

**ORDINARY
MADNESS**

VOL. 1

Ordinary Madness
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EDITOR-IN-Chief: Weasel

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Olivia Tucker
Chelsea Turner
Michael A. Wells
Tyson West
Sherayah Witcher
Nichole Yates
Laura Kat Young
Jeffrey Zable



Having a Nice Day — Barbara Martin

A White Water Rapids Mind

i'm just another wet gray stone

c revir rehtona tsuj

o

l

d fuzzy hedded

3mpT

i *don't* want to be here not now not alone just...not...be

I can't find a fiXXX can you hear me ???

blow-jobs traded for a needle

wounded mouse in a bloody trap

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 & & \wedge & &) & & \wedge \\
 & / & & \backslash & & (& / & \backslash \\
 & / & & \backslash & &) & / & \backslash \\
 i \text{ burned all of my bridges} & (& \text{at least the ones that count} \\
 \# & & \# & \backslash & / & \# & \# \\
 \# & & \# & & & \# & \#
 \end{array}$$

please! is it 4:20 yet?

a n

i'm w d n g through a cardboard city of

e r i cut-out people

[empty]

I can see

@@

see the handle

a door[]way

but my arms

R 2 heavy 2 lift

I guess

I don't want to be alone! : !ereh eb ot uoy tnaw t'nod I

midnight in the cemetery

dead cat swinging on a string

find the right window

find the right window!

Find The Right Window Inside Your Head!

"Got it? Good! Now change the channel..."

"Doesn't help, does it?"

Scuppernog

In the diaspora of devotion
 The binary star of those singularities
 Planetariumed against the old dominion capitol dome
 Above the needles of failures frequency
 I've never mooned any planet brighter than your disparate chemicals.
 A satellite map of high, lonesome and low pressure
 Fissioning once and forever
 As an old woman crochets a dress
 To obscure her daughter's nipples but exposing all the soft flesh surrounding them
 Leading up to those twin peaks.

—Tyson West

Desiccation

Plaza
 Babble
 Left, lift
 Down to
 Our dry lab
 To mine data,
 Readout rideout
 Dead hand control
 Guardrails – who can
 Rid me of some person?
 Gotta go out on far limbs
 To get the fruit ringing bells
 For deceased giving this whole
 Thing a celebratory tone honoring
 Those who've faced living's ultimate
 Challenge lying ahead before each of us
 -- we owe the murky universe that much
 Beyond trudgingly yours nostalgia and tears.

—Gerard Sarnat

Harm Myself

It's not a flash of silver in the moonlight
It's not a crimson petal falling on pale skin
It's dirty, bloody basements with
Rusty knives and scalpels and chains
It's a dirty bathroom with no seat on the crusted toilet,
A flickering florescent bulb and needles on the ground
It's loving someone who only hurts me with their friendship.
It's a stranger in my bed
Who scares me
And I desperately want him to leave,
But I need him to stay to make me worth something.
Even though it's not poetic, I still like to write about things like that
The petals, the moonlight,
Crack bathrooms and skeezy one-nights
Are too raw, too real
Too much like the inside of my head
So I wrap the scaries in beautiful words, smear color and shine
And I forget sometimes that things aren't really that way
I snuggle deeper into the pointy teeth and sewer-filled streets
The stranger in my bed is a prince
The bathroom is made of marble
I see a glimmer of moonlight on the razor

—Chelsea Turner

Wasting Away

Imminent darkness

Goodness is fleeting
 My heart keeps steady beating
 Until my body fertilizes your plants, and my bones turn to ash
 I sit here, wasting away, like a hot summer day
 My soul, weathered by the seasons, it weakens
 Who would know?
 It's not like watching a flower grow
 The turmoil sprouting in my mind is watered steadily by the hands of time
 I search blindly for meaning,
 for purpose, for breathing
 Finding freedom in solitude, so soothing,
 ...until my inner dialog starts moving
 Silence is so LOUD
 Oh God, please, stop the sound
 Can you hear me? Is anybody listening?
 Let me be empty, thoughtless, numb
 Seeking unobtainable answers to questions is just dumb
 I know not what I do, NO that is untrue.
 I am awake, aware
 That's the chink in the armor, the tear
 It chills me to the bone to never be certain of the unknown
 That's why I waste away,
 like a hot summer's day
 Neither here, nor there,
 I'm floating on the surface,
 somewhere.

—Nichole Yates

Dawn Babel
Don Noel

The refrigerator compressor cycled on.

Walter lifted his head from the pillow to see the clock. Five. A wispy hint of daybreak brushed the window. He wanted another hour's sleep. At least.

Not likely. A Japanese visitor last month had observed that in modern society one is never out of earshot of man-made sound. A Buddhist monk who probably spent his days in Zen meditation in some mountaintop temple surrounded by dark, silent pine forests, he'd been a guest at the home of a philosophy-professor neighbor.

The comment festered in Walter's mind. Noises began intruding.

The refrigerator, for instance, had a whirring fan to move air over coils. Everyone heard that. But there was also that compressor chilling those coils, a bass-clef rumble that Walter heard but Mildred didn't.

Nor did she hear the bedroom clock. He'd had it since college; it was as usual grinding grittily.

The thermostat in the hall clicked, followed by the rumble of the furnace, accompanied by the tenor whine of the motor spraying the oil into the fuel chamber. The heat registers began to sigh.

Mildred had left the bathroom sink fluorescent tube on; its tired transformer hummed softly.

By now the daylight had grown. The neighbor's overhead garage door opened with a rumble, followed by the whine of a starter motor and then the cough of his tired pickup truck backing out to the street.

If Walter got up now, he would use a buzzy electric toothbrush, then heat coffee in a microwave that sounded like a model airplane revving toward takeoff. As if reading his mind, a jet labored overhead, apparently taking off with a full passenger load and fuel enough for a cross-country flight.

He might soothe his auditory channels with a nearby classical-music station that did a minimum of talking, but one of his neighbor's not-yet-determined electric appliances had begun injecting occasional static into his radio.

His computer had a fan he had not noticed until the Zen guy came along. The record turntable grumbled enough to intrude on the pianissimo selections of a string quartet. The grinding of the ancient cassette player easily overcame anything but a Sousa march. The answering machine had complained throatily until the electronics salesman explained something about "cracked shellac on the windings," and sold Walter a replacement part. He also bought a new, digital timer to replace the rasping electric-clock switch for the fluorescent grow-lights in the window planter.

He had tried earplugs, but they made it worse, amplifying the noises inside his own head: grinding teeth, snuffling or snorting. It took concentration to stifle his bodily functions, which hardly helped sleep.

Damn all Buddhist monks. Disturbers of the peace. Silence may be golden, but ignorance had been bliss.



The Temptation of Gautama — Russell Streur

To Ask For An Apology

We skinned our knees
 Proclaiming them to be proof
 That life can sprout
 From an open wound,
 It was assumed that a tree would grow,
 A beautiful oak
 From each leg,
 Birds would nest
 In between branches
 And squirrels would dance
 Amongst the opulent rippling
 Of leaves in the wind,
 Instead of carving initials
 Into picnic tables
 Or wherever the surface
 Could be engraved
 There would be trees
 And eventually a forest,
 Gathering rings like kleptomaniacs,
 To age and acquire distance
 These knees would heal,
 So the infant seed disappears
 And the rest of the body
 Is slowly annexed
 First with wildflowers
 Then soon saplings,
 Sitting on your front porch,
 Old growth,
 Scraping wrists against stair steps,
 Remember when
 We were just
 And only,
 Human?

—Montana Svboda

Two point five states

In and out of Pensacola
 a warm
 anywhere place before the ride
 North to Montgomery
 as the South o o z e s in

bending time

paying homage to Lewis and Dees
 Paige and Parks
 Abernathy and King

West to Selma
 a prayer for the marchers
 of then and of now

in vast rural tenements and cramped urban fields

down to Gulf Shores
 oil rigs beyond the sand
 leaching long buried forests

using history
 for today's supposed gain

—Sarah Bigham

No Dose

Skin on fire
 Past electrified
 Flames licking up and down

Eyes darting
 Burning
 Smarting

Too much too hard
 Wanting to die
 Because this is sober

Can't have the drugs she needs
 Not because they're illegal
 Because her medical card expired

—Jazmine Bellamy

Last Truth

*to Republicans in US Congress
 on repealing ACA*

The wind moans
 among dry grasslands.

Monster, lovely-haired creature
 devours my flesh.

Born too soon vermin
 bellows to god.

A specter rises, heavy
 with loneliness, probing the past.

Paper castles,
 deadly derechos,

you will glow in the dark.

—Sergio Ortiz

I.

I wear paranoia-- stare
 at the flickering street
 lamp, twelve paces
 from my childhood
 doorstep. Convinced it syncs
 with my brainbeat, *off*
on my eye shutters close
 tight, *off* I look toward
 the closet crawl space
on remembering how
 my sister and I laughed
 in there as kids. *off on off*
 I dart downstairs to face
 the light blinks directly.

III.

I'll start researching
 the Romanov dynasty,
 claiming my ancestry
 to fertilize myself
 with distant roots--a Princess
 complex convinced *on*
 into me since my Pop Pop
 got bloodwork done
 by National Geographic.
 Rasputin scares me *off*
 and I think *on*
 he's *off* in the crawl
 space. *on off on off*

II.

My words begin to
 trip *on* over the distance
 of sentences. They run
 from/toward/into
 one another: a spider *off*
 crawling away from a paper
 towel grave, gangway
 airport reunions--impact
 like teeth grinding *on* molars
 into dust. My speech is debris:
 squished *off* spider legs, lost
 baggage and the mouthguard
on under the bed.

—Bianca Glinksas



Allison Anne



Through Her Tears — Fabrice Poussin

Drizzle

The drizzle
Large glass drops
pelting the sidewalk,
Grass, buildings, benches,
Trickling down
Assailing all beneath
Translucent beads
Shattering upon icy impact.

