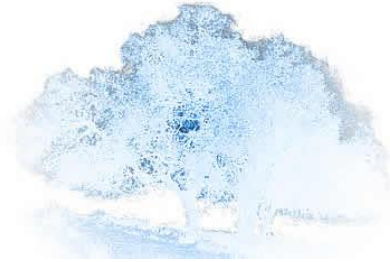


PVR 11



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**A special thanks to all those involved in promotion,
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and students who made this possible.**

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Dear Readers

This year marks perhaps the most active and transitional phase in PVR's history. Active because we hosted our first poetry reading and art walk on our home campus, Cal Poly Pomona, where featured poets Catherine Kyle and James Hickson shared their poetry. Several art pieces, some from the Alley Gallery in Pomona, were on display. Well attended, the event included an audience vote on pieces featured in this issue. Accompanied by an open mic for students, the event marks a turning point in PVR's activity—one event of many to come.

This momentum is made possible by the addition of the greatest number of new staff since PVR began. We would like to welcome each of our new staff members, whose names and positions you will see toward the beginning of the issue, and the energy, hard work, and opportunities they bring to our team. Largely because of their support and ideas, our first reading and art walk was made possible.

Furthermore, this new addition in staff is accompanied by, and also a result of, Chris and I (Ryan) stepping down as managing editor and editor-in-chief, respectively. It's been a good run since we picked up the journal

from its hiatus seven years ago; however, it is time for us to pass the journal on, in very good shape, to a new generation of talented students. We've certainly enjoyed seeing your work, and we're excited to have Ian Cressman take over next year as the new editor-in-chief.

Lastly, we hope you'll enjoy the breadth and in many cases synchronicity of the works herein. Many speak to the embattled status of personal identity, stability, and cohesion amidst whatever a post-post modern world might be. These works make visible the tension between being and becoming we individual beings—nevertheless entangled in the social world from which we emerge, and to which we are a response—face as we navigate discourse, ideology, perception, and competing narratives.

In a century made relative and precariously contingent by everything from philosophy to quantum mechanics, we hope these works will both provoke and comfort you.

Thank You,

The Editors
PVR



*James Hickson—Featured Poet
Reading at PVR Event
Cal Poly Pomona, April 10th, 2017
~
All Event Photography by Ana Perez*



*Catherine Kyle—Featured Poet
Editor-in-Chief Ryan Leack Listening Intently*



*James Hickson, Catherine Kyle,
and Ryan David Leack
Q & A Session*



Marta Albalá Pelegrín—Faculty Advisor (Front)
Andrea Montoya—Poetry Editor (Middle)



Ian Cressman
Managing Editor



*Chris Baarstad
Managing Editor*



PVR Art Exhibit & Voting Contest

~

*Featuring Art from
The Alley Gallery
Pomona, CA*



PVR Art Exhibit & Voting Contest

~

*Dr. Liam Corley
Previous PVR Faculty Adviser
Pointing at Art Contest Winner
"KoD" ~ Adam Castillo*

MUFFLED CRIES FROM MY BLACK WOMB

The sound of the ocean waves reminds me of my King's reign.

My soul cries for humankind

As every day when I watch the news, check my Facebook post or troll through my
Twitter feed,

I find that another black man has lost his life to state sanctioned violence.

And because of frustration and hopelessness those who share the same heritage,

Retaliate with the same,

'shoot emm up,'

'shoot emm up,'

Bang!

Bang!

But the sound bites of fallen officers

And a city in morning are on constant replay.

Yet the fact remains that an unarmed American citizen who happens to be a black man,

Was shot in cold blood right in front of his queen and princess

When I boldly proclaim that, "#Blacklivesmatter,"

They immediately remind me,

"Naw nigga #alllivesmatter."

"Oh really," I suspiciously reply.

Inquiring further I ask, "If so, why does the tone of the newscaster change from somber
To matter of fact

When they switch stories about fallen cops to executed black men?"

Silence—

Haunted by the sorrow on Corretta Scott King, Sister Betty Shabazz and Mrs. Medger Evers faces

As the reflection of the same sorrow spills from mine,

While I cup the face of my loved one and remind him that he is loved.

With fear and genuine terror, I entreat him to, "Please be careful out there because in This nation it is

Dangerous being a black man."

Although he lovingly reassured me that he would be okay and there was no need to Worry...

In my heart, I knew that his and all black men and boys' livelihood is in danger.

I remember the words of Langston Hughes,

When he proclaimed that one day, "They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed."

Until then I will continue to see the beauty

Inside,

And outside of me.

Digging even deeper in the crevasses of the ocean to see the beauty in humanity.

Knowing that one day we will all be free

When the Prince of Peace reigns in complete sovereignty as the King of Kings.

~ Keyana Rhoden

PVR Poetry Contest Winner



*“KoD” ~ Adam Castillo
PVR Art Contest Winner*



“Waft” ~ Matthew Felix Sun

ROADS

We learn early on that
Life is rich with forks,
To lie would be to deny the
Inevitable truth, yet to
Regret is to condemn one's
Entire existence.

The choice that is made
At any point in time, should
Forever be thought as
The best in sight, if believed
To be right for
A moment.

Time is unforgiving, eating
Away our souls,
And so the paths we choose
Should never feel
A waste to those
We lost.

Life is like a box of
Chocolates they say,
Unpredictable and worrying, but
With force in all, we
Tell our tale with
Praise.

~ *Mariam Abd-Allah*

ODE TO MY VOICE

I lay on my flowered sheets, with mouth
Opening and closing,
Believing to be
Amazing, my sister's screech reaching through
The crowded wall,
Yet the air still
Thick with notes, never
Stopping, my strings wriggling as I
Say it all, whether in broken waves or
Current flow, soothing my
Ears, I sit with hands on the wheel,
Mind full of
Woes, pouring out like a
River, washing the weight away,
It coats my cords like honey, creepily crawling
Up the octave ladder and reaching
An attempted
Soprano, sweet to the tongue
Like chocolate before my twines
Turn to sandpaper, allowing me
To escape the dusty mat
Under my feet, whether it be for
A second or a minute.

~ Mariam Abd-Allah



"Me as Alice" ~ Joanna Madloch



“Passing By” ~ Joanna Madloch



"Street Life" ~ Joanna Madloch

LOOKING FOR A SIGN FROM GOD? THIS MIGHT BE IT



On the cusp of the cave just beyond
the border of Laura's land, on the edge
of adulthood, I heard the call,
like Isaiah and Jeremiah and

Mr. Busch—Mike's grandfather
who greeted me one Sunday with
"Morning, preacher,"
who drove across the country,

from California to Tennessee
in a Model T,
straw piled past his waist
to keep him warm those winter days.

But no one talks about visions
for quitting, no still, small voice
that says, "You suck,"
save for Charlie, who could see
my future far better than I, knew
youth ministry wasn't one of my talents.

No fiery chariot came, just my
father's old, gray truck, a stick shift
with no power windows or air

conditioning, but with a tape player
I could turn up as I drove away

with the music loud and
the windows rolled down,
the American archetype
of nowhere I needed to be,
no one I knew how to be.

~ *Kevin Brown*

STOP, DROP, AND ROLL WON'T WORK IN HELL



I grew up with Carter and
the Cold War, Reagan
and *Rocky IV*, young enough
to believe our small city
a hundred miles from Oak Ridge
was a Russian

target. On random
autumn afternoons or winter mornings
when the only things that fell
were leaves from the oak
tree outside our classroom

window or snow we hoped
would increase so we could spend
our days watching cartoons or

other Stallone movies,
I was one of sixteen second graders
who ducked and covered

beneath a desk,
one of twenty-six seventh graders
in a hallway, our knees
to our noses. Because we were Americans,

because we were taught
Jingoism and Advanced
Ethnocentrism somewhere
between Civics and Algebra,

we believed those desks could deflect
whatever Russian weaponry would
come, that those walls would withstand
a blast that would level the land

around us for miles and miles,
as if we were Rocky in the ring
with the Russian, taking punch
after punch until we won,
until someone draped
an American flag over us,

still too young to know
that it also covered the coffins
of real casualties we never saw on TV.

~ Kevin Brown

CHOOSE THE BREAD OF LIFE OR YOU ARE TOAST



I wanted to be who I was
 how I was
in college: every weeknight

I didn't work, I started
with two slices of
white bread,
barely browned,
as if the toaster was afraid

to touch them,
a hunk of margarine in the middle;
as it melted,
high-fructose-corn-syrup-laden
grape jelly, store brand,
mixed in until it looked like *Lucifer*

or some other Pollack painting,
the same study break I took from
calculus or chemistry
or some other subject I've forgotten.

But tonight my wife walks
in the kitchen,
wants to talk about
our unhappiness.

She wants
I don't
I want
She can't care
So I say
She doesn't hear
And I say
She closes her ears

So I shout as if trapped
in a burning building,
the smoke choking every word

until she looks
in my direction, sniffs
and says,
I think the bread is burning.

~ *Kevin Brown*

GOD ANSWERS KNEE MAIL



As teenagers, we found creative ways
to bring daily pain
to one another: we reversed

our class rings, turned rubies and amethysts
back into rocks
we would echo off each other's

skulls, as if we were cavemen;
we raised our middle fingers,
not in rebellion

against administration, but into triangles
we learned about
in geometry, found the right angle

to sink it into the shoulder of the boy
we shared a locker
with, to protract the pain;

we coupled our ankle with another's
as he walked by
our desk, wanting to watch him

fall, at least see him stumble;
and we drove our knee
into our best friend's leg for a charley horse,

left him limping to his next class
so everyone would know
who had left his mark, a bruise blossoming

mid-thigh the only way
we could communicate
our care.

~ *Kevin Brown*

LULLABY

The silence in bedroom has the quality of placid water. The surface tension is rigid, but playful, like it's begging to be broken. I sit at the piano bench, watching as my fingers brush over the ebony and ivory keys of the dark oak piano. Taking a deep breath of the still air, I close my eyes. After feeling out the starting position like a child toeing the waterline I break the surface. I begin to play your melody.

With the soft notes that resonate and ripple throughout the room, I hear you stirring in the bed behind me. Breathing deeply I smile as your scent permeates with the music like it rides the waves of the melody. With that in mind I build cadence. Each joyful hit of a key I imagine more vividly you smiling with thin pink lips as you listen to me play, yawning ever so slightly. The sound sends caressing waves through the room enveloping you within them. I feel dizzy. I can see in my mind your small delicate structure wrapped inside my white sheets that your light skin matches. It looks so because your long raven black hair spills over the covers reminiscent of ink on a page. Like a flower floating above the ripples of sound I see an image you opening sleepy eyes to watch me happily.

Focusing is hard, but I take that feeling of being the reason you smile and put it into the piece. This way anyone listening would properly know the love and ache that your lullaby creates. I play each bar, each stanza, and each arpeggio with the perfection you inspire inside me. I hear a shuffle of sheets and listen to you get up. The floorboards softly creak from the weight of your delicate feet. I doubt I could stand amongst the flurry the notes make, yet you walk on the surface of the moving current my song creates. It's ironic. I wrote this song to help you sleep. Now it wakes you. At least it does so lovingly.

My finger lands on an off key, the sound breaks apart the tranquility, causing a swell of noise to knock me off rhythm. My vision is fuzzy. I hear something slamming, and a familiar voice screaming from behind the door to the right of me. The water moves indicating an oncoming storm. It's hard to regain control of the moving voices of the melody, but the moment I do I hear the soft patter of your footsteps moving towards

me once more. Your soft floral scent grows stronger with each step. I know when I finish I'll turn and feel the soft palm of your hand cupping my cheek. As your lips press against mine, we would feel something that one forgets they need after so long without. I'm entranced, wanting nothing more than everything to disappear so we can float together forever in the soft waves of the music.

I struggle to keep my composure, as the world around us continues so very loudly. Spots drift in and out of my vision, and I hear someone trying to break down the door I barricaded earlier. The door stands strong, but the noise is causing me to lose my composure. With every note off key the waves grow until the world has turned to nothing but torrential rain and a wrathful sea. Still I push. It becomes easier to ignore things after a moment, and though I can't see you in the storm, I know you're so close to me. Once this last stanza is done, never will I be without you again.

The song slows at the end as I feel you leaning against my back, watching over my shoulder as I play. I take one beat to savor before pressing the last key. Once I do I will stand, and turn to you. I will pull you into my arms and I'll feel your warmth against me. I'd feel a teary cheek against mine, and I'd try to calm you while I too wouldn't be able to stop crying. I'd want to tell you I love you, that I've missed you, but I wouldn't be able to form the words. I don't think you would mind. You already know.

As I hit the final note, wood cracks. Snapping back to reality for a moment I turn to you. There is nothing behind me except for a neatly made bed with an empty bottle of pills resting on comforter. They grab me from behind, and proceed to drag me to the gurney. The world is fading into an inky icy black. I see you for a moment in the dark. I attempt to reach a hand out to you. I can't. You're gone. With my limbs pinned to my side I find myself drowning.

I was so close.

~ Dominic Perez



“Nap Time, Fun Time” ~ Miguel Jeronimo Arenas



"Love at First Sight" ~ Miguel Jeronimo Arenas



"Blue Rain" ~ Miguel Jeronimo Arenas

FRAUD

She is asking you a question, and you stare
off looking for the right words
to be kind but dishonest.

You look back at her
And tell her
she's not important.
Why? Because
you're too brilliant? Because
you're in the middle of too much? (No)
You're not.

A flashback:
you are a small boy
again (and still now)
you don't know why
you're fixated
on the lemon on the ground.
It fell from its tree alone in the yard
while you were playing.

Now in her room,
she is waiting for your answer, and you stare off.
You look back up at her
and wonder why you're letting this fall.

Ignoring the gravity building in you,
you take for granted the strength of branches.
What does a coward's heart sound like
when it hits the ground?

~ Trevor Allred

STEPS

Feel this: it's true
you're alone.

This was your old drive to work,
and now you're back, but
that pothole is the same.
Its cavity belches in your face, and
you wonder how the fuck it's still sunny
at 7pm. Later, you and your friends
surf through Netflix and settle.

You're going to have a hard time here
for a while. You won't believe this is
home, but remember
you belong here
with yourself.

~ Trevor Allred



"Untitled" ~ Lorik Khodaverdian



"Moon Girl" ~ Lorik Khodaverdian



"Red Lady" ~ Lorik Khodaverdian

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY THOUGHT

bones fracture and b r e a k
you've got to cast them together
grab some plaster
your anatomy textbook
i don't know what they thought

their home is falling apart
i mean l o o k
the tiles are trickling off the roof
through the vacant gaps
from the sinking wooden rafters
the glass from the windows
has eroded back to sand

lead dust is falling out of their ribs
a coke bottle fell through a pelvis

they're all wired together
did you bring the stand to hang them from
how do you expect them to s p e a k
they don't have jaws

throw a sheet over them for now
the teaching hospital's got enough of them
no not that one
the clean cotton one
they'll make nice forgotten-about lamps.

