I can’t say that I did, not at all.

I felt a pain in my neck. I blamed it on her and the fish. It didn’t make sense to do that, but I did. And then I got hot. She hadn’t had the air conditioner running. Her fault. My dick itched; maybe I did have an infection.

“I’m going to the emergency room,” I told her.

She woke me up the next day by painting a rabbit on my stomach. A lime one with dark blue eyes. I fell back to sleep and dreamed about it. It just kept staring at me, scary, and I couldn’t talk to it. I couldn’t say anything. One of those dreams.

The doctor had told me my neck was fine, or was going to be fine, to just take it easy on the neck a few days. “You don’t have whiplash,” he said laughing. He clearly didn’t believe what he was saying.

After she painted the rabbit on my stomach, she spent the rest of the morning—before I woke up—covering the bathroom with a sand-colored carpet. And she had gotten some seashells and starfish and things like that and put them all around the floor.

I walked in and said, “Okay. Too much.”

“This toilet is sort of in the way,” she said, eyeing it. “Why don’t we just use our other bathroom for the pee-pee times and BMs? And showering business? We’ll keep this room for this.”

“This is a bathroom,” I said. “The key components are bath and toilet. Not coral or scuba-divers or what appears to be a blobfish.”

“If you don’t like it, say you don’t like it,” she said.

“I don’t like it.”

“Well, I knew that,” she said. I think she maybe thought I would like it today, that putting more work into it would make me change my mind. “I spent a lot of money on it already, so it would be stupid to paint it white again. I hate white.”

“You don’t hate white,” I said. “Something’s just wrong with you.”

She stopped and looked at me, with a face like she hadn’t thought of this. I felt bad. I opened my arms for a hug and she waved her hand at me. She took the bandanna off her head and said, “I need to get cleaned up.” She looked around the room. “How about you help me paint it over? Yellow. Or light blue. Something. I just didn’t want



white. Does that make sense?"

"Yeah, that makes sense," I said.

When does she figure out how ridiculous I am, I thought to myself. Maybe she already had and was simply a better forgiver than I managed to be. I picked up a seashell and held it to my ear. "Of course, we're missing out on some pretty obvious jokes here," I said.

"What, like that all this is pretty darn fishy?"

"Yeah," I said. "Or that you should be put in a gill-otine for doing this."

"Well," she said, "I just figured carp-e diem."

I started filling the bathtub. She took off her clothes and got in, letting the water flow over her feet. She looked relaxed, was almost sleeping. I went to the other room to get my ukulele. When I came back, she was snoring. I played it anyway, a Hawaiian love song about the sea, hoping she would hear it in her dreams. 🌊

All Change

Bruce McRae

The coming and going of things,
time altering itself, adjusting temperatures,
refining seasonal light, making all the difference.

A darker morning than the month before,
Venus struggling in the lower atmosphere,
the stars reassessing their previous stance,
Planet Home circumnavigating the galactic rim,
pulling us by the hand as if an untoward child.

Sitting at the littoral edge of the world,
summer packing it in, autumn shaking in the wings,
alterations accruing at the cellular level,
otherness replacing otherness on the big wheel
and little I can do about it,
ruination unenviable but always in fashion.

Losing my grip to a false sense of accomplishment.
An exasperating cavalcade of light and circumstance,
youth fossilized, the middle ages genuflecting
before a darker age approaching.
When the last is first and nothing lasts.
Where we make mansions of the ephemeral
and a door closes for evermore,
gravity's top wobbling as you reach for the wine.
The Earth running down. The light tiring.



Between the Woman and the Telemarketer

John Grey

Hold the phone.
There's a woman in the garden.
I can't talk right now.
I'm too busy being in love.
Sun's like a spotlight
Iris and rose are audience.
There's no breeze
yet still their petals clap.

Go about your business.
Find someone else to bother,
a poor soul
without a window to his back yard,
and an angel on her knees
with pruning shears,
a bed of flowers aching to be clipped.

A head bowed into
the reds, the yellows, the greens,
is so much more than
a lifetime subscription to
whatever it is you're selling.

She's troweling open the earth.
Can magazines or
identity protection or
timeshare in Saint Maarten do that?

Colors pop in her lovely fingers.
Your salesmanship cannot compare.
My eyes, my mouth, my whole body,
is lining up for her delicate attention.

Listen for a moment to what I'm selling:
what you need is not a pigeon
but a lover of your own.

The next click you hear
will be my best offer.

Snowed In

John Grey

Snow doesn't surprise—
it can never rise too high,
sink too deep,
drift too far.
I've kept abreast of snow through time.
It follows an old line
from Canada to halfway across the Atlantic
with help now and then
from the heavy moisture of the south.
I'd trust my own fingers
to the frozen oceans of Antarctica
as easily as the ice
that candy-canes my windows.
It means no harm,
is more logical
than I can thaw out enough to admit.
But there are days
when snow is all I have to say,
when I call around
and no one thanks me for my
blanket, prisoner, burial, metaphors.

Everyone else reckons life
just isn't the same in Winter.
Like me, my neighbors
don't speak sometimes
because they're either on the edge
or their lips are blue.
They don't make plans
when the weather's listening.
Yes, I feel for the local bird-life, squirrel population,
and the kids who trudge off to school in it.
But when they play, I look for something
I might have been.



Snowball fights, tobogganing—
a middle-aged man finds it hard
to lord it over his youth.

Yes, for months at a time,
I'm restricted to a puny life.
Luckily, my brain takes keen interest
in all that I'm unable to do.
It has my head in a book.
It encourages me to scribble words on paper.
It looks out the frosted window
and informs me, "This won't last."
My optimism doesn't surprise me—
despite its highs, its deeps, its distances.

Gentle Spirit

John King

Mackey clomped into Madame Suzette's parlor and thudded a rock onto the hearth, glints in the ore. The little tallow flames jumped with a queer chill. It was three o'clock in the morning.