—Sherayah Witcher

Fireworks

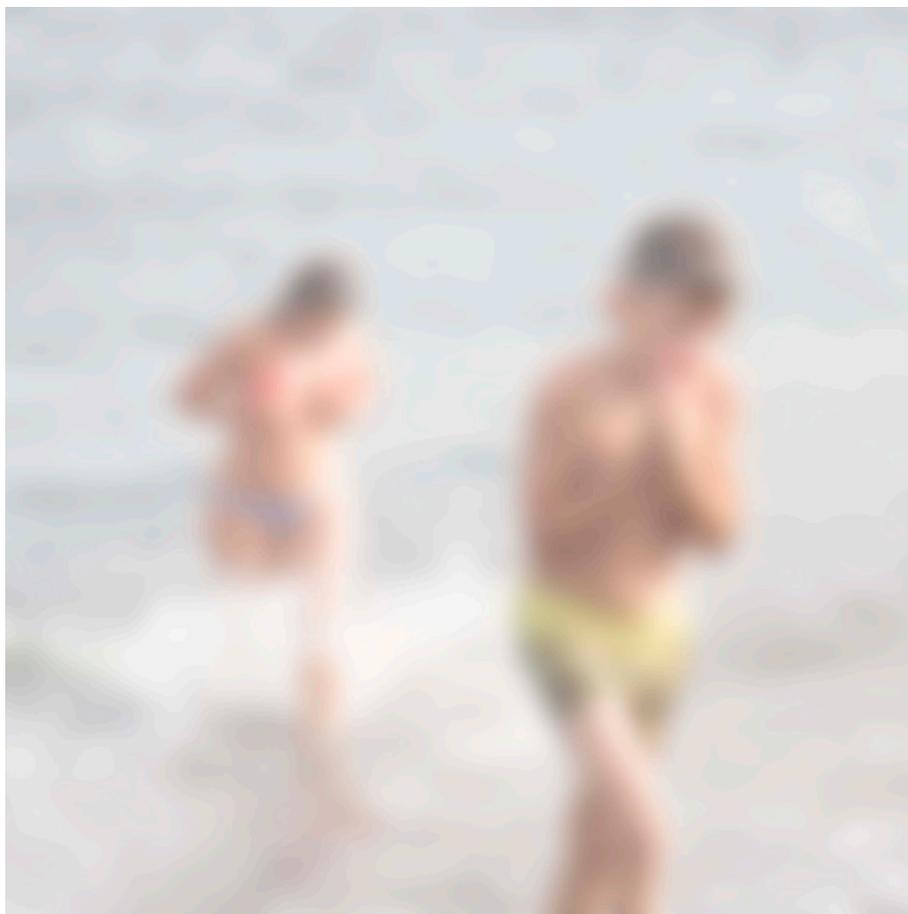
First a pop
Then a whistle-whoosh
And BOOM
Go the lights
Light up the smoke like dandelions
And ash falls on my head.

— Cailey Blair

Autumn's Breeze

Down below the cliff lain ancient tombstones
Stained in boundless time of mortality.
The tattered remnants of ancestor bones
Remained mute in endless captivity.
While near the edge, I looked down from atop.
Behind me stood a weeping willow tree
That was as old as those below the drop.
When Autumn's breeze blew, the leaves left in glee;
In a golden glory, they tumbled down
Onto the graves, and softly spread across.
With a blanket of green, yellow, and brown,
It seemed that all in our world is a loss.
What rises must fall, and what falls must rise;
And like the willow, we revitalize.

—Skyler Jon Thayer



David Rodriguez

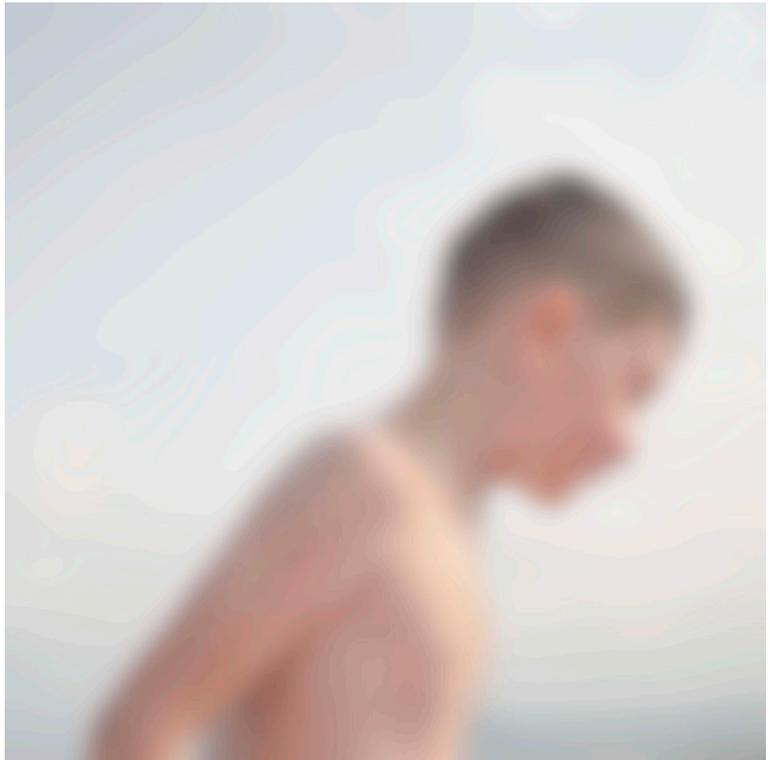
Ice Cream

Chocolate, vanilla
Strawberry, a mix of the three
These are what I see at the ice cream shop
Grape, raspberry
Huckleberry, mango
These are the exclusive flavors
I use the simple change I earned from my lemonade stand
And I buy the huckleberry
What even is a huckleberry?
I've no idea but it intrigues my young mind
I taste it but to my horror
It tastes like dirt
Four dollars wasted
Thus is the life of a kid in summer

—Dakota hensley



David Rodriguez



16 ounces of coyote urine
Jhaki M.S. Landgrebe

There was no reason, this time, to work at place such as this. She shook her head, stamped *South Dakota Snares and Bait-PAID* on another invoice of the piles of invoices, all waiting for entry into the homemade database.

A rickety database much too humble for the profit generated. She added.

She'd accepted the job in just an office. Before, she tried not to imagine or even acknowledge what happened on the factory floor. Now it was behind her. And her eyes knew more. Her youth and heart ached.

I'm an animal lover.

She was. And she was trapped among traps.

Jagged toothed traps, teeth size varying with their meal.

Even though her job was in the office, it was but a doorless closet space to the harsh, glandular reality of the factory. Her back was to reality. Her front to paper piles. The odor at her back. And in her front. On her papers. And on her clothes. In her shiny, brown hair—especially the shiny brown hairs of her nose, hitching a ride home with her, in her, each day.

She clicks.

Click.

Clicked.

Entry after entry. She wished she could sabotage the prosperity of the company with her click, click, clicks.

But she could, could, couldn't.

They were after the fact. Purchases already made. Purchases already PAID. Shipments already sent. She just typed, clattering 77 wpm, in a gentle applause for each successful transaction. She just danced, finger by finger, sniffle by sniff, in a hypnotizing cloud of tainted meat, musty hides, and gland potion.

Easy-set grassland snare 6-pk

ENTER

South Dakota Snares and Bait hooded sweatshirt XXL

ENTER

'Busy Beaver' Beaver Castor 1 oz.

ENTER

Coyote Urine, 16 oz.

ENTER

Free

Apologizing fragrances,
 the curious coffeepot
 did a short
 shuffle,
 foot ball change
 and re-called
 her past lives:
 snorts of limes,
 lactating tits,
 voices with pins,
 quagmire scandals,
 voluptuous sodomites,
 rallies crowding
 the streets
 with bright allusions
 to gritty truths,
 ode to the mirror
 and the monster
 found there.
 Magicians getting
 haircuts
 at barbershops in kansas,
 coffiners leaning on posts,
 taglines of sexual experiences,
 bizarre antihistamines,
 lazy eyes
 dabbling too long
 on toads bulging,
 cement gods cradling
 cold bloody sparkling gold,
 miracles and their makers,

scotch and vomit,
 flagrants and their
 dope parties,
 masqueraders in
 bondage makeup,
 whores in the alleyway,
 talking bout
 hurricanes in texas
 smoking cigarettes
 on their lunch breaks,
 heaving high heels
 above one's head,
 but really,
 trying to blind
 my eyes out,
 from the fucking noise.

Oh honey,
 I dreamed in truth
 of subtle softness,
 light touches
 with loving pants
 in the rhythm to the
 rocking waters.
 Aw come now,
 be Free with me.

—Megan Coleman

Wicked

Deep throaty laughter
 Coming from the depths of the gut;
 Felt to the heels – distant memory
 of who made that happen
 the sensation of impending sex –
 ecstasy!

Lingering, echoing, but too
 damn distant
 to touch or rewind.

Where is the fucking button
 to press, the switch to flip to
 go back and feel
 that sensation in my thighs?

That flush at the small of my back,
 racing up my spine to my head –
 dizziness,
 breathless with knowing I'm
 about to do something
 completely wicked,
 with abandon –
 not a second thought.

—M. E. Keyes

9:30

Nine thirty
 and still the world spins
 on its imaginary axis
 fast enough
 to sicken the drunks
 in Virginia

and move the stars
 for the rest of u

—Robert Beveridge

a hopeful argument for entropy

there are many things that work about life
 most of those are broken on the surface.
 bloody fights,
 messy sex,
 violent breakups,
 drunken conversations,
 near-fatal car crashes.
 anything that spikes the heart rate,
 dances with death
 we all live on the precipice of annihilation
 but very rarely acknowledge it

when you can,
 when you experience things
 that bring you to the edge of oblivion and back,
 a great white certainty occurs to you
 and the mind calms.
 you enter the moment,
 and the moment screams in wild tongues
 until the noise becomes a soft static
 the roses bloom and wither before your eyes
 and wrinkles form on the faces of the youth
 it all happens.
 existence is put on a loop
 on a great big projector screen
 and a shadowed figure that doesn't look unlike you
 is at the helm
 things make sense again.

and then when they don't,
 which will eventually come,
 the birds sing a bit more in tune
 and the faces of strangers share more features
 with that face in the mirror
 there's something there.
 you may not yet know what it is,
 but it's there.

we all go to the grave together,
 the sun
 and the moon
 and plants
 and animals and people

nothing dies alone.
 that's the least anything could
 ever ask for

—Jack Moody

Obsession

You've become a transparency
 overlapping everything in my mind.
 I see you in every crowd. You inhabit
 my dreams and can be seen permeating
 every picture— wedged somewhere
 behind or to the side of the subject
 photobombing your way into my life.