~ *Lawrence Mullen*

EDITOR'S NOTE

guess what

you can now legally exchange your wage paid labor
for a nicely printed piece of paper
that'll make it so my insurance
can cover you
so i
can cover you
when the doctors and nurses wouldn't
because who knows how that virus spreads
but you're probably fine if you aren't one
of those damn queers

i shouldn't be yelling at you
you know right
preaching to the choir
like that one in san francisco
that only has five of its original members
because the rest were personally murdered by ronald reagan himself

i think every damn queer should fuck on his grave
(& nancy's)
at least once just so he knows we're still there
still cockroaches lurking in every drawer
maggots hatching from every fatal
blunt force trauma cranial injury

sorry i'm running out of breath
i'm bound too tight
as soon as i'm unwound it'll be easier for you
suddenly i look like i could be your next girlfriend or
maybe i'm just one of the guys now
either way no thank you
sorry i said no thank you
i know you can hear me i said
no fucking thank you
oh and now *i'm* angry

don't be so angry
it's such a bad color on you
i've been thinking about what that's supposed to mean
i don't think i own anything
that's colored angry
but i guess i need to check again

the anthology you're about to read is not colored angry
it's colored isolated, tired, and done with being bound
it's colored tired of being resilient
it's colored i am not resilient
by definition an anthology is a collection of work
but think of this anthology as census data
or as all those people
who you know must have existed
because you aren't the first person to think
maybe you aren't the woman you were
tagged at birth
these are the stories i think they would've told
and the lives they may have lived
and if you're willing to suspend your disbelief
and listen to the stories
of your neighbors from centuries ago
maybe you'll find those
drowned in disease.

~ *Lawrence Mullen*

TWEET

I've seen the best minds of my generation destroyed by Twitter,
Angry, broken, yelling in the streets. Gripping a hold that cannot be
unclenched.

A fist so powerful,
Anger, aggression,
A bottle smashing into a wooden top.

As I floated up toward the sky, the moon, the stars,
I saw every flower beaming with yellow calm flame,
The same source for all,
And I saw the dog as the Incas gazed down upon the mounds.

~ Grant Palmer

ROMANCE POETS

There is a legend that the romantic Anglo poets—
Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, Shelley—
Would claim to write a poem
That flowed free
From their pens,
Unhindered by any three-headed Cerberean gatekeepers:
rules of syntax and grammar and usage of phrase—
And instead: spontaneous, pure, unrevised,
An oracle
Of the Muses and their sweet songs.

These men, of course, were liars.

~ Grant Palmer

“Modern poetry
Isn’t about meter and rhyme scheme anymore,
Now it’s a short story in little vignettes.”
I am paraphrasing
Here
Because I don’t exactly
Remember
What he said, but that was the gist of it.

Perhaps he is right.
I don’t know if I can call this poem
A narrative.
It’s more of a conversation between me and you,
But isn’t that what any written words are?
Or at least Can Be.
Because my aim here isn’t to tell a story,
It’s more just to communicate that Poetry has changed
Is changing
Is intrinsically about change.
Wan that Abril became Fear in a handful of dust;
Es werde Licht became God is Dead.

~ *Grant Palmer*

DYSTOPIAN FUTURE

In a certain dystopian future
There will be no word processors
No keyboards
No utterance
Of a single syllable
Noun
Verb
Article.
In this dystopian future
There will only be
Silence.

~ Grant Palmer

THE NEW FORMS

There was talk of the need for a paradigm shift, though nobody actually knew what that entailed. That this old form of life must bend and give way for something new in order for that to happen. The modern American lifestyle had grown, expanded beyond any natural sense of border or propriety, glutting itself on anything and everything it came into contact with. I used to imagine it as some sort of enormous giant, a conglomerate of our collective greed, a Cerberus of Dante's Third Circle. That is what I believed. I believed in the paradigm shift until it happened.

What we got from the world were vast subsidies designed to facilitate this New American Life. The shift came in a baptismal flood of fire, leaving behind a chaos of ashes, burned stone, and shadows. There was a great jumbling and renegotiation of form. Old forms made way for new. I know, because after it happened, in those split seconds of ringing silence that filled the air preceding the creation of the new world, I saw the old form of my life dance of shadowlike, flitting through some interstice and becoming one with the brand new void. He would not return; they had subsidized his change with fire.

And everything changed when the bombs dropped.

I was a teacher then, a professor, or at least I thought I was. I taught Modern American literature at a small liberal arts university, very exclusive, very expensive. In the old days, prestige was subsidized by those who sought it. The area of my dissertation was in some oblique angle of an up-and-coming, post-post something or rather theory, a reaction to Deconstructionism, Derrida, or the like. I don't remember. I don't have time. Nothing derides theory like active deconstruction.

In the old form of things, I was a teacher; I taught a seminar on neoliberalism in post-war literature to twelve graduate students one night a week. I served on the department's Student Relations Committee. I had a paper slated for publication in a famous literary journal. Those old forms dissolved. My students dispersed, returning home to feel out their place in this new shapeless world. The journal had gone up in a toxic plume of ashes like most of New York City.

I had stepped out into the brisk late-November air. The strip mall was rife with that peculiar pre-Christmas shopping buzz, another one of those old forms. A tense, temporary assembly. A great flow of bodies and capital. My phone did not get reception inside the bookstore so I darted out, waving the screen at my wife by means of explanation, a sort of ambiguous smartphone semaphore clearly meant to say, “I have to take this. I’ll be right back,” but should have said, “I love you, dear, with all of my heart. I love you and Eileen, and that’s all that really matters.” In my new form, I wished with all my heart that this pleading message had gotten through to her. As I recall, she barely glanced up, fussing over our daughter as she deconstructed a blueberry muffin into the shapeless form of a pile of crumbs.

I could still smell the fragrance of coffee clinging tenaciously to my down coat as I left the warm comfort of the bookstore’s café. The call was from a student, a particular favorite of mine whom I was grooming to write his thesis in line with my research. I answered his call with something I probably thought was a clever greeting; I don’t remember, and it doesn’t matter. The student had probably called by mistake; my last name being Abelton, my first being Alvin, I resided at the top of most acquaintances’ contact lists. I don’t know. It doesn’t matter now.

It wasn’t the sound my father grew up with, played over and over in Cold War era propaganda films. There was supposed to be the hum of engines, discernable, propeller-driven planes flown in tight Soviet formation, a skein of geese flying south to lay their eggs. There was no wailing air raid siren either. Instead, the screaming of modern fighter jets split the sound of the Silent Night filtering through the shopping mall’s tinny speakers. The crowd and I looked up in unison. This was one of the new forms: a many-headed body scanning the sky. A prairie dog colony on the lookout for hawks.

They say it was a mistake. That The Enemy hadn’t really meant to bomb a strip mall in a sleepy college town, which, in the grand scheme of things, was largely unknown and unimportant to global affairs. Many theories floated around. Maybe they *had* meant to blow us to kingdom come and this particular bomb was just a dud? We were lucky, the national media tried to tell us; the bomb that fell on our town had only killed twelve people. A stark contrast to the hundreds of thousands, the

millions incinerated in New York City and Los Angeles. We were told that *those* were catastrophes, that ours was merely an act of terrorism—and what purpose terrorism, if not to show the least likely target that they are in the sights of the greatest crosshairs?

Following the screaming, a cartoonish whistling was heard. Everybody present saw it in hindsight, but at the moment, nobody actually did. A black obelisk falling through the frigid air at near-supersonic speed. We stood stupefied for one numb second, and the defunct warhead, the would be weapon of mass destruction turned lame, manmade meteorite, made a crater of half of the bookstore.

And, as I said, I saw the shadowy form of my old life dance away into the night.

~ *Alex Lennert*

THE SUPPLIANT WOMEN (FOR ALEPPO)

Around the perimeter I see them glide
In single file, solemn,
Brindled in the purpled twilight of supplication.
The world stares on,
A house with vacant windows,
With cracks in the boards where the wind whistles through.
Twelve phantoms in a fever dream,
Given over to grieving in the interim
Between death and life,
Between light and obfuscation.
Upon the sand glassed over by seven miniature suns,
Seven pairs of eyes given over to decay,
Seven rotten yolks in seven black eggs—
How can their souls quell
That hollow ringing birthed by wind?
The rights of the dead are painted
In pulverized concrete:
They echo at the bottom of an inverted ziggurat
That once was a park where children played.

By seven, we mean the opposing chaff
Of countless souls who drifted on a fruitless wave.
The suppliant women pray in circles;
They dance around a cicada shell
The empty husk that held the light
And dreams of some unknown and unknowable thing,
A song lost to the braying and unhinged world.
One last time they go around,
Before the wind picks up and flings them
In a directionless eddy.

At the bottom of the harbor is a fish with the whiskers of a cat.
At the bottom of the world is a worm with blood like mine.
The dust filters down through their twilight,
And only they hear the prayers
Of suppliant women.

~ Alex Lennert

SOLSTICE

Winter stretches out with the majesty of a fallen tree
Her former grandeur gone to seed and spore
That press in against the house in droplets of rain
The windows struggle to trap the radiant heat
And the sound of a leaf blower wafts in through a crack

I can still hear the sound of sage birds
Like little bones rattling together in hollow throats
As they scatter at my footsteps stirring the blood red earth
Today is the shortest day of the year
Tonight is the longest night in a century
And that thread takes me along the rivulets of rain
Down past green gutters and fields
Where I hear the sobbing of a rabbit giving its last
Against hollow fangs in an iced over twilight

The morning becomes a ritual:
I cook eggs and boil water
I sip coffee and stare at the rain
In the hills something makes unknowable tracks
Something stacks flat stones that fall in the rain
Something crouches in the last dry hollow of the valley,
Waiting, waiting, waiting
In the night it comes down from the hills
Whispers up the bones and fur of something new to me
Lays the soil-bleached teeth and fingerbones on the porch
And slinks away unbidden as it came
I can see the place where the sageland becomes a mirror
Behind a curtain of flat, white fog,
Safe indoors I can wait out the chill
That harbors snow in tiny drifts
Even in the brightness of the year's shortest day

The Solstice beckons with ivory fang and hollow bone
But tonight's no night for candles

They would sputter in the rain
So the shadows will have to wait
In the dark of the brief and static pastureland
I hack at the base of a sapling
The air fills with the odor of green mesquite
And the silence presses in
Gone are the crickets
Gone are the nighthawks
The owls
The coyotes
This very absence is a presence—

The sapling falls into the stiff arms of a creosote
And the damp earth and the rain eat all sound.

~ Alex Lennert

LAST (SONG FOR A NEW, CLEAR WINTER)

last cast off
last corroded seal
last sun on frozen November plains

last omen read
last red bird flown
last star sets on December's son

last risk taken
last button pushed
last eyes blink open twice then close—

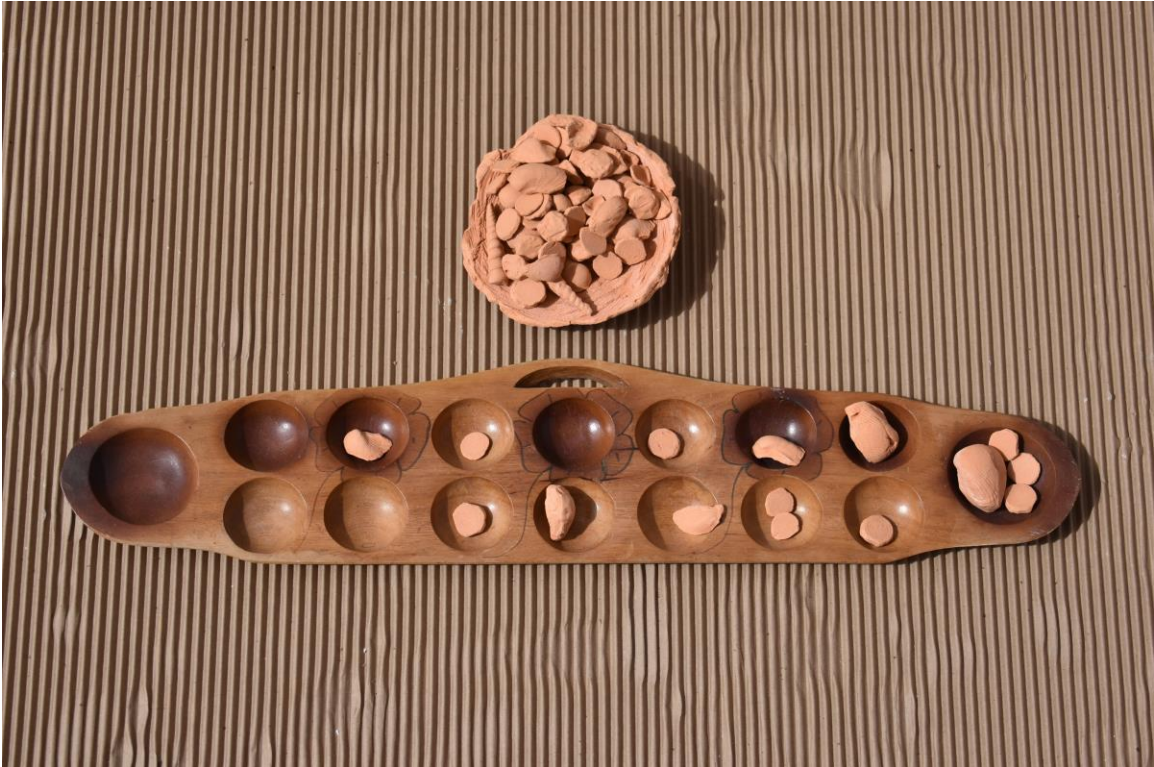
First mouths open
First violent scream
First marrow rots bones split seams

First sepia memory
First violet sky
First ash constellation around the stone

First time mistake
Second time folly
Last time

—silence.

~ Alex Lennert



"Sungka" ~ Jacqueline Lee

FISH LOVE

I love fish. Love to trawl lines for a catch
and scoop up the reaping in the sunseting hours
beat it dead, a sharp head tap with the mallet
flake off the scales, slit it down, remove the
gut of slithering purple and maroon
spear it, roast it in its own salt water
and the first bite is soft, fire crackled
but juicy. sometimes I've missed a bone
and it stabs my cheek. You don't need sauce,
lick it up, lick my fingers, lick the plate.

~ Elizabeth Upshur

IMITATION POEM: CIRCLE OF LIFE

after Hafiz

the epitome of all that is
poised to sharply crystalize
then shatter into a new day.
In the still dark fool's dawn
wet and cloaked with desperation
to be born and seize our moment,
our zenith height of history
to our destiny a presumptuous little pawn
knowing that all falls start from pride
but forgetful if we cared to know.

Perhaps we should turn back!
but the sky wheel pushes on; relentless like a deity
the spinning loom needs thread for lives
to cut short, so
the sky turns.

~ Elizabeth Upshur



"Obedience" ~ Eva Lewarne

TIME

now einstein said, "...the reason for time
is so that everything doesn't happen at once..."
and he was great, so it must be true
coming from a great man of science
who couldn't possibly be wrong or lying
singing a song about time

now i say, "...the reason for time
is so the watchmakers can make dime..."
so the industrial wheel can let their clogs take lunch
and on a hunch i made time stand still, at will
by a little meditation, just by not moving mind
i realized that everything happens at once
and einstein was right

while sipping a latte at the sicilian one day
i watch the reaper arrive in may
in the guise of a man with a gun
shooting another sitting in the sun
a senseless act or divine intervention
i ask the great man, the big question
and what does einstein say?
"...time doesn't exist..." as he blows us a kiss
from the realm of timelessness

~ Eva Lewarne

RICK'S DREAM

The sprawling campus was larger and more lavish in appearance than any Rick Blaine had visited in his nearly forty years as a professor of political science. Had it not been for the courteous information clerk stationed near the campus entrance, Rick would have had no idea where to go. The clerk's directions led him to Alumni House in the center of the campus. Using the east entrance as instructed, he found the registration desk just inside the glass doors.