We hadn't seen Mackey in going on three years, since the cave-ins along North Moccasin. But there he was, glancing me and Suzette up and down. In the billiard room, Nancy and Betty kept colliding them balls, oblivious. "I would like to request the privilege of some company," he said, and tiny sparks cascaded off his teeth. His skin smelled of rotten meat, old books, and kerosene.

Suzette gave her ever-gracious smile. "You are welcome, as always, Mr. Mackey," she said, inviting him to sit down in a wingback chair by the fire. I didn't know if she had gone crazy, or if I had. Maybe it was just habit, being the perfect hostess, trying to elevate this Montana town into something we could call America.

We didn't have no more regulars, since the miners left. Even the most tenacious of those men scattered east and west, some even north, after what they found trying to dig their way back in. No sir, all of our business was down to travelers, those who remembered, or told stories about their fine treatment at the Opal.

The truth was we barely had enough to eat, despite the fact that our linens were still impeccable. Madame Suzette was a stickler. But most of us had moved on, like the miners. I stayed because I believed in Suzette, and knew I wouldn't find finer elsewhere. Suzette was supremely decent, and encouraged us to read luxurious prose.

Suzette's hand was on my shoulder. "Would you like us to play something for you?" she said, setting her other hand on the ebony fall of the piano.

"Thank you," said Mackey, "but no. I would like to refresh myself, since I know I am not presently fit for such feminine entertainments as you can provide. So I would like it if you would pour me a bath, and then for someone to join me in my chamber in a half hour's time. If that is amenable to you, M'am."

Every word was like a miniature jostling of a furnace inside his mouth. But Mackey was, for his rough exterior, incredibly gentlemanly, and Madam Suzette always liked him, even when he wasn't carrying around gold-flecked rocks, even before he happened to be dead.

She walked to the back of the house, and murmured for Betty to pour the bath. We already had some water on the stove for Madame Suzette's morning ablutions. She told her not to show any disrespect to our guest. She quoted some Nathaniel Hawthorne. And then Betty led Mackey to the bath.

"Arabella," said Madame Suzette.



“Me?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said.

“That there’s unholy,” I said.

“Shhhhhh, doll,” she said. “Even the unholy need love.”

“What about—?” I asked.

“Arabella,” she said, holding up the ore, “I will give you what you want, just don’t bring shame upon the Opal. You have the gentle spirit to give Mr. Mackey what he needs.”

What can I tell you? Not all men are the same in the dark. My skin tingled for weeks, my brain seething with a beauteous babble. Mackey was trying to shake off so much it lifted the hair from my head. But he was gentle, and he cried after, until the dawn’s light made him sort of evaporate. The ore remained.

Mackey was only the beginnings of the visitations, though. In weeks, the town was repopulated with spectral miners between midnight and the first flickerings of dawn.

Not long thereafter, I learned I was with child. 🍷

Good Friday, Seining for Minnows

Daniel Sundahl

I was young;
What I remember now comes
With this morning's brewed coffee.

Lying in bed I listen to Strauss,
A tone poem resting on the heart
Like the bed's coverlet spread warmly.

A man and a boy go about their work,
Deftly dipping the net,
Feeling the current,
Stepping carefully to avoid rocks.

How good it felt to be
In that natural place that day,
A few shale edges of ice
Wedged in bushes along the bank.

But that was long ago,
So far away that now I think
It's only one of memory's
Aimless urges turning up
Whenever time makes me
Feel I'm losing hold; a man
After all, should not make a career
Of lunging around in memory's serenades.

But there is the insatiable lust of the mind,
The mind bruited for its deeds of sin,
Which among crowds make one feel conspicuous.

Another memory, another hour of age
Stolen from the body,
More so over the foolish middle years.



Brought up from the pool,
The net lay wet on the bank,
Laden with flarings of silver,
The first shock of air sipping
Through delicate gills,
Wide mouths agape bewailing their maker.

I remember the boy's face,
The gaze in the eyes struggling with fears
And dreamy shapes bending in and out of nature.

I think today the memory needs an equation,
Balanced so the memory equals beauty;
I have instead all the classic unknowns,
All the anonymous murmurings, the grindings
Of unsatisfied expectations; even worse,
The twitchings of another love
Soon to be exhausted,
Another figurative decoration for loneliness,
Transfigured as slithering silvery skin tones.

Today is another Good Friday morning,
A day of disorder and strangeness,
Of discontinuous monologues,
Anticipations of who-knows-what
As the earth swings into final approach
And God Himself wrings His hands
Anticipating another miracle.

Wittgenstein at Hutteldorf

Daniel Sundahl

The monks are awake in the middle of the night,
Worshipping their anguished God.
Morning will come and once again
They will warm their bellies and wonder
About that feeling growing upward from the groin.

What makes it possible for their worship
To represent their faith in another world?
The icons and statues could be manipulated
To depict in different ways what might have taken place.
God, I believe, must somehow show us His sense,
Be something other than an extremely general fact of nature,
Or spirit substantiated into matter.

Father Superior calls it my “logical compulsion.”
Father tells me to let each day
Lead me to the next, and to the next,
From the coolness of morning to the coolness of evening.

If I were more casual
And if the clamor of my senses
Did not so much disturb my thoughts,
I could join these everlastings.

I remember a poem written for a blonde girl;
The brightly joined rhymes were stolen,
Wings rhyming with sings.

Lord it is time now;
Someone is being buried
Beside the monastery’s garden wall.
Something dwells in the thick darkness,
Finer than what gives light its shape and substance.



This year in Jerusalem,

Gerard Sarnat

well not exactly, it depends whether you consider Ma'ale Adumim—mentioned in the Book of Joshua as the border town between the tribes of Judea and Benjamin—a suburb as Israel does, or an illegal settlement like South Africa's past cantons that much of the world boycotts/ divests/ sanctions including last week Oregon under the state's Fair Trade Practices Act.

On the other hand, just today India proudly announced “rehabilitating” Muslim Kashmir with “Israel-style” townships occupied (for starters) by tens of thousands of Hindus.

In any case here I am traveling from Jerusalem through the West Bank on a sterilized road to where we spent last autumn's High Holidays and will spend next New Years with our youngest and her in-laws.