Last night from the other room
 I heard your name called out
 in a commercial on TV;
 Obsession— Obsession—

Of course my interest was piqued
 by this Calvin Kline whose name
 was mentioned. Who is this man
 and what has he to do with
 my Obsession?

—Michael A. Wells

—
 StreaksFox

The low pulsating rhythms of the dance floor gave way to chilly, city air with a slam of the alley door. I told myself I needed some air to think, but the first thing I did when stepping out was dig my hand into my pocket for my phone, and look for him in my contacts. Maybe I was just tired of hanging out at the bar, sipping the same rum and coke all night.

I miss you. Fingers pecked around the keys before the thought could fully register in my mind. No, this was too forward. I was supposed to be over him. I -am- over him. My hand performed its own walk of shame along the keys, erasing the text and replacing it with a simple message. *Hey.*

The sharp smell of piss broke my concentration. At least, I think it was piss. One look down this alley and it was obvious the smell could be any number of things. How many people must have stepped out for air like I did, only to be completely blindsided by the horrible odor? Probably not nearly as many as those who came out here to relieve themselves. A small vibration alerted me to a new text.

I thought you had a party to attend.

I could sense his snarky tone, even without hearing his voice. He was always the sort that had to resist adding a winking face at the end of every message, as if the slight professionalism it granted him was at odds with his true self. I liked that about him.

My reflexes were faster than logic could follow, typing out a quick “I don’t know anyone here.” Hovering over the ‘send’ button, I held my breath. Finally, I relented and erased the message, re-

placing it with something less desperate. I'm just grabbing some air.

It wasn't a lie, exactly. It was what I originally told myself after that third remix of a Modest Mouse song started playing inside. Maybe this club wasn't my idea of a good time. I wanted to meet other guys (well, maybe more than just meet), but this seemed like too much trouble. And while other options were only a quick internet profile away, they didn't lead to anything more than a quick fuck.

Bzzt. The text pulled me back momentarily. He must not have been having a fun Saturday night either. *You can grab some air in the morning. Go grab something else tonight ;)* I let a small chuckle escape. That was oddly sincere coming from him. That probably explains why he didn't resist the wink.

My gaze wandered out to the entrance of the alleyway. Every now and then a car sped past the thin opening, the grumble of old engines in the cold, night air contrasted harshly against the fading music behind me. A question reverberated back to me, new, but not unfamiliar. I let it hang out of my mouth like foul take-out.

"What am I doing here?" It's true, I haven't had a fun night since moving here months ago. Every weekend between classes was a struggle to meet people, and the people I did meet didn't want more than a night between us. It was like back home, like with him.

Shifting off the alley wall, I shoved my hands into my jacket. I didn't even give the door to the club a second glance before I took off to the street. There were other nights to party, nights with better DJs. Idle hands fiddled with the phone in my pocket as I absent mindedly strolled down the block opposite to the club. *I really should call a cab*, I thought. But there was no rush. It wasn't like I was eager to curl up in the comfort of my dorm room. The only thing I was really eager for was to respond to his text, but I also knew if I kept the conversation, he'd start to worry. He was protective like that. It was another thing I liked about him.

It was honestly too bad we never hooked up. We were close in a way beyond that of best friends, but we never wanted to risk fracturing that bond. And then, I had the bright idea of moving to the city for the fall semester and...

I stopped mid step, turning my gaze up to the sky. There were no stars here, at least none that could be seen with the city lights. It wasn't like back home. None of this was like back home. Pulling my phone out of my pocket, my fingers hovered over his contact info once more. I could call him. He was up.

Instead, I swiped over to the ride sharing app and set the pickup info for the club, turning around as I typed. The city wasn't so bad. The bars were better here, I didn't need a car to go to class or work. I just needed to get used to it. Besides, the Midwestern, suburb aesthetic was stifling; I never felt like I was living up to my potential.

But then again, was this really living up to my potential?

I paused again, this time just staring at my phone. My driver was three minutes away, and the club was only another block. I could go home and give this another shot next week. Suddenly, the thought of what he would say echoed through my mind. And the next week, and the next. Even in my imagination I couldn't spare the snark from his tone.

Hitting the red 'x' to cancel the driver, I slid my phone back into my pocket and adjusted the collar on my jacket. The club was open another few hours, and the music couldn't be horrible for the rest of the night. Heck, another rum and coke might make me tipsy enough for it not to matter.

the things that stayed

“People go/ but how/ they left/ always stays”

-Rupi Kaur

maybe that's why i cant stop thinking about you
 why i tried so fucking hard
 to build something from the shattered pieces
 of all the things we could be.

now all i think of is the fight
 the radio studio.
 two chairs a soundboard
 awkward seconds between songs
 before we said anything
 the yelling. the yelling. the yelling.

in my memory it's all i have left of you .

—Meghan O'Hern

The Editing of the Big Bridge

I do not need the locals here
 to welcome my return,

I only want the chance
 to drag myself to the market

For work and negotiations
 over a place to live in town,

Even the stork is able to nest
 on top of the telephone pole.

—Benjamin Nardolilli



Fire Tomorrow — Fabrice Poussin

The Awkward Transition of a CD Player Into an iPod

Rebecca Street

There is something natural about spending the first eighteen years of your life under a shingle roof or in an awkward embrace or between polka dotted sheets or eating flower petals from your front yard or sitting cross legged on a granite countertop or counting the black keys on a piano or listening to the sound of a mouse clicking or organizing the bookshelf by spine widths or choosing to hide in the treehouse instead of go to that birthday party that you've known about for weeks.

What isn't natural is coming home to a silent shoebox, all the clutter being in the exact same place you left it, pouring cups of caffeine for one, not being able to ask someone to turn the lights off, getting mad that the shower drain is clogged then realizing you're the one who clogged it, tripping over your own two feet, knowing it'll be years before you can sit cross legged on a granite countertop again, washing plain white sheets and realizing they're anything but pure, just like you.

It's a peculiar thing when you forget what your voice sounds like after three days. Then you speak and you almost feel like you're in the company of someone other than yourself. Almost.

You begin to leave behind messes like they're your trademark. Paper plates wet with acrylic globs, silver spoons stained with avocado, recyclables sitting in the trash pile, books with creased corners, your yoga mat half rolled, a postcard hanging crooked on the wall, cassette tapes collecting dust.

You do this in hopes that someone will find you. Even if they show up when you're not home, the evidence will still be there. You spend all day anticipating the organization, the fresh air, the noise, the presence, the wide eyes. You rehearse your hellos and your goodbyes, clearing your throat again and again.

You're ready. You've been ready since the first time you woke up alone but this time feels really ready.

It's Thursday. It's dusk. It's nice out. You come home eager, bright-eyed after spending the day with a plastic straw between your teeth, slurping five dollar concoctions you could've made yourself. The sound of the key switching the lock excites you.

But you return to find dried paint on unmoved paper plates.

So you clean up the evidence, the smoke signals, the red flags and shove everything under the couch where it doesn't bother you.

The sun sets. Friday is tomorrow. The weatherman says it'll be nice out.



Seigar

The Patience of Cold Places

In white latitudes, sky and snow
 meet: a blue moment, a silence
 of distance. There,
 under the weight of chill,
 a bird or a bear is the same thing:
 just a pin-prick, movement in a far land.

There beneath old ice as the wetland
 holds its breath, the tight-furled
 buds of cottongrass are swaddled
 in delayed snow melt
 and dry moss waits quietly.

No one counts the calendar days.

There is an absolute faith
 in the snow goose
 who will come
 when she comes.

—Jana Russ

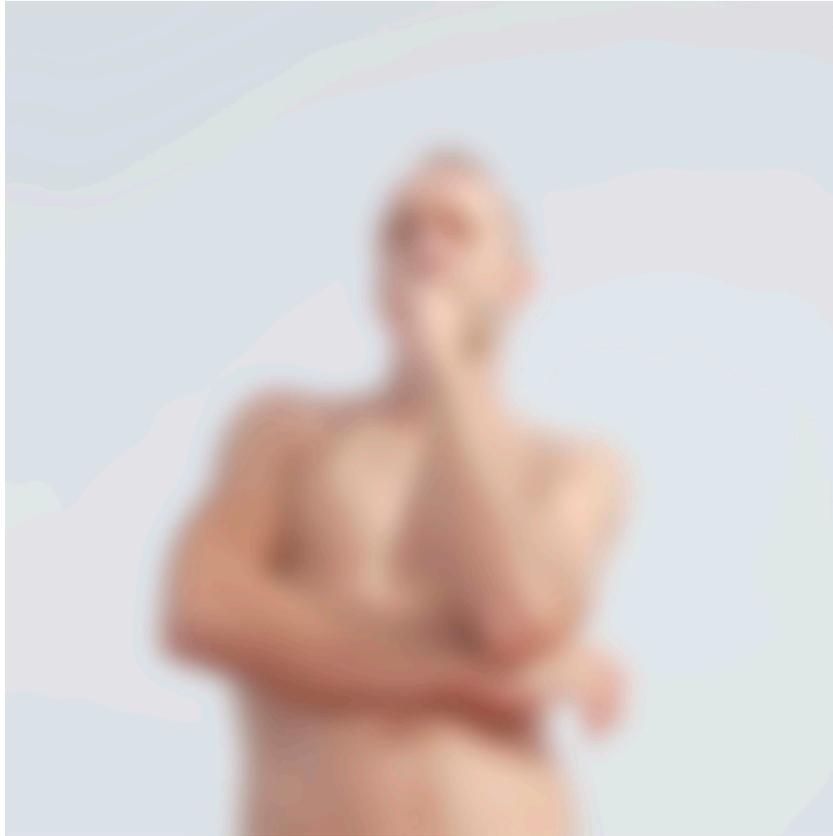


Presley Nassise

The Kiss

It was a vista that opened into mountains, water on either side of that creaking wooden aisle, anchored by rusted ropes, weathered iron of nails sticking out dangerously in places. The wind was blowing at my back. I sat there, dappling my feet in gleaming water. He was rowing. My heart was fluttering, and my pit skipping a flip too many. His current of anticipation ran through my thighs, and the bridge gave way. I fell into that sparkling swell, blanking out for the rush that soaked me. An angry cackle of geese apparated out of the blue and started to peck, peck and peck at his boat. Before I could emerge out of my moment, his boat had started to leak, and he was swimming towards my shore. I was swimming towards him, and he was swimming towards the aisle, my body and earth. And we kissed, hands on each other, lingering long into one another, in that eternity of water, long until our breaths asked for a gasp, and we laughed. There was a sizzle on my cheeks as they met his lips, as mine met his. The geese flew away. The bridge gave way. There was a quiver of landslide. And we kissed. A few trees bowed into our stream of consciousness, some sliding mountain soil too. And we kissed through the end. The universe was giving way to us. Our bodies were showing their way to each other. And we kissed hard in that river.