"I'm looking for Ilsa Lund," he told the girl - obviously a student - who handled registrations. "She's participating in the Shakespeare conference."

"Please fill out this short form - we'll get a longer one later after you're settled in. While you do that, I'll find out where Ilsa Lund is."

Rick sat at an empty desk and glanced over the form. It wasn't clear why he had to register in order to find Ilsa, or what she meant by "settled in," but the girl was so polite and she was looking up Ilsa's location, so why not fill it out?

He expected to be on campus just long enough to find Ilsa and take her home. Though retired from her position in the English department at Amherst College for the Performing Arts, Ilsa still received invitations to Shakespeare performances, sonnet readings, academic gatherings of Shakespeare scholars and similarly related activities around the country and overseas quite frequently. While she was on the Amherst faculty the cost had been absorbed by her department. Now retired, as was Rick, she had to pay her own way most of the time. Organizers of this conference, however, had picked up the tab, which pleased both Ilsa and Rick.

"Do I really need to list an 'emergency contact'? I'm just here to pick up Ilsa," Rick asked when the girl returned to her desk.

"If it's on the form, you have to complete the line," she responded.

Rick started to put in Ilsa's name but the girl stopped him after he had written her first name.

"You can't list Ilsa since she's here. You need to list someone else whom I can call if there is an emergency."

Rick listed Walter, his long-time co-author of opinion articles, a fellow political scientist.

"I do have the location where you can find Ilsa."

She handed Rick a card with a building and room number written on it. Rick turned in his not quite completed form, took the slip and started to ask which direction to go. Before he could, the girl walked him to the door and pointed in a northwesterly direction.

"Go past the athletic field, then keep to your right. You can't miss it."

Rick thanked her and exited the building. The clock on the bell tower stood at 10:30. He was to meet Ilsa at 11.

It was a cool, early spring morning but in anticipation of a warm afternoon, the campus girls were dressed in Bermudas or jeans, tank tops or short sleeve pullovers, and carried their bags over a shoulder. Not a skirt or dress was in sight. Rick smiled, enjoying the sight of these young college kids. Yes, they were studying all kinds of stuff but, whether boy or girl, they all wanted a marriage license as much as a degree. Most of them would eventually get both.

Ilsa had chided him about his preoccupation with looking at the girls. After he retired he often made trips to his campus library, not to check out a book, but to check out the girls. He sat in a comfortable chair just inside the entrance and would spend an hour just looking at the kids, boys and girls, entering the building. He was pleased that his sample count usually found about as many girls as boys entering the library within a five minute period. It especially pleased him to see couples coming in together to study. Well, ostensibly to study. Did it

really matter if they didn't open a book?

Then there was the time, up on the fifth floor, in a sparsely occupied section of the library, when he sat down to read an obscure article and after a few minutes noticed that there was a girl sitting at the next carrel, perhaps the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in his years on a college campus. He never saw her face. He didn't have to in order to realize how pretty she was. Nor did he ever see her again, but he mentioned "the girl on the fifth floor" repeatedly to Ilsa, who shook her head in frustration every time he recounted that chance meeting.

But that was another campus, his campus, and now he was at an unfamiliar college that he had never visited. As he wandered while looking at the kids he suddenly realized that he was lost. He hadn't seen an athletic field. He stopped two students to ask directions but neither seemed to know where the athletic field was. Both, however, called him "Professor Blaine," which somewhat puzzled him since he had never been on the campus before. He thought for a moment that he recognized one of the students, but couldn't think of a name and chose not to prolong the conversation.

When he tried to read the name of the building that the girl had written down, he found it indecipherable. The room number was quite clear, but either the ink had smeared or the girl had written it so hastily that the building name was illegible.

So Rick wandered until it occurred to him that the simple solution was to head back to the Alumni House and start over in the direction the girl had pointed out. Which way was back? He wasn't sure so he decided to ask a student for directions to the Alumni House. His inquiries resulted in raised eyebrows. Seemingly, no one knew where the Alumni House was. Rick was lost.

For the first time since he had arrived on campus Rick felt ill at ease. This should have been an easy pickup as he met Ilsa at the conference and took her home. That's when he suddenly realized that the answer to his confusion was to ask students or faculty members for directions to

the conference building. Or he could show some student the note the girl had given him and he would get directions to the building she had written down - assuming the student could read the note.

Like their inability to locate the athletic field, students had no idea where the conference was held nor could most of them decipher the name of the building. Finally, one grad student laughed at Rick's predicament, noting that the building housed the English department and had several large conference rooms where the meeting probably took place. His instructions on how to reach the building were complicated, however, and in the end the student simply pointed to the northwest and indicated it was some distance away, toward the outer edge of campus.

Rick looked at his watch. It was now 10:45. Ilsa expected him at 11 and that gave him fifteen minutes to reach the building. At the rate he was going, he would need all that time.

The next student he stopped nodded knowingly. "It's this six-story classroom building right in front of you. Looks like you need the conference room on 5."

Relieved, Rick thanked the kid and went in. Then his relief was somewhat eroded. The sign on the elevator door indicated the entire bank was out of order. Not to worry, He rode the escalator to the second floor, expecting it to continue on to 5. Instead, only stairs led up to the fifth floor.

At seventy, Rick was unaccustomed to long climbs up flights of stairs, but since he was near his goal the daunting task of climbing three more floors was put aside. It was, however, more of a climb than he wanted. When he reached 5 he first sat down to rest in an empty classroom before going on to the conference area. After a couple of minutes, he decided it was time to move, so he headed down the hallway, looking at door numbers. A hallway clock stood at 10:55. He breathed a sigh of relief.

The note said Ilsa would be in 533. Initially he went the wrong way in the hall, the numbers declining from 520. After reversing his field, he

discovered that the odd numbers were apparently in a different hallway. Several jogs later he was at 531, which was, indeed, a conference room, but it was empty. Assuming the room he wanted was next door he went further down the hallway, but the next room was 535. He couldn't find 533. In any event, all the rooms were locked and, as he noted through the window in the door, empty.

He encountered a professor coming out of the men's room and asked for help.

"No, there have been no conferences on the fifth floor this week, and we don't have a 533." He looked at Rick's note, shook his head, and suggested that he had been given the wrong building for such a conference. This was primarily a journalism section of the language arts program, not English. That was in Hilgard Hall, on the other side of campus. Hew offered to make a phone call for Rick to see if they could find a more precise location, but when the calls - it took several - were placed, no one seemed to be aware of the Shakespeare conference.

Dismayed, Rick retraced his steps down from the fifth floor and, at the suggestion of the journalism prof, headed to the other side of campus. If only Ilsa's cell phone was not disabled he could simply call her and either go to her or she could meet him. But neither was possible. He had to search.

As Rick made his way back across campus it occurred to him that what was happening to him mirrored a constantly recurring dream that he had all through his academic career. In his earliest days as a young, nontenured assistant professor he had dreamed that he was entering class completely unprepared for the day's lecture. Either he had forgotten his notes or he couldn't remember what he was supposed to lecture on that day.

Sometimes the dream concerned an exam he was to give. Either he had forgotten to write the exam and now faced 50 students ready with blue books and pens, or he had forgotten to bring the printed copies to class.

But the more frequent occurrence of the dream took the form of his inability to find the room where he was to teach on the first day of

class. In that dream he roamed endlessly through buildings, up and down stairs, occasionally stopping at some office in an effort to find a class schedule that would tell him where he was supposed to be. Everywhere he looked he saw a clock and it always read ten minutes after the hour that class was to begin. Fifty students sitting there impatiently waiting for the first meeting of their class, perhaps another ten hoping to be admitted. And Rick never showed. For an hour, in the dream, he wandered, lost and frightened. What would the administration say when they heard what happened? Would he be told that he wouldn't be invited back next year?

Now he was actually living that dream and there seemed no solution to his dilemma. No one had even heard of a Shakespeare meeting, for a moment he thought that he had gone to the wrong campus. Perhaps there was a secondary campus where conferences were held. Everyone he asked assured him that the university had only this campus.

He passed the library. There was no identifying name on the building but he recognized it because it looked very much like the one on his own campus. For that matter, several of the classroom buildings also resembled those on his campus. Probably, he thought, they were constructed alike to save money. But that didn't make sense since his campus was not part of a system that would include this school.

By now he was a half hour late. Ilsa, nearly always calm and understanding, would be upset. Everyone would have left and she would be sitting there alone, twiddling her thumbs while waiting for Rick to arrive. What she was thinking he didn't want to think about.

Dear Ilsa! She had put up so much with Rick over the many years they were together. He had disappointed her far too often. She nearly always minimized his transgressions, and in the end she gave him a warm hug. But there were far too many of those regrets on his part - what he should have done, or what he didn't do. He often thought of those misgivings and wished he could erase them. But they were there, in his mind, forever. Even as he had thought about them over the years, as they accumulated, he continued to create more bad memories for him and for

her. And this one would be added to the list.

At this point he realized that he had covered nearly every building on campus and had not found Hilgard Hall. To his surprise, he had accidentally returned to his starting point, the Alumni House. Dejected and defeated, he entered again and went to the registration desk. The same girl was at the counter.

"You didn't find her." It was a statement, not a question. "I knew you wouldn't but I had to let you try. It's easier that way."

"That wasn't very easy, if you want my opinion," Rick responded. "But easier than what?"

"If I had told you it would have been an awful shock. We think it easier if the client makes a search, fails to find the one he's looking for, and then comes back here, as you did."

"That suggests that you've been through this wild goose chase before." Rick's reply was a little testy.

"Regularly. But the client always thinks he's the only one this has happened to."

"But if it happens all the time, wouldn't the word get out that we can't get any real help from Alumni House?"

"Who would tell?"

"I would, for one," said Rick, "and I'll bet others would too. The next time I hear of a conference at this campus I'll warn my emeritus colleagues that they had better know precisely where the room and building are before they go."

The girl was about to respond when Rick interrupted. "Now, surely Ilsa has made an inquiry here about me. Is she nearby?"

"No to both questions. She hasn't inquired and she isn't nearby. Rick, Ilsa isn't going home with you."

"Then why am I here?"

The girl hesitated. "I think I'd better get the gatekeeper to answer that." She made a short phone call and instantly a door opened and an old man with a white beard and bushy white hair came out of an office.

"This is... just call him Levi," the girl said, and then she left the room.

"We've been expecting you, Rick. Enjoy your walk?"

"No, Levi, and I'm beginning to get a little annoyed. I'm not sure what's happening or why I'm here. And where's Ilsa?"

"Where do you think you are, Rick?"

"At the university Alumni House."

"Have you ever been here before? Have you ever heard of this school? And why do you think you were told to come to the Alumni House?"

Rick thought a moment. "No, I've never heard of this university. I guess it's a university, it's certainly big enough. I must have walked several miles since 10 this morning."

"Yes, you'll have to get accustomed to that. There'll be a lot of walking from now on."

"I don't understand. I'll never be here again. If I can find Ilsa, we're leaving shortly."

"You won't find Ilsa, Rick."

"You mean she got tired waiting and went home with someone who gave her a ride?"

"Ilsa was never here, Rick. That was all in your imagination. But you're here and you won't be leaving."

Rick didn't know how to reply to that "won't be leaving" comment. He waited for more.

"Rick, you don't know where you are, do you?"

"Like I said a moment ago, I'm at the Alumni House, trying to find Ilsa. If I knew the campus I would have found her and left long ago. But I don't know this campus. I've never been here before."

"You've actually been here many times, Rick. Didn't the campus look somewhat familiar to you as you hiked to building after building and to classroom after classroom? You've seen it many times."

"Some of buildings looked vaguely familiar, and some students seemed to know me, but I've never been here before," Rick insisted.

"Yes, you have, in that dream that you keep having, the disturbing one where you can't find your classroom. And now you really get to search for it."

"I don't need a classroom anymore. I'm retired. And I wish that dream would go away."

"It won't, Rick. It will be with you forever... literally. You had a heart attack last night. It was fatal. You died, and as a professor you leave Earth, appropriately enough, at Alumni House on this university campus."

"This is Heaven? What I went through this morning was more like Hell."

"And that's where you are, Rick. Others may rest assured that you are in Heaven. but you and I know that there are reasons you could never go through those Pearly Gates.

"For starters, consider your ineptness as a counselor. Do you recall the student who had to spend an extra term because you incorrectly advised him on the degree requirements? He'd already quit his job and planned to do grad work the next semester at State, on scholarship, but your error cost him that. You could have called the Dean and arranged for a waiver of some of the requirements, but you didn't, fearing it would harm your chance at tenure. The kid accepted your mistake without protest. You didn't even bother to inquire what happened to him.

"Then there were those boring, pointless lectures of yours. The impossible-to-answer essay questions you asked on exams. The books you wrote that your students had to buy at outrageous prices - and you came out with a new edition each year so that each class had to buy the new one. To say nothing about those awful pamphlets you made the students read and discuss pamphlets that had little meaning for today's students.

"There's more, Rick, but no need to go into all that now. You'll have plenty of time to contemplate why else you are here.

"In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was doomed to push a boulder uphill forever. Your eternity, Rick will be spent walking the campus, day and night, asleep or awake, looking for your classroom, or trying to get an exam typed before class starts, or standing in front of the class totally unprepared. Rick, this will be your Hell."

~ Ralph E. Shaffer

I WAS WATCHING A MOVIE

I was watching a movie about frustration,
the Molotov cocktail of hope plus gasoline.

I was watching a movie depicting sadness of loss.

I was watching a movie with rotten special effects—
aliens that looked like men, explosions, floods—
not to mention actors so awful at dialogue
they were like mimes who hummed inside their boxes.

I was watching a movie about gun violence.

I was watching a movie about growing up too fast.

I was (sort of) watching a movie
that (kind of) helped me pass a couple hours
while I waited for my rendezvous with sleep.

I was watching a movie that could've been a comedy
if not for the mother dying from disease.

I was watching a movie about big cars
with bigger tires kicking up dirt
like panoramic photos snapped inside a vacuum bag.

I was watching a movie about family bonding.

I was (I say that loosely—the film didn't end)
watching a movie on how to tell time
after smart phones die.

I was watching a movie, wasting my life, &
no one called to save me from myself.

~ *Ace Boggess*

“WHAT FEELS BETTER THAN NOISE FROM OUR NIGHTS?”

—a line found in an old notebook

How the first guitar chord—
key of G, merry, vibrant—
thrummed from a speaker,
riding over skin already in
the dope metamorphosis.
My friends & I felt it:
rhythm bopping our heads
like those of pigeons,
patterns of fingered runs like jazz
with blur & contempt,
tone of a singer seducing
as if from across
stray ridges of blankets.
We raised an empty glass in toast.
We tapped the tops of salt shakers
utilizing our coffee spoons.
We sang along as if we knew
words, their meanings,
as if we could penetrate
complexities, how hum &
screech will merge.

~ *Ace Boggess*

“WHY DID YOU SMILE?”

