

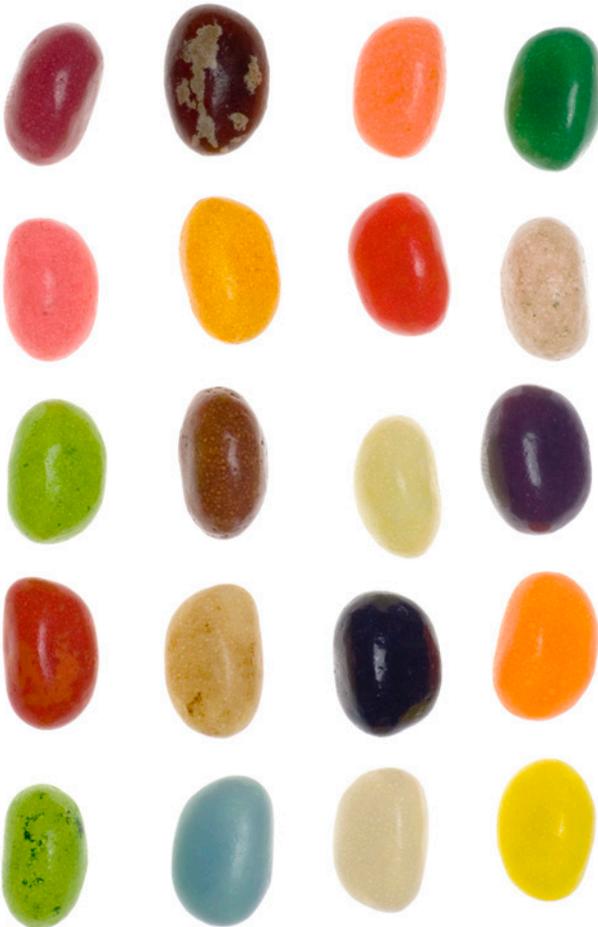


SUGAR HOUSE

REVIEW

#16

FALL/WINTER 2017



POETRY

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT POETRY MAGAZINE

FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Sugar Readers,

This issue marks *Sugar House Review's* eighth year, which is both a long and short time for a literary magazine. Of course, time is a tricky beast and these years have felt both long and short. We are proud of this magazine and the many wonderful contributors, readers, and staff that have been a part of its continued creation. The four founding editors started this in friendship with the hope of furthering the poetry community in Utah and beyond. It's with mixed emotions that we announce Jerry VanLeperen, one of our founding editors, is hanging up his editor's hat and red pencil.

If you haven't been part of a literary magazine's staff, particularly as an editor, it's hard to understand just how much work goes into each issue. We dare say, it's more taxing when you're part of an independent magazine, staying afloat without the support of a larger institution. For all of the work, time, emotion, and resources Jerry put into *Sugar House Review*, we want to say *thank you, thank you, thank you*. The magazine wouldn't be the same without you. You were essential in connecting *Sugar* with the midwest writing community, which has become so important to the magazine and us personally. We love you. Poetry brought us all together and, for us, that alone means poetry ain't dead.

Many thanks to each of you reading this for being a part of our poetry project,

Natalie, Nano, John, and Michael

I'd like to acknowledge Sandy Anderson, Lisa Bickmore, Ken Brewer, Star Coulbrooke, Brock Dethier, Teri Grimm, Steve Langan, David Lee, Richard Robbins, Pat Russell, Roberta Stearman, and William Trowbridge for an education, and what good I've contributed to *Sugar House Review* is a reflection of the inspiration you have given me.

I haven't known how to say goodbye. What I have tried to write just becomes too sentimental or too bitter, too sweet, too unfocused, or just too much. As *Sugar House Review* grew and evolved over the years, I found my sense of belonging to the larger poetry community diminished. What was once a passion now feels like a chore and the feeling of pride for back-from-the-printer issues gives way to an overwhelming guilt for leaving the other editors to do the work. Is it really better to burn out than fade away? I don't know. I have no apologies, but I do have so much gratitude for Natalie, Nano, Michael, and John for letting me share in this experience. It has been a delight.

For the readers and contributors of *Sugar House Review*, I sincerely thank you for these sixteen issues.

See you on down the road,

Jerry VanIeperen

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I'M THINKING ABOUT YOUR MOTHER

again.

Which is to say:

often,

sinking into the couch
like a half-flooded ship,

the water cradling
then smothering
as the hull tilts.

Okay, and you now:

relief as a delay of pain
instead of its end.

Or:

relief as a form of loss,

collecting in your hollows
like lead dust.

Now me:

as witness, the weight I bear
is all my own.

Now all of us:

seeped together.

A unanimous
rejection.

Why are we always outside
when inside they are singing?

Your head kinks back, throat white as a wrist.

I get it. I know. I showed it to you.
That sheet of stars.

THE DOMINO EFFECT

Not to be confused with The Butterfly, The Hawthorne,
The Casimir, The Accordion.

Each day, one thing touches another, which in turn
does one more.

You trick the whole in neon, light
become definitive.

The drawbridge of your mind lowers,
to a thunder of boots,

the rapacious entering for a furious sacking.
Don't let the wordless

aftermath frighten. At least believe in the Lazarus effect,
all of us again upstanding,

shrouds dragging as we window-shop, sip coffee.
The stars off-gas

one flare at a time, and this is how the ancestor
of the cow walked backwards

into ocean to become the manatee. A dam breaks
and it's Noah's fun park

all over again. Don't worry about what's next,
the tourists with their endless selfies,

and clotting memes. The wolf is the answer
to the question of the wolf.

By the end, it isn't clear who wins,
the canyon or the cowboy.

Both jag with scars, echo the ring of bullets
whispering their heat

to a chosen few. Grass blades, having learned
the truth of fire,

can't wait to tell their neighbors, who kindle and burn,
kindle and burn.

PORTRAIT OF A BOUNDARY LINE FROM A
MOVING VEHICLE AT DUSK

January vees in on layers
of wet bright
against the barbed wire

easements that split
the city from its surround
of bucked-up tree rounds

with the slash burns still burning
in the hills. In the trees,
more valley fog sinks

a few minutes of light
into the welcome sign
and the seedlings'

wrapped collars
brace for new cold.
The old school flag

is raised, not waving
as trucks rattle by,
dualies churning

the gravel. Houses
lit up against the night
relax with space

between them, and
then the past leans in
as it does sometimes

where fences hang open
and the willow trees almost
brush the ground.

UNTITLED COLLAGE ON POSTER BOARD

They've got the place surrounded, and who could resist? Like ants swarming a grasshopper, like ants swarming a fawn, a house, your life or your imagined life. The way ants build a bridge of themselves to get to the food bowl floating in the center of the dog's water bowl. A pontoon bridge of ants. Who could compete with that? The kingdom of ants. It's any kingdom I find myself outside of, looking in. They're having a great time on the dog food. They're really going for it, their own fall of the Western Roman Empire. And then I get the hose or I get the shovel or the bug spray, as my own little treaty of 382 that I had to look up, where the Romans and the Goths kept things going a bit longer. What's good is possible, we say, but what's bad is likely. Say you're the giant, for instance. It's an attack of you, visited upon the swarm. And the swarm is at first against you, and then thankful for the shadow you cast down the avenue, and then you're the usual. It's an easy arc to trace. And say I'm there too, eating dinner at Chez Le Feé, because it's my story, how I'm keeping dinner going as your shadow walks by the full-wall window, your giant strides, and then how I'm keeping it going a bit longer as someone's spraying all the cleaning spray there is on the table next to me, and I'm imagining the glow of torches along the hillside, the way orange is such a happy color, like the sun, like bringing thousands of suns to bloom at once over the fall of the Western Roman Empire. It's how any memory works, like a photograph of the last game of the championship season taken from the cheap seats. Ants! They're nothing but ants! Here, let me squish them with my thumb. There's this moment when you come face to face with who you're going to be from now on. See? What we say we've seen and are now just seeing, saying "first time"? And then it's not the first time. It's been seen a long time and is still just seeing, how we each have something we'll never have. The children we'll never have crowding the square, to whom we hand over the stuffed animals we didn't keep from childhood for just this purpose. The people we'll not grow old with sitting on the front porches we don't have, to watch the caravan that's not passing. My, look how tall they've gotten on Visigoth appreciation day . . . It's a collage you made years ago and then forgot about, as most things are, spread out on a plate, floating there, surrounded by water. And you're hungry, so you reach for it, and call it the world, as it's falling and rising up, to fail and to praise the beautiful despair of happening upon any grand or common edifice crumbling into the hills equally brimming with light.

“WHAT WAS THIS WRATH OF YOURS THAT
YOU WENT TRAMPLING THE FOREST?”

In the great presidential debate, you're to play the part of "Quizzical Townsperson." It's a pretty decent gig, and it means you get to be in *The Great Epic of Our Time*. Sure, at some point you're going to have your arm torn off, or you're going to be the part where whomever wins sharpens his or her animus by accidentally shooting you in the face, and it'll hurt, but without you there'd be no humanizing backstory to the final boss fight. Buildups are important, as epics wouldn't be epic without all those pages. It's a causal relationship, like you and your shadow, inextricably joined, but needing this third thing to bring you together. So, maybe you could blame your shadow, because the sun's too far away and too grand. And they need you, as there are many people who can do what you do, but only some of them can imagine lying on a white sandy beach in a beautiful tropical bay in just this way. "We're in this together," candidates say to each other, turning and heading back to the tower, clapping their hands as if to applaud their supporters and themselves. Domo, we name them, or Disaster Girls, these little explosions, these stories that aren't really secrets, but aren't really polite conversation either. "What bombs are there left to drop," we're really asking by the end, and then we find out. If born to grief we turn out so like and unlike ourselves, grief. It's a kind of phantom-limb syndrome, how any minute now I'm going to realize there are options, but for now we're talking about nothing, which I find slightly delightful. Something to do with sleeping, how they say every day is a brand new you, but if so, the brand new me is an antique finish that's so sought after, except in actual old places. It's why I'm asking about shadows, and about this wrath of yours. They concern me. They do. They make me want to stand up and denounce every self-help manual and kitchen plaque regarding the wonder of one's dreams and how everything's blue sky with clouds and gray surf against a cliff saying I love you like stars or footprints in the sand. This shadow, or angel, is falling from a great height, and music's the sound it makes falling around you. I see it in people sometimes, the way they're holding a functioning *yes* close to the surface—how they think it's covered—and at any moment it seems it's going to break through, and I'm not quite sure what it is, but I'm convinced it's not going to be a good thing.

THE CHAPTER ON TIME

The last days of any system are chaos. Barbarians outside, making speeches. The secret police calling in sick and working on their disguises. The furious doctors at the bedside. The extravagance of their entertainments. It looks like that later, but when you're in it, it just looks like Tuesday. Tell me again, when were those great times you're longing for? Those times we should be getting back to, unravelling the clock, unbreaking the eggs? After having won some big war perhaps, during the confetti parade? Or is it more local than that, like when you finally got the neighbor to cut down that hedge or move away. You were at your most vital then, threatening lawsuits and midnight poisonings. This chapter's full of gears and wires, and whatever page you're on is always the last page. It's a kind of silence that keeps spooling out, day after day of traffic layering into your breathing. I like the idea that the world is only a construct of our sensory apparatus, that it's a kind of fantasy then, partial and partially known. And what, then, might be lurking all around us, unperceivable landscapes rising and falling into and out of unknowable weirdness. My brother and his friends, home from college, were playing golf once, 1988 or so, and my brother chips this shot wide into the back of my head. Next thing I know, I'm face down in the grass, and I remember it as a kind of flying, passing out and coming to. There was this other place for a moment, and then back to more blood than I thought there'd be. It was last days of visiting home from college. Then it's the navy. The last days of disco. The late great empire. How it's elusive, what we're talking about, as Brunhilde Pomsel, at 105, is finally talking about her time as Joseph Goebbels's secretary. You get the feeling she'd go back to the Nazi machine if she could. It's when she was making serious money. The music was great, smiles came easy.

ASYLUM

She has a way with numbers.
His hands do not forget the
weight of fruit

but here with all the others
knee to knee no way to add,
afraid to even whisper.

Have you seen? Time slows
the more you walk about the world.

So many hallways, little rooms
to count. They learn that nothing
lasts beyond the now.

They wear their boots like
irons clapped to plastic chairs.

BLACK HOLE HORIZON

I'm in flux with a TV alien, the best sad thing that's happened to me all year. He's in flux with someone else, of course. They live in different macrocosms. My chances with him aren't great either, I know, but the odds of my nonfictional self bumping into his fictional one are actually much better than the odds of two universes overlapping and forming a handy little doorway, so I'm in a much better position than the long lost girlfriend. She'll keep pining away in her parallel world, wishing she had the weekly window into his life that millions enjoy, or at least an identical night sky. I'll keep polishing the glass of my flat-screen crystal ball and writing her farther and farther into the back of his mind. Until he can barely remember what her face looks like. Until she's just another dot on his bright and busy page.