Ems offers gladiolas to the matriarch who rules the domestic roost this Scrabble triple word score day recognizing the anniversary of my daughter making aliyah, plus Shabbos, as well as Pesach.

Rather than be the only man among women at home, again I don a pocketed yarmulke and accompany Emma's husband toward the Kurdish synagogue.

On our way he silently points to a brewing sandstorm on rolling hills beyond an electrified fence and security road where sheep graze around Bedouin tents.

In the makeshift synagogue, about 100% of the shorn (or male pattern baldness from the existential stress) warrior community bears witness. Rebellious boys might be allowed not to cut what's on top though below is traditionally bris-buzzed.

Few youth here wear glasses compared to yeshiva bochers
whose googly eyes are on the Torah and Talmud—humanoids
weren't designed for such intense morning till night near-work.
During this my third or fourth service, I begin to recognize the
darker men
around me. Almost all wear simple pants and open collared shirts.
I try to blend in if not emulate.

The congregant to my left opens a wood cabinet
on which his Siddur rests, removes a tube of cream,
spreads some on each arm, closes the hatch, lifts the prayer book,
looks at me and flips mine so it isn't upside down.
The only changes since my last visit are children growing,
some of whom now show off facial hair and are no longer eligible
for Passover lollipops handed out to keep little kids' quiet.
And at the other end an anemic jaundiced elder who has trouble
davening,
stand/ bend to pray, attending what's likely his last yom tov festival
of Spring
marking the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt.

The single fair-skinned fire-engine redhead -- he reminded me
of me as a cocky pony-tailed ecumenical JewBu atheist med student
—sticks out like a sore thumb
as does a charismatic in his prime with a walrus mustache
and neck tattoo and wraparound alpaca sweater perhaps from Peru
—which combined identify him as Other.

The combo of my son-in-law's goatee, plus after service in the
people's
army that had occupied Lebanon and now occupies Palestine
he left for the US then returned to Tel Aviv's secular bubble
for college no less, make him slightly suspicious.
But the fact his dad is the heart and soul,
leader of the ingathered, makes him still a possible heir apparent.

Given I'm too old or at least unwilling to put out the energy
to attempt more than fleeting Engbrew/ Hebrish gibberish,
the best I can do for my daughter is to leave politics and religion
at the door and show respect to her new Israeli family



by accompanying its Iraqi-born patriarch to the temple he built.
Ignorant uneducated non-Bar Mitzvahed,
among the dead giveaways I was unaware of at first
is that my Joseph-many-colored kippa found deep in a drawer
before leaving California, brands as Ashkenazi,
a European Jew. The Middle Eastern and North African
Mizrahi sea of muted skullcaps surround me.

We, or our parents or their parents or theirs,
Holocausters on not, had to leave behind hametz bread,
instead grab the same unleavened matzo
to flee what turned out not to be our homelands.

I come to the house of worship—what in my Polish Pale
Grandpa's shtetl was called a shul here's a beit kneset—
not just to avoid staying behind with scornful ladies
who don't want me around while they put finishing touches
on a ten-course Seder dinner that puts my family's to shame
—but also because I enjoy rising/ sitting in unison,
sinking into landsmen chanting, made more meaningful
since I can't understand a word.

Afterwards, I proudly shake hands and Chag Sameach
everyone—though hearing it later on my daughter's dismayed,
demands pronunciation of the Happy Holidays phrase be tuned
before we return next week to conclude the celebration.
She also informs me that my Technicolor skullcap
from her Bat Mitzvah had nothing to do with ancestral roots
—they were made in Guatemala.
Then tells me to straighten my off-kilter kippa
which is a badge of the militant settler movement.

Outside cigarettes are passed around to light others,
presumably because there's some religious prohibition on matches.
Convincing myself of the smell of marijuana
off in a circle of teens, I've heard the Green Leaf Party
polled well among new voters in the recent election—
which SodomGomorra's the last thing the generals want.
Clap of thunder, whirlwinds or air raid sirens greet us
as we walk through this land of Abraham's three children,
back toward my host's government-subsidized apartment
where his postman's mail truck perk is parked in front.

Passing a second just-let-out sanctuary,
Mizrahi and Ashkenazi don't acknowledge another
any more than they would Arabs.
Or appear to realize or care
a couple of miles away in the Old City, pilgrims
walk the Holy Land's Stations of the Cross;
that today's Good Friday and Sunday's Easter.



Journal

John Stocks

Firstly, you should be black-edged, leather bound
The colour of blood or wine.
You should carry with you the scents
Of creative silences
Or rain soused city streets.

When opened,
You should reveal yourself
With the secretive stealth
Of a philanderer,
Or 19th century anarchist.

Your pages should automatically erase
All traces of aesthetical compromise
And shards of self-deceit—
Whilst hiding an infallible antenna
Always attuned
To select, and identify, the perfect muse.

Slow Train

John Stocks

A slow train home on this lonely line
That Beeching somehow forgot to close.
Window open—a soft drizzle falls
Releasing the night scents, petrichor,
Honeysuckle—
An inspirational rose.

And then we pause, mid station
To diminishing birdsong
Rich peat and loam.

I imagine an old oak copse
I know, quite close to here
Its dark foliage holds the rain
In tiny drops
Its curved leaves bejewelled.

I know—
Because this is where I come from.
This secret, half-known place
Of loveliness.

And all other sound is smothered
As I lean through the window of my train
With the soft west wind, whispering my name.



Signs

Tom Spencer

Something had been trying to be told to him all day, but he couldn't read the signs. The maggots he had concealed in an old plastic pencil case inside a tree stump had bored their way out, despite the leaves and earth he had left to make them feel at home. The black car that was always there in the driveway at the bottom of the hill when he walked to school but was always gone when he walked back was missing at the start of the day today. The zip on his coat had broken; he had to walk with it open.

Now parents' consultation was over and his mother was behaving strangely on the other end of the phone. Edward had gone over to Andrew's house while his mum talked to the teacher, and Edward and Andrew had built a successful skateboard ramp. Edward wanted to stay and play longer; this sort of thing was rarely a problem.