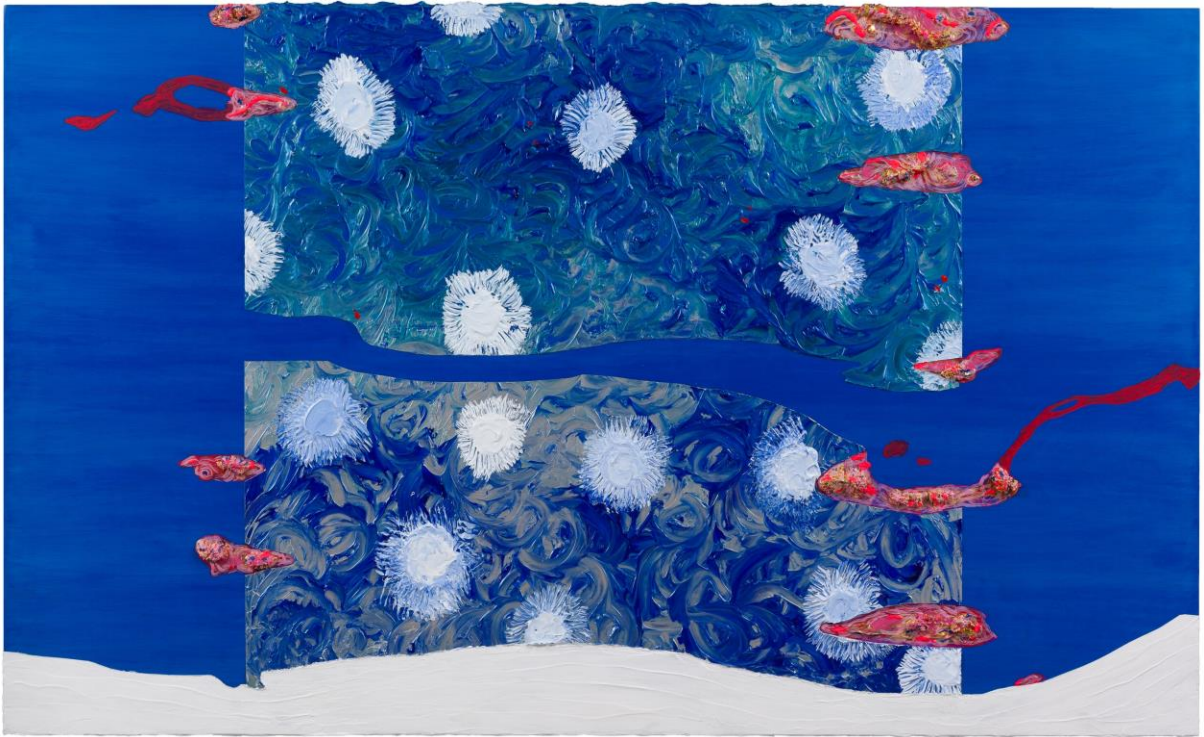
[question asked by Charlotte San Juan]

Half-hearted, the promised snow
finger-flicks against my cheek.
Baptized in dark, I lean
into a drag from one of those cigarettes
I know I should quit but love
now that my other habits have been lost:
narcotic haze of junk light blurring time;
liquor lens like detergent,
making brights brighter & bleaks bleaker;
lips like magnets, pulling mine.
For now, the rain/snow cleanses
like a rag against my face.
I hear deer in the woods: blackened invisible,
they romp through mounds of leaves.
Above, the sliver of moon
like a pinky ring for the Divine
has blinked out of bling behind clouds.
I look for it as icy droplets
run along my skin: tears
on a granite monument.
I catch them in my mouth,
that beggar's bowl.

~ *Ace Boggess*



"Matter - Study 4" ~ Paula Izydorek



"Nostalgic for Maha'ulepu" ~ Paula Izydorek

WORMS

Beyond the opened garage door, the asphalt surface is alive with scores of wriggling worms, enticed from their more native grounds by excess rain, now drying out as sun beats down and slowly murders them.

If I were the kind of person who feels deeply the life in every creature, no matter how low, perhaps I would think to wash them down, flood them with water, make some attempt to save them from the elements. But

worms — I find them loathsome. Instead, I take a broom and quickly sweep them out of view, a pile of rotten husks pushed back into the flower beds. Maybe some of them survive, but all I care is to rid them from my view.

I'm getting older now, and sooner or later my own time will be done. And this I must insist on — burn my body, scatter my ashes anywhere you choose. Donate my organs, all of them. All I ask, don't feed my rotting carcass to the worms.

~ Paul Ilechko

THE WATER MAIN

The great bough stretches and curves,
arching its back like a cat in heat. Along
its rugged, masculine length the green
emerges, vivid yet subtle. Spring arrives.

The winds are high in this season. A
banded sky, clouds alternating with sun,
a flickering suspension. The end of
winter is still too fresh to be believable.

Construction crews hit the streets en masse,
taking advantage of the final unfreezing. But
one small error is made, a water main breaks,
and the street is a rushing muddy torrent.

Later, the regular rain arrives on schedule,
washing away the filthy residue. Normality is
resumed. Warmth envelopes all, and the joyful
children carry their backpacks to school.

~ *Paul Ilichko*

SHAPES OF WINTER

Shape of winter trees, tall
and slim against the white of snow.
Shape of towering trees; slant of
lengthy winter shadows, angled
across the delicacy of snow.
Shape of house atop a ridge, seen
through the height of shadowed trees,
seen against white, against the
blue of winter sky.

Shape of ancient red, old and
worn. Shape of scarlet barn, red against
the winter day. Shapes of drab, long
lines of peel and wear, of absent
red. The slats of gray and red,
peeled and measured against
the white of winter, against
the blue of perfect sky.

Tall shape of white, a wooden church.
Erect and white against the winter day.
Tall and white against the white of
winter, a squatting monochromatic base
of white on white. A blanched and lofty
apex, reaching silver, reaching high
against the ice deep blue of sky.

The blue of winter sky. No
shapes of cloud against the azure day.
No white of cloud, this cloudless day.
No shapes to pacify, to minimize,
to interrupt the immensity of
the terrible depth of blue.

~ Paul Ilichko

SUNSET WITH A DOG

The ocean burns at sunset in
a glow of fire. Silver of mercury, liquid, floating.
The ocean is a sea of color, leaching upwards
into a Rothko bleed of sky.
Leaching through a rainbow of color,
from deepest burgundy and reddest red
to orange, yellow, and, fading at the edges,
back to palest blues and whites,
with fluttering bands of darkness,
the gilt-edged clouds.

On the beach, a dog cavorts.
White dog, fluffy and knotted,
burning gold and red with tongues of fire
outstretched and gathering. Gamboling in the
silvery surf, playing in fire but never burned.
A path of brilliance, molten gold
lays like a magic carpet from sun back down to dog,
melting and reforming over the waves,
pleading for the dog to try, to take the plunge
across the golden sea, and into sky.

~ Paul Ilichko

Four legs good, two legs bad.

Chapter I

“They don’t even let me sleep inside the house,” she thought as she laid on a bundle of hay left for her in the shed outside. She yelled “I can’t live this way forever!” into the night sky and the trees surrounding the farm.

“Be quiet, Laska!” Sergei hollered in response to the barking he heard from his shack nearby. Then he laid down on a bundle of blankets and thought to himself, “I can’t live like this forever” just before falling asleep.

Chapter II

Laska knew today was a day for hunting snipe. Her master always fed her a little extra the night before so she would have the energy to fetch the birds he shot down from the sky. Last night she had gotten an extra serving of her favorite: pork chops in wine sauce. She may be a simple dog, but her knack for flavors made her more appreciative of a good meal. Laska loved hunting. It was one area where her expertise surpassed that of her master. He could not distinguish between any of the different smells in the marsh. She was certain that even he knew that, hence why he brought her along every time he went. They had a system: she sniffed out the snipe, listened for any peculiar movement, then jumped toward them causing them to rise in fear out of the reeds and bushes. She would watch as they darted into the sky, believing themselves to be free of harm at that level. Then she would watch as the fatal blow landed and one would sink down and she would run after it, using the power of her nose to find it and deliver it to her master. He was always so pleased with her; he would even pat her head and scratch behind her ears when she brought one to him. This sort of affection never happened outside of hunting, so for Laska, these were the best days.

On this particular morning, Laska awoke before her master arrived to her room in the shed to get her. It was still dark out— but her and her master usually left before the sun rose enough to light the yard. Laska began to walk around and sniff the ground while she waited. She found a spot she considered suitable and emptied her waste. “Where is he?” she thought to herself and began to whimper. She stopped abruptly when she heard and smelled Sergei approaching her. In her opinion, he had a terrible smell. He reeked of bodily oil, dirt, and grass. Some days he would even carry the scent of the cows or the horses he tended. He was a nice man, but he did not like

her making sounds, so she always went silent when he was near. Sergei did not give her much attention though, except to quiet her down or call her to him when he needed her help with fetching something. But Laska saw the way he treated his family and obeyed his master (theirs was the same) so she was sure she must be right in thinking he was a nice man. Over all qualities, Laska respected loyalty. It was her strongest trait.

In the distance Laska heard her master's voice yelling. She did not even realize she had lost track of time while she was waiting for him! Sometimes Laska lost track of her surroundings when she thought about her master and her dedication to him. She ran towards him and barked eagerly to let him know she was ready for their long day of hunting. She saw he was carrying his gun and two sacks and she knew he also was ready for their long day of hunting that lay ahead. He greeted her sternly as he always did and also acknowledged Sergei with a slight wave of his hand and a grunt. Then they were off.

Chapter III

The morning air felt and smelled extraordinary to Laska that day. She felt so alive and even swifter than she usually did. Her master and she performed their usual routine of sniff, stalk, pounce, shoot, and fetch multiple times and she could tell he was feeling very satisfied with her performance today. "Maybe he will give me extra food to reward me tonight!" she thought as she looked up to her master's face. He looked down at her approvingly. By mid-day, they had caught a full sack of snipe. But that was no reason to stop. Her master wanted to bring home at least two full bags to show his family and friends what a skilled hunter he was. Laska was okay with not receiving the credit for the part she played as long as her master was happy.

Chapter IV

After catching a few more, Laska and her master took a break so he could eat his lunch and drink some vodka. Laska knew never to whine or beg for food, even if she was hungry. Her master did not like to see weakness in her, so she never showed it. Luckily today he gave her some of the meat and bread he had brought with him so she did not even need to concern herself with her hungry stomach. After she ate this, her master was not ready to get back into hunting, so Laska circled the area where they were sitting to scope out some potential spots.

Laska knew the smells of the marsh. She knew the snipe, the other birds, the way the water smelled, the plants, even the dirt and the trees were familiar to her. While she was making rounds, she smelled something unfamiliar. For a brief moment she froze, perking up her ears and lifting her

front left leg for full concentration. She inhaled again and listened closely. When she surmised from which direction the strange scent was coming, she quickly glanced that way and saw a shadow receding into the shade of some trees. Laska had no idea what she had seen, but she did not want to make a fuss and worry or annoy her master. She kept her attention on the trees for a while longer, but saw nothing. The smell lingered in her nostrils and she longed to follow its trail to find out what it belonged to. She heard her master call her name and she ran to him. They began hunting again. Laska smelled a snipe, brought her master's attention to it and then scared it into the sky. He shot it and the bird fell. Laska sniffed her way towards it; this one had gotten a little further away. She continued to follow the trail, but found it to be more difficult. "Why can't I find it? Where is it? I can smell it, it must be close," she thought to herself frantically. Then she understood: the smell was moving away from her! "But how? Surely the bird is dead!" Laska looked in the direction of the scent she had been following and could not believe what she saw.

Yards ahead of her stood a creature on four legs, like her, with brown fur. Its ears were floppier than her own and its face had a curious expression. It did not look malicious or angry or even happy. It looked solemn as it stared at her. What was most surprising about this creature is what it had in its mouth: her snipe. "It is going to steal my snipe...to eat?" she thought. That's something she had never done— eaten her own catch. She began to feel cross towards her master for never sharing these winnings with her as she watched this creature with her snipe dangling from its snout. Then she heard his voice and turned around to see where he was. She had wandered farther than she realized. When she turned back to the creature it was nowhere to be seen.

She had no choice but to return to her master without the snipe he had shot down. After a full day of success, she figured this would be acceptable. What is one snipe lost with so many found? She approached confidently, certain this would not be a problem, especially since the day was not even over yet. There would be more time to catch a few more birds yet. When her master saw her without the bird he became angry. "Laska! Where is the bird? How hard is it to follow the trail and fetch what I shoot down?" He spoke cruelly towards her briefly, but then remembered all the snipe they had captured that day and decided it was time to go home. He did not pat her head that time.

Chapter V

When they arrived home, he sent her to her shed to wait for her dinner.

It was dark by the time they arrived and as Laska waited in her shed she could think of nothing else but the creature she had seen that day. It hunted its own food and lived in her favorite place. She wondered how many more like it there were beyond the trees it disappeared into. Laska found herself wishing she had followed the strange creature and quickly growled at herself for thinking such disloyal thoughts. She heard Sergei's footsteps approaching. He placed a bowl of food in front of her. It was nothing special as she had hoped, even expected, it would be. "They are in there preparing snipe I caught and I am eating the leftovers they cannot finish themselves," she thought as she watched Sergei walk away.

After she had finished eating, Laska got up to make a circle around her shed to make sure nothing unusual was afoot (as she did every night). She was accustomed to seeing mice scurrying about on the ground at night and she had never given them a second thought. Tonight she observed one and began to wonder what it would taste like. Laska had never actually killed anything herself, only fetched the already-dead birds for her master. She began to crave the taste of fresh blood and fresh meat. "Where are these urges coming from?" she asked herself. Before she realized what she was doing, Laska lunged for the mouse and grabbed it between her teeth. She could feel it squirming, trying to escape, but she did not want it to get away. She bit down, hard, and felt bones crack. She could feel the life flow out of the mouse and she tasted a drop of blood. This experience was so new and tantalizing; Laska felt overwhelmed. She ate the mouse whole in her excitement, and also because she did not know any other way to eat it. Laska's mouth was filled with the flavor of the mouse and she felt more satisfied than she could ever remember feeling. She gazed off into the night pondering life away from her shed. She thought she could see shadows moving in the distance, but she assumed it was her imagination. Laska thought to herself, "Life could be different for me. What would I be missing if I left here? They do not even let me sleep inside the warm house. I keep myself warm against my hay. Now I do not even need them to feed me." She was struggling to remember why she had remained so loyal for so long.

Chapter VI

The next day Laska awoke with the sun and began to wander around the farm. She saw Sergei working and avoided him. Laska did not understand why, but she did not want to be around people. After her revelation the previous night, she was interested in exploring a different lifestyle that did

not include people. However, she did still feel obedient to her master and felt guilty for thinking of what else could be out there for her. She walked to where her master normally was in the morning to let him know she was thinking of him.

The morning after his hunt, Konstantin Levin had received a disturbing letter from a merchant he knew but disliked very much named Mikhail Ignatyich. It read:

Levin, I want to buy some of the land that belongs to you. I will pay a fair price, believe me. You will not regret it. I will come by later this afternoon to discuss this deal.

This infuriated Levin because he knew this man was in the habit of making bad business deals for his own advantage. Konstantin Levin was not looking forward to the impending visit in the afternoon and he was in a sour mood because of it.

Laska approached her master while he was working. She could tell he was not happy that day, but she thought her presence would cheer him up after their successful hunt the day before. When her master noticed her, he shoed her and commanded, "Go away, dog!" Laska was thrown off by this and was unable to move at first. When he re-iterated his irritation of her presence she sauntered off in the direction of her shed.