COOLEYVILLE ROAD

I avoid the treadmill two-step in the gym
because when I'm moving through time
I plan on arriving at a destination

so driving by Cooleyville Road
for the seventh time in seven minutes,
I pictured that night fifty years back,

Ira on acid, soldiering up the tenement's
four filthy flights to Spinoso's apartment.
On the second-floor landing he stopped & asked,

Have we been climbing these stairs forever?
After answering, *we have*, he stared at me,
not in panic, but thoughtfully & then we resumed ascending.

A driver on the Daniel Shays Highway
already possessing an impaired hippocampus
will have his equilibrium further frazzled

passing the same street sign seven times
even as the odometer ticks off the miles.
When your directional powers are non-existent

and it seems you're getting nowhere,
when you believe the ground
beneath your feet is stationary

and east & west are north & south—
singular-plural,
first person-third—

you keep travelling on
whether life invites you or not.
I wasn't looking for trouble

on Cooleyville Road and somehow made it home,
dug up the invasive spiderwort on Monday,
found it thriving on Tuesday.

AWAKE

to be the only one
to know the night

to watch the moon
move like an hour

hand across the sky
to clutch the couch

against the pull
of outer space

to see the terrifying
message in the stars

SIX YEARS AFTER MY FIRST SON'S DEATH

At my younger son's baseball practice,
a dad talks about his two boys—
all that energy and wrestling at bedtime.

I know I should use the old bread
when I make my son a sandwich,
but I open the new.

It's wasteful.

Like the hours I spent
pumping milk for my dead son.

Memories of my two boys
flash like reflections
off windshields.

The two of them jumping on the bed,
shrieking with joy,

until they broke the lamp—
shards of glass.

Light
wasted all over the floor.

OPOSSUM, OPOSSUM (THE POSSUM PRAYS)

The night has the night animals:
tough cats, raccoons and possums, feral children,
women in uncomfortable shoes,
men wearing warm socks, owls,
and they come to hunt,
to dodge the magnificent whales of God.

But the possum will always lose,
and the child will laugh from the bushes,
the owl from overhead,
the whales from down below.

The possum sinks to the void beneath your shed,
the sun rises, and the possum sinks.

Later, you call him the Opossum Paul,
but he shouts only terrible news,
like a be-retched Jonah to Ninevah,
not rooting for you at all,
imagining food and solitude,
food and solitude,
dinner, and he chews the paper plate to nothing.

What else would he eat if you let him?
What else is down there, already?
Surely, thinks the possum, and surely: no more whales?
No more low blows from the on high?

Well. The possum is swallowed and disgorged,
swallowed again, and he comes back from below,
and the child will laugh from the bushes,
the owl from overhead,
the whales from down below.

A PLAN

DA takes cold water in the face,
fists in the eyes, comb in hand, eyes in mirror,
grease in fingers, fingers in hair, comb in hair.

The new cabinet.
Those Melons.
Tarp in the back lot.
Pay Francis.
Yell at Jimmy.

There's rust in the sink and his socks.
Someone slams a kitchen door.
He slams a truck door.

New cabinet.
Load the melons.
Cover the good shelves.
Pay Francis.
Yell at Little Jim.

Rust in the truck door,
dirt in the bed, coffee,
brown stains on the floor and seats.

Open window, engine, engine, a turn,
grinding through gravel, rolling it—
to work, with the radio off.

New cabinet.
Sell the fruit.
Clean up the back lot.
Frankie.
Friggin' Jimmy.

DA's undershirt and white skin,
underarms stained, collar stretched,
in the room of broken stereos—

He stumbles behind the audio-cassette racks,
drops to his knees, scowls, lifts
fresh watermelons beneath each arm,
two by two toward Clyde's new truck—

Fellas out front chewing chlorophyll gum,
shaved this week, before, earlier,
can't be told about the moon men, and
we smelled mold,
watermelons rolled away, and
this river's been dry a while now,
for some time this has been working:

*Grease; slick back to the middle;
Part it with the end of a rattail comb,
Make a plan.*

FISH TREATMENT

Nona, who lived through three of them,
rarely talked about wars. In the kitchen

the macramé lampshade filtered
a chain-link shadow across her face,

a grid of borders dividing her neckline,
the dark apron that fell across her breasts

like night over a pair of capsized boats.
The tap water rushed and tumbled

over the mackerel piled in the basin,
her hands holding the dead fish

the way she held her sons, one by one
each year of the Second War,

before pulling a bed sheet over them,
and shutting their thin eyelids for good.

She'd pick up every fish with care, cradle
it in one hand, while her other, free hand

would sink the narrow fillet knife
into its white belly—a narrow passage

one makes when sliding into bed at night.
And like a waking flower, a stream

of blood would bloom within that basin,
her hands brush against its thin petals.

1. LA ROMITA

1.2

We begin here, where the antiquated Spanish aqueducts were abandoned to an inarticulate architecture we remain unacquainted-with— bracketed by church buildings built with coquina now alienated in allegory, where the place we were placed is displaced, as the turntable spins to sublimate the pattern: everyday rearriving to we arrive over again everyday at.¹

1.1

Barefoot girls selling guayaba and cigarettes in singles in tin gardens do so under duress. Give thought to giving. Bonfires in painted oil barrels. Candles tealights on the chapel staircase. And homeless men, half naked in newspapers, in suits that didn't fit absolutely, are included out and boxed in.

I was, lost in thought and uninvolved,  in a suit that didn't fit absolutely, sharing a bottle of red in brown paper on a park bench with two backpacking blonde women in army boots. Doing sousveillance on the scene, which was quite a scene, of the scenic obscene, or from what I've seen from place to place.

1.3

Aluminium flowers cut from pop cans. On footpaths and sleeping mats, from a camera lens caked in egg yoke; a double-red graffiti wall sun on a boarded window, like a sunspot burn mark licked out the bonfire, then photographed.

¹ Longing for belonging

THE MAN IN THE HAT

They used to be whole, but now they are parts.
His legs across the room, her hand severed on her lap.
The boy who once had eyes. Coal black and soft.
There's a wheelchair covered in downed wires.
A bloody foot stuck on the footrest.
One scream does not sound like another.
Uniforms run back and forth,
Wheel bodies on luggage carts, on rolling suitcases
Strung together like a train of toy wagons.
Somewhere history is gloating. It's still alive.
Somewhere a man in a light jacket and dark hat
May be watching the footage on TV, eating his dinner,
Or strolling through another city making notes.
Or, maybe he felt confident enough to go home
For more ammunition and kiss his mother.
She was a good mother, after all. She loved him.

THE POND OF YESTERDAY'S IMAGINATION

You were skating on the end of the whip,
bonfire etching tree limbs against the starless sky,
so long ago your knees ache to think of it.
Kennedy weeks dead, the car radio blaring
from the shore *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?*
while two lovers slumped low in the back seat,
just as you'd slumped in front the day he was murdered,
sprung from Latin class to storm the parking lot,
each station repeating *The President has died*,
each car motor running into the nowhere
of your imagination's limits, a line drawn in chalk
on the limo's shiny black hood,
as wind kicked up rotten leaves from the asphalt.
The school alarm rang, then stopped, then rang again,
and the principal stomped into the lot,
yelling, *Get back in there where you belong*,
but you, like the others, didn't belong in there
anymore, translating the triumphs of Aeneas.
You belonged to the new world opening its arms
like a sinkhole on the Beltway in Virginia,
swallowing stunned commuters on their way home,
just as the pond could have sucked you
into its vortex of concussions and broken necks:
you were so young you couldn't imagine it.

RONALD REAGAN

Washington
National
Airport
IATA: DCA
ICAO: KDCA
FAA LID: DCA
02/10/2017
new signs
read Real ID™
at the souvenir shop
new hats, t-shirts and mugs
demand the return
of American
greatness
by the line Clear™
offers a 30-day trial
for fast track crossing
of security in exchange
for money and fingerprints
my feet are bare
the old x-ray machine
encircles me as I mirror
the outline of a figure
a featureless human
hands up
hands up
hands up
A woman puts on gloves
and pats down my chest
“buttons,” she says
my bag is scanned, swiped
my clothes handled
by a man also
in gloves
on the other side
an American
Airlines™ ad says
they are #goingforgreat

HappyORNot™
asks me to answer
via emoticons “how good
is your wi-fi?”
my blank face stares
at the yellow smiley
I see my name in a list
on a screen
flashing
stand-by
stand-by
stand-by

IN MY FATHER'S OFFICE

When the desk spits out the anxious vehicle
of a black widow's body, you hardly blink.

It was you who taught me that only small things
should fear small things. In Prague one year,

in spring, we crossed the Charles Bridge
where strangers idled and toothy spiders

swarmed the lampposts, spinning traps
in their musical way. You held my shoulders

while panic rode my legs. Nothing like this
has happened since. Now you hold your shoe

and beat the hourglass back, the incessant
eyes. It's stuck in a corner. It's like a tree

trying to throw off its bridle of snow,
desperate, flinchy, like a man on a highway

flickering, riding out of his life. Imagine
what it would've been like to lie there,

your legs tucked under you in the darkness,
clothed in sleep, not expecting to be found

by anyone, just wanting to stay in a drawer.
I'll kill it myself and you'll watch me do it

from the farthest side of the room.
I'll kill it with these hands you've given me.

THE CONTEST

When whoever's parents hosted the sleepover
fell asleep, we went upstairs: six boys taking turns
wetting and smoothing our hair in the bathroom mirror.
It was usually Ben who'd take us into his room
and have us sit on the floor while he sat on his bed
like a judge in a hockey t-shirt. You got a point
if your voice was the deepest in the group,
and another if you were the tallest, and another
if he decided you had the best nose or skin.
Whenever he hosted, I wanted Alex to pick me;
when it was my turn to be looked at, I'd stand up
straight, as if on the edge of a diving board.
He'd always tell me my voice was too high
and my nose was too big, even though I always
picked him, even though I liked him the most.
I didn't know the real thing would be like that—
stilling my voice, wiping sweat from my forehead
and waiting for the boy I wanted to choose me
as light began pressing its face to the window.
I never told them that while they competed
I was learning to swim a different race
against myself, through colder water.

THE SCIENTISTS

Bay City, Michigan

Know this: the boats you made
actually go places; hollowed clanking

of watery chambers, piping and rust
on blue for a reason. My grandfather,

painting hulls, glancing at his reflection
in portholes on Destroyer escorts,

adjusting bow thruster and trawl crane,
leaning against well walls at lunch—

I'm told I look like him, that I carry
a similar silence though sometimes he hit

my mother and gardened instead of wrote.
His hands roughed the bowed shells

of frigates before lacquering them,
perhaps even the RV Knorr, the ship

that discovered the wreck of the Titanic.
Housed the scientists who discovered

the wreck, the vessel a tinny jumble
that could have been made anywhere

but was assembled here by car mechanics
and line workers to meander through Thunder

Bay and gasp at the Atlantic. Bay City:
you are now a scrapyards, Defoe Shipbuilding

company sold and resold, soldering tools
cast into the dusking Huron Basin.

Before he died I captained the clacking
vessel of my skateboard around his block,

discovered new ways to be bored,
to owe myself to the scientists alive

at twilight before curfew that could
call me by both hull name and number,

and had enough of a particular kind
of grace to let some things stay unfound.

STUDIES FIND PEARLS ARE TEETH AFTER ALL

I've never been in woods
without the sight of interstates,

but I want to be so lost I lose
the diagram of my own form

among forest circles echoing
from tree-flesh

in small eternities. I am always half-
hoping to find an eye-plucked body

so I can be the hero who arrived
too late—a bad witch, or the not-

sound of every branch encasing
me in an oyster shell

where I will stay Hammurabi-handless
with agate nubs, not quite

a dead fish. Who can remember
those other lives

where I swam with my egg-tooth
out proud? I wake up

with the dead tooth
in my fist—I'll shuck it

like roses & let it grow
a skin of its own.

DOLLHOUSE ON UNMARKED GRAVE

Objects of natural disaster can be measured
only in functionality—the dead

bear: a pile of dried wine & a lemony
caravan. Twig-maggots rocking themselves

in small chair-shapes—I make

contact for the purpose
of classification & the swirling

ghosts of things gone

useless, limp, not
awake, but more

awake more wide & in place

than the chimney that careens itself
upwards & into skies that turn

green & sire washing

the emptied bear

creating gone-ness

& the odor of

birth.

APOTHEOSIS OF X AND THE AUTHOR

And then ascend
as if the box does
what it says:

elevates. Assume
belief
in pulley

and counterweight,
allow the body
enclosure. Enter

the room.
No. First the hallway,
turn two corners.

Catch yourself garish
before the knock, hear
the trash

wheeling by.
Here's engineering:
the body's potential

energy held, converted
by cables.
I said enter

the room. And he will
as if the floor
wasn't stacked against us.