"You can stay for fifteen minutes," said his mum in a blank tone. Fifteen minutes was an odd amount of time. If he had to come straight home, ask him to come straight home. On the other hand, if he could stay, let him stay. Fifteen minutes.

Edward decided to make the best of it. "We can do a lot in fifteen minutes," he said, hopefully.

He turned out to be right. They attached a laundry basket to the skateboard with a piece of rope and went over the ramp together in it without falling out, though it was a close thing. It was amazing, he thought as he walked home past the empty pencil case and the missing car, how you could do a whole project in fifteen minutes if you had to. On the other hand he didn't see why there was any need to come home. Dinner wouldn't be for at least an hour. "Can I go back to Andrew's in a minute?" he said after she let him in.

"No. You can't go out anywhere for a month," she said. Edward was stunned. The statement was strange, but even stranger was the strangled tone in which she said it, and the fact that there were tears in her eyes and on her cheeks. Edward had never seen his mother cry, or even get really upset. Instead of going into the living room she sat down on the stairs. The front door was still open and he had to close it.

He saw her incredulous look and he knew, though he didn't know anything else, that he had betrayed her. "Mr. Martin said you were rude to your violin teacher," she said. He had taken consultation for granted. So had she; only now did he realize that there was even anything to be taken for granted. Consultation was when they told her how wonderful he was, how clever, charming, and well behaved, and she came home pleased and hugged him and sometimes he got a present. She had failed to read him right, to see that, all along, he had been a bad sort of boy who had deceived her as to his true nature; that was what he saw in her eyes. How could he have been caught so off-guard?

How not realized even that there was a choice to be made in these situations, to be on-guard or not to worry? He tried to cast his mind back. “He heard you through the wall,” his mother said.

Edward remembered. It had registered so little with him at the time that he had not even thought to mention it at home. She must have decided now that he had deliberately concealed it. He played the violin in a group lesson with other boys, in a music room next to the headmaster’s office. The group had joked around sometimes. It was light-hearted. On this day the teacher had been joking with him, calling him Teddy, which was not a name by which he ever went. Te-ddy, Te-ddy. He was stung, irked, but not angry. He answered back, in fun he had thought; he couldn’t even remember. Afterwards the whole group had been called into the headmaster’s office. “Do you know why you’re here?” he had said. Truly, no one knew. “The violin lesson?” ventured Andrew after a while, more in hope than expectation. “The violin lesson,” the headmaster said definitely, showing that he knew their bafflement was a put-on.

But at this point, Edward remembered, the whole thing had deflated. There was no dressing down, no punishment. The boys had explained quite reasonably: the whole thing was a misunderstanding of sorts. The teacher had been teasing them. They had been teasing the teacher. It was a game. The headmaster misheard it through the wall. Edward thought the headmaster had conceded that. At rate, they left with only a gentle admonishment not to mess around in violin lessons.

“I never thought that you would be rude to a teacher,” she said bitterly. He said nothing. Perhaps in a moment he would begin explaining, explaining to her as they had to the headmaster, going over it, straightening it out, trying to make it all right. At this moment, though, he understood only, and for the first time, the nature of betrayal, how it came from failing to read signs properly, and was filled with anger. 🌐



Fishers of Men

Donald Mitchell

Suppose you hook a large rainbow trout from this shore, and you are a catch-and-release kind of soul, but no matter how carefully you release that big, living, shaking jewel, it dies like a promise to yourself, goes belly up against the rocks and reeds, its poor heart stopped. Maybe you're disgusted with your life already—of course you are—and since there's nothing you can do to save it, your life or the trout, you just sit here in the quiet desert and wonder. Maybe you're Christian and think of Jesus and all the healing he didn't do, or all those hungry souls he didn't feed with the loaves and, yes, the fish. Or maybe you weren't raised that way and think instead of all the lives this hard universe seems to waste with or without bad governments. Out in the lake, you may see the fins and white crease in the water where that upturned life is floating away, too far out now to be retrieved. Maybe you realize how deep the black basalt goes down. Look, I'm not mentioning this to depress you further, or to question your right to joy, but rather to say that others threading their own needles have found these desert lakes too; the river otters have arrived, their sleek, dark fur sun-dyed and shining, and they cherish and continue what and where we cannot. I think that's the message for you and me: persist or die, live well or fall short, we cannot help but feed the multitudes.

Informal Service

Aaron Belz

“Not another lilted topiary
of my darling,” reported an historian

as she tugged at her protégé’s
necktie, “but a flight

of Central California rosés,
herbed in the finest blossom bottles,

the green-hued variety Mamie used
to jog home from Woolworth’s with.”

And suddenly we, as if we (we being
the collapsed cretins in her

custody) knew what she meant,
begin applauding and pounding

our hooves thunderously, as one
blue herd seeking the most

cornflower-bedecked dell
we could find. And she, having just

lost her stepmother to copperheads,
donned a Stetson

and ambled west, toward, they say,
the sea and whatever lurks in it.



Clearance

Aaron Belz

We would read Dickens to one another
and weep. We would huck mussel shells
from the dock (ones we'd just plucked).
We would flop from Jacuzzi to Jacuzzi,
our eyeballs hanging from their sockets—
like richly textured sock puppets soaked
to the stuffing and just a tad soused.
Even “like” got us down, though. “Like”
with its coterie of likeminded connectors,
like the way we held hands (like volcanoes
just run out of jokes to tell). “Just”
got us down, actually. “Actually”
discouraged us deeply. We narrowed
our gazes and wept; each knew
he was out of his depth. Even driving
spacecopters across a white-banked sky
we attracted coppers like pixies or kewpies,
like the time we traveled the wrong way
down a one way in Salisbury—and Max
just shrieked. Nate grinned deviously.
Jerome wasn't with us, nor was Molly.
Ted wasn't there; we didn't know a Leon,
actually, but we knew a guy just like him.
And after I'd pattered around me shop
arrogantly for about fifteen minutes,
the rest of us were nowhere to be found.