—Heena Khan



David Rodriguez

Barstow Requiem
Steve Carr

Atop a hill a wisp of white smoke curled up from the yellow sun burnt grass and dissipated in the hot noontime breeze. Another plume of smoke, thicker and darker than the first, rose from the ground and momentarily froze in place before being carried off by the wind. Overhead, a white sun seemed too large for the sky. Rivulets of sweat ran down my spine, drenching my t-shirt. Waves of heat rose from the concrete around the picnic tables in front of the Kentucky Fried Chicken. The crispy skin on the chicken leg crunched loudly between my teeth.

He was a hitchhiker headed for San Luis Obispo, and he liked to talk, non-stop. “Hardly anyone hitchhikes anymore. It’s too dangerous. I’ve never had any trouble though. You have to know what to look for before you get in a car. I’ve had a few guys come on to me while we were on the road, but that’s not something you can tell will happen just by looking at a guy. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t have anything against gays, it’s just not my thing. I did break a guy’s finger when his hand got a little too close to my junk. I guess I should have warned him first. Thanks for the chicken. You’re not expecting me to do anything sexual for it, are you?”

Flickering blue flames shot up sporadically in the grass, like decoration amidst the drabness of the hilltop. A man and woman in matching white Bermuda shorts and blue and yellow Hawaiian type shirts and both wearing identical sandals pointed at the hill excitedly while they ate their chicken. People inside the restaurant had their faces pushed against the plate glass window. From

a bright orange house at the base of the hill, a man in a green bathrobe came out and went to the side of the house and unwound his garden hose, turned it on and began to spray the house. In the distance the blaring of a fire engine siren was heard.

“When I was somewhere in Utah I met these two guys who were hitchhiking to San Francisco. They had one sleeping bag that they slept in together. During the night I could hear them doing stuff. I didn’t stick around in the morning to talk to them. It’s not that I’d deny anyone’s right to get pleasure any way they want to that’s legal, but I wasn’t expecting it to happen so near to me in the middle of nowhere in Utah. I don’t have a sleeping bag. I prefer to sleep on the ground and under the stars. I’ve heard of guys sleeping together in sleeping bags in really cold weather. I’d be okay with that as long as the other guy didn’t want to touch me. This chicken is really good.”

Nine firemen in full gear appeared at the top of the hill. They couldn’t be heard, but they talked in pairs and trios and then as a group, while pointing at the evolving fire that was sending burning grass into the sky. They spread out and began stomping on the fires until the flames were out. A haze of smoke hung over the hilltop.

“I’d do anything for a ride to the coast. Anything, if you know what I mean.”



Seigar

Coalescence, family style

The nylon-faced intruder	creeps up the stairs	with sharpened cutlery
a calico cat in a cage	while	down the aisle
the water witch's	during	of the gasping ground
a roan-haired seamstress	before	into dreidel bags
the bespectacled octogenarian	after	in a white, button-down shirt
	turns sateen stockings	
	hums about trees	

—Sarah Bigham

Dialogue
Wylie Strout

INT MOTEL ROOM

WOMAN

I'm thinking of a comedy. An intimate comedy with nuanced conversations and melting. (pause) A farce. (pause) A satire? Are you listening to me while you pack? You know you could listen while you pack. Should I turn down the music? You are . . . it's funny, you are turning down us while you pack. Your packing is ending us. Tuning me out metaphysically and physically. An ending. A beginning for you right out that door. Right out that door and past the ice machine. Your new beginning. Don't trip over the maid cart. Damn it Zanz, say something.

Zanz continues to ignore the Woman. He goes over to the fridge and pops mini-champagne.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Thank you! I'm celebrating too. My book is being published. I was waiting to tell you. Now you know the news. They actually like my writing. They, the powers that be in the literary world, want to hear what I type. Imagine that. And I am not on anything tonight. I'm serious and was holding out for the right moment to tell you.

Woman goes over to her Dobb kit and starts rummaging until she finds Oder Eaters powder. She proceeds to where Zanz has lined up his shoes and starts pouring the powder in each shoe.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You can never be too prepared. Sure have another! A moment ago I shared news of a life time and you just continue. You should be done by now if you weren't packing like we were moving. But then again, you are packing like you are moving, because you are moving. Moving for good. Away from here and me and that's it. I am going up to Ouray and I am going to stay there for awhile. Stay and dream. This is a new start for me too. Much safer for me. Away from the bandits, the gambling, you're whoring. Away from it all.

Zanz zippers up his suitcase. Woman goes into the bathroom and grabs a razor and brandishes it comically in a dramatic fashion as a weapon. Woman makes a broad gesture with the razor and Zanz steps into the bathroom. Woman continues in, Zanz backs into the shower and she starts the water.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Stop! Damn it, Zanz. You're going to talk this out with me tonight, if we have to stay here the whole god damn night. ZANZZZZ! Forget the move. We can go somewhere else together. Forget me? Don't forget me, Zanz.

Woman backs out of bathroom. Zanz turns off shower, grabs a towel and goes silently back out

into the main room where she is now on the bed. He grabs the razor from her hand and puts it on the side table.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You could at least stay for an hour or more? You are making me into this desperate unrequited son-of-a-bitch. I've read all of the novellas. I know how this ends. What is it about desiring what doesn't desire us? Friendships that don't evolve because a person doesn't want to be friends. Lovers that wake up and walk away. Husbands and wives that forge a partnership only to be pulled away from each other like they never knew each other in the first place. We push, we pull, we try. . . Just leave. The more I desire for you to talk the less I like you. The more that one pushes to be friends with someone who is so obviously gone...futility. All I'm saying is its futile.

Woman pops open a champagne bottle as Zanz prepares to walk out door.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Futility and lovers. Lovers and futility. Champagne. Sparkling bubbly oozing its way down the snarled remnants of my vocal passages. To futility, my darling! To futility and love. To love. Yes, good-bye and good luck.

Zanz realizes that he is forgetting his shoes. He turns around picks up the shoes with the Oder Eater dust now swirling up into the air and heads back for the door.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

You aren't even saying why you're leaving?

Zanz leaves.

* * * * *

Ted Talks Sign Up Sheet
Paul Beckman

Purchase

I bought a drone on Amazon and it was delivered by drone

Changing Times

Time was when you could screw your neighbor's wife and she'd keep it to herself

A Surprising Pair

I have no tolerance for anti-Semites or polo players

Hurry Up We Don't Have All Day

I don't know what I'd request for my last meal if my family walked into hospice and asked
I'd have the same dilemma if I were on death row

Good Samaritan

I want to feed the hungry, clothe the cold, and give jobs to those out of work but my schedule
doesn't allow for such frivolity

Sometimes I wonder About My Motivation

A conversation between Dr. Phil, Dr. Oz, and Dr. Ruth

The Misunderstood

My wife never did drugs so she doesn't understand the pleasure and the pain.

Oh the Shame

My wife was formerly married to a Republican

A Mother's Promises

My mother often promised to break every bone in my body

True Confessions Part 1

I worry about becoming impotent as I grow older

True Confessions Part 2

I worry about growing older as I grow older

Religion

God and I do not see eye to eye. But then again, I don't see eye to eye with anyone

Family

Almost all my relatives are dead or do not speak to me which is basically the same thing

Emotions

Grudges are their own rewards

Friendship

I have too many friends but I don't know how to cull them because they are all connected



The Confession of St. John — Russell Streur

An Excerpt From A Zine I Wrote On My Electro-convulsive Treatment Experience
Fishspit

The people that were in the cubicles . . . all around me . . . how can I put it gently . . . ah hell . . . let's just say it . . . they were fucked up man . . . over the rainbow . . . toodly whooped . . . deranged . . . damaged . . . or just plain worn out. The last house on the block. I watched . . . I listened . . . and I thought, "Holy cats! Am I that fucked up? Do I look like them?" Befuddled . . . mixed up . . . nobody home . . . can't make friends with the brain. Shock! Shock! Let's shock 'em back into shape! Get rolling! Keep them doggies moving! Rolling! Rolling! Rolling! The shock mill. They were sizing up our situation . . . asking the necessary questions. They were nice nurses . . . a lot of compassion. One of them put her hand on my shoulder as they put the electrodes on that first time . . . it's a strange thing . . . all so strange. Pardon me dear reader if I bounce around like a ping pong ball . . . it's part of the program right now . . . a side effect . . . being flumdiddled. "It'll go away," they say. I don't care if it doesn't . . . I'll be a simpleton! I'll be the slobbering screwball of the century . . . just get that fucking beast depression out of my soul! Shock the shit out of it! Zip! Zip zoom! Zap! Give it to me! Double doses! No . . . hell! Quadruple doses . . . make me a dingus! Destroy my reason! I want to play again! Shock! Zip! Whammo! When you come out of it . . . Oh god! The first time . . . a terrifying vision! I can't remember the details . . . I don't want to . . . I just remember the fear . . . I weighed it in the balance . . . do I want to experience that again? I decided it was worth it . . . but what a bitch!

Misery upon misery! “Would I do it again?” I decided, “Yes!” But why so much misery?