While walking, Laska smelled something familiar. This was a smell she associated with her master's negative feelings: it was a person coming to visit. She walked towards the scent and then she saw a man walking on her master's farm. "What is he doing here?" she thought. So she began to yell "Hey! What do you want here? My master does not like you! Hey! Leave! Master! Look behind you!" She carried on like this for some time because she was trying to warn her master of who was heading in his direction. The only problem was her words were not clear to her master or anyone else in the yard.

Her master began berating her and yelling "Shut up Laska! Go lie down! Mind yourself! Stop barking!"

Laska could not understand why her master would silence her in this way when she was only trying to help and protect him. Laska did not know if it was her hurt feelings or her anger, but she felt that she needed a change. She was tired of being obedient and loyal to someone who did not concern himself with her feelings or even respect her for all she had done for him.

Laska looked to the trees around the house and again thought she saw shadows moving behind them.

Chapter VII

Before the sun went down that night, Laska began walking towards the trees. She looked back to her shed more than once and considered her decision. She did not stop walking. Laska's final image of her old home was Sergei carrying a small bale of fresh hay towards her shed. She turned back to the path and continued. The smells of the farm faded away and were gradually replaced by the fresh scent of the wild beyond the trees. When she reached the tree line, Laska thought she could hear her master calling her name. "It must be dinner time," she thought to herself, "I am getting hungry."

~ Kaitlyn Irwin

ON THE OUTSIDE

On the outside.

Girl.

What makes you tick?

Makes you sick?

Makes you flick
your bean alone

in your room

at night

with a cool breeze

blowin in your ear?

Someone smiles and waves

in your direction - your heart

lifts as you falter *hey*

through wobbling lips. A voice

passes you without hesitation,

bounding through that someone

you

thought noticed you today.

Only you

saw that.

Theysawnothing, no one.

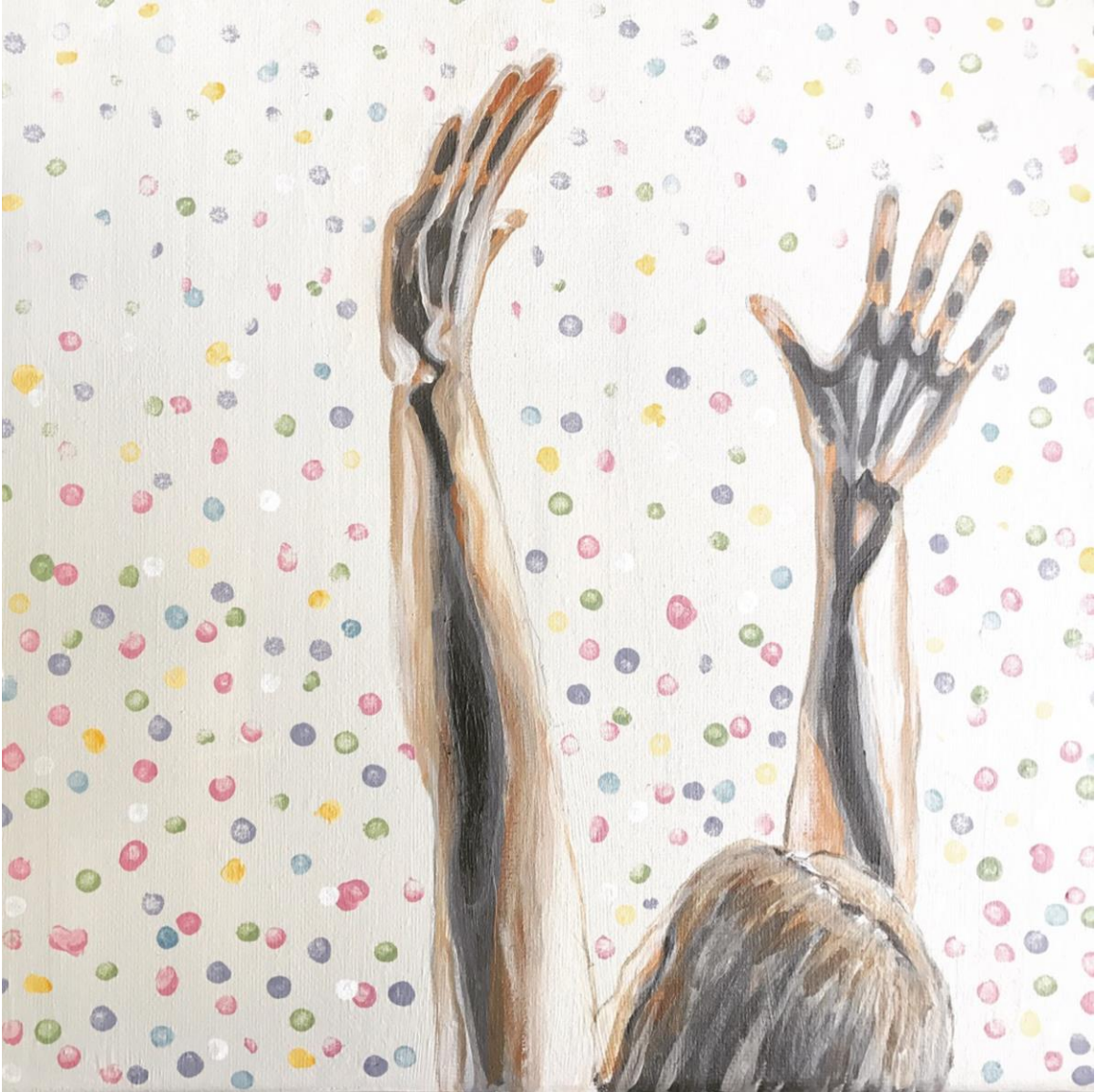
Days fill with moments un-seen;

am I invisible?

~ *Kaitlyn Irwin*



"Forecast: Sprinkles #1" ~ Rubia van Roodselaar



"Confetti #1" ~ Rubia van Roodselaar

THE STORIES OF GHOSTS

How often I find myself with questions
For people who are too dead to answer them
So instead I find photos and journals and poems
I stitch together what I can grab onto
Trying to weave a narrative from scraps
But there are always gaps and problems
I cannot figure out
Things that do not add up
I wish I had asked more before I had to turn into an archivist for
family history
I never imagined I would have so little time
It's lonely work trying to know the dead

~ Kathryn Carlson

DIARY OF A FAT WOMAN

When I was ten I was made to pose in a bathing suit
I was told that this picture would remind me
Of what I looked like before I lost the weight
But I never did.
I gained more.

When teased by a boy heavier than me in middle school
I asked why it was okay for him to be fat
But unacceptable for me
You're a girl he said
And that explained it all, didn't it?

I hated buying clothes
Nothing fit right
It'd look better if you lost twenty pounds
You need to hide your stomach
You need to hide your body

The first time a lover saw my naked body I cried
I was afraid that once he saw the ugly folds and stretch marks
That once he saw the real me he would turn away
Who wouldn't be disgusted by such an ugly thing

I wonder what it would be like to love my body
To not see myself as a condition that needs to be fixed
But a woman

What would that be like?

~ Kathryn Carlson

FALSE CREDIT

I'm tired of the fallacy
That what doesn't kill me
Has made me stronger
When all I can see is the scar tissue
From where the things that didn't kill me
Left me weak and vulnerable
Susceptible to attack
Loss and trauma wore chinks in my armor
Holes inside of me that will never be filled
If I am strong at all it is inspire of everything
Not because of it

I'm tired of credit going to
The things and people who hurt me
When I've had to fight to find strength to fight at all

~ Kathryn Carlson



"Vermont 1" ~ Doina Ciobanu

EL CANTAR DEL GALLO—PETEN, GUATEMALA

Black pigs are rooting
for cattle worms writhing in the red clay
hazy longing
passes like a veil before their sunburned eyes
the eyes of women travel
over vine covered hills as they lay
sleeping
thoughts writhing
in the red clay of their minds
small diamond warriors fell out of the night sky
long ago

Soldiers have painted skulls
on boulders in the hills
a ghost hand sweeps angrily
across the face of the land
shadows falls on men hacking down vines
chasing diamond warriors across the naked earth
they are invisible in the sunlight
but they shine

In villages the weight of dust
hangs over the market
where fire ants march in disciplined rows
they hear coins dropping
they squint at long, hammered
blades through ashen eyes
the narrow knives etched
with couplets that speak of love
of friendship,
of the value of a mule

At sunrise the roosters scream in anger
their nation sleeps
like a dog chained to the sun
the passing of night
the theft of jewels

fixed on a nation's forehead like a crown
the diamond warriors
of dreams that dare not speak
because their children's legs are pillars
and their eyes are obsidian
teardrops that see nothing until night
when they see diamonds

Ten thousand roosters
trumpets from another world
where night ruled and the hills were alive
until the ghost hand came and
morning fell across the land.

~ Michael Reibel

THE INVENTION OF TIME

What a colossal swindle.
The sun is running in place
huffing and puffing flares
that scorch the eyebrows of Mercury
but never moves through the sky
because there is no sky out there
only blackness
inky and eternal
like the first line Shakespeare ever wrote

there are no bells to call
the change of the watch on deck
no whistles or starting guns
the purple of sunset
the same today as yesterday
melts into yesterday
every time the wheel turns
but the wheel is still round
and it remains the wheel

only the chill of the infinite
only our vantage point
on the lustrous cheekbone of the blue pearl
only the crashing of dawn is real
the hammer of noonday
and the open arms of night

~ Michael Reibel

MAKING HISTORY

Sammy forgot to hold onto the screen door as he entered the kitchen through the back door of the house and it slapped shut with a bang.

"Don't bang the screen door, Sammy," Mum said without looking up as she stirred the oatmeal bubbling in a pot on the coal stove. "Did you wash?"

Sammy shook his head and went back outside to the pump in the back yard where Vernon was dipping his fingers into the cold water he had just pumped into one of the buckets. Sammy ran up and dove his hand into the water, creating a wave that splashed onto the front of Vernon.

"Hey!" Vernon shouted, jumping back. He dove his cupped hands into the bucket and scooped a splash onto Sammy, who yelped from the abrupt chill. The screen door screeched on its rusty hinges and both boys turned towards the house to see Mum on the threshold.

"Wash. Breakfast's ready," was all she said, then she gently eased the screen door closed behind her so it didn't bang shut.

Both boys dabbed some cold water on their faces and scrubbed their hands, then dried their hands on the legs of their trousers before running to the house. They squeezed themselves through the screen door, mockingly quiet, and slid into their places at the long kitchen table. Mum ladled oatmeal into their bowls, along with the one expectantly set at an empty chair for Sammy's brother, Eddie, then returned the pot to the sideboard.

"I'm going to send Eddie down. Make sure he eats his breakfast," Mum said as she started down the hall. "You're taking Eddie and Louise today. I've got a house to clean."

Sammy and Vernon looked at each other, making faces as they feigned choking on the thick oatmeal.

After breakfast, Mum gave the often-repeated instructions on what to do and not to do, where to go and where not to go.

"Stay away from the railroad tracks," Mum would begin. "The trains move a lot faster than you think and that's how people get killed. Mind what happened to Mrs. McGillicuddy's husband. And stay away from the Duquesne Incline and those Indian Trail steps -- all those homeless folks still living in that dirty Shantytown wander around there looking for youngsters to kidnap and turn into thieving slaves living like gypsies. You don't want that to happen to Eddie, do you?" This question was always followed with a stern pause that waited for an acknowledging nod from the boys.

"And mind not to talk to strangers or take anything they might offer you," Mum would lecture. This was always the closing epitaph which was accompanied by a wagging finger. Then the kitchen door would open, they would be ushered out and the door would whisper to a close behind them.

Once outside the little troop headed for the street, Sammy and Vernon side by side pushing Louise's baby buggy ahead of them, and Sammy's younger brother, Eddie, toddling behind.

Two adventurers could hardly be seen pushing a baby buggy, especially one that looked like a large basket on wheels, so there was no choice but to seek out the coal hills and desolation. They headed for South Side Flats, winding their way down Mount Washington to the industrial area along the Monongahela River.

"Come on, Eddie, walk faster. We can't let anyone see us pushing this buggy," said Vernon.

"Walking fast," returned Eddie with a stern look on his face.

"How 'bout you ride in the buggy?" asked Sammy.

"NO! No baby!" Eddie shouted.

"No, Eddie, this isn't a baby buggy. This is a carriage," said Sammy and stopped, gesturing to Vernon to lock the wheels of the carriage, "a carriage with the royal princess Louisa of France," he continued with wide gestures while indicating the sleeping Louise, "who is being chased by the evil prince who wants to kill her and take away her throne. And you are the brave carriage driver racing her to freedom."

Eddie's eyes grew large with fascination as he nodded his head and became part of the adventure. Sammy picked up a stick and slashed it through the air with sword-like motions. Vernon searched around for one in the grass and then sprung towards Sammy, stick whipping as they clashed together – parry, thrust -- in a duel. Eddie clapped and grabbed hold of the side of the buggy, trying to climb over the wheels and in. Sammy and Vernon dropped their sticks to push Eddie into the carriage.

"Careful," said Vernon, "don't squish Louise or wake her up."

"Now, hold on and stay low so the evil guys can't get you," said Sammy.

Then he and Vernon dashed for the handle, looked each other in the eye, spit in their palms and shook hands while shouting, "Making history!!" and they were off, running as fast as they could, the baby buggy jostling ahead of them.

They bumped the baby buggy over the cobblestones, dragging their feet as they hung onto the handle to make sure it didn't pick up too much speed, careening down the zig-zag streets. They didn't want it to tip over going around the turns on their way to the railroad tracks. Down near the tracks, they pushed the buggy through the dried grass that sprouted through the gravel towards the large, dark hills of piled coal.

"Out. Out!" Eddie began to shout.

"Quiet!" Sammy commanded, "We're looking for a good hiding place from the villains."

Eddie's eyes scanned the landscape on either side of the buggy, looking for the would-be villains.

The bituminous coal of Mount Washington and areas surrounding Pittsburgh was the perfect fuel for making coke, a component for the manufacture of steel. And steel was what had helped to forge Pittsburgh. Sammy and Vernon marched up and down the long row of coal piles -- small mountains as tall as a four-story building composed of black nuggets -- looking for the one that had been there the longest. The coal piles didn't sit long since they were constantly extracted and renewed to feed the smelting ovens. They looked for a coal pile that wouldn't be as fresh because it would be more compacted and easier to climb.

"How about this one?" asked Vernon.

Sammy ran at it and started a few steps up. A trickle of loose coal bits rattled to the bottom of the pile.

"Sure," said Sammy, "this looks good. Let's get the buggy."

Sammy and Vernon ran towards the carriage. Eddie was tired of riding and wanted out. He started shouting again, "Out, out, out..." as he grabbed the side of the carriage and began to climb over. Louise woke up with an escalating, strangling cry.

"Are you hungry, little girl?" Sammy asked as he tickled Louise under her chin and with his other hand tugged the back of Eddie's pants to hold him in place.

"Here, let me help you," said Vernon. He put his arms around Eddie and hoisted him from the buggy while Sammy pushed Eddie's legs out. Sammy helped Louise sit up, placing her chubby hands on the edge of the buggy and wrapping her fingers on the rim.

"Now you hold on, baby sister," said Sammy, "it's going to be a bumpy ride."