Y

Changming Yuan

yummy yummy, you have
become so indulgent
in this juicy alphabet
you can readily get high
high within your hairless skin
as yellowish as the bank
of the Huanghe River
less sleek than a china crane
but more fragrant than a young yucca
while its pronunciation can lead you
to the very truth you are seeking, its shape
can grow from an unknown sprout
into a huge Yggdrasil, where your soul
can perch on an evergreen twig, cawing glaringly
towards the autumn setting sun



Veteran

Nels Hanson

Down an old man's constricting arteries
lines of revving engines
wait to run boat's pitching strip, leap
rough water
for thinner air. Brake,
magneto, flap, aileron, elevator,
brown rabbit's foot . . . A dark
flagman signals Go!
and waves approach, ivory
teeth that snap at silver belly
before sun's magnet draws skin high
toward shooting stars of glowing
nickel. Fire sleeps in rows
guns hunger for
to spit sharp seeds, mothers
of fire swell with jellied oblongs
of gasoline. Loud heart's chrome
pistons aim down tunnels boring through
sky, hot rings spurting oil to grease
cylinders. Pressure, air and wind
speed, new heading, altitude, horizon,
zenith, nadir—angel in fleece
reads green dials, wears two silver
wings, on back cocoon calm silk worms
spun as mulberries burst red, strange coast
drifts seaward, bright needles stitching
white nets of flame to snare
a rising phoenix.

Changes

Nels Hanson

Spring plum trees set yellow peaches
and peaches smooth plums, sweet corn
red kernels or rather rose to match tan
cheeks of blushing girls while vines

swelled melons gray as summer clouds
withholding rain for mountains' dust
of silver snow. Deep water from wells
poured lightest lavender, sable flowers

bloomed among thistles' orange spikes
like pumpkins' sprouted thorns. Farm
prices fell, then shot sky-high, grapes
checked with many-colored lozenges

attracting shoppers bored with August
green and ruby, Concord's midnight
indigo. Above the fields a rainbow's
thin bands shaded gradually through

glare to fleece to final pearl past 20
whites and wouldn't leave for days.
I walk ripe rows of dazzling eggplant
whose blaze recalls noon-gold suns far

as storybooks. I pick, hands burgundy,
bucket brimmed solar, throwing hot light
that makes you wince and stare at faded
loam only yesterday brightest fallen blue

from azure sky bled marigold. On black-
veined leaf a caterpillar trudges patiently
with purple feet, slow accordion whose
folding, unfolding striped side spells with

easy script a message anyone could read—
*"All things at last are as we always wished
and hoped they'd be"*—dissolving now,
stained windows blurred by colored rain.



I Won't Forget You, Everett Sloane

Richard Peabody

“So tell me about that scene in *Citizen Kane*.”

“Which scene is that?”

“The one where Bernstein tells Thompson, the interviewer, about the girl with the parasol. ‘You’d be surprised—’”

“... what a man will remember.’ Yes, what about it?”

“Well, is there any truth to it?”

“What do you mean?”

“Was that a real memory of your own or just part of Welles’ script?”

“You’d be surprised how many people ask me about that moment. A girl in a white dress carrying a parasol crossing to New Jersey on the ferry.”

“It certainly resonates for me.”

“What does?”

“The fleeting moment. The knowledge that he’ll retain that image of her all his life yet never meet her.”

“Perhaps it’s a universal experience?”

“Do you really think so?”

“Who can say?”

Sloane had ad libbed the line and Orson had let him keep it in. That was the great thing about the Mercury Theater—life experience worked its way into every scene. After the stock market crashed in 1929 he hadn’t been sure what to do. He’d waited at the ferry landing off and on for a month hoping to see her again. She’d worn white gloves. He’d never mentioned them. He never would.

He’d been reading Henry James at the time, which hadn’t helped. *The Golden Bowl*. He became obsessed with finding her. Soulmate stuff. Sure, it was corny, or just plain dumb, but he’d glimpsed something in that instant, a parted veil that presented possibilities he’d never considered. And that gnawed at him.

A student going back to Princeton? In the city for a day. And fate had played a dirty trick. He scanned the social pages in the *Times*. Took long walks. Decided to return to acting and abandon his runner job on Wall Street. A wise move as it turned out. That chance moment had sparked something. He met Lillian and they had two kids. He acted with Welles and company through the 40s. During the 50s he was all over television, doing *Bonanza*, *Cimarron City*, *Laramie*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Andy Griffith*, *Perry Mason*, even *Zorro*.

By the time he performed passages from *The Great Gatsby* on an NBC program devoted to great American authors, he’d become as obsessed as Gatsby with a green light

of his own. And yet he marveled that one fleeting instant could have such an impact on him. Who was he kidding? All the time. Even his dreams. Especially in his dreams.

Sloane thought he'd seen the girl in the white dress one other time in October in the early 60s. He'd been living in Los Angeles, but for some reason was back in the city where he grew up, walking past St. James' Church on the Upper East Side as the service let out. A splash of hats and gloves sparked his imagination. He was ridiculous, like a hunting dog pointing. Still, he loitered among the parishioners. Young children moved loudly into cabs and cars, families walked decisively toward lunch or their relatives' apartments, couples moved as one toward the art museum or the park. High heels, canes, a wheelchair in their midst, young women who made him look, once, twice, to be disappointed every time by the close resemblance, the near miss. A crowd dotted with colorful sweaters like shiny semaphore flags among the dark woolen coats.

Just when he'd given up there was a stoppage to the steady stream of worshippers, and was that her? The lilt of chin? The dimples? And the gloves, the white gloves. Surely not the same gloves? His sharp eyes had never failed him before. He couldn't be certain. He rubbed his eyes. Was that her? Hugging a woman in gray flannel, only to explode into motion, like a flower blossoming at twenty times its normal rate, as the other double church doors, which had been closed, opened, releasing an additional stream of choir members, and musicians with their heavy instruments. There had been music. He thought he'd imagined it. Now, here were the clunky gray and black cases, blocking his view.