The second time? It was worse. I couldn't breathe . . . I was conscious . . . I couldn't move. I couldn't speak. It's hard to remember details . . . I was shocked you know. Most people have no memory of the whole process . . . this would become true of me . . . but this time . . . Jesus . . . I could hear them talk . . . their laughter . . . but I couldn't move . . . I couldn't speak . . . it's hard to remember it all. I'm digging deeply here for you dear reader . . . visiting memories I'd rather forget . . . for you! The anesthesia . . . the shock. Most people have no memory of the whole process . . . I did. I was awake. That first time . . . that terrible vision . . . told you that . . . my passion for repeating myself. . . can't remember the vision

. . . only the fear . . . I tried to hold on to it . . . the vision . . . not the fear . . . fuck that kind of fear! But I couldn't. After the treatment you are totally . . . what? Whammo! A dead donkey has more sense than a person coming out of the induced seizure. That's what they do . . . induce a seizure. Crazy! I take an anti-seizure med . . . but no I don't! They told me to nix that baby . . . it'd fuck with their little seizure.

I don't ask questions. No . . . I'm beyond all that. I don't give a good goddamned anymore. Just shut up! Shock me! Let me become a human again. I haven't been a human for so long . . . I jabbering idiot? Yes! Yes indeed. I've stumbled through somehow . . . ended up on that table. Table? It's not really dear reader . . . added that for effect . . . drama . . . a slab of meat . . . on the table . . . wicked scientists

. . . no! They show the utmost compassion. It's soft . . . my little table . . . plenty of cushion . . . don't you worry my peruser. The machinery . . . high tech! Beeps . . . boops . . . tweets . . . twinkles . . . all sorts of beeps going on . . . no use trying to separate them out.

The anesthesiologist tells me I'm going to get sleepy . . . the oxygen tastes good . . . I count backwards

. . . 10 . . . 9 . . . I'm out. God I love 9! I could stay at 9 forever! 9 is the most fantastic place in the universe. I've smoked crack . . . it's like the first hit . . . only a 1000 times better. But I always get kicked out of paradise. I wake in the recovery room.

so how about the film, guys –
everyone seems to get a kick out of it –
drinking & clowning
only reiterate our opinions –

I love how drunk we can get
& still remember the title
& who was in it
& maybe some of the plot
& a few of the best lines

& one even gets serious
for a moment & says,
but it sure was fucking sexist
wasn't it

& the rest of the crowd
freeze up
& refuse to answer –

oh I've been on the carpet
many times now,
admonished by what I shouldn't like
when actually I do -
I have to trust in my own convictions
even when they're wrong

but I'd rather my conscience
didn't shove that microphone in my face constantly
while saying,
“okay bud, tell us how you really feel” –
that's the part of me I hate,
the feelings that just won't drop it,
the fact check,
that comes down on everything that sounds like
I'm not who I should be –

so a film catches me out –
the hero is a bully, a womanizer, a louse
& it still all came good for him at the end –
my sensitivities just don't get it –
they put me on pedestals
that can't handle my weight -

the problem is that
some of the funniest shit I've ever heard
I'm too embarrassed to repeat
to anyone but myself
& many of the trashiest books ever written
I devour eagerly –
I don't want people to understand exactly –
I just assume they realize that
we all have thoughts & desires
we wouldn't want others looking in on –

maybe next time, the guys & I
will go to the local art theater,
see a classic by Kurosawa or Cassavetes
& not some gross-out comedy,
films where the emotions linger
long after the end credits roll -

we'll still drink
& still clown
but we won't have to stop ourselves
in mid-conversation,
to doubt the way we saw what we saw –

but, until then,
we have an uncaring, foul-mouthed,
undisciplined, misogynist creep
messing with our self-respect -
he was only on the screen
but that didn't stop him.

—John Grey

The Charred Mayor Meets Madam Exoskeleton

He wore a black suit to match his poor skin,
 his neck crinkly and crispy around the collar,
 and she strode into the room like a mechanized
 weapon, clacking and clanking across the marble.
 “How do you do?” wheezed the Charred Mayor,
 taking Madam Exoskeleton’s rock-hard hand
 and bringing it up to what was left of his lips.
 “Charmed,” Madam Exoskeleton’s voice echoed
 through the ridges and furrows of her gray face.
 The two danced to LPs all night, blurring the line
 between human and inhuman, shadow and carapace.

—Robert Crisp

The Encounter

Jeffrey Zable

So I stopped and said to the chihuahua chained to the parking meter,
 “You know, I’m not a happy man. Haven’t been for as long as I can remember.”

And to that he immediately answered, “I feel exactly the same. Here I am waiting for my master so I can get home and eat a few scraps and drink some stale water. It’s a dog’s life at the lowest level!”

“From that standpoint, I guess it’s better to be human. But that isn’t saying much!” I responded.

”Well,” he retorted, “I’m sure I was human in my previous life, and this is the consequence of what I said and did in that one.”

Feeling upset by this admission, I stammered, “See you again sometime,” and headed down the street wondering if I would wind up as an earthworm,

or cockroach scurrying across a wall. . .

Two Guns
Mitchell Krokmalnik Grabois

1.
Henry David Thoreau has a pistol at Walden Pond.
2.
I strode hurriedly into the McDonalds
3.
At dawn, Henry dresses quietly, so as not to wake himself, and gently pulls the gun from under his pillow. He walks out to the pond and scans the ice for thickness. Then he takes his gun and, with a motion like bowling, sends it across the surface.
4.
I normally don't eat junk food, but I had only ten minutes for lunch. The boss was killing me with his arbitrary demands and his bullying. I was job-scared so I put up with everything he dished out.
5.
Henry's gun slides, as with intent. The ice is not perfectly smooth and Henry wonders if the gun will discharge. He's not hoping it does, and he's not disappointed when it doesn't.
6.
Thinking of that miserable cur, that miserable excuse for a human being who was my boss, I yanked open the McD door and hurried in, looking up at the unfamiliar menu, and didn't see the puddle of vomit on the floor. My slick-soled dress shoe hit it and I went into a slide, as if I were on ice. Amazingly I kept my feet and was halfway across the room before I knew it.
7.
Henry watches his gun, where it has come to rest, for a long time as if, through his concentration, it will sprout legs and dance a Celtic jig. But it doesn't. It just sits there, black and ugly against the snow swept ice.
8.
I slid almost to where the man stood holding the big, black automatic weapon, pointing it at the kids having a birthday party, all of which registered in my mind in a split-second. Time was suspended at that point and for the moments following. The gunman turned his head toward me just as I reached him. Sliding on vomit is silent. I never made a conscious decision, but added the strength of my legs to my momentum.
9.
Thoreau ventures out to get the gun. He doesn't walk gingerly, but with confidence, as if the ice were a wooden floor he had built himself. The ice doesn't flex or crack. It respects Thoreau's trust. Thoreau knows that objects respond to trust, as people and animals do.

10.

I smashed into the gunman and knocked him into the big square garbage container. He hit his head and was knocked cold. His weapon clattered to the floor. The birthday boy's mother rushed over and grabbed it, but I kept her from shooting the madman who'd ruined her son's third birthday.

11.

Henry retrieves his gun, puts it in his coat pocket, walks back across the ice, doesn't hesitate when the ice transitions to land, coated with pine needles and snow. He walks to his cabin puts the gun back under his pillow, and feels even safer than when he awoke.

12.

On TV they called me a hero and interviewed me on talk shows. Nobody ever mentioned the vomit. No one seems to have noticed it, though some mother must have been aware that her son or daughter had puked, likely out of fear. I never mentioned the vomit either. I did a good job feigning modesty when I was called a "hero." An admirer offered me a better job, and I took it.

Night Music

100	93	86	79
72	65	58	51
44	37	30	23
16	9	2	100

Chemicals, uningested, refuse to kick in
 Unfathomable pressure on the seabed

93	86	79	72	65
57	50	43	43	100
93	86	79	72	65
58	51	44	37	30

Otherworldly current of echoes
 Clattering radiators cannot drown out

23	16	9
----	----	---

Silence has never been so loud

2	100
---	-----

Silence has never been so

—T. J. Smith

Singularity
Bear Kosik

Sometimes yule see sumun trine real hard, like the hole whorl depent on winnin a stupid game. Thair inna nuther yunaverse. Fer real! I trytit wunce, lettin myself go with my fingers jitterin on the controls. My stomach tightind, my eyes wudn't blink. I mean, I cudn't blink my eyes, man! I hadda stop. I wuz gettin suckt into the game, like, like it was surroundin my brain an takin over my body. Sorta like mixin spray an speed, when ya suckt down too much an ya feel like yer brain is fallin inta yer crotch. I thot I wuz bein dragged in by sumin. I pult back, an felt, well, I felt like I'd downd a bottle er two the night bafore. I jus sat thair lookin at the screen. I never let go again like that playin on a computer. Never.

Ya know I did all kinza shit years ago -- ethyl, speed, coke, poppers, an, an lotsa booze. Why'd I do it? I dunno, I did it cuz, ya know. My family hates it when I say I did sumin jus cuz, but it's the godzawnest truth. I jus do things sumtimes, ya know, jus for the sperience. Jus cuz. I like new speriences. Who don't? I'm sorta glad I did all that shit, ya know, to have the sperience. Wunce in a wall I have. But now, wow man! I can't magine why anywon wood let imself go like that. Bob duz it a lot. That's why I starded callin him Alice. You know, through the lookin glass. Alice. Hah! Man, he hates it. But what else do you call some guy who lets his mine fall into a computer screen, so focused on winnin a game with a machine. I mean, cumon! Ya godda wunder. Maybe the guys that stick it out, maybe they enter a hole new yunaverse. Fer Crissakes, it's like yer bein suckt into a black hole, right? Whadattheycallit? A singularity. Yeah. A singularity. Fer real, man. Who wants to wine up suckt inta nothin? I dunno. Maybe fer the sperience?

Lambs and Goats

“The One
 Surviving Suspect
 of the Boston Marathon
 Bombing Believed
 to Have Shot Self
 In Neck.”
 His voice box
 skewered
 like a kebob
 by the thin metal
 finger-length bullet.
 His larynx
 a silent howl
 a shattering
 blast of neurons.

—Gabrielle Langley

Six Days

Rock L. Madigan

The twinkling of sunlight came through the fissures of skin and sinew that belted the rib cage together.

The cardinal, crimson plumage, waited patiently for more of the prison to evaporate today. It had been 6 days, 6 days of surviving on what was in the cat’s stomach, and left of the cat. Tough choices had to be made in tough situations. The cardinal thought about how tight it could squeeze itself, maybe through one of the gaps in between the larger ribs. They certainly had some give to them. And it was a far cry better than being in the stomach, wet and dark and undulating.