The two older boys looked at each other and slapped their hands together in a loud clap.

"Makin' history!" they shouted and started pushing the baby buggy faster and faster towards the coal hill. They pushed right into the bottom of the pile where it was the least steep so they could push as far up as the running momentum would allow. They climbed the rest of the way to the top in zig-zags back and forth up the slope.

"Wait for me! Wait! Wait me!" Eddie yelled, running along behind as fast as his short legs would carry him.

At the top, Sammy and Vernon stopped, panting for breath and grinning at each other. They made a weak victory hand shake and locked the brake of the buggy. Louise had stopped crying with the jostling movement of the buggy and the wind in her face on the way up. She cooed and giggled at the edge of the buggy. Eddie was trying to climb up the coal hill, but kept tumbling back down in a wash of black rubble.

"Wait for me, Eddie!" Sammy yelled, "I'll come get you!"

Eddie didn't stop, but doggedly kept trying over and over.

Sammy sat down on his butt and slid down the hill in a flurry of tumbling coal pieces, shouting "WOO-HOO!" as he went. Eddie got caught in the landslide and started screaming as he was covered with black dust. Sammy jumped to his feet and grabbed Eddie's hand and helped him stand up, brushing him off in a cloud of choking dust. They both started coughing.

"Come on, Eddie," said Sammy between coughs, "I'll show you how to climb up. Follow me." They took off at an angle up the pile, Sammy offering instructional and encouraging advice as they zig-zagged up and up, firmly planting their feet and trying not to create another slide that would take them back to the bottom. Occasionally, Eddie would falter and Sammy would reach out and give him a hand up.

At the top of the coal hill, Vernon cooed and tickled Louise as she giggled and drooled. Sammy and Eddie finally made it to the side of the buggy and sat down in exhausted, panting heaps. In the distance, a steel mill shift whistle blasted.

"Do you think anyone will see us?" Vernon asked.

"Maybe from the tracks, but I don't see anyone down there and we're far enough away from the guard shack to be safe from Fatman Gilbertson," replied Sammy.

Although the Depression had left thousands unemployed, taken food, homes and family security, it had offered up a few new jobs in the way of hated guards and patrolmen for the rail yards and coal hills to prevent theft of the precious black nuggets. Theft of coal was punishable by jail time -- but only after a thorough clubbing by the cinder dicks, a nickname for the guards that routinely patrolled the tracks. Fatman Gilbertson was the supervisor and usually sat in the guard shack with his feet up, napping or reading a newspaper.

Louise started to cry and Sammy turned around shouting, "Hey! What do you think you're doing?"

Eddie was draining Louise's baby bottle. Sammy grabbed at it, but Eddie bit down on the rubber nipple to hold it. Sammy pulled and the rubber stretched until it popped off the end of the bottle and snapped back into Eddie's lips.

"Owie!" Eddie screamed as the nipple dropped to the ground and he rubbed his lips.

"What do you think you're doing?" Sammy yelled.

"Thirsty," Eddie said as he wiped his lips with his sleeve. Now he had a black, sticky smear across his face. Sammy was busy trying to fit the nipple back on the bottle.

"I think we should get going before someone catches us," said Vernon nervously as he scanned the tracks below for any sign of cinder dicks.

"I told you we're okay," said Sammy while he jostled the buggy to quiet Louise and teased her lips with the milky nipple of the bottle.

"Yeah, well," said Vernon hesitantly, "well, we can't make history just sitting here." Sammy started laughing.

"Right-oh," he said with a dignified air, his chest puffed out, mimicking Mr. Williams, the British man who was staying in the boarding house across the street from theirs.

"Do you want to go for a ride, Eddie?" Sammy asked.

"No," Eddie replied.

"Come on, you have to get in or we'll leave you up here all by yourself," said Sammy.

"No," Eddie said again.

"Do you like fast cars, Eddie?" Vernon asked.

"Where?" said Eddie, "Where fast car?"

"Right here," said Vernon as he patted the buggy. "You get to be the driver." This time the imaginary transference didn't work.

"Not a car," said Eddie stubbornly.

"Well, you're going to be pretty lonely up here by yourself and I'm not climbing back up to get you," Sammy said dispassionately.

"No," said Eddie, "I tell Mommy."

Sammy laughed, "How can you tell Mum if you're stuck up here by yourself, at night, in the dark, with no food and no water?"

Eddie stood there for a minute, looking down at his dusty shoes, then he turned and started trying to scramble into the buggy. Louise let out a scream and pushed at Eddie, holding her bottle away from him with the other hand.

"Eddie doesn't want your bottle," Vernon soothed as he patted her head, "he wants a ride. Make some room for him, okay? You can sit in the back under the cover."

Sammy helped Eddie over the side and into the buggy.

"You should have brushed him off first," Vernon said. "He's getting everything dirty."

"We'll shake everything out when we get close to home," Sammy said. "Come on, we're wasting time." They situated the buggy at the edge of the top of the coal hill.

"I think you should hang onto the front," Sammy said, "so you can keep it down."

"I don't like riding backwards on the outside of the buggy," Vernon said. "It's hard to hold on."

"Well, I'd do it, but I'm too heavy and the front wheels will get stuck and we won't go anywhere."

Vernon looked down the slope. It seemed a lifetime away to the bottom.

"What'll happen when we get to the bottom?" Vernon asked.

“Well,” said Sammy as he quickly calculated the adventure, “you’ll jump off and I’ll drag my feet and you can run over and help me drag the buggy to a stop. See, it’ll be easy.”

Vernon played the scenario over in his head with his eyes closed, then looked down the hill again.

“Might work,” he said without enthusiasm.

“Sure, it’ll work,” said Sammy, “Just like coming down Wilbert Street.”

Vernon didn’t answer. He just climbed onto the front of the buggy with his feet on the front rail of the frame and his hands grasping the sides.

“I’m going to push now to get it started and then I’ll pull my feet up. Eddie, you hold on and make sure Louise doesn’t try to get out,” said Sammy.

Eddie nodded his head over and over as he patted the smiling Louise who was tucked under her blanket deep into the comfort of the buggy. Sammy pushed, but the front of the buggy dug deep into the coal.

“You’re going to have to help me push to get started,” said Sammy, “then jump on when we start to roll.”

Vernon didn’t answer. He climbed off and moved around to the handle and pushed down in unison with Sammy to raise the front wheels out of the coal rubble. As soon as the wheels were free, the buggy started to roll down the steep incline of the hill.

“Quick!” Sammy shouted, “Hop on, hop on!”

Vernon scrambled in the loose coal to get back to his perch on the front of the buggy, but it was already gaining speed down the slope. He slipped in the loose coal and fell. Sammy started dragging his feet to try and stop the buggy, but he lost his grip on the handle and it took off without him, bouncing faster and faster away. They could hear Eddie yelling, “Wheeee!” as the buggy shot down the hill. Without a word, the two boys looked at each other. “Making history!” they shouted as they scrambled up and started to run down the slope after the buggy. They lost their footing and half-slid, half-tumbled down the hill. The buggy raced in a jostling, side to side, sometimes four-wheel, sometimes two-wheel dance down the slope to the bottom. When it reached the bottom, it flipped and landed upside down with the wheels spinning in declining revolutions.

Sammy and Vernon came tumbling shortly behind in a landslide of rubble and dust, banging into the buggy and tipping it onto its side. The skyward wheels of the overturned buggy spun to a lazy stop. The air was cloudy with coal dust. Time stopped momentarily while Sammy and Vernon looked at each other, blinking away the dust, and read the fear of disaster in each other's expression. As the dust settled, they assessed the situation. Eddie lay on the ground with eyes as big as saucers. Louise was grunting and squirming under her blankets, trying to release herself from the suffocating, bundling confusion. She started to

scream when she couldn't release herself and Eddie started shouting, "Again! Again!"

Sammy scrambled over the coal pieces and quickly began freeing Louise, checking her limbs and body for blood or scratches or damage. She hiccupped a few ending cries as he picked her up and held her to him, soothing her, "It's okay, baby, it's okay."

Vernon was still on the ground, examining a bloody scrape on his knee.

"You okay?" Sammy asked.

"Yeah, stings a little," Vernon said.

Vernon got up and with Eddie's help righted the buggy. He shook out the blankets and put them back into the buggy. Eddie started back up the slope.

"No Eddie," said Sammy as he bundled the smiling Louise back into the buggy; "we have to go home."

"Again!" shouted Eddie, "Again!"

"We don't have time," Sammy stated again insistently. "We have to go home before dinner time and it's a long, uphill hike. And quit yelling or we're gonna get caught."

"Again!" shouted Eddie stubbornly.

"Hey!" came a shout from down the tracks. "What are you kids doing?"

"Fatman Gilbertson!" Sammy and Vernon said in unison.

Eddie looked down the tracks where the shouting man was running towards them.

"You kids are going to rot in jail for stealing coal!" Fatman shouted. He was getting closer, his great weight a rolling gelatinous wave in rhythm to his stride.

In one quick movement, Sammy swooped up Eddie and slapped him to the front of the buggy, planting Eddie's feet on the frame, shouting, "Hold on tight!"

Vernon was already pushing the buggy to a bumpy, rolling start in the rough grass and dirt on the side of the tracks. Sammy fell in beside him and they both pushed, running as fast as they could, leaving the panting Fatman in the distance, waving his arms and shouting profanities.

~ Nan Darbous

THE BOOK I LOST IN MY DIVORCE

is a painting, not *capriccio*.

Sunflower yellow streaks across page
forty-eight where “the golden specks fly”
with imagined noon sky imperfect
-ly blue; discursive crossways of

stifling composure. Page one hundred
and three holds faded pencil notes in
margins, highlighting self-reliance,
foreshadowing the horizon line:
“I’ve got to work when the weather

is bright...Why don’t you go after you have
said good-night?” A typographical
error on one forty-six where I
added a missing vowel to “loy-
alty.” My black pen swooped indignant

-ly. It was September. I was lost
in a sand field of parasols, frilly,
and specked with sea spray. She was me and
I was her, our ears filled with rolling
waves offering reprieve and I knew

my lungs would fill with the weight of salt.

~ *Heather J. Macpherson*

FOR DIANE ON HER 60TH BIRTHDAY

Don't worry, I'm not comparing you to the wise
old owl, not that it matters since you'll laugh
anyway and say, That's right I am so who cares?

And I say, Okay time-honored goddess
of the north whose noiseless flight is anything
but, answer me this: you hoot not holler,

hunt small animals to feed other people's' children,
raise your mysterious eyebrows and swivel
your head before flying away capturing snapshots

of all beneath you, keeping only what is most
important; releasing voles from your talons
is not worth your time. No, you go after the big

fish. You watch. You poke and prod, then swoop
down barely grazing the water's surface. No one
gets away with anything so answer me this: who cares?
So what? It is only a myth that owls are blind

in daylight, or harbingers of misfortune and shipwreck,
and their ability to see all angles is demonic. I suggest
you maintain each thick, soft feather, keep your keen

eyes open and aware, tell me who cares whenever I
care about something that doesn't really matter.

~ Heather J. Macpherson

BEFORE

There is before
and there is after

Before was
love
basketball
inside jokes

After is
dark
hurting
sadness

Since you left
after is all I have
but before keeps me going

~ Stacy Fowler

MEMORIES

A simple little box
can bring back many memories

... childhood
... adolescence
... marriages
... divorces
... births
... deaths

Somehow life still goes on
with a hole in my heart
which carries my mother
as if she were still alive.

~ Stacy Fowler

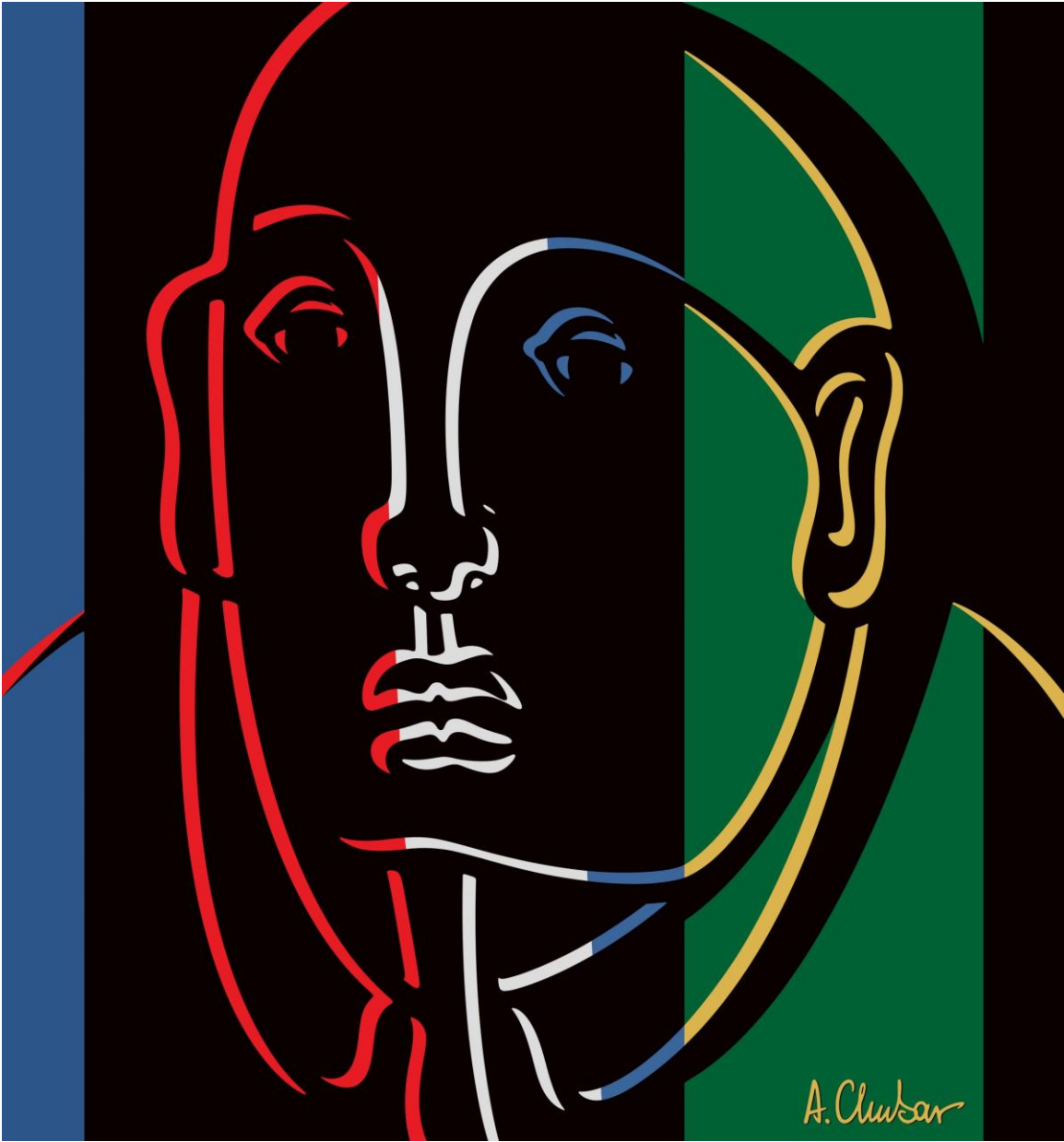


"The Portfolio of the Mind" ~ Eghosa Akenbor

13 WAYS OF LOOKING AT MY BATHROOM MIRROR

- 1) Suck in stomach because you love the lie.
- 2) Never wipe it because you're scared to see it clear.
- 3) Turn around because you swear there was something behind.
- 4) Drunk.
- 5) No glasses .
- 6) In the dark.
- 7) Alone.
- 8) Sometimes a little longer than you should because sometimes you think the reflection looks happier.
- 9) You don't.
- 10) You still haven't looked.
- 11) You “forget”.
- 12) Still scared.
- 13) You brush your teeth.