PROOF OF ZERO

X proves me
wrong. I know

pleasure, I just don't
want it. That nothing

should happen
is greater than

or equal to
what does happen:

a bad outcome
is an outcome

I can count on
and nothing

is something
I can hold close.

THE HUNTING CAMP

(central Pennsylvania)

Which hangs greater on the eaves. Which sleeps,
striped, which wakes in winter. The Concord vines

on their slanting fence have walked for miles.
Which light, early or late, which interior,

which dust, which selective tilt of the motes' angles,
which forgotten. Which blackened iron pans. Which

antlers, which absent bones, which thin moon.
Which flesh consumed, which hung as trophy, which

burns in autumn or appears to, gathering the torched
tones thrown off the unlayering trees. Which is a man's

place, a white man's place. Which inheritance,
which "tradition," which deed marked 1804 stashed

in the floorboards. Which America. In which
I learn to drive on the brushy expanse of the yard.

Which series of grinding halts. Which scarred
tenderness, which isolated series of tendernesses.

Which weaponry, which disastrous pride, which
brownish progeny in amongst the wood piles—

in which I that progeny steer across the face of it,
knowing what it is, and shift cleanly into second.

HEARTLAND

I collect tin men. They stand around on the top shelf of a china cabinet in the dining room like the Latin Kings hanging out in Humboldt Park. Most of the time, I'd never know they were there. But once in a while, when the moon goes behind a cloud, and a shot rings out, one of them falls down and can't get up. Maybe because he doesn't have a heart.

I keep thinking of the first recipient of Jarvik's mechanical heart. After the successful operation, he didn't live very long. I can't remember his name. I suppose this means we could all end up in a box of old photos the fading colors of Autumn.

It seems Chicago will never forgive me whenever I enter her. I make no apologies for my inability to preserve the architectural heritage of Louis Sullivan. The lake will probably still be here when all of those ornamental cornices are worn as smooth as any pebble upon the shore. I sometimes wonder why the lake isn't full of salt sneaking in through the Saint Lawrence Seaway along with the giant ore carriers dumping bilge water contaminated with invasive species.

On Argyle Street in Little Saigon, Asian Carp are considered to be a great delicacy. Last winter, I could watch plump, golden fish floating motionless beneath the ice on a pond in my friend Jamie's rock garden. Their tiny hearts were scarcely beating; as slow as snow softly falling.

WELLS FARGO

I'm thinking how the word spill exactly describes
a sunrise, as in *bourbon spilled over the mountain*
—how the sun becomes
a sloshing bucket

soon I'll only see
the bottom of. I want to know a little stumble
won't hurt anyone, might be welcome even, as in
words spilled incoherent from the child's mouth.
When was the last time anything spilled from my mouth?

I'm thinking how nice to watch the ridge
slump into a butte, that, high enough, the range becomes
leading for a rose window. I'd like to watch
glass puddle. Daughter-to-be,

I imagine
last night after the overdraft you seeing your mother
in the bedroom alone. I only want
to know how to proceed. Will the body
you'll live through be so adjusted that if I

stay silent, you get a mind full of shards? *Seed spilled*
on the ground—that Bible story I used to laugh about. Light
splashed on a shoulder blade. How to separate
of consequence

from not? Is this why if I use liquor
as a metaphor I quickly steady it? Your mother spills
from her clothes, wanted new. I can dream up
pre-stumblings in a vague heaven. Practice, please. My double-,
my triple-checking gently could wreck you.

THE GREAT EGRESS

There's a world born every minute, whistled
up with a prophet or two, an Eden
avec snake, maybe a feejee mermaid
and the hot fry-and-hiss of a banging

good time right next to Ned the Learned Seal.
More Barnum than Bailey, perhaps, more mare's
nest than miracle but plenty of real
come-one, come-all, O You Saps and Side Chair

Pilots, at least until the whole damned thing
burns screaming down, pale beluga whales boiled
in their tanks, chimps and dancing bears leaping
out of windows only to be shot dead

by beat cops with nothing kinder to do,
a fireman splitting like kindling a crazed
tiger's skull while carrying a tattooed
and ruined lady from the sublime blaze

of all the hokum through which we had strayed
bemused on our way to the Great Egress,
into daylight just beginning to fade
as the doors locked firmly shut behind us.

LINES WRITTEN FOR MY DAUGHTER AFTER *IT'S THE GREAT PUMPKIN, CHARLIE BROWN* ENDS AND THE NETWORK MAKES A TOO-QUICK LEAP TO THE OPENING SCENE OF THIS WEEK'S EPISODE OF *SCANDAL*, A SCENE WHICH SHOWS THINGS I DID NOT ANTICIPATE BEING ASKED ABOUT BY MY SIX YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER AFTER, AS I BELIEVE I MENTIONED, WATCHING *IT'S THE GREAT PUMPKIN, CHARLIE BROWN*

I must admit
it was something I cannot imagine Linus,
when he inevitably grows to maturity, would be engaged in
but would always hold in secret
in his thoughts, burning
at the box he shoved and locked and buried and barricaded them inside;

which Schroeder would someday excel at;
Peppermint Patty would dream about it
until she, at a disappointing office party, finally asks herself:

“Charlie Brown? Really?”

which Lucy would, in college, find a man who plays
guitar and demand and demand and demand

and be disappointed and disappointed and disappointed;
which Pig Pen would make most of his short film career garnering accolades for;
which Charlie Brown would fumble, that
light bulb nose of his bonking comically,
that head of his never proportioning to his body, Hindenberging into her knees; oh,

which Sally,
Sally would enter the convent
not thinking about

and find it all dashed the night before her vows
when visions of Linus wash over her,
leave her aching most of all on her long, dark night of the soul
thinking her emptinesses
were still his
to fill.

They would reconnect
by chance
(sort of)
in a Target,
end up sitting
next to one another
in a pumpkin patch no mystic squash would ever rise from,
wind crackling the stiff grass,
leaves shushing and shaking down the streets,
they bump hands by accident (sort of),
too scared to say
what they really wish for,
unable to voice
what is plainest
on their lips.

FORTY-EIGHT

This girl married
A handsome twin
You once loved

They are living
Now in Paris
Where she suffers

A treatment nearly
Identical to
Your own

But do you recall
One evening when
After dinner

She flashed
Her frying pan
Advising

We request
Its lustrous twin
For our wedding

I marveled
The steel was already
Turning black

ELEVEN

The holiday
Of illness
With friends

From northern
Childhoods
Converging

To say love
You maybe for
The first or

Last times with
Such cheer
The old

Receive our envy
The young
Are welcome to it

Mothers lie
In daughters'
Vacant beds

While fathers
Vaporize
Behind cigars

The babe leaps
Barefoot from
Stone to stone

In the summer of
Another
Breaking day

FUGUE

In the moment I was not in the moment I was
far above my body in a corner of the room watching

I've known dissociation since first traumas bruises
on my shoulders like hands from the ceiling I watched

myself held down *grief is like the Grand Canyon*
years later grief is like the Grand Canyon *viewed from space* but trauma

is zooming back & forth between the two without control
standing with dust in my eyes when I want space

& when I need to be on the ground to start running away my body
doesn't move I am strapped in immobile & so distant

I think if I had cried he would have stopped sooner I wanted to cry
but from the ceiling it all looked so familiar & anyway wasn't it someone else

& anyway he didn't hurt me I lay in his arms after he said *I was good*
wasn't I I listened to you trying to get my body back my words back

I said *it took you long enough* like he'd been late with breakfast & he laughed
The worst part is that I think he filmed it the whole thing

me trying or not trying to cry the saying *stop* over and over laying in his arms after
The moment a wisp drifted to the ceiling like steam from a kettle calling out it was done

SHEVAUN BRANNIGAN

MOONSCAPE

Dictate time in prosthetic dreams.
Nothing is ours anymore. Nothing
I can seize and mold in my likeness.
Is it no moon or new moon? I am never sure.
I proffer a woman's solitude like hands
holding church bells, offer refreshments
to guests. The corner market out of milk
again, a dusty mirrored world levitates
my grandmother's words. Words passed
through hands: she remembered
nothing of my mother's birth
except ether and being shaved clean.

FEARSCAPE

If you were my sister, you would be dead.

Your beautiful arms outstretched,
can't say shit with a hole in your head.

If you were my sister, would you cover up already?

Plum in one hand, vetches at your gender,
a wolf at your neck. *Twenty minutes of action:*
they said you were asking for it, my sister.

If you were my sister, you would sit in the corner.

Your beautiful face levitating over water—
no longer a body, just a hole in the ocean,
a hole in our human backs spilling out over the floor.

DOPING THE WATCHDOGS

The farmer's Dobermans are chained to the stump, they snap and rattle like Halloween props. Never having left a 4' radius, you could say those dogs are only rivets in the dust, lackluster echocardiograms on ice. The farmer drives a semi,

revisits crank from time to time, wishes he had a wife to share the plots of alfalfa, corn. To curl around his carapace at night like aqua scarves. The city news breaks through the night in spurts, but in low-res, in phonics, in not quite

relatable terms. A radio PSA: *The region's drinking water positive for cadmium, methane, lead.* The dogs coagulate with their chains and the highway wheezes. Engine breaks throb and sputter. All those mineral rights signed away

a hundred years ago for \$40 dollars a pop. Now gas wells top the peaks like tinny Reno pulses, a stretch of frenetic, husked magnetos. Exxon scoops and pours. At dawn, the farmer bush hogs the fields, scrapes nearby road kill for the dogs,

rakes hay. If it rains, it molds. He names the calves T-bone, Rib-eye, Burger. Hangs a car tire in each pen for the steers to tussle. Misses his mother, who's been gone nearly a decade. He wears what wears him, wipes his hands, pops ephedrine tabs

like vertebrae and wraps a few inside some deli cuts: chipped ham, bologna, whatever's in the fridge and rank. Those dogs, he miffs, just large slabs of meat themselves. He hates to think that way; his own sleep only comes in unarmed jolts.

DENOUEMENT

When the movie burns,
light floods

the house to silence—

plates drop
& pedals outpace the chain

faster & faster,

prayer beads move
but nothing catches

then & now, a spool

a fingernail can't wedge between,
real, flammable, wound so tight,

to stay is Hollywood—

celluloid & lightness, that *yes*—
to feel like I've won,

& don't give a fuck, that high

biochemists compare to crack,
first love & breathlessness—

I look for what keeps me here.

DOLL, HOUSE

There is a home where I shrink inside
to fit every room. More out of body

than furniture, but I have been that too,
posable in the kitchen & bath,

tub filled to the brim, shower falling.
Remember? I have been the carpet

& Queen Anne chair, coffee table set
for you, dresser, with belts & ties.

Trope the bed, to rule with no rules, king
spread pulled wide. What is a realm

with windows painted shut, sun slanted
& the view a daydream? I never knew

I had a smallest self & wasn't looking
when I forgot I was alive.

TENERAL

Do you remember the furnace of cicadas
at dusk in a field, the heat, ineluctable
as a mirror, of metamorphosis or mating?
A nocturnal percussion, louder
than the stridulation of subtle wings,
stirred you awake. You counted each beat,
each hour of night that grew, its cooling root,
you thought, in the sea, in the moon.
Your consenting words consented
without praise, while, outside, the cicadas
praised, loud and unhearing. Remember
the cicada pitch of your blood
in the summer dusk, the shedding of skin
or clothes in a field, the prayers for rain
prayed over the fire? Over the poem
your heart burst forth in every tree.

FLOCK

Red wing blackbird on the fence post, barbed wire lacing the fields.
I became a mother here, buried my childhood self in the bog,

under a wooden pallet, underwear stained with blood.
The Amish youth stood in a half-circle outside my window

singing Christmas carols and Gott ist Die Liebe.
After London, after Odessa, I could only have sex with strangers

for the rest of my life, cursed like a single shot on the steps of Potemkin.
I fell sprawled on the asphalt looking up flickering like a television, mouth

opened wide in a thick red palette, cracked spectacles dangling
from my ears and mercury pooling under the back of my head.

I came back to America, a heritage of women's dismembered parts.
We all know how to quilt ourselves into this earth, no way to unravel

every stitch now. Outside my window flocks of starlings shape-shift in loops,
swooping together, protection in numbers.

IN-FLIGHT: PHILADELPHIA TO BIRMINGHAM

On the occasion of my mother's 75th birthday party

We spend the morning blowing up balloons,
the plastic colors filled with my coffee breath,

shellacked by the kids' unapologetic spit.
Flabby failed attempts litter the just-swept floor.

I feel along the wall for the nails we keep in place
to hang the rotating cheer of our Happy Birthday sign,

its drooping smile and matte, fading shine.
Without it, we simply could not celebrate.