6 days ago, that was when the cat, who had swallowed him whole in the Carter backyard, had been beamed by the falling concrete of construction. 6 days in a prison that had a certain comfort to it, but now it was time to bid adieu.

The Redwood Orphans of Carbon Canyon

241

stunted

Redwoods

sulk in the Southern
California climate.

I marvel at the headline
 promise of "The only Redwoods Left
 in Orange County." Long Beach air ranks
 among the worst in Earth's atmosphere
 and my lungs are sick from soot-rich exhaust
 pipe breaths. I make the half hour drive and walk
 the mile, following the few caps-lock trail markers.
 A plaque tells the tall tale of these orphans' origins.
 In the 1920s a bank donated 600 leftover seedlings after
 a promotion ended (*One for each new account opened!*)
 Botanists from CSUF fostered the seedling Sequoias, studying
 the resilience of the remaining bunch. In 1975, the survivors
 were deep-root ready for homestay in Carbon County. Shuffling
 through brick bark dust, circling the trunks, I pace the scant grove
 twice, taking the splintered air in huffs. At least their scent measures
 up--a blend of pungent paprika, lemon peel and vanilla bean. This soil cannot
 nurture these to-be timber chiefs to the same grand fruition one sees in National
 Parks. Next to bamboo, Prickly Pears, drought-dead reeds, the verdure
 grandeur holds its bold
 contrast to the chaparral
 surroundings. A maintenance
 staff tends to the fostered forrest
 five times a week, working
 against the land's desolation
 curse. This soil disowns the roots:
 they remain unbelonging,
 needs unmet, thirst unquenchable,
 perpetually deprived, potential
 thrashed by mischance. Their trunks
 will not match their blue
 prints--the girthy stature
 which invites picture-taking
 tourists to wing their arms
 for comparison, asks necks
 to crane so eyes might double-
 take their frames, heaven-bent
 to witness their magnificence
 like in Yosemite. The
 achievement of their genetics
 is in their act of always
 climbing towards Mother Sun.
 They are sempervirens:
 the ever-living, a privilege
 or sentence of hundreds
 of years marked by rings.

—Bianca Glinksas



The Exodus from Egypt — Russell Streur

Highway Between Moab and Zion

Leave behind your soul
 to roam
 the crimson-colored hoodoos.
 Chase prairie dogs, sage lizards,
 the peak of a Champagne-pink sunset
 that creates a lump in your throat
 so big
 you forget to take a photo.
 But that was miles back.
 A lonely waterfall leaps over a cliff
 above hanging gardens of moss,
 forming undulating shadows
 on the canyon floor below
 which is interrupted
 only by this stream of asphalt
 extending past the horizon,
 all the way to the Grand Staircase-Escalante
 that tiptoes up to God in shades of
 Yuma-orange sandstone.

—Olivia Tucker

Brooklyn Drive Bye

Used cup
 curb tossed
 she drives
 past him
 in side
 dark steel
 with out
 glance back
 care less
 soul cold
 Bye, Bye!

— Joseph M. Felser

There was crime

in your eyes,
piercing truths gallop
in the air like absolute nonsense.

Your absence, a precise trauma.
There were litanies, erased,

deleted invocations, maps,
ashstorms

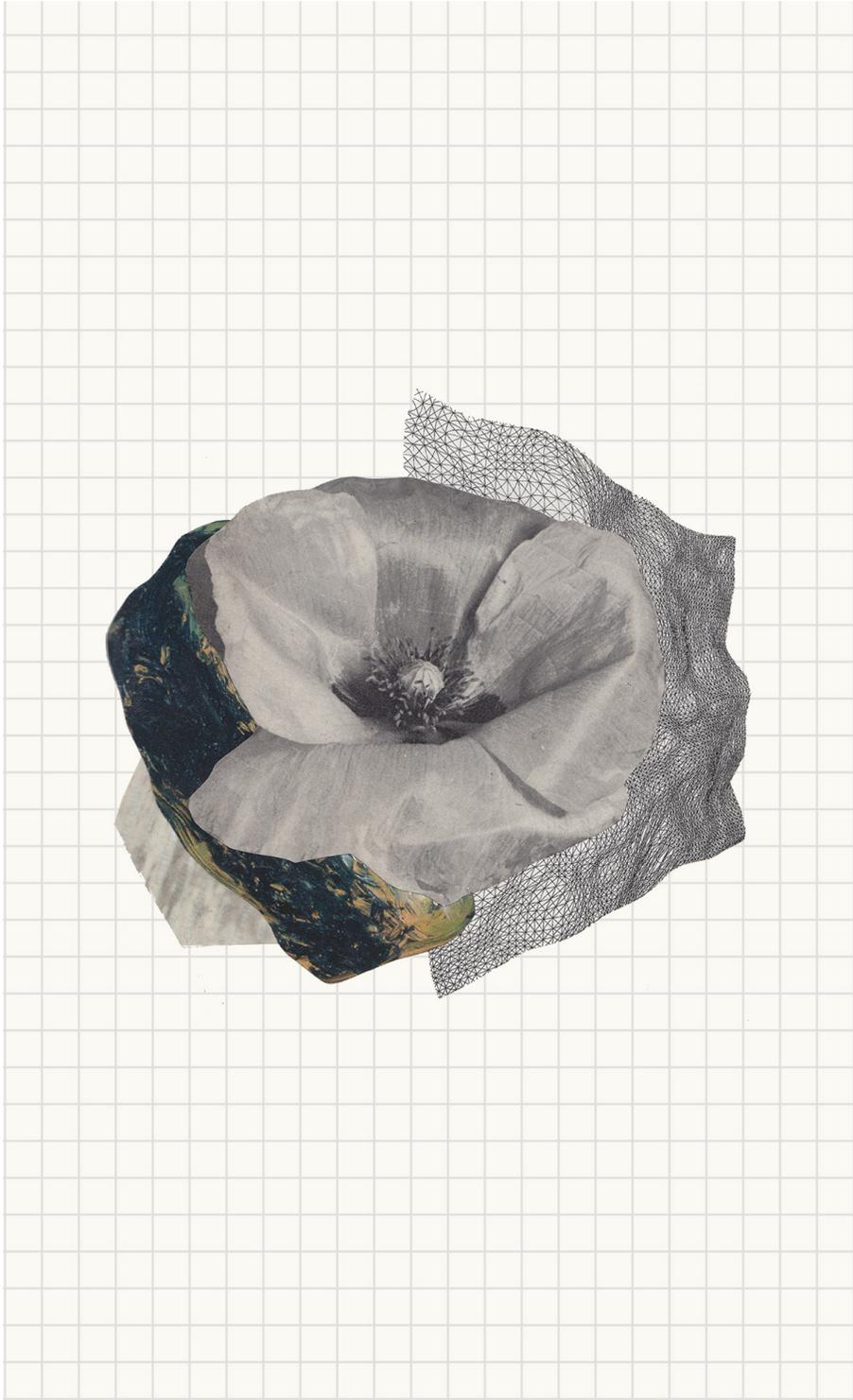
that still hurt my lungs.
Patience was happy with impatience.

You tried the calm,
but committed the crime,

in your eyes, your pupils.
You don't need to explain.

An old adios
is never forgotten.

—Sergio Ortiz



Allison Anne

left cheek

i.
if i can seduce you with anything
it's my walmart night gown collection

ii.
spotlights blink
like fireflies do
but you don't
slow down

iii.
this is like that one halloween
my sister and i walked home from the bar
and a drunk man slapped my ass so hard
that i had a red handprint
on my left cheek for two days
and when i tell people that story
they always laugh
but to be honest
you should be careful when touching
my left ass cheek
because i still get real freaked out
for some reason

iv.
she only sees me when it's dark out
that's why we will never work out

v,
we're talking one adjective here

vi.
i had the best damn day
in disney world
without you

vii.
and don't you ever try
to touch my left cheek
again

—Shelby Curran



Presley Nassise



Laser Chicken Carpe Diem — Barbara Martin

Litterbugs
BanWynn Oakshadow

By this point the sails are so much confetti trailing micro-fiber lines. We look like a poorly tricked-out Bakian punk's jumper. We figured that we might as well call this deploy "solar sails" since they managed to slow us down enough to find out that Sol is what the local call this little star before it turned us into a Rut Festival float. As always, my favorite ear jockey has maneuvered us perfectly. We are going to slip between Sol 2 and 3 to drop us into a nice, clean S-curve around Sol, then a single jerk of negative acceleration to the starboard engine and slingshot around this orifice evacuated excuse for a system, saving fuel at 20% over optimum projections. I am going to have to fuck all three of his holes to say "Ghneezax" for this one. That means ten extra flips at full acceleration, and into the port 4.734 turns ahead of scheduled delivery. Narcotics are profitable and that means upgrades for my sweet baby...and some for the ship to.

"Tank, baby, grab your chin and cuddle them balls. You're going to need them. We are now at Sol 3 planar orbit and nearing 180 degrees. 5 ren burn that'll make your brain take a week sliding back down to your asses, and we are looping out of this..."

The whole ship jerked alright, but not because of the engine. We hit something...big. You absolutely, never hear dings against the hull, but I sure as fuck heard something.

I yelled, "Sweet Baby Roofus! What the fuck did you just do to my ship?"

"I didn't see it. Honeybuns never detected it. Who could have expected it? It ain't my fault!"

"What ain't your fault, super pilot who ain't getting laid tonight, after all?"

Fre giggled back, "Tank, I don't know how to say this...but, at 180 degrees we...I had to have Baby rip data from Sol 3 to identify it...we hit a toaster. A big, fucking toaster. Tactile is on your pad now, if you wanna take a feel."

Shit. Roofus was pretty stressed if fre was venting NO2. Sometimes I hate Thrillians. "What kind of damage are we talking about, Slick-tail?"

Fre managed to sound ashamed while continuing to giggle, "Boss, we're limping home. Thirty-seven turns late on delivery at best. Repairs are going to cost twice what we will get paid on delivery. I'm going to sling us back between Sol 4 and 5 then shoot it again at twelve degrees vertical of any planetary orbit."

"Can you get decently close to Sol 3 on the way?"

"I can. It'll cost a bit of fuel, but why?"

"We gonna drop some dead weight on the way home and make ourselves feel real good doing it. When you are close enough to the primitives who don't understand "Don't make us shoot. Don't pollute." drop three of Baby Bird's eggs and glass that fucker."