~ Jose Mendez



"Portrait" ~ Alexander Chubar

OF MODEST MATERIAL

The City of Industry buzzed with an air of ambivalent activity, like one of its denizen factory machines that has been forever unaware of its function. Commuting workers crowded the long blank roads between business parks, and the few unfortunate residents circled the dwarf city in a futile search for recreation. Giving the illusion of progress were constant construction projects with escaping deadlines, projects that eventually produced identical, imperceptible alterations to buildings and roadways. Broad streets differing only by name intersected to form an unyielding urban grid amidst brown hills of disheartened, dying grass that resembled the sun-bleached hair of a man stranded in the desert. The pale landscape stretched tiredly past the long white warehouses and factories until it dissolved into the colorless haze. It was a place between destinations.

The many gray buildings in the many business parks looked from the sky like ambiguous microchips in a giant circuit board. Among these microchips was the Fisher, Fisher & Fisher Law Office, where Sal Gibbons worked. Sal stood outside of it now, staring into the parking lot after a man searching for the particular four-door sedan that he owned. Sal smiled to himself, grateful that his own sedan was not lost in the sea of beige. He loved the way his crimson paint blazed defiantly like a coal in a bed of ashes.

After identifying what seemed to be the right make and model, the man unlocked the door, cranked the engine on, and pulled out of the lot. As he drove past, Sal was bewildered to see it was his crimson sedan with his colleague Stanley Miller in the driver's seat.

He remembered. Stanley was color-blind. Sal wandered into the parking lot in search of Stanley's car with the twin key-hole.

In his regular diner, Sal sat on a stool near the window, blinded by the refraction of the pale sun in the lambent dishware.

"My usual, please," Sal said. The server blinked at him. "Which is...?"

Sal looked into the face of the server who had fed him every weekday for fifteen years and sighed indignantly. "Chicken breast in balsamic reduction instead of lemon glaze. Rice pilaf on the side, but cook it in water, not seasoned broth."

Several moments passed in silence as the server scribbled on his pad.

Sal turned to face the window, his eyes vaguely wandering between the throngs of hungry pedestrians who drifted along the cigarette-strewn sidewalks,

grateful for whatever freedom they were granted during their midday reprieve. Shuffling together and growing in density, the crowds graced the desolate roads with more foot traffic than they were accustomed to at any other time in the day. The hordes now swarmed with such volume that the individuals therein became a single amalgamation, which threatened to condense them back into a uniform, primordial ooze.

Out of the writhing masses, a single woman emerged, approaching the window of the diner. Overhead, the sun hung lazily at its zenith like a blind eye, casting a hazy glare that completely hid the diner's patrons behind a one-way mirror. She stopped, staring at herself in the now-reflective glass.

From humble features, she had gleaned an extraordinary beauty that was somehow exponentially more striking in its unity than the sum of its components. Neither her chestnut tresses nor the soft curves of her face drew the eye, but if the eye were to find them, it was captivated. If a divine creator had a hand in her conception, he had proved his skill in his craft through his selection of modest materials, as a true sculptor seeks not the finest marble but the most genuine composition. She looked upon herself with an appropriate appreciation; a glint in her eye that was suffused with self-awareness and devoid of self-consciousness.

Inside, Sal sat enchanted, marveling at the lovely young woman who had walked up to the window just to stare directly into his eyes. She fixed him with a look that distinguished him, emphasized him, selected him alone from the dozen other men who sat in the window chewing.

Sal pretended not to watch as she walked inside, her presence announced by the understated fanfare of the tinkling bell above the front door.

At her entrance, the server shed his reticence. "Nora! Turkey on rye coming up."

Nora claimed a seat behind Sal, who promptly turned to face her.

"Sal Gibbons," he said.

"Excuse me?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, I thought I heard you ask my name." He smiled coyly. "Oh no, I've never had much concern for those. If you'd like to introduce yourself, tell me what you do."

Sal grinned. He'd gotten to this part faster than he'd hoped. "I'm an intellectual property attorney."

At Sal's law office, he and his colleagues evaluated creative work for its originality. They read books, listened to music, and considered patents to

determine the legal basis for the authors' protection under copyright law. Sal took pride in his work, particularly in guarding the public from the conventional, the cliché; and as a corollary, promoting genuinely novel creation. Sal had an obligation to the convention of intellectual pioneering; he was a sentinel of creative thinking. As such, he punched in every day at 9 A.M., left at 5 P.M., and adhered to the strict office dress code.

"Mmm," she nodded. "I'm an actress."

Sal raised his eyebrows. "You must have missed the exit for Los Angeles."

"Well, you know. We're not all in it for the glory. Some are in it for the savings on location," she laughed. "Sets are remarkably cheap here."

"I'd think there'd be a reason for that." Sal turned his head toward the blank land outside and wondered what cinematic value it could possibly offer.

Nora shrugged. "Well, before you think me intimidatingly successful, know that I just took a bus to get lunch."

Sal's eyebrows raised in recognition of an opportunity. "Could I give you a ride when you've finished?"

"Depends. Is that your car outside?" She indicated Stanley's beige sedan.

"Essentially."

Having judged it "reasonably safe and conventional," as she put it, Nora accepted the offer.

* * *

Through a series of contrived carpools, Sal developed a steady friendship with Nora that gave him the context necessary to invite her over.

Sal's house was a duplex, a craftsman style home that appeared to have split down the middle and frozen halfway through some sort of architectural meiosis. On the other side of the half-inch drywall was Curtis Lowe, an eccentric man whose idiosyncratic orderliness was nearly constantly at odds with Sal's acerbic rebellion against the homeowners' association. On the first day he moved in, Sal had painted his half of the house a ludicrous yellow that clashed deliberately with the understated maple on Curtis' half. In a selfless sacrifice for the sake of symmetry, Curtis had synchronized his half of the house with Sal's absurd canary color scheme. On each front porch was a small potted boxwood whose thin branches and dense leaf coverage made it malleable to shaping and trimming. In the years of peace before Sal moved in, Curtis would gingerly prune his boxwood into an immaculate, uniform sphere. Every week since, Sal has trimmed his into the shape of a different animal, his inspiration increasing in unpredictability as time goes on.

When Nora came over, however, she was more preoccupied with the interior.

In the corner of the living room, two African Greys perched on staffs of knotted wood, guarding the entryway to Sal's home office, where they would overhear him exclaiming in anguish over suits concerning songs, novels, and patents that so clearly resembled earlier works that they threatened the name of unique creation.

Sal led Nora to the perches of his babbling pets. "You've got Pete and Repeat. Guess which one's which."

"I would, but I don't think it matters. They only have meaning when they're together."

Nora spent the evening serenading Sal on his piano, composing a concerto of show tunes and pop songs that he, in his compulsory familiarity with music, had heard too many times to count.

Pete and Repeat squawked the mantras that they had acquired.

"Derivative!"

"Infringement!"

In the midst of the familiar music and the heckles of the parrots, Sal and Nora drew close to one another, kissing slowly and reveling in their embrace.

In the morning, Sal stood in the bathroom, leaning on the faux granite countertop that surrounded the sink. Above it was a triptych of mirrors, two of which faced each other on opposite sides of the vanity. When he was a child, Sal would stare into his parents' mirror set, engrossed in the infinite parallels that surrounded him. He would crane his neck as far as he could, trying to see past the obstacle of his own reflection to the mystery at the end of the reflection.

To his right, the shower sprayed a forced rain that drummed insipidly on the ceramic beneath.

Nora entered from behind him. "Would you mind if I joined you?" "I'd mind if you didn't."

Immediately after reaching under the cylindrical torrent, she recoiled from the icy temperature.

"Jeez," she said. "You still trying to calm down after last night?"

Sal smiled. "It's my routine. Anybody could take a hot shower."

Nora left him to practice his uncomfortable, unconventional routine alone. Turning toward the shower, Sal stepped away from the infinite repetition of the mirrors, leaving them to stare one another into unobserved eternity.

On his way to work, Sal stood on his porch locking the door. On the far side of the garage was Curtis, who, with a self-satisfied smile, had just finished perfectly reproducing Sal's meerkat-shaped boxwood. Sal returned the smile with cruel irony. He leaned over and turned his pot, revealing the plant sculpture's bushy tail. It was a tree squirrel. Curtis threw down his shears in exasperation at the branches that he could not regrow.

At his much-anticipated lunchtime, Sal sat in his stool at the window, awaiting his balsamic chicken. Outside, an unusual California rain had set in. His eyes wandered across the street to the window of a neighboring eatery, in which a handsome couple were playfully feeding each other. They held each other in amorous union, absorbed in the particularity of one another's existence.

Sal stood up from his stool, his straightening knees knocking it over behind him, sending it conspicuously clattering to the tile floor.

Grappling with denial, Sal clearly saw Nora's exquisite face nuzzling the neck of that ambiguous stranger. In a flash of disappointment and fury at his own irrelevance, Sal felt himself crossing the street, which was dappled with wet footprints. Fleeting, Sal wondered how many square inches of the earth had never felt the footfalls of man. He wished to touch those places.

Sal stormed inside and up to the table where Nora sat with her lover, only to be halted by a hand on his shoulder. Whipping around, he beheld a second Nora standing beside him.

The face that he had held in such particular and remarkable esteem was now presented in multiplicity before him.

Nora introduced Sal to her twin sister Cassie.

When he returned to the restaurant, Sal canceled his order.

"Ham on white, if you would."

* * *

Sal watched as the ephemeral breath rolled over the mirror, painting it with colorless opacity like an invisible flame. As Nora's hot steam covered the mirrors on the left and right of the vanity, their infinite tunnel was truncated there, at the intersection of Sal's and Nora's shower. Dulcet tones reverberated off the tile surrounding Sal as Nora's voice echoed in peerless harmony with itself, crooning familiar lyrics that propagated in an acoustic bliss that Sal had never heard.

~ Ryan Brown

for an entire day.
come back the next;
the words still the same.
the emotion recognizable.

I've grown accustomed to these
moments of weakness, and poetic calling
that lead to nothing more than words on paper.

I'm still away from where I belong.
I still look downwards when I walk
in Anaheim, California.

I wipe tears at night, hiding
emotions I'll never admit. like how
I want to stay away from the occupation,
although I know I have to fight it.
like how easy it would be to have an airport home;
plan trips momentarily without needing months
of visa approvals.
fall in love with a man who doesn't know
politics. write words about happiness,
and nature.
yet here I am.
same words, on the same paper.

~ *Laila Shikaki*

MY BROTHER HAS A FIANCÉ NOW

my friend has his second child,
my other friend got engaged, and now she's married.
my best friend moved to Germany;
and I will come back with graduate papers and a collection of poems.

back home life has changed. roads have expanded.
buildings have grown taller, and the trees abundant.
my room has been transformed into my mother's wardrobe;
my friends have learned to live without me.
I've been gone for two years;
I will learn that change happens in less.

two years, two birthdays, two Valentine's days, four Eids,
and two Ramadans I've missed.
four semesters, one post-colonial class, one poetry workshop,
and two American lit classes I took.
ten close friends, two best friends, two important teachers,
and two B's I've received.
three houses, three roommates, two dogs
and one cat I lived with.
same me, different me, depressed me, happy me, content me, scared me
I've seen.

~ *Laila Shikaki*

MAKING DUMPLINGS

She was not an artist, but taught me how to sculpt
the soft dough into minute stiches, thumb and forefinger
kneading the dumpling skin in alternation
with scientific precision.

She called this particular stylization the *xiao lao shu*,
the *little mouse* that yielded to her deft touch as
supplely as the real mice she worked with every day.

Yet for all her lab training, she could never
pinpoint the proportions of flour and water—
you just have to feel it—
she would say.

And maybe that's legacy,
the approximation, the blurring of gain and loss,
the alteration of fingers and voices
as I try to suture past and present
for children yet unborn.

This is how she would do it,
I will say, our fingers struggling with
my too gooey dough,
imprecise as memory, stubborn as grief—
words mixed with flour and filling,
spiced with their imagination,
we will sculpt her again and again.

~ Nancy Carranza

CLIFF WALK AT POURVILLE, 1882, A POSTCARD

Because I've always liked Impressionism,
painting truth in messy strokes of
pinks, browns, and greens,

Because the two girls stand as sisters, one
Sense and the other, Sensibility,
spilling secrets over ledges,

Because as a child, I too would stand
before the vaults of sea and sky,
listening for divinity in the crashing waves,

Because I was sixteen,

I saw in Monet's landscape
a story, blurred as blades of grass,
sure as the horizon.

How to explain.

The girl, staring out to sea,
remembering and forgetting,
bidding farewell and awaiting,
still, for the arrival—

This is me.
You: not here.

Desire is the ocean between us.

And love, a blank postcard, tucked away.

~ *Nancy Carranza*

THE LITTLE CAFÉ

After Café Terrace at Night by Vincent van Gogh

On the streets of Italy
a little café stands—
so quaint and elegant
but small and uncrowded.

Lit up by the golden embers
of a single light.
Rested upon a single wooden floorboard,
topped with dated pub tables and
antique chairs.

Men and women sit meekly—
meeting and greeting as they wait to be served.
Waiters in white—
juggling their tasks as they serve each individual.

Bound to the walls of towering estates—
built upon rigid street pavement.
Passerby's stroll through the streets—
enjoying the serene scenery.

One by one, stars twinkle in the night sky—
casting a light for all to see.
An artist sets up his easel,
ready to paint the exhilarating café at night.

~ Alexa Findlay

JAZZ

The fleeting minute pebbles of sound,
Showering cascades of blizzard like beats.
Whip smooth cords: glazier like crescendos.
Dolce and Vivace voices...
Echoing in strenuous strains.
Those broad bass...Bossa Novas
With their ricocheting rhythms.
Charge and tumble and fickle,
Forfeited, tones of diminished marches.
Forte like ends revering Mezzo like beginnings...
Resting bars lay placid,
Before the surprising leaps.

~ James Ford Jr.

CARDBOARD KID

I'm a cardboard kid.
I'm faded brown on one side
And printed white on the other.
I'm exactly what they wanted me to be
They made me out of leftovers
And drew a smile on me.
They separated me from the collective
With an industrial grade X-Acto knife.
And they played with me
To fulfill their amusement
Until they found out cardboard
Was weak and flimsy.
My legs were bent and broken,
My arms were torn apart
And I was cast aside
Like all the rest of the cardboard.
Yet I'm still a cardboard kid
With cardboard dream
And cardboard feelings
But to them I was just a play thing.
And that's why they cut out another one.

~ Cassidy O'Reilly-Hahn

THE COUCH

They didn't think
I was paying attention the first time,
but I hung
 on
 to
 every
 word.

Whispers in my ear –
repeated religiously
as they continued
the volley
into me.

I packed their words into my suitcase,
right next to the toothbrush and my blood-stained underwear.
I took 'em all home with me –
nailed them to my wall.
Every day I wake up
in bitter certainty
to these words.