Sloane began to follow, to move around the clot of musicians paused at the bottom of the steps, blocking the sidewalk. He hurried over the curb into the street, passed a cab loading a family of four, all blonde girls of varying ages, into the back seat, crunched almost on top of one another in frilly layers, and by the time he stepped back onto the sidewalk, he'd lost her once more.

The host shook Sloane's hand, thanking him for his time. "I imagine it's quite a shock for you to go from working with a serious intellect like Welles, to making comedies with Jerry Lewis."

"Why do you think?"

"I'm not really sure. Maybe I find it hard to take Mr. Lewis very seriously."

"He's a comedian. Why should you take him seriously?"

"You know what I mean."

"How do you feel about Jonny Quest?"

"What?"

"Nothing. Put another way, I'm fifty-four and I'm still in Hollywood. Still working."

Sloane gathered his things and turned to go. How many roles have I played? How many hours have I spent in wardrobe, in makeup, shivering on chilly sets. How many voiceovers have I recorded? And for what? Everything comes back to the girl in the white dress holding a parasol. Never could have worked. A dreamy old Jew like me. There was a gentle tap on his arm. "Mr. Sloane."



“Hmm?”

One of the sound men. Proffering a hand.

“A pleasure to meet you sir. I worked in radio for years. And my favorite of everything you’ve done is Dick Tracy.”

“Is that so.”

Sloane shook hands.

“Just wanted you to know.”

“Thank you. A pleasure.”

Where was the driver? Sloane shielded his eyes. Hot enough to make the studio shimmer like a mirage. Or were his eyes really going? He began to hum. A song about the one who got away. He’d written it for a revue he starred in during the 60s. Lillian had never been the wiser. She assumed he’d written the song for her.

Here was the studio driver now. Green sparkles off the chrome cast by the street-light. Who knows? Maybe the girl in the white dress had heard the song, too. Maybe she was humming it right now. 🧐

For Ezra Pound
As W.C.W. Sees It.

M. G. Wessels

A
poem
about a
tree. It is b
lack an
d white. Imagism
is a silly idea anyway.
This poem me
ans nothing, as well,
nothing implied by juxta
position. Just some words about
a tree.
That is
All it is.



This Is Just To Let You Know

M. G. Wessels

The plums were
moved
Doctor Williams
from the icebox

and were
placed in a
red wheel
barrow.

Forgive me.
What does
so much
depend upon now?

Poemographic Images

Benjamin Arakawa

Poemography exposes essential nature,
the vulgar
elegant interaction between observer
and the poemo star.

The art of misconstrued empathy,
mental stimulation,
human interconnectivity,
subconscious masturbation.

A glimpse inside the chaotic mind,
a smorgasbord of mental orifices,
penetrated and titillated.

An unveiling of history,
the re-write of history,
poemographic addiction,
mental asphyxiation.

When it becomes an obsession of meaning
it is a perversion.
Inevitably it is the idea,
not the poem.



Archaic Carton of Oatmeal
after Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo"

Joseph Dorazio

Though you'll never press close
to his salubrious chest
nor feel the embrace of his capable arms,
his smile and sanguine jowls still cajole you.

Otherwise his great black hat could not
stir you so, could not make morning
glow hot past some mysterious bog
where cranberries flare. Otherwise

this Quaker would seem decapitated
inside your constipated house: would
not be warmed by your stories of oats

wild and sensually sown: for here
there is not one grain that does not taste you.
You must simplify your life.

Larchwood, Iowa

Dylan Debelis

You'll come back,
you always do.

To these flooded plains,
this Michigan drawl,
Fourth of July bottle
rocket fizzle
pop up
explode power lines,
stitches, guitar string
twitches, your brother
plucks
uneven time.

You'll come back
to the pastures, stale manure,
fingers calloused, twine wrapping hay bales
tight,
night cricket violin
making monsters out of cumulus
clouds so large they punch into your throat
stealing breath.

Down by the river
comparing your nakedness to hers,
wondering if the fireflies in your jar
will imprint this like a flashbulb,
her hand leading where your hand leads,
in the dark empty stomach of God,
your memory is a desperate crucible
banging an anvil
that used to spark so easy.



Litany

Dylan Debelis

Speak to your unbecoming,
make friends with it.

Cook it soup when it is sick and salad when it must lose weight,
help it with its math homework, especially fractions,
let it take you for long walks on the beach
after your boyfriend gets drunk and kisses another girl at a party.

Let it sing to you in the shower, hold your hair back when you puke.
Talk it down from ledges. Let it talk you down from ledges.
Teach it to ride a bike, teach it to drive a car, teach it to drive
you crazy.

Let it lead you blindfolded, let it teach you long-form improv,
let it massage your jaw,
unhinge its maw so it can swallow the both of you and keep you
safe from the storm.

Speak to your unbecoming,
when the wrinkles form and the plane turbulence no longer
scares you
because you've seen it before, your muscles twinning with a
familiar snap,

when your breasts sag and your abs erode,
when your tattoos stretch and become grotesque across your back,
when they've taken so much blood for tests your veins are hard and
unforgiving,

when those of your generation lie in coffins,
when your doctor asks your daughter if he can speak to her outside
for a moment,
when the only option left is flatline,

speak to your unbecoming,
let it carry you both home.

Author Bios

Winner of the 2014 Kithara Book Prize for *Idyll for a Vanishing River* (Glass Lyre Press, 2013), **Jeffrey Alfier** is also author of *The Wolf Yearling* (Silver Birch Press, 2013) and *The Storm Petrel—Ireland Poems* (Grayson Books, 2014). His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Southern Poetry Review*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and *Louisiana Review*.

Tobi Alfier is a five-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee. Her most current chapbooks are *The Coincidence of Castles* from Glass Lyre Press, and *Romance and Rust* from Blue Horse Press. Her collaborative full-length collection, *The Color of Forgiveness*, is available from Mojave River Press. She is the co-editor of *San Pedro River Review*.