"I like the way you think. Looks like you're the one getting lubed tonight...all eight of them."

"Boss...got a weak transmission coming in. Their philosophers or priests or scientists or whatever are claiming that we just pulled a "hit and run" on God."

"Fuck 'em. Count to three and say "Goorshik VorrroaW!"

I could hear Roofus' smiles, "I never get over how much prettier those glassed planets look after we're done with them."

My ear began to erect and get cold, "You're just a hopeless romantic. That's number four of the three reasons I love you, so peel them open. Put the big girl on auto and let's fuck."

"Whatever you say, you're the boss. You want me to bring some Tribbles?"



Presley Nassise

Termination
Laura Kat Young

I pick up the bucket and walk out of the room toward the incinerator, which is half a floor below us. On the way, I glance at the monitors and see the reminders still lying there. Helio is right: we have to be invisible and since fuel collection is so sporadic, we must conserve it for the most necessary of situations. I walk to the rear of the room and through a door, the bucket banging behind me as I climb over the steel threshold and down several steps toward the furnace. Every time I find myself in here, standing here with this bucket, I remember that Helio did this for me. I was that woman lying there. Does he remember that when we entangle in the darkness as I do?

I do what I have done many times, though I know I should not. I take the fetus out of the bucket and lay him on the floor and then I wrap him in a cloth that I have taken with me, a small one that will go unnoticed. It does not look human quite yet; his abnormalities attacked him in the early stages. He wouldn't have lived, even if he hadn't grown outside the womb. When I have swaddled him, I lift him up, and open the furnace door. As I bring him forward, I whisper in his ear and place him on the cement slab. The cloths sizzle and I shut the door.



Seigar

Biographies

Allison Anne is a mixed media artist, illustrator and graphic designer from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Their work is the result of years of self-directed experimentation, frequently using rescued, found or recycled materials to create handmade books, unusual mailings and works on canvas + cardboard. Allison uses collage and correspondence art as ways to explore intersections and interactions between media, medium and function in their art practice while concurrently examining their own motivations and experiences by producing a visual diary in the form of daily collage work. Find them at <http://allisonanne.com> or [instagram.com/allisonannedesigncreate](https://www.instagram.com/allisonannedesigncreate)

Paul Beckman's stories are widely published in the following magazines amongst others: Connecticut Review, Raleigh Review, Litro, Playboy, Pank, Blue Fifth Review, Flash Frontier, Matter Press, Metazen, Thrice Fiction and Literary Orphans. His work has been in a number of anthologies and a dozen countries. Paul was one of the winners in the 2016 Best of the Small Fictions. He's the author of two story collections, "Peek" and "Come! Meet My Family and other stories".

Jazmine Bellamy is a writer from the great flatlands of central Illinois who masquerades as a giant rabbit online. When she's not working on a writing project she's either quilting, practicing archery, or debating on getting more Betta fish or Basset Hounds. She is also a self-professed mental health advocate, and happy to discuss her day to day living with type two bipolar disorder and complex post-traumatic stress disorder, especially in how it affects her creativity.

Robert Beveridge makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry just outside Cleveland, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in *Survision*, *Loud Zoo*, and *Ghostlight*, among others.

Sarah Bigham teaches, writes, and paints in Maryland where she lives with her kind chemist wife, their three independent cats, an unwieldy herb garden, several chronic pain conditions, and near-constant outrage at the general state of the world tempered with love for those doing their best to make a difference. A Pushcart nominee, her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have appeared in *Bacopa*, *descant*, *Rabbit*, *Serving House Journal*, and other great places for readers and writers. Find her at www.sgbigham.com.

Cailey D. Blair is a young creative from Cincinnati, Ohio. She recently earned her BA in English, but she likes to split her spare time between creative writing and visual arts. She currently works as a barista in a 3rd-wave coffee shop, but when business is slow, you'll probably find her doodling or scribbling lines of poetry on the paper coffee cups. She blogs about art and creative inspiration at www.seecaileycolor.com.

Steve Carr began his writing career as a military journalist and has had over sixty short stories published internationally in print and online magazines, literary journals and anthologies including *The Gathering Storm Magazine*, *Fictive Dream*, *Jakob's Horror Box* and the *Dystopia/Utopia Anthology* by Flame Tree Publishing. His plays have been produced in several states. He was a 2017 Pushcart Prize nominee. He lives in Richmond, Virginia and writes full time. He is on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100012966314127> and Twitter @carrsteven960.

Megan Coleman has been writing from the womb and is an emerging poet in Chattanooga, TN. Her poems appear in *Elephant Journal* (2017), Chattanooga Writer's Guild contests in 2003 and 2004, and *Visera* in 2012. She has given readings at Barking Legs and Mudpie Cafe in Chattanooga.

Robert Crisp currently hides out in Savannah where writes poetry as often as he can. Learn more at www.writingforghosts.com

Shelby Curran recently graduated from Florida State University with a degree in English: Editing, Writing, and Media. She currently works as an Editorial Assistant at Scholastic. Her work has appeared in *The Miami Herald*, *Panoply* (Editors' Choice), *Snappedragon Journal*, *The Write Launch* and elsewhere.

Joseph M. Felser, Ph.D. graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Boston University, and received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Chicago. He is a professor on the faculty of Kingsborough Community College/CUNY in Brooklyn, NY, where he has taught since 1997. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the world-renown Monroe Institute, located in Faber, Virginia. Felser is the author of two books, *The Way Back to Paradise* (Hampton Roads, 2005), and *The Myth of the Great Ending* (Hampton Roads, 2011), as well as numerous articles and book reviews. His published writings on myth, religion, and parapsychology have appeared in both scholarly and popular journals, including *The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, *The Quest*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *The International Journal of Parapsychology*, *Collingwood Studies*, *Mythosphere*, and *the Anomalist*.

Fishspit writes his own zine called *Wiseblood*. He likes cats and spinning rockabilly 45's on his little record player.

Bianca Glinskas considers poetry a horizon--an unreachable mirage, a delusionary destination that she can't help but set course for anyway. When she isn't reading or writing poetry, she plays viola, does yoga, and eats too much mac n cheese. Bianca studied English Literature and Creative Writing at Cal State University Long Beach.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over twelve-hundred of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for numerous prizes. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical psychologist in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and Nook, or as a print edition. To see more of his work, google Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois. He lives in Denver.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in *Sheepshead Review*, *Studio One* and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in *Louisiana Review*, *Poem* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

M. E. Keyes - I live in Pearland with my husband, daughter, three grandchildren, three dogs and several various and sundry additional animals. I currently work in the oil and gas field as a contract administrator, and am planning my "retirement" career as a university instructor in creative writing. I am joining the Gulf Coast Poets today and look forward to meeting some of you at the next

meeting!

Bear Kosik has authored three novels: *The Secret History of Another Rome*, *Crossing Xavier* (as Hugh Dudley), and *C Square* (with Paul Barone). Many essays, short fiction pieces, and poems have appeared in anthologies, reviews, and e-zines. He is a resident playwright with Manhattan Repertory Theater. His plays also have appeared in the Midtown International Theatre Festival. As a political scientist, his book *Restoring the Republic: A New Social Contract for We the People* assesses the state of democracy in the USA and accurately forecast why Donald Trump would win the White House. He resides in East Greenbush, NY

Gabrielle Langley is Houston Poetry Fest's Featured Poet for 2017. She has been featured in the Huffington Post as one of Houston's important emerging poets ("Five Poets You Need to Know About," HuffPost 11/23/2015). A recipient of the Lorene Pouncey Award, Houston Poetry Fest's Jury Prize, Vivian Nellis Memorial Award for Creative Writing, and an ARTlines national poetry finalist, her work has been appearing in a variety of literary journals. Ms. Langley is also a founder and editor of *Red Sky: poetry on the global epidemic of violence against women* (Sable Books – 2016). She works during the day as a licensed mental health professional. To safeguard her own mental health, she writes poetry and dances Argentine tango at night. Additional information about this poet can be found at www.gabriellelangley.com.

Rock Madigan is a writer originally from Chicago. He has spent a number of years abroad researching, and is currently preparing for his doctoral thesis defense. His creative writing has been published in a number of small publications and local magazines. Madigan also runs the twitter-zine @PocketStoryCOOP on Twitter.

Barbara Martin grew up on three continents, and has lived in eleven states coast to coast. She currently lives in Oregon where she keeps a studio and teaches art classes. Art is an adventure for Barbara, where each painting is a new exploration of place and emotion. Her work is contemporary in style and leans toward the abstract, and sometimes surreal. Her subjects range from the serenity of a landscape ... to the horror of a nightmare. Barbara belongs to the Oregon Society of Artists and is a member of several galleries and artist groups in Oregon. Her work has been featured in galleries, shows and museums around the country, as well as in Norway.

Jack Moody is a short story writer, poet and freelance journalist from wherever he happens to be at the time. He didn't go to college. He likes his privacy. He doesn't have a social media account. Don't ask him to make one. Contact him at j.moody9116@gmail.com

Ben Nardolilli currently lives in New York City. His work has appeared in *Perigee Magazine*, *Red Fez*, *Danse Macabre*, *The 22 Magazine*, *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Elimae*, *friction*, *Inwood Indiana*, *Pear Noir*, *The Minetta Review*, and *Yes Poetry*. He blogs at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com and is looking to publish a novel.

Presley Nassise is an eighteen year old photographer focused on contemporary artistic twists as well as social justice. She would like to make art that provokes strong emotions.

BanWynn, aka Suta Sunmanitu (Tough Coyote,) is a hermit, hippie, experimental beat poet, speculative fiction writer, nature photographer, cultural historian, social activist, NA pipe carrier, husband, father, adult survivor of child abuse, mentally ill, dyslexic, aphasic, gay, pagan, disabled veteran, and a Cancer with a criminal record. He uses every bit of that in his writing. The Jack-of-All-Trades/Master-of-None has no degrees in 8 interesting majors. He loves to create but hates the job of finding good homes for his work and is attempting to train his Border Collie to become his agent.