Your descent, Mother. I am in it. I'm the air,
dry and flu-filled, whirling in place, I am dirt

sour tea in your Styrofoam cup, the in-flight
magazine's sleep machine bartering choices

of water sounds. I hear the river's directionless
dark. I watch your shimmering gold

numbers float to the ceiling: seven trailed
by five. They will catch in the reeling fan,

the kids fret, between cartoon commercial breaks.
Thank you for this flour to sift, eggs to beat,

the request for our family banana cake,
best made with the brownest, overripe flesh.

Doing my best to prepare for this,
the fruit has been ruining for a week.

Gluey pulp in a bowl. The flies gather.

RINEKE DIJKSTRA: *SELF-PORTRAIT,
MARNIXBAD, AMSTERDAM, 1991*

"I came out of the swimming pool and looked in the mirror and I took my goggles off, and it looked like I was crying. I thought, maybe I should make a self-portrait."

—Rineke Dijkstra, in an interview with BlouinArtinfo

After a brutal bike spill
 she was ordered to swim

herself well, and behold
 the breadth of that exhaustion:

fried goggle-sunk eyes,
 ruddled cheeks, spent limbs

that hang like a limp marionette's
 from her close-to-transparent

bathing suit. Replicating white
 wall and floor shower tiles

seem to try to box her inside,
 but she's oh-so-very out-

of-the-lines. She's wrecked.
 In the now double-whiteness

of the Guggenheim, seized
 by the same exoskeletal twitch,

I feel a fissuring of the frame
 we experience as real—

This is a gallery of the tissue-skinned
 matron with red helmet hair

gripping the hand of her fidgety
 grandson. It's the whispering

knot of teenagers forced into
one more stupid field trip

and the infant sucking on her mother's
bead necklace as the woman's

instinctual hips urge her child
to sleepiness. Beyond, labyrinthine

hallways lead to the Impressionist rooms
blooming careful arrangements

of peaches and pitchers, so calm, cool,
in their pretty precision.

What bounty, order, and polish,
there is in this world to resist.

What pulsing temptation to twist
oneself past indelicate grace

toward the safeness of a still life.

PEOPLE DANCING WITH THEIR ARMS RAISED

What he called my perfect yellow tulip thighs
and called them *mine* and sucked his teeth,
a noise of possession like several hundred orange coins
collected from a field of weed-flowers.
Undoing the string of my hospital gown in his kitchen,
he put one finger against the blue moon lace panty waist,
his eyes warming over my body, my back
flinching as though under the shadow of a raised bat. He means,
Me and all of my friends, we're always moving like this,
and begins to show me by tilting his body away from me
a baseball game flickering dimly in the background
sunburnt men twisting in white outfits, the wood cracks as they run.
His father is dead and mine is alive trying to find a way to talk to me.
And then he's turning away towards pictures of Stefanie in red lipstick
hanging over his mother's table.
Do it, he taunts, not saying a word, *come for me.*
He looks back, my legs hanging from the counter, naked
feet hovering above the tongue-pink tiles,
daring me to become fully my desperation and buck into the air
or break my hand across his body
trying to get inside

—for my protectors, who were furious

A BOY WITH A BERRY ON HIS TONGUE

We drive to breakfast late in the day. Your body hangs out of the truck window like a blonde dog. Your back hanging on your body like a clay bird, like a crystal pulled across the skin of a neck. You try on lipstick. You try on lipstick red and peach and the fields go by and you ask me what I think. I want to tell you I am in love with your body but I try for something else. I love all men and their bodies. Their bodies make me want to die. I love stocky men and I love what it means in their bodies to be stocky. When I look at a man with that shape, it makes me want to die and that is not because of their body or mine, it is because of something else.

When I was nine, I tell you, in the Accademia in Florence, I slipped away from my mother at the David and father at the slaves. I looked at the paintings of Leda and the swan and it made me feel like I was in love. They made me feel like I had a circus or a cannon in my body—he bird and the way Leda clutches.

APOLOGIA FOR WHY I'M SELLING MY PANTIES
ON THE INTERNET

I. ELDERLY WOMAN FOUND MOLDED TO CHAIR AFTER SITTING
FOR NEARLY A YEAR

When they pulled them apart, it broke her screaming bones.
They could smell her from the sidewalk.

I've never been so attached—not to the hydrangeas,
head-heavy & blue, scraping the sides of the house,
nor the rusted nail upright in the arch of my foot.

I'm still fond of the bush
by the stoop my mother since uprooted;
how I could rub

its leaves & go—my hands
smelling like lemon.

II. MY GRANDMOTHER DRAWS A DUCK WITH FOUR LEGS & NO
ONE NOTICES AT FIRST

The woman in the chair has the same name as my grandmother, who didn't
have time to sew her skin to her bed before my grandfather claimed
angels were circling. I sat outside
& did not cry & watched
the hospice worker smoke.

III. I AM PROBABLY A LANDFILL ASTRONAUTS CAN SEE FROM
SPACE

I've thought this for a while. I used to think
the only way to fuck someone is to love their scent.

This is considered typical behavior,
to take what you like & shove it in your mouth.

My dog (now dead) kept eating the crotches
of my blood-stained underwear.

IV. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO TELL YOU THAT YOU SMELL
LIKE AN OLD LOVER OF MINE & HOW MUCH THAT
COMFORTS ME & HOW MUCH I'M AFRAID

V. WOMAN FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE BERLIN WALL &
THEN THEY TEAR IT DOWN

I've seen men lick their cars clean; a woman
who could only get off by humping her laundry.
That must be love.

Even objects can't escape this.

VI. WOMAN IS SAID TO HAVE SHIFTED HER AFFECTIONS
TO A NEARBY GARDEN FENCE

It's better if we end this before it gets worse.
Before it has you sending twenty dollars to a stranger
for the chance to get close and sniff.

PUNISH

Imagine you are no one,
only young. And your partner
is a famous architect
swarmed by brilliant
minds and bodies. At parties
you proffer drinks and smile deadly
and they tell you you are lovely
and get back to talking about cornices.
But in the dark, you tell him
what to do and when and how
and he does, until you're done
with him and he's flushed
and stammering in gratitude.
In the morning, more gratitude
and then he goes to work
and is dazzling and masterful
and digital. And you prowl the house
unstraightening things
a millionth of an inch
mispairing socks
dogearing incomprehensible
pages in first editions
devouring all he's bought
with the latest plump prize
or commission, heedless
of the crumbs. That house
he built around you
is immaculate.

TABLES

I take the first boat out of the globe;
translate what you never said
into a pink mechanical tongue.
Use it as a paperweight.

I short-sheet your bed, practice
traps. Shoot down your apologies
with a twenty-one-gun salute.

You think my ribs are your own—
give them back before they blow
like ash & your eyes become wine:
I would drink them like I am thirsty.

I overturn the tables so they can't be turned.
This is a clue a riddle a game.
This is how I leave you.

DUSK AND LIES IN APPALACHIA

You said once that nature is conspiracy theory,
a way to cleanse our limbs with air and romantics.
I've come to debunk what you think
you know. We are curiosities here; unfamiliar
with forest posture, the moonshine stills
of distal mountain trails. This stopping place—
this clearing is not desirable, especially in the light.
But the sky is turning grey, seeping into the trees.
It falls on our feet, and we cannot cast it off.
We crawl over to a rubbing of dirt, make necklaces
from the spiders that comb and rake the ground
ahead of us. I stammer into a trance, conjure up and praise
the rotting logs that crush the fringed phacelia,
fray their dusty edges on dull bark. The air is heavy
and damp, wilts the plush cow wheat nearly
out of our view. You burnish this ground
raw. Silt chokes under your fingernails and stamps
your callouses. What is one thing your hands do not claw?
Wash them in the river: the limber current cleanses and strips
a body unadorned. See, there is not much left of you
now that the light and trees are gone.

COLD ENOUGH FOR SNOW

you keep thinking “once I
get through [...]” / but [...]’s

always changing / a closed

book on your lap / look out
the heading-north bus’s

window / stretches of yellow

-beige grass and pines in their
fur-skirts / your cold-enough

for-snow thinking interrupted

by crying / the infant / so you
open up to the introduction

AN ALBERTA CLIPPER

the moisture just inside
your nostrils

freezes / the medicinal

air smells not unlike paper
-white

blooms / the still air / yet

up street some wind chimes
seem

closer / also a deep muffler

and its exhaust-curtain /
organized

particles lift with integrity

as does a certainty-bird
leaving

a feeder/ doesn't explain

your unwritten letter / snow-
flakes

amidst evaporation as they

fall reminding you of child-
hood

/ you stick out your tongue

SNOWFLAKES

themselves
in relation to

movement

that is to say
the others /

is it possible

you are starting
to think

differently /

meanwhile
indoors

it seemed

necessary
to move

your bed

to another wall /
the next morning

notice

before you
the squalls

and the

blanketing
dull light

acknowledging

your
symmetry

OTHER MUSIC

hyper-aware of mutually
turning

one-sided / not of your

doing / the varying faces
of thief /

bank / note / must turn

your disappointment into
surplus

/ with a long foot inside

yourself take a walk / here
under

the light light / listen

now to the snow lightly
against

your gain-face / though

again find yourself at the
opening

A MOTEL IN STANLEY, IDAHO

Wind soon undoes the snowfall draped across the fir outside my window, a bulb pops from the cold on a Christmas string crowning the fence, no tracks are left to mar the landscape not even my own—an embarrassment of riches the stars unbind their bestiary.

The coiled ice of Iron Creek cinches tight the meander where we once sat in chairs carved from the last bones of old growth.

What good does remembering do, what possible use are words when every impulse is drowned by second guessing and trucks downshifting on the grade up over Galena toward heaven?

If I could sleep I would sleep.

The mountains cup the moon like a flour moth, its wings flitting against their palms tentative the light between drifts.

JEFF EWING

LAZY EYE

It sees what it wants and what it doesn't
it doesn't—ignores, for instance, the
host face striated as bristlecone bark,
a lentigo tracing the Caspian shore.

General outlines are noted, an overall
impression glazes the retina—a shoebox
diorama holding me fast, leaden feet
glued in the shade of q-tip trees. Doing

the work of two with half-assed effort,
it leaves most depths unplumbed:
What do you see that I don't, squinting
into the poorly delimited sun?

At night, beads well and fall—I find
them in the morning distilled to crystals.
In trade, the Jewelry and Loan grants
me three wishes I expend for: a glyptic

of seasons turned with loving obsession,
a quart jar preserving the last outcast
breath of the last *arctos californicus*,
and in rubicund Cambrian amber a photo

of us on the South Rim framed by an
uncertainty no perfect eye can fathom—
rock and pinyon, and the river far below
fogged by unspeakable distance.

MOUTH QUILL*

From Northlands
winds blow low and rise, they ripen.
Metallic ringing runs from your mouth.
Wailing not at gods but from some crucible of the gods.
Your incantation pelts the room,
the color of blue sorrow.
One river, two rivers, three rivers, more.

My voice fails. I fear to go there
and utter nothing.
I offer recorded purity,
nuns singing 9th century Christian chant:

*Gloria, laus, et honor tibi sit
Rex Christe, Redemptor.*

Isn't this your God?

No! You smack the sounding device
and, though words have eluded you for months,
deep-throated, you decree,
“This is false death!”
and renew your endless spell.

We are so far from singing together.
I don't know how to join you:
my mouth quill has stilled.
Oh, *Mesi Marja-memmekene*, Honey Mama-berry,
Emakene hellekene, my Mother my dear.
Äiu, äiu, äiu, once you charmed me to slumber
on silken nets in this space of braided hair.

*Suude sulg—a singer's magic tool in Estonian mythic lore

[MY AM DIAL FINDS HIS VOICE]

Every time I stay so late at the bar
they wash me out with a hose,

my AM dial finds his voice, clear and urgent,
while all music fades to static. Preacher Smith says

the ILLUMINATI controls
our NEW WORLD ORDER with the two GEORGE BUSHes
and SELECT members of the SCOTTISH Rite,

and if we had sense to FACTOR it,
we would ALL see the numbers of every IMPORTANT date
in JuDEo-CHRISTian history add up to 144 with a deNOMinNATor
of 7, the formula for which we relieved from the PHOnecians,

so we, BROTHERS and SISTers,
must clear our minds of all interference CAST upon us
by the WORLD WIDE WEB and by the iLUmiNAti,

and by the NUMber 7 so that

we can HEAR the good news HE is singing,
hear it and praise it before this HUMble PREACHer's hour of POWER
ends, and we all return to REGular programming.

Every time, by the blood of the Lamb. EVery damn time.