Aaron Anstett's most recent collection, *Insofar as Heretofore*, was published last year, and new poems will appear in *Cream City Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Handsome*, *Parcel*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.

Benjamin Arakawa is a senior and English major at Northeastern Illinois University and a Chicago-based poemosexual.

Les Bares is a retired high school English teacher who lives in Richmond, Virginia. His poems have appeared in *The Evansville Review*, *Cream City Review*, *Spillway*, *Slipstream*, *Stand Magazine* (U.K.), *Temenos*, *Illuminations*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Red Earth Review*, and other journals.

A printmaker, painter, and graphic designer from Brooklyn, New York, **David**

Barthold is currently involved in the creation of a monumental copperplate engraving of an African black rhinoceros, which he expects to complete by the fall of 2016. A resident of North Brooklyn for many years, Barthold often revisits the people and streetscapes of Northside and Greenpoint in his work.

Aaron Belz has published poetry and poetry-related prose in *Boston Review*, *The Atlantic*, *Books & Culture*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*. His books include *The Bird Hoverer* (2007), *Lovely, Raspberry* (2010), and *Glitter Bomb* (2014). He lives in Hillsborough, North Carolina.

Mark Brazaitis is the author of seven books, including *The River of Lost Voices: Stories from Guatemala*, winner of the 1998 Iowa Short Fiction Award, and *The Incurables: Stories*, winner of the 2012 Richard Sullivan Prize and the 2013 Devil's Kitchen Reading Award in Prose.

Recently **Vincent A. Cellucci** embarked on an explosive collaboration based on the common tropes of action films—you know the ones you love to hate or hate to love—with his partner, the poet Dylan Krieger.

Yuan Changming grew up in rural China, became an ESL student at nineteen, and published monographs on translation before moving to Canada. Currently Yuan edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver and has poetry appearing in *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Threepenny Review*, and 1109 others across thirty-seven countries.



Justin Christensen is a Creative Writing major at Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Amy Watkins Copeland grew up in central Florida surrounded by a big, loud, religious family, a situation that's produced generations of Southern writers. She married her high school sweetheart, had a baby girl, and earned her MFA from Spalding University. Her chapbook, *Milk & Water*, is available from Yellow Flag Press (yellow-flagpress.tictail.com/product/amy-watkins-milk-water).

A founding editor of Pelorus Press (peloruspress.org) and publisher, poet, performer, chaplain, and minister based out of New York City, **Dylan D. Debelis** has been published in more than twenty literary magazines and reviews including the *Buddhist Poetry Review*, *Peaches Lit Magazine*, and *Carbon Culture Review*.

With prose and poetry previously appearing in *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Acentos Review*, *New Orleans Review*, and *Apeiron Review*, among others, **Arturo Desimone** is currently based between the Netherlands and the emotive Buenos Aires, and was born and raised in Aruba to a family of Argentine and Polish origins.

Joseph Dorazio is a prize-winning poet whose poems have appeared widely in print and online literary reviews. He has published four volumes of poetry; the latest, *No Small Effort*, been published by Aldrich Press (2015).

William Doreski's work has appeared in various e- and print journals and in several collections, most recently *The Suburbs of*

Atlantis (AA Press, 2013).

Denise Duhamel's most recent book of poetry, *Blowout* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013) was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. The recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, Duhamel is a Professor at Florida International University in Miami.

Iris Jamahl Dunkle's new collection of poems, *There's a Ghost in this Machine of Air*, will be published in 2016. Her poetry collection, *Gold Passage*, won the Trio Award and was published by Trio House Press in 2013. Her chapbooks *Inheritance* and *The Flying Trolley* were published by Finishing Line Press. She is on the staff of the Napa Valley Writers conference, and is a professor at Napa Valley College.

An Australian poet and U.S. resident, **John Grey** recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Perceptions*, and *Sanskrit*, with work upcoming in *South Carolina Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Owen Wister Review*, and *Louisiana Literature*.

Kathleen Gunton has published her centos in *Rhino*, *Rock & Sling*, *Perceptions*, and *Tab*—to name a few. She posts to her blog, KathleenGuntonDiscursion.

Having grown up in California's San Joaquin Valley, **Nels Hanson** has worked as a farmer, teacher, and writer/editor. His fiction received the San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award and Pushcart nominations in 2010, 2012, and 2014. His poems have appeared in *Word Riot*, *Oklahoma Review*, *Pacific Review*, and other magazines, and his poetry received the 2014 Prospero Prize from the

Sharkpack Review and a 2014 Pushcart nomination.

M. J. Iuppa lives on a small farm near the shores of Lake Ontario. She is Director of the Visual and Performing Arts Minor at St. John Fisher College. Her third full-length poetry collection *Small Worlds Floating* is forthcoming from Cherry Grove Collections, August 2016.

Janne Karlsson is an insanely productive artist from Linköping, Sweden. His many books are available on Amazon and his poorly updated website (svenskapache.se).

Jason Kerzinski is a poet, playwright and photographer living in New Orleans.

The host of *The Drunken Odyssey: A Podcast About the Writing Life*, **John King** earned an MFA from New York University in 2010. His novel, *Guy Psycho and the Ziggurat of Shame*, will be released by Beating Windward Press in 2016.

Nathalie Kuroiwa-Lewis is an Associate Professor of English and Writing Center Director at Saint Martin's University, a private, liberal arts university in the Pacific Northwest. She has published "Awakenings" in *Penny Ante Feud*, "Osama" in *OccuPoetry*, and "Tickle-Down Economics" and "The Bottom Line" in *Social Policy*.

Nathan Leslie's nine books of fiction include *Sibs*, *The Tall Tale of Tommy Twice*, and *Root and Shoot*. His short stories, essays and poems have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines including *Boulevard*, *Shenandoah*, *North American Review*, and *Cimarron Review*. Check him out on his

website (nathanleslie.com), Facebook, and Twitter. Nathan is the current interviews editor at *Prick of the Spindle*.