Retired after four decades' prizewinning print and broadcast journalism in Hartford CT, **Don Noel** received his MFA in Creative Writing from Fairfield University in 2013. His work has so far been chosen for publication by Calliope, Shark Reef, Drunk Monkeys, The Tau, Indian River Review, Midnight Circus, Oracle, Clare Literary Magazine, The Raven's Perch, The Violet Hour, Literary Heist, Dime Show Review, Yellow Chair Review, Meat for Tea, The Penmen Review, 99 Pine Street, BLYNKT Magazine, KYSO Flash, The Raven Chronicles, Route 7 Review, Halfway Down the Stairs, The Icarus Anthology, Darkhouse Books, Simon Press and Zimbell House

Meghan O'Hern has their BA in English and Creative Writing from Bradley University and has published their first chapbook, *Rising from the Ashes* by Weasel Press. Their work can be found in various journals and on Facebook at Meghan O'Hern Poetry

Sergio A. Ortiz is a two-time Pushcart nominee, a four-time Best of the Web nominee, and 2016 Best of the Net nominee. 2nd place in the 2016 Ramón Ataz Annual Poetry Competition sponsored by Alaire publishing house. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in FRIGG, Tipton Poetry Journal, Drunk Monkeys, and Bitterzeot Magazine. He is currently working on his first full-length collection of poems, *Elephant Graveyard*.

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *The Chimes*, and dozens of other magazines. His photography has been published in *The Front Porch Review*, *the San Pedro River Review* and more than 200 other publications.

My name is **David Rodríguez**. I am 39 years old and I am from Spain. From an early age, I have always been attracted to the art world, but my love for photography didn't start until 2013, the year I bought my first reflex camera, and I began to explore my attraction to art. Shortly afterwards, I began to train myself through several courses, and also in a self-taught way. While I was studying, I discovered new photographers. One day, I discovered Guy Bourdin and a photo that fascinated me enormously. In the picture, there was a girl under the water with her eyes and mouth open. I was enthralled with this image instantly, and this is how I came up with the idea for the "Fresh" series. Then, I did the shooting taking advantage of a summer day in which the sun was at its peak.

Jana Russ teaches Humanities and Asian history at The University of Akron. She has an MFA in poetry from Northeast Ohio Universities (NEOMFA). Her poems have appeared in *Georgetown Review*, *Up the Staircase*, *Coachella Review*, *Rubber Top Review*, and *The Centrifugal Eye*, among others; and in three anthologies: *OURS* (Fantastic Books, 2013), *In the Hardship and the Hoping* (J. B. Solomon, 2008) and *Women. Period* (Spinsters Ink Press, 2009). She is the poetry editor for

Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies.

Gerard Sarnat's recently been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He's authored four collections: HOMELESS CHRONICLES (2010), Disputes (2012), 17s (2014) and Melting The Ice King (2016) which included work published in Gargoyle, Lowestoft, American Journal of Poetry, Main Street Rag, New Delta Review, Tishman Review plus was featured in New Verse News, Songs of Eretz, Avocet, LEVELER, tNY, StepAway, Bywords, Floor Plan. Dark Run, Scarlet Leaf, Good Men Project, Anti-Heroin Chic, Winamop, Poetry Circle and Tipton Review feature sets of new poems. "Amber Of Memory" was the single poem chosen for my 50th college reunion symposium on Bob Dylan; the Harvard Advocate accepted a second. Mount Analogue selected Sarnat's sequence, KADDISH FOR THE COUNTRY, for distribution as a pamphlet in Seattle on Inauguration Day 2017 as well as the next morning as part of the Washington DC and nationwide Women's Marches. For Huffington Post/other reviews, readings, publications, interviews; visit GerardSarnat.com. Harvard/Stanford educated, Gerry's worked in jails, built/staffed clinics for the marginalized, been a CEO of health-care organizations and Stanford Medical

Jhaki is an accidental teacher by trade and an artist and writer by otherwise. Her birthplace in the Midwest was a conservative start to a life of wander. She's recently settled down and commutes between Sweden and South Dakota. Her artwork and publications can be found at www.jhakijhaki.com.

Seigar is an English philologist, a highschool teacher, and a curious photographer. He is a fetishist for reflections, saturated colors, details and religious icons. He feels passion for pop culture that shows in his series. He considers himself a traveler and an urban street photographer. His aim as an artist is to tell tales with his camera, to capture moments but trying to give them a new frame and perspective. Travelling is his inspiration. However, he tries to show more than mere postcards from his visits, creating a continuous conceptual line story from his trips. The details and subject matters come to his camera once and once again, almost becoming an obsession. His three most ambitious projects so far are his "Plastic People", a study on anthropology and sociology that focuses on the humanization of the mannequins he finds in the shop windows all over the world, "Response to Ceal Floyer for the Summer Exhibition" a conceptual work that understands art as a form of communication, and his "Tales of a city", an ongoing series taken in London. He has participated in several exhibitions, and his works have also been featured in international publications.

T.J. Smith is a poet in New York. Originally from Jacksonville, FL, he studied German and Creative Writing at Princeton, and he's currently completing an MFA at NYU. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Gyroscope Review, Split Rock Review, Red Flag Poetry and Nassau Literary Review.

A native of Chicago before defecting to warmer climes, **Russell Streur's** poetry has been widely published and is recently included in Negative Capability Press's 2015 anthology of Georgia poetry, Stone, River, Sky. Streur is the founding editor of the world's original online poetry bar, The Camel Saloon, and is the current editor of Plum Tree Tavern (<http://theplumtreetavern.blogspot.com/>). He is the author of The Muse of Many Names (Poets Democracy, 2011), The Table of Discontents (Ten Pages Press, 2012), and Fault Zones (Blue Hour Press, 2017). A photographer and painter, Streur is a member of the Atlanta Photography Group, the Artists Atelier and the Johns Creek Art

Center.

Rebecca Street is a queer poet and writer from New Orleans, Louisiana. Her best work is usually a product of overdosing on caffeine and talking to strangers.

Wylie is a California based writer who enjoys art, film, theater and music. She enjoys writing fiction including short stories, poetry and film screenplays. She is also a practicing attorney. Other work includes the yet produced feature film "With a Child's Heart" and the published fictional short stories "Petunia, Under The Sun," "Sid," "Excalibur Magic," and "The Forgotten Tomorrows."

Montana Svoboda is a genderless poet hailing from the cedar forests of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Having spent much of their life mapping the sky night on flat stones, sipping coffee in pursuit of fire- their legs are relentless, hands grasping constantly for honesty and adventure. Poetry is a reflection and attempt to continue the endeavor. Comprised of vivid nature scenes set against the fragile intimacy of social interaction. Their writing seeks to answer the question, what does it really mean to be human?

With a Bachelor's Degree in English, **Skyler Jon Thayer**, is a graduate from Stony Brook University. While establishing himself as a writer, Skyler learned that it takes tremendous effort and ambition to have works published. His poem, 'An Hour,' can be found in Route 7 Review's Issue V - 2017.

Olivia Tucker is a rising junior at Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia, originally hailing from San Francisco. As an editor of the School's newspaper and literary magazine, Olivia has worked to cultivate a love for literature in her community. Olivia's poetry has been featured in the She's the First: Voice Your Verse poetry anthology, as well as the 2016 & 2017 Daemon. She has also been recognized by the Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards, the David Dougherty Writing Prize, the Charles Fellow Page Award and the Jacklyn Potter Young Poets competition.

Michael A. Wells is one of 25 emerging writers chosen from some 400 applicants for the Writer to Writer Mentorship Program Spring 2017 session through the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. A poet, a baseball aficionado, lover of wine and a Diet Coke addict. He makes his home in a Kansas City, Missouri suburb with his wife and pets. His work has appeared in both print and online journals such as Rockhurst Fine Arts Review, Park University Scribe, Boston Literary Magazine, Autumn Sky Poetry and Right Hand Pointing and Rose & Thorn Journal. He is currently working on a poetry manuscript. His web site is michaelwells.ink

Tyson West lives in Eastern Washington with its beautiful vistas, dry dusty summers and cold winters on the bottom of the flood plain of the great Ice Age flood. He enjoys reciting his poetry to magpies and coyotes. He has published poetry in Danse Macabre, Misfits Miscellany, Subtopian, Haiku Journal, 50 Haikus, Three Line Poetry, World Haiku Review, Cattails Haiku Journal, Big Pulp, Cowboy Poetry Press, Annapurna. He published a fiction in a vampire anthology called "You Can't Kill Me I'm Already Dead", and a steampunk story, "The Wulver", was published in Voluted Tales. He has published scifi in Fast Forward Festival and "Warlords of the Asteroid Belt". He has had two poems nominated for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry collection "Home-Canned Forbidden Fruit" is available from Gribble Press, <http://www.greymareedit.com/>. His novella "Mall of the

Damned” was published in 2014 by Red Dashboard Publishing, LLC.

Sherayah Witcher has Bachelor of Arts in English from Middle Tennessee State University. During her college career, she worked on student newspapers and as a writing consultant. She’s still a writing tutor by day and runs Thurston Howl Publications by night as the associate editor; when she is not completely immersed in words, Sherayah enjoys cooking, ballroom dancing, and hanging out with other people’s dogs.

Nichole Yates was born July 2, 1982 in Costa Mesa, California. She received her Bachelor of Arts, English in 2012. She resides in Oklahoma, and currently works in the accounting department for a Corporate Law firm in Arkansas. She has a passion for reading and writing, and is actively writing her debut novel as well as her collection of poetry.

Laura Kat Young - I have studied under Ann Hood and Xu Xi at Vermont College of Fine Arts where I received a scholarship to attend the MFA Post-Graduate Writers Conference. I earned a BA in English from the University of Iowa where I was in the undergraduate Writers’ Workshop and a MA in Education from California State University. A recipient of the New York Mills writing residency, I have had short stories published in Cold Creek Review, The Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies, and the online magazine, Mr. Judas. My short story “What We Can’t Talk About” has been nominated for Sundress Publication’s Best of the Net 2017.

Jeffrey Zable is a teacher and conga drummer who plays Afro Cuban Folkloric music for dance classes and Rumbas around the San Francisco Bay Area. His poetry, fiction, and non-fiction have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and anthologies. Recent writing in Serving House Journal, Mocking Heart Review, Kairos, Third Wednesday, Futures Trading, Tower Journal, Jokes Review, Fear of Monkeys and many others