TOUR POEM

from Baton Rouge, LA to Austin, TX. August 6, 2014

I was in the back of the van
when Jane started in on her
slasher's songs called
Dear Fuckface, I still believe in love.
So I wanted to piss
into the swamp fields
without any insurance agents yelling
into my reverie.
For you don't know how close
I came to diving into the rotting cake—
the fountainous pool
at the Hilton in Baton Rouge
tossing these
gleaming white children into
the glad waters.
Changing in the stall
next to the changing table.
Humming that Ginuwine song
I couldn't forecast from
whatever might clobber
me from Lafayette to Lake Charles.
Swimming with my dead friends
called back from the future
to linger together for a while

in the I love you—
Wastoid-Taperecorder-Graveyard.
Until a glass elevator pulled us up to where
we'd taken to bed leaping
with a death letter on the chainwax—
For I was on the hunt for a young
Heideggerian they call John Beer,
author of such ruins as
Apoplectic Sleeper, Apneatic Brethren,
& The Inadvertent Methamphetamines
of Squirrel Hill.
& even though Kamala had strep throat
we were doing laundry at Kelly's in Pittsburgh
living for the moment, accidentally
locking my friend out of the bathroom
drugs I just figured he'd finished with.
I was yet on the hunt for
another way onto the stage, embarrassed
to give Gus Van Sant a little wave
in the parking lot on our way back to Seaconk
& I finally worked it out
at the Knights Inn after ten days' abstention.
What shuddered forth was a white discus
loosed from a future afterlife escutcheoned
with shame & I came on the toilet, on the floor
on the wall beyond, & on the top of the same toilet.

& did you then crumple into a spidery ball
on the warm linoleum?
So I did, only to dream myself back
into the cop's ledger:
he who pulled Mathias over, wanting apparently
to crawl into a cruel optimism called
Anywhere But Here
in the dead now of Wednesday morning traffic
on Gertrude Schnackenberg Avenue.
Jenn Marie & Abe were on a defenestrated
air mattress in the front room on Royal.
I was in the street—no shoes, no socks
& regretting either choice I wasn't about to make:
1) to climb into this car's front window & get
fucked like clouds level the mountaintops—
Or else what?
2) To live inside the seam
of better decisions.
Meaning?
Meaning: climb back up the stoop
& dream out the 50,000 different
directions it didn't go
but could have.
What's better than any afterparty
with Amy Lawless?
To my knowledge, nothing.

What's better than being assaulted by clouds
on Royal in the Bywater?
Perhaps only napping with a pit bull
called Margot, lazily chomping
on my friend's big yummy arm.
Swimming to Mimi's & back
& so on to Flora's with Abraham.
For death, I don't have a way
to get the moon out of the swimming pool tonight—
that we must pulse on.
As it stands, anybody who cries this much
must be running from something very terrific indeed.
Then the thunder started
in Hadley just as Jane took the microphone:
All the little boxcutter poems
sledded out.
Coco the hound
moaning back to the kitten
starring in: *I Tried to Behave: The Lara Glenum Story*.
I was with Dirty Three in Tucson the day Nina Simone died.
It's not what Creeley meant by company, probably—
but it was the best moment I'd lived to that point.
Warren Ellis howling like a ghoul. My mom's sister
was alive, and I'd driven another four-hundred miles
to watch Chan Marshall lose her marbles
in a Paradise City medley up the coast

from San Diego some place.

The lyric was: don't expect to get thanked in the liner notes
if you shit on somebody's dream—but I botched it
& started sobbing at breakfast because
maybe I don't know how to live, maybe I don't know
how to keep my friends from the pain
they have coming.

It's not my job, I know, it's not about me or you
or stress-induced shingles or getting spit on
by somebody you'd loved well.

It's not about what Brandon said
about your fucking poems. I don't care
if you were watching Hill Street Blues.

I was in love with Meredith Graves when
I re-watched the clip in Scranton I'd seen live
in Chicago. I was in love with the blue roses
on Dara's wrists in Raleigh.

But sometimes I want to be put to bed: dirt
shoveled over, night swimming
& another call into NEG.

If you can hear me,
I loved you, you asshole.

I don't want to lose what I can't figure out
how to recognize till it's a voicemail, let alone
keep. Now I'm making a few of your old mistakes:
chasing the ineffable bottom of something

infinite. Like falling in love with fire
or with a recent divorcee standing outside
George's in Iowa City.

Dear Fuckface, I still believe in love, too
I just don't know how to fuse that
with desire into any set of practices I might
call livable—even for a weekend in Clinton Hill
where I can't quite return to the pleasant solace
of ordinary unhappiness.

So, we're either gonna die
or we're gonna live forever but I was
beyond wrong—

Calling the kettle black
& blathering like I'd known
what we needed.

But I did not know what
we needed.

Mostly, I'm a bad spokesman for any
bounty of dust
willing to ventriloquize me
with the help of a lone, cold
sweating bottle of Bud Light tonight.

HUNGOVER TOUR GUIDE

I can tell you where to look, but I will not go with you
to the shoreline where the ore-men tear up almost-earth
and stare out across the lake to the iron hills of Duluth
wondering what's bled out here, what's in the wetland
heaving sinfully, pickled in the grassy hummock
torn up by the boot you stomp clean when the ground dries,
when you find lumped forests, dense pockets of growth
and stumble into a yard. You don't mind the blaze
in front of the gardener, how she holds the hack-saw
and feeds the bonfire buckthorn, how she palms soot
to her face when the flame dies. How she asks you
to help pull more, to trim the glacier frown of this land.

OL' FARMER LITCHKE

To know an animal, you must be an animal, Litchke tells the sheriff after a Wednesday night cattle slaughter goes bad. A deputy holds a pair of boots, stares at his hands through their soles. Last month, Litchke lost his best bull, coughed out a conjugation of varluv and cut up his best cattle with a saw. Left the steaming hocks in the swamp and, from a pine, surveyed how the pack tore at dead things. Forgot how to shoot a rifle. Got hungry. Got thin. Grated his gravel road with his fingers, learned to use his tongue like a napkin after dinner. Sometimes it seemed howling made words real. Sometimes he woke up in a bear den, huddled next to a spring litter licking chunks off the mess of flannel shirts he recognized, the same size that the man from homicide wears now as he slides his finger across the floor, saying he can't tell what is cow and what is man.

THE HAPA ANTHEM

I move with the elegance of an African elephant.

—Killer Mike, “Run The Jewels”

Badass top feeders. Real North Philly
boys.

We were a tribe of concrete Natives, pigeon feathered
Latino Whiteys, Burnt Rice wannabees:
“block boy skid stains,” “hijos of scarecrows,”

they called us, brown

enough to smear an imagined girlfriend
& her white panties. “The Christo
Rey Sharks,” we monikered ourselves.
As if we wanted to run

far away but not yet forget our mother’s—Christ,

we wanted to be Papi Chulos, we wanted to kaboom
(not bloom) into their language of how to make a home

of dimpled hipbones, we supplicants eager
for tales of human humidors, filtered
through mocha cigars
& the sheen of yellow teeth
smoking on & on about the rudder of their tongues.

So we bowed
our mohawks, our buzz cuts, our sick fades,
& we prayed

for jewels: encrusted fingers cresting
ten-ringed & gold, our necks thick,
we bound our own feet

with colorful shoelaces
like the lashings of a newborn
kite soaring high above the Schuylkill,

we dangled from our bronzed Achilles:

Our spindly limbs unwound with age, & again we prayed
for stereo systems, loud
enough to outrun cop sirens
hatcheting their red,
whites, & past our saggy blue
jeans, past our sandwiched crust
of uncut curb & we beat
the tar, across
each other's faces, & gleaming bone-shot
we came into
our own heart's leaking.

Gaggles of fists, we circled up
in that apartment complex basement
or this moon-gilded lot,

empty.

& we spun each other's heads like well-oiled weathervanes.

We taught ourselves
lessons we would be learning decades after—

each decanting
finding ourselves

unable to lift and light
the wet firewood of our arms

& find the actuation to pray again

for our fingers
to reach
just above the parapet.

“STILL WORKS GOOD. BEST OFFER”

Someone's selling a futon.
Just the frame.

It's broken, it's raining,
it's on the lawn.

I don't have much worth much—
86 cents, and a CD

that skips on track 9—
but we strike a bargain.

Sometimes you knock and doors open.
Sometimes they're home.

Now I sit as the cars pass by,
red and blue and purposeful.

Possibly their drivers wonder
why I'm holding a dripping sign.

“I’VE STILL GOT MY PASSPORT”

Don’t take this personally—
I’m sure you think you understand fire,

and it’s true some forests stir up
out of ash; everything leafy—

but I liked me better
as a wooded slope,

and you far more
in your riverbed,

when we were an unnamed country.
And no one had a map.

MEDITATION ON TREES

Maybe it's all incidental—you in your body, me in mine.
Visiting Chicago, one night only, all those people in the Big City,
patron saints of transience, me trying

to stop from asking—are you happy? Rate your happiness
on a scale, *1 to nirvana*. Meanwhile, the summer in mid-parade.
Everyone bored with heat, not exhausted. An anthropologist
comes to town, gives a speech over beers,

says inside a human is ring after ring, which sounds better than guts.
See, a wise person does not trust flesh to tell us anything.
A woman buries her placenta underneath a maple seed. She wants

to trace her child growing. My grandfather
plants three weeping willows though he'll likely die
before they cast much shade. What is the word for this? Faith?

I make a rule at the nursing home where I work: *you will not
think about your own death*. Instead my dad's old ghost story: a tree fell,
a tree was felled across a road by teenage boys, old prank, same road

where a man was rushing his pregnant wife to the hospital.
The downed sycamore, blocking their path. In the story,
everyone dies. Baby first, or mother first,
or the two together—fused pink & bloody. The husband later,

rafters in the barn. Then, those guilty boys. One by one,
years creeping the way years are sometimes prone to creep.

PHYSICS WILL EAT EVERYTHING

Sunrise, sunset. Behold, this is the spacetime fabric. The terrorist called *Jihadi John* is beheading some humanitarian from Indianapolis.

Stephen Hawking does not believe in black holes as we know them. Physics keeps teaching us, *it's all relative*. Late in February,

twenty-one Egyptian Coptic Christians on a beach are *cut*. I'm staggered by what's simultaneous. Them headless in the water.

Me safe in a snow storm, getting caught up in an almost miraculous drift outside my Toyota. In the Alzheimer's wing, every Wednesday

I go through a binder full of dead famous people, *Barbara Stanwyck*, *Jean Harlow*, *Clark Gable*—just faces. I read the residents current events,

explain Israel/Palestine because they lived through the Holocaust but don't remember it. History is redundant. *It's the Crusades 4.0*, I lament about ISIS at a bar.

Stop! Don't shoot, I'm agnostic! you add. Last winter, my friends Ann and Brian died months apart, Ann's bicycle swaying into Mexican traffic,

Brian walking home from a bar when a van skidded off the road. Graffiti on the alley outside the bar: *Physics will eat everything*.

So not death but *concepts* that should concern us. Take gravity. Time ticking near, it slows seconds into years. On airplanes, clocks

move faster near the stratosphere than on the ground. And somewhere a black hole, lording over light. *Which type of gravity*

has hold of us? I might ask. At night, I watch deer scour the frozen soybeans. Fog rises off the fields. The moon cannot get away from us,

though it tries and tries, changing shape so as not to be caught in the act. Full. Then gone. Then sliver.

SUGAR ASTROLOGY

BY SHARI ZOLLINGER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOLLI ZOLLINGER



ARIES: *March 20 to April 19*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, dear Aries, and you decided to take neither. Let's just say you forged your own path. Frost's poem perhaps the most quoted in America has been said to be a paean to human individuality. Whether or not this interpretation is true, courageous Aries, it is indeed true for you. Individuality IS the key to your success. The maverick of the zodiac, we find you machete in hand, action oriented and ready to forge ahead, strong-willed and confident.

"The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost



TAURUS: *April 19 to May 20*

The original bard was indeed the love struck Taurus bull that said: "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments. Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds or bends with remover to remove. Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark that looks on tempest and is never shaken." Take heart, true Taurus, that your ability to love remains healthy and strong. Your most precious value is devotion in love without restraint.

"Sonnet 116," William Shakespeare



GEMINI: *May 20 to June 20/21*

Howl was published in 1969 by the wordiest wordsmith of all, Allen Ginsberg. He was among a generation of revolutionary writers "who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish." Yet this gibberish WAS inspired. Dearest, inquisitive Gemini, how do you want to use your words and for what? To change the world? Whatever the case, USE your words, communicate, let others partake of your bubbling and beautiful brain.

Howl, Allen Ginsberg



CANCER: JUNE 20/21 TO JULY 22

There was a poet who admired many things—women, nature and, most especially, food. Pablo Neruda was this admirer, the master of odes. Lovely Cancer, you have a secret ode inside you too. A love affair with the nurturing and feel-goodness that comes from something as simple and sweet as, say, a watermelon... “water coffer, placid fruit queen, warehouse of depth, earthly moon!” Food represents for sensitive Cancer the path to security in which the luscious future holds something known in this unknown universe.