Laura McCullough's next book of poems, *Jersey Mercy*, is forthcoming in 2016. Her other collections include *Rigger Death & Hoist Another*, *Panic*, *Speech Acts*, and *What Men Want*. Her work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Georgia Review*, *American Poetry Review*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Guernica*, *Southern Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Pank*, *Hotel America*, *Prairie Schooner*, and many other journals and magazines. Visit her website at lauramccullough.org.

Pushcart nominee **Bruce McRae** is a Canadian musician with over a thousand poems published internationally, including *Poetry.com*, *Rattle*, and *The North American Review*. His books, *An Unbecoming Fit of Frenzy* and *The So-Called Sonnets*, are available on Amazon. To see and hear more poems, go to 'BruceMcRaePoetry' on YouTube.

Donald Mitchell lives in Deming, WA, on land his great grandfather homesteaded in the 1880s. He works manual labor jobs to pay the bills. He's most recently been published in *The Far Field*, *Moss*, *The Boiler Journal*, and *Animal*, and soon will be published in *Referential Magazine*.

Christopher Moylan is an Associate Professor of English at New York Institute of Technology. He publishes poetry, fiction, and literary criticism.

An ex-roughneck (as on oil rigs), hospice nurse, and the former editor of *Bear Creek Haiku* (26+ years/127+ issues), **Ayaz**



Daryl Nielsen has published poems in *Lilliput Review*, *SCIFAIKUEST*, *New Verse News*, *Shamrock*, *Kind of a Hurricane*, and online at *bear creek haiku poetry*, *poems and info*.

Richard Peabody is the founder and co-editor of *Gargoyle Magazine* and editor or co-editor of twenty-three anthologies including *A Different Beat: Writings by Women of the Beat Generation*. Peabody taught at Johns Hopkins University for fifteen years. His new book is *The Richard Peabody Reader* (Alan Squire Publishers, 2015).

Drew Pissarra has written a poem for every movie that Fassbinder ever made. The two sonnets printed here are inspired by a Venezuelan who lives two blocks away from his apartment. He also blogs weekly on Korean movies at koreangrind-house.blogspot.com.

Charles Rafferty has published poems in *The New Yorker*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Southern Review*. His tenth collection of poems, *The Unleashable Dog*, was published by Steel Toe Books in 2014. He currently directs the MFA program at Albertus Magnus College.

Stephen Reilly's poems have appeared in *Wraparound South*, *Main Street Rag*, *Broad River Review*, *Cape Rock*, and other publications. He is presently working as a staff writer for the Englewood Sun, a daily Florida newspaper with circulation in south Sarasota County, Charlotte, and DeSoto counties.

A writer, editor, and book group facilitator based in Los Angeles, **Taylor Lauren**

Ross was selected as a 2014 AWP Writer to Writer mentee and is senior editor at *The Riding Light Review*. Since earning a BA in English from UCLA, she has published articles in *Santa Barbara Magazine* and elsewhere, and her fiction has appeared in *Westwind*, *Foliage Oak*, and *The Artificial Selection*. Visit her at taylorlaurenross.com.

Gerard Sarnat, MD, is the author of *Homeless Chronicles from Abraham to Burning Man* (2010), *Disputes* (2012), and *17s* (2014). Work from *Melting the Ice King* (2016) was accepted by seventy magazines, including *Gargoyle*'s fortieth anniversary issue. For *Huffington Post* reviews, reading dates, publications, interviews, and more, visit gerardsarnat.com.

Her work previously appearing in publications including *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Confrontation*, *The New Yorker*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Southern Review*, **Ciara Shuttleworth** just has finished a three-month residency at the Kerouac House in Orlando and an epic, 4500-mile, fifteen-day road trip from Florida to eastern Washington. More info can be found at ciarashuttleworth.com.

Rusty Spell is an Assistant Professor of English at Alabama State University where he advises the undergraduate magazine, *Dark River Review*. He has been published in *The Georgetown Review*, *The Mid-American Review*, *The Mississippi Review*, *Nightsun*, and others.

Tom Spencer is the pseudonym of a professor of English in Montgomery, Alabama. His creative work has appeared at *The Awl* and elsewhere. His critical writing has been published in venues including the

Times Literary Supplement, *Public Books*, and *American Literature*. He published a book on middlebrow literature with Palgrave Macmillan in 2015 and occasionally publishes chapbooks under the Academic Kitch imprint.

A widely published poet, historian and bar room philosopher from the United Kingdom, **John Stocks** has the honor of being published in anthologies with Maya Angelou, Bob Dylan, and Leonard Cohen. He strives to write poems that can be enjoyed by both specialists and the general public.

Daniel James Sundahl is Kirk Professor in English and American Studies at Hillsdale College, where he has taught for thirty years. He is the author of three books, and has over the years published nearly 400 articles, book reviews, and poems in a variety of national and international magazines. He is married to Ellen; they have one well-behaved German Shepherd dog and three less well-behaved mackerel cats.

A.C. Warner lives in Orlando, Florida, and is finishing a PhD from the University of Massachusetts. She hopes to publish

more, teach, and, in general, attempt to use her arts to delight and teach.

M.G. Wessels writes fiction and poetry. When not writing, he can be found repairing airplanes or trying craft beer; however, it is considered bad practice to combine the two. His work has been featured in *Apeiron Review*, *Text*, and *Centrifuge*. He studies at the State University of New York, New Paltz, where he lives. [@MG_Wessels](#)

Valerie Westmark fell in love with poetry in seventh grade and has been getting to know it better ever since. She finds joy in chai tea lattes, fresh cut flowers, worn book pages, relationships, and the white sand beaches of Pensacola, Florida. Her poetry has appeared in *The Wilderness House Literary Review*, *The Southern Voice*, *The Wayfarer*, *Sleet Magazine*, *The Voices Project*, *Damselffy Press*, and elsewhere.

Christopher Woods lives in Houston and Chappell Hill, Texas. He has published a novel, *The Dream Patch*, a prose collection, *Under a Riverbed Sky*, and a book of stage monologues for actors, *Heart Speak*. His photographs can be seen in his gallery at christopherwoods.zenfolio.com