“Ode to the Watermelon,” Pablo Neruda



LEO: July 22 to August 22

Dear Leo, in the hard-won words of Ted Hughes, “the only calibration that counts is how much heart people invest, how much they ignore their fears of being hurt or caught out or humiliated. And the only thing people regret is that they didn’t live boldly enough, that they didn’t invest enough heart.” For you, proud Leo, it is and always will be about the heart. How much light do you have to shine today? Stay true to the creative fire that bubbles from your proud soul.

Letters of Ted Hughes, Ted Hughes



VIRGO: August 22 to September 22

Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) was a poet who, although lesser known, took part in inventing a whole genre of poetry called Imagism. This is the way of cool Virgo, playing it humble on the surface but with a roiling pot of words and ideas just waiting to birth, fully formed. As H.D. would say, “words were her plague and words were her redemption.” For you, keen Virgo, you are blessed with a mind that seeks function and organization. How best will you serve that mind?

HERmione, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.)

LIBRA: *September 22 to October 22/23*

The classic Libra symbol is the scales, yet when we boil down the essence of Libra we get light. Taking light as a symbol, bright Libra, helps you feel elevated and within the luxurious and artistic territory in which you thrive. The distinguished poet, T.S. Eliot wrote about light just for you: “The light that slants upon our western doors at evening. The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight, moon light and star light, owl and moth light, glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.”

“O Light Invisible,” T.S. Eliot

SCORPIO: *October 22/23 to November 21*

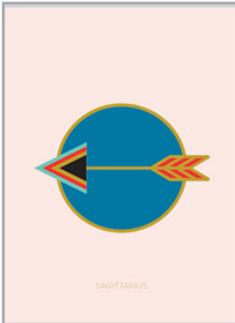
The story goes that when Sylvia Plath first met Ted Hughes in England, she bit him long and hard on the cheek. This was an expression of her passion. This is also the measure of Scorpio’s most infamous plight, to transmute passion into indelible experience. “Brave love, dream not of staunching such strict flame, but come, lean to my wound; burn on, burn on.” Dear, deepest Scorpio, this is a life to share what is most intense inside your extensive psyche.



“Firesong,” Sylvia Plath

SAGITTARIUS: *November 21 to December 21*

It might seem surprising that Emily Dickinson was born under the sign of adventurous Sagittarius given the limited circumference of her life. Yet, when we peer in more deeply, we see that she took to traveling in the mind as any true Sag would. Ever the seeker, she says, “there is no frigate like a book to take us lands away, nor any courses like a page of prancing poetry.” Wandering Sagittarius, what adventure on boat or in book are you waiting for? Is your passport in order?



“1286,” Emily Dickinson

CAPRICORN: *December 21 to January 19*

Modern day word and song junky Patti Smith moved to Manhattan in 1967 with little more than a typewriter. In tune with the city she embodied, she built her own legacy on those streets. “New York,” she says, “my greatest love, rise of



the building, flash of 42nd street.” Timely Capricorn, your abilities lie in entering a scene, making it out, and building a lasting legacy. Even the youngest Capricorns know that time is both friend and foe and that timing is everything.

Autobiography, Patti Smith

AQUARIUS: *January 19 to February 18*

It is true that Elizabeth Bishop came of age when confessional poetry was en vogue. However, she rarely used this technique in her own work. She was never without life’s share of grit, and yet, she moved from trends to create a work wholly her own.

Innovative Aquarius, who breaks out of every mold, you might take Bishop’s tack and imagine life upside down: “It is so peaceful on the ceiling! It is the Place de la Concorde. The little crystal chandelier is off, the fountain is in the dark.”

“Sleeping on the Ceiling,” Elizabeth Bishop



PISCES: *February 18 to March 20*

It could be argued that Anais Nin wasn’t really a poet, more essayist and memoirist. Her words have entered the journals of the angst-driven young as any good poetry would. Dreamy Pisces, Nin gives you these words in simplest terms: “And then the day came, when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” Sensitive ocean dweller, you will be asked to flow from your deepest vulnerability for the ecstasy of living a transcendent and spiritual life.

“Risk,” Anais Nin



KEVIN MCLELLAN: A CONVERSATION ON CRAFT WITH DANIELLE BEAZER DUBRASKY

In my correspondence with Kevin, I commented on the texture of the lines in his poems, borrowing from Jack Meyers' *The Portable Poetry Workshop* where he makes a contrast between lines that have thick or thin texture based on the white space between lines. Unbeknownst to me, Myers was one of Kevin's mentors at Vermont College. I also took a manuscript workshop with Meyers; thus, I feel I have crossed literary paths with Kevin.

He is a master of the enjambed line, creating contrast between fragmented images and moments of wholeness, the fragmented images sometimes being extensions of a refracted self. In his poems, images mirror each other, or refract and split—like tributaries—often leading the reader to a line or single word as a point of unification. The poems face head on the challenge of using abstract language to describe both the world of the imagination as well as the physical world—and the border between the two is sometimes made transparent through consecutive enjambments as in the poem “Slope”: “this crystallization / an otherness / which keeps.”

This interview took place from August–October 2017 via e-mail from our respective places of Cambridge, MA, and Cedar City, UT.

DBD: I admire the conciseness of your poems in *Tributary*. In “Split Personality: i. Bouquet” the transition from the first line to the last is such an elegant cat-leap—a move I see in other poems. I sense that many of your lines are the result of what has been carefully pared away. Can you comment on the aesthetic or process of paring away to get to a core image or concept?

KM: Bouquet—the first section of “Split Personality”—is a single sentence (composed of language from the same/similar register), four couplets (not of dissimilar lengths), and one punctuation mark (a period to end the sentence/poem). This particular construction allows its language to move fluidly with brief pauses between stanzas, creating a thin texture.

In order to address your question, I will need to talk about my usual process—the roles/actions integral for me. There is the forager and scavenger, first, who searches and records: images that resonate, overheard language, unusual language that assembles and presents itself in my head, and words that swirl or creep or twirl or leap when heard. Once I have intuited that there is enough language to comprise a poem, my role as forager/scavenger must give way to the collagist that determines what information best abuts other information, yet

best doesn't always mean logical. This as an opportunity to assemble dissimilar, and sometimes disparate, pieces of information to create tension and/or to challenge logic or create new logic. The collagist decides where language needs to shift and where bridges need to be constructed. It is as if the collagist uses language like puzzle pieces, some fitting and others not fitting, for the purpose of making a sculpture.

Once a first draft is constructed (there is always remaindered information which is either recycled or retired), the sculptor takes hold of the poem, listens word by word and between each word to determine what information from beginning to end can stand alone as poetic lines. Simultaneously, the sculptor must also determine if and when silences (white space, line breaks, stanza breaks) are needed, and these combined tasks will eventually give light to its innate form. Further line adjustments are usually necessary for the poem to better meet the form. And then the chiseling begins, or furthers, for the purposes of providing the necessary space for resonant language and its key images.

I am interested in the mechanics of poetry, Danielle. Lately, I am most attracted to enjambed lines that create subtext, a threat under the poem's skin, and especially when the subtext challenges or overthrows the meaning created out of a given sentence or sentences—THIS, for me, or rather HERE is where brushing shoulders with poetry is more possible.

DBD: So let's consider "a threat under the poem's skin" in "A Bedrock" and "Of Bones." There are lines in "A Bedrock" such as "He didn't recognize his face" or "He won't recognize himself" that stand quite unified in contrast to the split lines of "in the outside window of the / bridal shop. He won't marry / nor father. / Sacrifice is a river of perennials: tiger lilies / surrounding a stone house." And there are other enjambments that create more splitting in "Of Bones": "You stopped placing me/atop your shoulders" as well as the lines from ". . . (The residue / of you yelling something / hateful" to "(I'm the son / of a gun)." These poems also conjure the idea of the "split image" as in the following definition: "An image in a rangefinder or camera focusing system that has been bisected by optical means, the halves being aligned only when the system is in focus." I appreciate how "Of Bones" is quite literally a split image. What can you say about the concept of the "split image" in these or other poems and how you shape a line to create a focus?

KM: Please allow me to back into an answer, Danielle. I must trust my intuition. I must consider the preoccupation with the self—or rather for the purposes of this response, the whole self—and the fragmented self/selves as the other. I must explore how their different lenses, agencies, and agendas interact. I

must employ poetic conventions and images that illustrate and support the complexity of self and (the self as (the)) other. We must consider each line an independent division of information that has the ability to accommodate both separation and wholeness. Yet each line also informs or speaks to the abutting lines, challenging the sentence, the sentence's preoccupations, and the reader's expectations.

DBD: Your comment about lines as "an independent division of information" calls to mind the title of your book. Fragmented lines create tributaries of thought. Your poems inspired me to look up a few words and one word I explored was "astral." The poem "Astral Beach (A Tribute)" plays around with tangible/intangible experiences (as does "Silver Lake"). Both describe a relationship—a tether almost—between the abstract and the concrete: "Thoughts / attaching themselves to / what is scattered in the / night sky" ("Silver Lake"); "Eyes hunt the language (echo / of the last words are roses / in an urn:..." ("Astral Beach"). I am struck by the physicality and directness of "Eyes hunt the language." It describes simultaneously an interior and exterior perception. Both poems end on rain—the effect is of stepping from the realm of thought and suddenly noticing there is a world out there. Do you see your poems as tethers or mediums between abstract thought and the physical world or do you see them primarily as interior worlds that have an occasional brush with exteriority?

KM: Yes, I see a given poem, every poem, located somewhere on this spectrum. The physical world can reflect and perhaps inform one's emotional landscape and one's emotional landscape can reflect and inform the physical world. It is as if the abstract and the concrete exist for one another—codependent—despite, and because of, their opposition and contrast. Isn't this the nature of duality? Duality in poetry can be a rich and productive territory, an acknowledgment of difference. Too bad we don't see more of this in the physical world.

DBD: You quote Lacan in the epigram of "The Weight of the Second Person": "language is always about loss or absence . . ." I see several of your poems as emblematic of desire in the presence of absence. And the speaker turns to an image to compensate for an absent person or for a happier moment. Especially the image of birds—birds seem to represent an alternative existence, free of the weight and illness of the physical body. Rain seems to also have a healing significance. What would you say is the emotional landscape that is reflected in these or other repeated images pertaining to the physical world?

KM: The images, the birds, and the rain, are everyday moving images that represent life for a grieving speaker who has been abruptly stilled by grief, so the

images represent both loss and hope. An abruptly stilled position is necessary for some poets. My second full-length manuscript, *Ornithology* (The Word Works, 2018) further explores this position.

DBD: Did these images develop as motifs during the writing of this collection or have they always had significance to you?

KM: These *Tributary* poems were written over the course of 15+ years. Many more poems wouldn't make the cut. This manuscript was assembled in 2004 and this is when I became aware of, and accepted, my obsession with specific images and words. This awareness informed which poems to include in the manuscript and, in time, what poems would need to be written. So, yes, these images first developed as motifs within the poems and then within the manuscript.

There was some overuse of certain images and language in the penultimate version of the manuscript, most notably, "My body..." which I thought collectively created a sense of urgency. Once I changed some instances of 'my body' to "a body" or "the body"—which created a dissociative quality already under the skin of some other poems—I was able to part with some additional uses of "my body." It is profound when one sees minor edits making such a huge impact on the rest of the language.

DBD: The book's four parts create a subtle trajectory from a focus on the "I"/"you" relationship toward a more fractured "I." By the third section, the speaker seems to be struggling with symptoms of HIV and experiencing a dissociation from the body. You foreshadow a kind of dissociation with these lines from "Astral" that describe the consequence of being cut from the source: "... in an urn / roses are no longer."

The disassociation also is described through the following lines (though not exclusively): "My face as I knew it / went down the drain" (35), "Where is / your body? Shapeless distances near" (51), and "That some / don't own / their bodies" (54). The section ends in the poem "Untitled" with a kind of truce between the interior world that is searching for wholeness from a fragmented physical world: "I / among the salt / & sand / & fire ants, lay / down markers / all the way to / my particular the." The definitive words "salt," "sand," "fire ants" have equal weight with "my particular the."

There is also the contrast between separation and wholeness in the final line of the book's first poem "It was not long ago." Though the speaker finds parts of himself, there is a sense of having found wholeness at the end by anticipating / hoping for the return of someone: "Sometimes / I don't mind. That I believe. Tomorrow. / A without from where you speak." The final clause is unified

compared to the fragments in the penultimate line. So I am sneaking in two questions: What can you say about loss and disassociation and how language is a way to create unification?

KM: Danielle, it is as if your questions arose from the marrow of *Tributary!* In order to answer your question, I will need to be transparent, convey the personal circumstances that led me to loss and disassociation.

I trust that you are referring to the poem “Seroconversion” when you refer to the speaker struggling with symptoms of HIV. Seroconversion is a biological event one-to-three weeks after contraction, when the HIV antibody develops and becomes detectable, surges, and challenges the immune system. When I seroconverted, a doctor told me that these flu-like symptoms resembled HIV conversion. Since I had received two insinuated HIV diagnoses before, that ended-up being misdiagnoses, this was an established trigger, though this doctor was accurate. His informal diagnosis seemed not only derived from the symptoms, but also from my sexuality, like before.

Consider this relationship with the medical field upon receiving an HIV diagnosis. Imagine being cognizant of HIV occupying your body before effective medical therapies. Consider, a few months later, receiving a testicular cancer diagnosis (unrelated to the HIV) which would require immediate surgery and possibly further treatment, and this would compromise an already challenged immunity system. Consider how these diagnoses together will affect your relationship with sex, sexual relationships, and even non-sexual relationships. Consider how long it will take to come to terms with the above, and that there is no roadmap. Consider the stunned mind and its new clock.

Imagine being on a crowded subway train and feeling the loneliest you have ever felt. Imagine wearing sunglasses so that no one can see your eyes. Imagine that this seems like your everyday. Consider that the outside world (which is where the virus came from and the outside world is everyone else) and the inside world (your body) has already or will betray you, and the ability to not only cause harm, but also extinguish you. I believe that these specific circumstances laid the groundwork, forced me to face mortality, while also finding a new way to live. Yet there would be new obstacles—the bi-products anxiety and stress, and their by-product, disassociation. What was I supposed to do for myself?

Yes, I am well and doing well. Yet I believe that projecting a direct address, my inner queries under the auspices of limit and time, onto the page was not only a way to get through a day, but also a way to propel me through the maze that was my life—and to leave a small part of it outside myself, and for others to at least witness or even hold, like you with these questions.

DBD: I appreciate your direct and honest answer in describing the threshold between the exterior and the interior—the world and the body. I have been reading these poems as if I were inside something, but now I can also see them as artifacts, traces, shells, ghosts, your astral counterpart—“you” are no longer there. Very beautiful—and I am reminded of Gregory Orr’s book *Poetry as Survival*, which argues that poets have the linguistic facility to cross thresholds and place structure over chaos, loss, or trauma through their words. When they return from their linguistic journey, the reader benefits from the healing in the poem, without having to make the same journey. Orr argues that the poetic mind can survive in places where others might not. I see such a journey in the fourth section. The transformation of the word “last” into “salt” in the final section, defies an ending. Can you address any aspect of “Twelve Years of Looking at Nouns” and/or the tribute poems “Hands,” “Scattershot,” and “Form” in terms of journey and transformation?

KM: The narrative “Twelve Years of Looking at Nouns” needed to employ sections for the purpose of establishing duration and employ the third person for the purpose of creating emotional distance from a trauma and its tributaries—the beginning after the end of a sexual relationship, observing sickness and health in the animal world, an HIV diagnosis and the new role of writing—its related and interrelated concerns around death and possibly even renewal. Faith? The last section of the poem, subtitled “obituaries,” gives agency to: “he is a bird now,” a perch, the bird (a final time), dried seed, and then “the cage door opens,” and in that order. It implies freedom, yet the poem uses figurative devices throughout. You see, I desperately needed to find a way out of my own cage and wagered everything within language, something we all share, by letting my things (or rather nouns!) go.

The speaker and reader in “Scattershot” witness a beetle about to die, its motion toward immobility, and then the beetle is dead a few lines later. What we witness afterward, an incorporeal focus—with the trees and a shrub as another kind of witness and the allusion of a mourning dove—is also what the dead beetle misses, “a glass moon,” “a shadow under the trees,” and “threads of light / on this shrub // a silvery wet / gray-green // almost the hue / of a mourning dove // almost the our / of a cooing one.” This poem creates a liminal space, creates synonymousness for life and death, which seems an essential exercise for processing grief. I had no idea that this is what I was doing when I wrote this poem. I was just collecting evidence from the outside world.

The poem “Hands” employs an ambiguous “you,” since my body betrayed my mind and then my mind betrayed my body, so the “you” could be a self-reflexive

“you” that the “I” in the poem can’t access or an important-specific “you,” like a partner or faith itself. The purpose of the enjambed lines and the information itself is to embody, if you will, the speaker’s disassociation, “a maybe-house: beforehand // the mind: my mind / is cut flowers: I lost / my body between // field and vases...” The poem “Form” also explores the relationship between the mind and the body and employs the “you” for this same theme of living with death, yet this is a poem I would prefer to let speak for itself.

DBD: Returning to your description of the poet working as a collagist then a sculptor, how did the collaborative process work in your chapbook *Round Trip*? What is unique about this collaboration is that each poem is co-written by another poet.

KM: We, the *Round Trip* collaborators, mostly used the exquisite corpse method by way of email: one starts off by emailing a fragment (usually two to three lines) and then the other adds onto this. If one is unable to respond to their collaborator’s information, one can alter this language in order to add their own information, and so forth and so on until a first draft is written—once through the poem. Then, there is revision. I also wrote several collaborative poems with Derek Pollard. Our poem “The Sky as Vault” and a statement about our experience with collaboration is forthcoming in *They Said: A Multi-Genre Anthology of Contemporary Collaborative Writing*, (Black Lawrence Press, Summer 2018). Our statement addresses, briefly, how collaboration creates an unusual kind of witnessing and accountability, so different from facing an empty, white space alone.

CONFLICT TOURS
BY JONATHAN TRAVELSTEAD
(Cobalt Press, 2017)

REVIEW BY MICHAEL MCLANE

My day job entails organizing literary events around the state of Utah, including a statewide book festival that happens each fall. In 2015, a colleague sent me a copy of Jonathan Travelstead's first book, *How We Bury Our Dead*, a wrenching collection of poems detailing Travelstead's tour in Iraq with the Air National Guard, the loss of his mother to cancer, and his work as a firefighter in Illinois. I was floored by the work, and during a brief conversation at a conference that spring, invited him to Utah for a couple readings as well as a workshop with veterans.

A few months later, we were just a couple blocks from the VA hospital when Travelstead looked at me and said, "You know, I've never done this before." He was nervous, and now I was nervous, though I tried to downplay it. It had never occurred to me to ask him if he had worked with veterans before. Something in his eagerness and confidence, as well as the candor and compassion in his work, just left me assuming he had. I had no reason to worry. What followed that exchange was a two-hour discussion of Yusef Komunyakaa, Anne Caston, and many others, as well as a poignant conversation on how writing allows us to navigate anxiety, loss, and healing that left even the most reluctant of participants captivated. Some wrote about their military experience for the first time in their lives. Travelstead looked like he'd been there a thousand times before.

It is this same Travelstead that we see time and time again in his second collection, *Conflict Tours*—throwing himself headlong out of his comfort zone repeatedly, because of curiosity, empathy, or simply a desire to be engaged, to be helpful. The conflict of the title is real, be it life and death struggles along the U.S./Mexican border, the literal and cultural fallout that remains in the Ukraine following the Chernobyl disaster, or Travelstead's own struggles with ADD/ADHD. Both the military and recreational connotations of the word "tours" are at play, sometimes simultaneously, and Travelstead does not shy away from the complexities that the roles of soldier, fireman, or tourist carry with them.

The book opens along the U.S. border with Mexico, where Travelstead volunteered for a stint with the border patrol and witnesses the abuses that transpire throughout this landscape. He condemns much of what he sees, but also places such tragedies within a larger cycle of abuse that immigrants of all backgrounds

have been subjected to throughout our history. In the poem “Field Worker,” he compares the black-lunged fate of his coal mining great-grandfather to the field workers of the Southwest exposed to agricultural toxins daily:

*My eyes open again on the fields, and I see hours when minutes
are all we have, field workers trading*

*the only previous thing they have for what settles in the hands
before reaching the lungs, their family, I see the working dead.
Grandfathers and children alike, their leathery hands*

Or in the opening moments of “Border Patrol, Arizona,” where Travelstead is thrown immediately into the role of a medic with frighteningly insufficient resources:

*The square-jawed sergeant snatches my order.
Nothing that matters burns here. Congratulations, Airman First Class—
You’re a medic. Shunts me to female private beneath
the basketball hoop, who, with an IV and an orange bruised soft as skin,
instructs me on the military’s care towards aliens.
Cups my hand clasping the orange in hers. Finds the sweet spot in four
or less punctures. Suddenly it’s my lone hand holds the fruit.*

Travelstead’s sympathies clearly lie with those wandering the desert, be it for the benefit of their families, or in the attempts to flee violence, only to find themselves in the arms of another, albeit slower, form of violence. The stories of his own immigrant ancestors are made flesh and blood repeatedly in the poems. The duplicity of those the migrants encounter is clear, as with the farmer in “Riding the Beast,” who is happy to have the help as “no one educated enough for English picks / in the upper branches” but then jokes about the dangers of train hopping his workforce endures when “a hundred chalupas atop a train is a family portrait, / but when a train car slices into a low-slung tunnel / it’s a damn good start [...]” Ultimately, the border becomes a seemingly arbitrary and meaningless method of rationalizing greed, racism, and dehumanization. It is a place where we are left with the same question posed to the poet by two wild horses in a later poem, “Tell me who you are to draw a line / our myths cannot cross.”

The poems in *Conflict Tours* oscillate between concerns external and internal, but the poet’s personal conflicts receive every bit as much scrutiny as the troubles he witnesses in geopolitical hot spots and war zones. Ostensibly, sec-

tion two and its detailing of long bike trips and Appalachian Trail hikes lands the reader in a lighter place than the border poems. However, it becomes clear quickly that the physical activity and endurance inherent to these activities are both recreation and an ongoing challenge, a means of working through anxieties resulting both from the poet's professional and military experiences and from his own ADD/ADHD. "Ultralight" opens this section and is a litany of the objects in the speaker's pack along with their corresponding weights in grams. It ends with a declaration of emotional weight and surety that would make Tim O'Brien proud:

*Closed, I clutch the blade
dangling loose from the slipknot on my chest strap—
less than a kilo of pull and it's freed. Bumps
tumoring my hip-belt pocket.
Adderall. I know where everything is,
exactly how much I carry.*

The aforementioned Adderall, what Travelstead calls his "pitbull pills" are a constant companion in the poems. They become, in many ways, a character in and of themselves, as in "Rapture," an ode of sorts to the clear-headedness they allow:

[...] *Hummingbird
nested in the space between ribs. Your last thought,
you are it, sustained forever.*

*O Benzedrine, Dexedrine.
O cold blue angel of methylphenidate, Concerta, and Ritalin—
I hum with praise, I hum with joy*

The complexity of this relationship becomes central in the book's third section, which is devoted almost entirely to exploring this state of anxiety and how a regimen of medications, physical exertion, and wanderlust allow a means of navigating through them. "Analysis Paralysis" illustrates how even the most banal tasks become impossible in such a state of mind, while the poem's staccato, checklist form creates just such a state for the reader:

*A quick in-and-out and nobody gets hurt, you promise,
popping a sleeved capsule before walking into
the Kroger's. Only suddenly
it's two-oh-five
and you've been fingering packages*

*of meat on Manager's Special for fifteen minutes
comparing orange stickers on sirloin.*

The titles of the book's third section alone are indicative of the ups and downs which Travelstead is both enduring and exploring in the work—"Pleasure Principle (Pitbull Pills)," "Scientist," "Analysis Paralysis," "Failure," "Monster," and "Ghost." But there is also something in the long, expansive lines that populate many of the poems, and with which Travelstead is so adept, that strips the poems of ambivalence and makes his work an emotional tour de force. Nowhere is this on display more clearly than in this third section, in poems such as "Failure":

Better to forget what plateau means, and the law of diminishing returns,

*how muscle ceases making gains when worked the same way twice.
Sometimes even I try unyoking myself but Failure's been calling the shots
so long he's not going to give up. Laughs like a loon imitating a hyena.
Jerks the chain tighter, and this time when he smears my face in it*

I come away with a bloody nose [...]

Though its poems are more historical in nature and perhaps are more precise in many ways than the more personal work in the poems that precede them, *Conflict Tours* is at its best in its fourth section. The section is a collection of nine poems that traces Travelstead's journey through the Ukraine, particularly his time spent in the "Zone of Alienation," the restricted zone around Pripjat, the town evacuated after the meltdown of the reactor at Chernobyl. Here, we meet Oksana, his guide to the Exclusion Zone who, with the aid of various radiation detectors, helps him discern where he can and cannot go. We encounter glowing trees, the eerie, fly-by-night state of Pripjat, which is being reclaimed by the forest around it, and the abundant wildlife that has returned to the area. The cognitive dissonance that such a place should cause any visitor is a treasure trove for Travelstead, as in the poem "Proximity," where he is astounded by the indifference of the nearby wildlife to their presence, to which Oksana responds,

[...] it's not curiosity

*or pride, but time and nearness that make us forget
what is truly dangerous. A window
on the third floor where her red hair blazed as she wheeled
to the white wolf like rolling thunder in the doorway.*

it's lupine breath, penny rot.

Travelstead calls his travels “an addiction to traveling to places of internal or recent conflict.” It would be easy to dismiss such excursions as disaster tourism were it not for the empathy that is always centered in his work. Nowhere is this more evident than in the poem “The Liquidators” which functions as the heart of the Chernobyl poems. In it, we discover that Travelstead’s motivation for visiting Pripyat lay not so much in its devastation and reclamation, but in a kind of pilgrimage to the monument left for the liquidators—the fire fighters and other first responders who lost their lives battling the initial fire and trying to contain the subsequent contamination caused by the meltdown—and to research the hours leading up the hellish circumstances that cost them everything. The poem is an in-depth look at the interactions of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant Brigade and the Pripyat Brigade as the meltdown began. Travelstead is technically precise in the jargon and dialogue, while still compelling. We are thrown headlong into what are essentially lyric logistics, and they are heartbreaking:

Thumbing the mic, I recall the rate of depletion, our half-life in these conditions,

*and the assurance in Newton’s Second Law that there is no death,
but a changing of energy. Put out Reactor Four or they’re all going up!
Some relief comes when Commander Leonid arrives,*

*assumes command from the roof of Reactor Three where he directs
extinguishment of five fires formed into tornados of their own weather.*

That Travelstead would journey across continents to one of the least tourist-friendly spots on Earth in order to pay the briefest of respects to his firefighting brothers says as much about him and his work as anything I can say here. The complex empathy of the poem, the giving of a voice to those memorialized in a place that essentially no one can visit, only reinforces this. It is a feat he replicates throughout his work, and is perhaps best summarized in some of the final words of Vladimir Pavlovych Pravik, one of the two members of the power plant brigade to die that day:

In the silence I mouth Thank you, that I am become a tool

and not a weapon [...]

- Michael Bazzett, *The Interrogation*, Milkweed Editions 2017
- Lisa Bickmore, *The Ephemerist*, Red Mountain Press 2017
- Ace Boggess, *Ultra Deep Field*, Brick Road 2017
- Star Coulbrooke, *Thins Spines of Memory*, Helicon West Press 2017
- Lisa Dordal, *Mosaic of the Dark*, Black Lawrence Press 2018
- Benjamin Hertwig, *Slow War*, McGill-Queen's University Press 2017
- Nicole Homer, *Pecking Order*, Write Bloody Press 2017
- John Huey, *The Moscow Poetry File*, Finishing Line Press 2017
- Jan Minich, *Wild Roses*, Mayapple Press 2017
- Eric Pankey, *Augury*, Milkweed Editions 2017
- Kate Partridge, *Ends of the Earth*, University of Alaska Press 2017
- Stephanie Schlaifer, *Cleavemark*, Boaat Press 2017
- stinne storm, *jamtska*, Antipyrine 2017
- Mike White, *Adendum to a Miracle*, Waywiser 2017
- Banoo Zan, *Letters to My Father*, Piquant Press 2017

KIMBERLY QUIOGUE ANDREWS is a poet and literary critic. She is also the author of *BETWEEN*, winner of the 2017 New Women's Voices Chapbook Prize from Finishing Line Press. A two-time Academy of American Poets prize winner and a Pushcart nominee, her recent work in various genres appears in *Rambutan Literary*, *The Shallow Ends*, *The Recluse*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *ASAP/J*, and other venues. She lives in Maryland and teaches at Washington College.

KATHLEEN BALMA is a teacher, librarian, translator, and veteran of the US Navy. Her poetry has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *The Journal*, *Rattle*, and other magazines. Her awards include a Fulbright year in Spain, a Pushcart Prize, and a fellowship from Rivendell Writers' Colony. In 2015 she was a finalist for the Montreal International Poetry Prize, and in 2016 she was a Tennessee Williams scholar at Sewanee Writers' Conference. She lives in New Orleans.

DEVON BALWIT writes in Portland, OR. She has five chapbooks out or forthcoming: *How the Blessed Travel* (Maverick Duck Press); *Forms Most Marvelous* (dancing girl press); *In Front of the Elements* (Grey Borders Books), *Where You Were Going Never Was* (Grey Borders Books); and *The Bow Must Bear the Brunt* (Red Flag Poetry). Her individual poems can be found in *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Stillwater Review*, *Red Earth Review*, *Tule Review*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Noble Gas Quarterly*, *Muse A/ Journal*, and more.

JACK B. BEDELL is professor of English and coordinator of creative writing at Southeastern Louisiana University where he also edits Louisiana Literature and directs the Louisiana Literature Press. His latest collections are *Elliptic* (Yellow Flag Press, 2016), *Revenant* (Blue Horse Press, 2016), and *Bone-Hollow, True: New & Selected Poems* (Texas Review Press, 2013). He has recently been appointed by Governor John Bel Edwards to serve as Louisiana Poet Laureate 2017–2019.

JOHN BLAIR'S collection *Playful Song Called Beautiful* was the 2015 winner of the Iowa Poetry Prize and was published by the University of Iowa Press. He's also published five other books, including two poetry collections, *The Occasions of Paradise* (U. Tampa Press, 2012) and *The Green Girls* (Pleiades Press, 2003).

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CHANEL BRENNER is the author of *Vanilla Milk: a memoir told in poems*, (Silver Birch Press, 2014), a finalist for the 2016 Independent Book Awards and honorable mention in the 2014 Eric Hoffer awards. Her poems have appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Rattle*, *Cultural Weekly*, *Muzzle Magazine*, and others. Her poem “July 28th, 2012” won first prize in The Write Place At the Write Time’s contest, judged by Ellen Bass.

STEPHEN BROWN is a poet living in Mexico City. His recent work investigates the spatial (inter)textualities of psychogeographic urban life on the mind-body of both the city and its occupants. His poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Phoebe*, *The Indiana Review*, *A Bad Penny Review*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Exile Literary Quarterly*, and *Hotel Amerika*. He teaches, behind the wall, in the modern languages and cultural management program at Universidad Anahuac in Mexico City.

TERESA CADER is the author of three poetry collections (*History of Hurricanes*, *The Paper Wasp*, and *Guests*). Her awards include the Norma Farber First Book Award, The Journal Award, the George Bogin Memorial Award, two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as fellowships from The Bunting Institute at Radcliffe, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and the MacDowell Colony. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Plume*, *Memorious*, *Poetry*, *Harvard Review*, *AGNI*, *Slate*, *The Atlantic*, and other journals. Her poems and prose have been translated into Polish and published in Poland. Her work has also been translated into Icelandic.

ROB CARNEY is the author of four previous books of poems, most recently *88 Maps* (Lost Horse Press, 2015), which was named a finalist for the Washington State Book Award, as well as the forthcoming collection *The Book of Sharks* (Black Lawrence Press). In 2014, he received the Robinson Jeffers/Tor House Foundation Award for Poetry. His work has appeared previously in *Sugar House Review*, and he writes a regularly featured series called “Old Roads, New Stories” for *Terrain.org*. He lives in Salt Lake City.

HEATHER DERR-SMITH is a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop with four books of poetry: *Each End of the World* (Main Street Rag Press, 2005), *The Bride Minaret* (University of Akron Press, 2008), *Tongue Screw* (Spark Wheel Press, 2016) and *Thrust* (Persea Books, 2017). Her poems were recently featured in *The Missouri Review*.

JENNIFER DORNER’S poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Cloudbank*, *VoiceCatcher*, *The Timberline Review*, *Verseweavers*, and *The Inflectionist Review*.

In 2016, she was selected as a finalist for the Ruth Stone Poetry Prize. She lives in the beautiful city of Portland, OR, and is an MFA student at Pacific University.

DANIELLE BEAZER DUBRASKY'S poetry has been published in *Terrain.org*, *Pilgrimage*, *Sugar House Review*, *Salt Front*, *Cave Wall*, *Contrary Magazine*, and *Quill&Parchment*. Her poems were also published in a limited edition art book *Invisible Shores* by Red Butte Press of the University of Utah. Her chapbook *Ruin and Light* won the 2014 Anabiosis Press Chapbook Competition. She has been a finalist for White Pines Press, a semi-finalist for Backwaters Press and Elixir Press, and a fellow at the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. She is also a two-time recipient of the Utah Arts Council first-place award in poetry.

ELIZABETH EHRLICH is the author of *Miriam's Kitchen: A Memoir*, which won a National Jewish Book Award, a Washington Irving Book Award, and was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. Her short-short story "Friday Night" was included in *Sudden Flash Youth* (Persea Books), and she has published in *Tipton Poetry Journal* (Winter 2017). Ehrlich, who has taught writing at Columbia University, has twice been a resident fellow of Virginia Center for Creative Arts.

JEFF EWING is a writer from northern California. His poems and stories have recently been published or are forthcoming in *ZYZZYVA*, *Willow Springs*, *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Atlanta Review*, and *Saint Ann's Review*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *Dunes Review*, *ELJ*, and *Bridge Eight*. He lives in Sacramento, CA with his wife and daughter.

HOWARD FAERSTEIN'S full-length book of poetry, *Dreaming of the Rain in Brooklyn*, was published in 2013 by Press 53. His poetry can be found in numerous journals including *Great River Review*, *Nimrod*, *Off the Coast*, *Rattle*, *Upstreet*, *Mudfish*, *Gris-Gris*, and *Connotation*. He is an associate editor of *CutThroat* and lives in Florence, MA.

RICHARD J. FLEMING is a survivor of three Chicago blizzards. His poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Rusty Nail*, *Inkwell Mag*, *Curio*, *Otoliths*, *Rain*, *Party & Disaster Society*, *One Sentence Poems*, *Unbroken*, *Poetry Super Highway*, *Rattle*, *Stoneboat Journal*, and *Hotel Amerika*. Right Hand Pointing published his first chapbook, *Aperture*.

JOHN GALLAHER'S forthcoming book of poetry is *Brand New Spacesuit* (BOA 2020). He lives in rural Missouri.

MATTHEW GELLMAN'S poems are featured or forthcoming in *Thrush*, *The Journal*, *The Adroit Journal*, *MUZZLE*, *H.O.W. Journal*, and elsewhere. He is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets prize and a scholarship from

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TANYA GRAE won the 2016 Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival Poetry Prize, selected by Yusef Komunyakaa, and is the author of the forthcoming chapbook *Little Wekiva River* (Five Oaks Press, 2017). A recent finalist for the Four Way Books Intro Prize and the Brittingham and Pollack Prizes, her poems have appeared in *AGNI*, *New Ohio Review*, *Fjords*, *New South*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Barrow Street*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Tallahassee and teaches at Florida State University while pursuing her doctorate fueled by one chocolate truffle after another. Find out more at TanyaGrae.com.

JULIE HENSON was a finalist for *Washington Square Review's* 2015 poetry contest, *Iowa Review's* 2014 poetry contest, and a semi-finalist for *Boston Review's* 2015 and 2014 Discovery contest. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Colorado Review*, *Salt Hill Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Devil's Lake*, *Mid-American Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Redivider*, *Iowa Review*, *Quarterly West*, *The Collagist*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *cream city review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *CutBank*, *Southern Indiana Review*, and others.

A recipient of fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and the National Endowment for the Arts, VEDRAN HUSIĆ was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and raised in Germany and the United States. His collection of stories, *Basements and Other Museums*, will be published by Black Lawrence Press in 2018. He has poetry published or forthcoming in *Salamander*, *Silk Road*, *Pleiades*, *Spillway*, and *Denver Quarterly*.

ELAINE JOHANSON is a writer, teacher, and videographer in Philadelphia. She holds an MFA in poetry from Columbia University.

FRED JOHNSON teaches American literature and film studies at Whitworth University in Spokane. He used to see a lot of possums on the backroads in Indiana, but he doesn't see so many in Washington. Except, really, he sees them everywhere.

ANDREA JURJEVIĆ, a native of Croatia, is the author of *Small Crimes*, winner of the 2015 Philip Levine Prize. Her poems, as well as her translations of contemporary Croatian poetry, have appeared in journals such as *Epoch*, *TriQuarterly*, *Best New Poets*, *The Missouri Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and elsewhere. She is a recipient of a Robinson Jeffers/Tor House Foundation Award for Poetry, a Tennessee Williams Scholarship from the Sewanee Writers' Conference, and

a Hambidge Fellowship. Her translation of *Mamasafari (and other things)* from Croatian will be published by Diálogos in 2018.

MIA KING is an Oregon-born, Texas-raised writer, named the 2017 winner of *Boston Review's* Annual Poetry Contest by Mónica de la Torre. Her poetry appears or is forthcoming in journals including *Poetry Northwest*, *The Margins*, and the PEN Poetry Series. A Brooklyn Poets Fellow and runner-up for the 2017 Discovery/Boston Review Poetry Contest, she is currently a PhD student in the history of art at Yale University.

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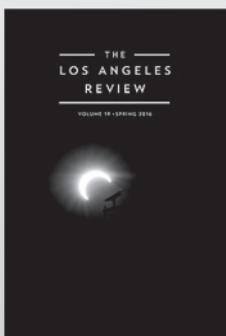
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