No one will believe you.

~ C. Parks Allen

SHOOTING STAR

4 a.m. and far off a small dog barks
against the envelope of silence
as the moon submerges in the west.

Even further in the distance a freight train
rounds Cape Horn rumbling faintly on its tracks
as the conductor opens his cab window
and there on the eastern horizon spies
a shooting star burning in its path
that no one near can verify.

100 miles away an old woman
facing east, rocking in the darkness
sleepless and in mourning,
sees her child smile again.

~ James Hickson

SINNER'S PRAYER

Now pluck out my bent wings like rice – cloister
the wild aside. A web of white remains.
Then lacquer me with ambrosia, let nectar
seep down, spume into bony barbs. Pick clean
my soapstone ribs with your tongue – a philtre
to smooth the down, leaving my jittering veins
milky and light. Brush the shafts still softer,
and let me lift us high. Scorched, burnt, brazen
when you cut me open for sacrifice –
roll your knifing finger across my keel;
wrench open the slit. Push aside the shield
to watch the organ stutter at your eyes;
pulse beneath your heavy thumb, then splinter;
its last hallow hush enfold you like skin.

~ Stephen Reaugh

WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT LOVE AND HATE FROM SOCRATES AND HIS WACKO, SICKO PARENTS

The man I still love, and hate, who lied to me for eleven months about his age, along with a few other more important things, still wants to take me on a first-class tour of Greece, the birthplace of him and his parents. Or so he says. I adore Greece, what I've read online and seen in picture books. Santorini Island sits on an active volcano. How dangerous. And picturesque. I've never travelled outside Green Bay, Wisconsin, my birthplace, which is pretty cool if the Packers football team matters most.

The Packers are responsible for bringing to me the man I still love, and hate, which is why I still love, and hate, the Packers. Every Sunday, during regular season home games, I sell fried corndogs and eight-dollar Corona on the main level of Lambeau Field, the Packers birthplace. The man I still love attends like clockwork every home game, by himself: section 133, row 47, seat 8. A season ticket holder. Grandfathered in, thanks to some deceased Uncle Nikolas he never met. Fans tell me the strangest things. The flirtier ones, like Socrates, stand around like bedazzled super-fans until my shift is over and then, once we're alone, ask, in a whisper, for a date. Yeah, I'm a looker, if pretty-boy-androgyny fields your dreams. I usually decline the invitation, citing a jealous boyfriend or a newfound propensity to dabble with girls. But I said yes to Socrates, mostly because of his huge hands and rolls of cash, but also because I love, and hate, the way his accent takes charm to the summit of the most mesmerizing eyes and bubble-butt I've ever seen. Still. From the very beginning, he was a temptation I couldn't refuse, a game I wanted to play, a devil disguised in the physique of a god, a man's manly man, a bona fide charmer and total mother fucker.

On our first date, we walked the perimeter of Lambeau Field. I said very little while he replayed with his lips and hands the game highlights, as if I hadn't just worked a shift and clocked out. He isn't the first guy to confuse my working at Lambeau for wanting to be at Lambeau. But it's a bi-monthly paycheck for five, often six, months of the year. Its food in the fridge, electric bills, black toenail polish, and Indie flicks on weekends. It's learning through experience to be okay with whatever team I'm playing for at the moment. My deceased parents, who never saw the inside of Lambeau, called Lambeau incredible. I never asked if by incredible they meant absurd or awesome or daydream or noisy or what. I should have asked. But I didn't. The man I still love, and hate, will never get to

meet my parents. Which is fine. I haven't met his parents either. At least not in person.

The man I still love, and hate, had given me some great sex in my apartment. He's a passionate lover, eager to teach me lots of things about my body, mostly to appreciate the youthfulness within it. "I'm not doing too bad for forty-eight," he likes to say, flexing and kissing his biceps. His driver's license, which I peeked at while he was going to the bathroom, says fifty-eight. I don't think fifty-eight is old. He still has broad football shoulders, a rigid tummy, a cellulite-free ass, and a cantaloupe-shaped head marked by chaotic gray and black hair. I enjoy looking at his red face, no doubt the result of too much outdoor-stadium sun, a lack of fruits and vegetables, and oodles of eight-dollar Corona. He'd benefit from a good clay mask and some anti-bronzing concealer, although I'd never tell him as much. He may talk and act tough, pounding his chest and growling like a Packer, but I can see within the shallow spaces of his mannerisms a vibration of softness, especially malleable whenever we hug and he calls me his sweetest one, his Packerette, his pro-everything, his real-life dolly-doll. It's hard to not fall in love with that kind of presentation. It's harder still to fall out of love once the presentation, with all its sideshows, begins to crumble. And it always crumbles. For me. It's too bad dabbling with girls does nothing for me.

The first time I invited the man I still love, and hate, to my apartment, I worried his flashiness might pock fun at its starkness. Except for the mattress and box spring, it's all previously used, and in uniformity to the cabinets, closet doors, and countertops, the rent's pretty cheap. He didn't say a word, his big brown eyes skimming the space. I should have asked if he liked it, or if he didn't like it, and if so, why. But I didn't. Instead, I became distracted unzipping his pants and tearing off his shirt and rolling down his socks, which I like to throw on the carpet and use after sex as stepping stones going to and coming back from the bathroom. He prefers the apartment dark, which means we spend a lot of time tip-toeing around and bumping into each other. I figured he never said anything about my apartment because he couldn't see anything inside my apartment. That's fair. I get it. It's fine.

Three months after we started dating, I asked the man I still love, and hate, about siblings, cousins, parents, friends. It seemed odd that he'd never mentioned anyone except for Uncle Nikolas. He snickered and said he wasn't ready to talk about stuff like that, not yet, but soon, someday dolly-doll. I promise. The dismissiveness hurt my feelings. But I let it go. For two months. Then one day, after sex, while he was going to the bathroom in darkness and I

quickly turned on a reading light, I scrolled through his cell phone contacts and wrote down three phone numbers attached to three names—Mom and Dad, Packers Pro Shop, & VIAGRA69.

The next day, I phoned his Mom & Dad. More curiosity than investigation, I wondered if their names actually matched the numbers. If so, did their accents mirror his? Did they know about me, because he told them about me, and if so, what did he say? A simple call. Nothing heavy. I was even willing to hang up after they answered, depending on the tone of their voice. Or maybe I'd chat a little bit, depending on the mood of my reaction. Easy breezy. Like Socrates. And me.

His mother answered. Sweet voice. "This is Katerina." His father, Babis, introduced himself on a second phone line in the second bathroom. Pleasant sounding folk, until I mentioned dating their son, the sweetest man and biggest Packers fan I've ever met. They were quiet for a short time. "Are you still there?" I finally had to ask. His mother sighed, and said, "Are you a boy or a girl?"

"A boy."

"You don't sound like a boy."

"I don't. Well, how do I sound?"

She stayed quiet. Babis did, too. "Are you still there?"

"So how much do you want?" she asked, lingering on the word, you.

"Want what?"

"Hmm," she and Babis murmured at the same time.

"I just called to introduce myself and say hi."

"How nice of you." Her voice turned gruff, tormented by grit and cynicism. "You're not the first gender to call, and I can assure you my dear, you won't be the last."

Babis laughed an unfunny laugh. "Our son's a packer alright. Like pack-her-him-in."

I remained quiet for a minute, maybe two, wondering about the other boys, girls, genders, who had phoned his parents. How many had there been? The words, "pack-her-him-in" split my heart into fractions, keeping me from deciphering exactly what Katerina had meant by, *how much do you want?* Was she offering a bribe? Hinting at hush money? Attempting to silence the truth by way of compensation? I should have asked for clarification. But I didn't. Instead, I thought about the word, team. The man I still love, and hate, and his parents are part of a team. The Packers are part of a team. Goddamn strippers are part of a team. But I'm not part of a team. Anger, the kind that lines a body's cell count with goose bump and vengeance, caused me to blurt out, "A \$3,500 cashier's check outta do it, as that's the exact amount I gave him last month from my

savings account for a fourteen-day tour of Greece he said just yesterday he still wants to take me on." The amount was a lie. I'd only given him \$500. But there was stuff I could buy with \$3,000 more.

"He hates Greece," Katerina blurted out. Babis grunted. "We've asked him to go a hundred times and he always gives us the same answer. No."

I remained quiet, flipping through a picture book of Santorini Island.

"But I suppose," Katerina said. "As long as you promise to never tell him that we talked and if you can cut off all contact with him asap, I think we can come to a mutually beneficial arrangement." She paused. "Think you can manage that, deary?"

Who should I have to? "You know what, make it an even five-thousand. Call it reparation funds for the emotionally abused." I figured if they could afford \$3,500, they could afford to add an additional \$1,500.

"How do we know you'll keep your word?"

"I guess unlike your son, you'll just have to believe in my trustworthiness."

"Hmm," they said again in unison. Then I heard a click. "You still there," I asked.

"What's the address," Katerina said, hanging up the moment I finished the zip code. Later that night, lying in bed, with every light in the house on, I spent in my head the extra \$1,500 on Chicago Bears gear. That'd show him.

The man I still love, and hate, continued to come over. And we continued having sex in the dark. He didn't mention anything about his parents. So neither did I. Like usual, he dressed quickly and stomped his feet inside Packer-colored tennis shoes. Looking at me from outside the screen door, he whispered, "See you soon, my sweetest one, my Packerette, my pro-everything, my real life dolly-doll. Can't wait to take you to Greece." And so it remained for five months. Coming fast. Leaving faster. Allowing little time to whisper goodbye or tell him about the \$5,000 cashier's check sitting atop the fridge, *charity donation* written in the memo line. I began to wonder where the man I still love, and hate, lives and works. Probably part of some team in some well-lit office in some top floor building with floor-to-ceiling windows. My father said a man's job is a private affair. So I didn't prod. But I refused to give up.

Last month, on the twenty-first, on my birthday, right after we had sex and had fun feeding each other Packer-themed cupcakes, just as I was about to tell him about the \$5,000 check and beg for forgiveness, the man I still love, and hate, asked if I wanted to come over and see his home—like soon. His face was redder than usual. I couldn't decide if it he was nervous or happy. I picked happy. Why not. I never am.

“Sure, I’ll come over.”

“I’ve got a king-size bed and a few other amenities I think you’ll really enjoy,” he said. “I’ll shoot you a few dates and times later this week.” Two days later, at 6:16pm, he texted, *I’ve got tomorrow from noon to three to show you more about you and me.* The rhyme scheme made me giggle. And soften. And forgive. And hope.

R u picking me up or do I need to find my own way?

I’ll pick you up at noon, dolly-doll. Don’t keep me waiting.

“Should I be dressed or what?”

Me thinks wearing a Packer thong beneath a Packer robe is super sex.

Go Pack Go.

My Packerette.

The man I still love, and hate, was prompt. Right at noon. I jumped in and took the passenger seat of a green and gold Ford F-350 super-duty truck and set my head on his shoulder while he rubbed his hand up and down my back. I wanted to say I love you. But I didn’t. How could I? Knowing what I know. Knowing what he didn’t know I knew. Besides, it’s pointless to rush a man’s tongue to the words, I love you. Men are like babies, capable of expressing love only after their hunger for something visceral and reassuring is routinely satisfied. That’s what my mother said. And she was never wrong. Not about men.

The man I still love, and hate, tapped the brakes in front of a large estate with a four-car garage before slowly turning into a wide, slick-polish concrete driveway. Manicured front yard. Six rock beds. Elm trees. Shapely shrubs. Blooming flowers. Light-brown stucco Tudor. Dark-brown trim. Hilltop viewpoint. A bit ornate, but also calming. A place where one-hundred dollar bills could easily grow, hang, and fall from the vines. I held out my hands. Just in case.

“Is this where you live?”

“Come on in and I’ll tour ya.”

We slipped through a cherry side-entrance door. Once inside, the smell of lemon and lime, including the mud room with industrial-size appliances and an oversized sink, made me sneeze. The sprawling kitchen had a built-in espresso maker and a two stoves. Seven bedrooms. Seven bedroom sets. Art-deco watercolor paintings. Custom-made tapestries. Eight toilets. Seven marble showers. I’d never before heard the term Jack-and-Jill bathroom. To my surprise, and delight, there were no visible photos of his parents, nor of any other boys, girls, or genders on any of the walls or inside any of the many bookshelves. The in-ground swimming pool had a curlicue slide. The outdoor kitchen glimmered against the sun. Lattice gazebo. Sand-pit volleyball court. Movie theatre. Pool

table. Cosmopolitan bar with ten leather bar stools. An entire room decorated and stocked with expensive Packer memorabilia: signed footballs, posters, jerseys, and hats. The Packer-themed home gym was bigger than my apartment. The sauna was hot and the steam room was sticky. “Made sure it was all on for you, babe,” he said, unknotting the belt on my robe. His eyes landed on my chest while his hands worked down my torso to the top of the thong—a gift he’d given with pleasure, no doubt in the hope of one day taking it back by taking it off. That day had arrived. “Me likey you more, and less, in Packer lingerie.” He grabbed my ass and pulled my erect cock into his erect cock. Can life be a fairytale? Do some dreams come true? Is it possible for two people who’ve connected to stay connected? Especially for people. Like us.

“Do you live here all by yourself?” I stepped back, after we both found ejaculation, which he wiped up with his socks.

“I take it you approve of my digs?”

“Why does one man need so much space?”

“Because more is more, and even more is better. Haven’t you heard?” A pea-green framed cell phone popped out of his front shirt pocket and toppled against the hardwood floor.

“Whose phone is that?”

“Who else’s would it be but mine?” He stepped backwards, leaving the phone on the floor.

“Is it new?” I bent over to pick it up.

“Leave it alone.” He kicked it across the room. It slammed against the terracotta-colored wall and spun like a top. “There. Happy now?”

“That’s not the one you use when we’re together.”

“So I have a couple of phones. What’s the big deal?”

“Why do you need more than one phone?”

“Why the interrogation?”

“Why do you always want my apartment dark?” I couldn’t believe I was asking him about apartment lighting, or the lack thereof. I should have been telling him about my conversation with his parents, confessing all that I’d learned, all that I’d said, all that I knew. But I didn’t.

He frowned. “What’s going on?”

“What color’s my couch?” I sat on the edge of a brown, L-shaped Packer-insignia sectional. The cold leather made me shiver. I saw through the sliding glass door a golf course and the back decks of other, even larger estates. The man I still love, and hate, came at me holding two Corona. I hadn’t realized he’d walked away. “Here.” I didn’t take it. “You’re really killing the buzz, hon.”

“What color’s my couch?”

“Really.” His shoulders slumped. “You want me to tell you the color of your couch?”

“Yeah. What color is it?”

“I don’t know. I mean, have we even sat on it together?”

“How could we. You’re always in such a rush to get the hell outta there.”

He stood quiet, staring at the Coronas. Finally, he shrugged and whispered, “I don’t know. Black?”

“Wrong.” I tied the robe’s belt and took two and two the plush-carpet steps leading to the main level.

“Do not go up there.” He followed me up the steps. “You can’t go up there.”

In the foyer, half-way to the stained-glass front door, I stopped at a towering bookcase, packed with books about Spain, Packers, marriage and family, horror and mystery, Oceanic Mammals, Qurans. Not one book about Greece. The man I still love, and hate, put his arms around my neck and squeezed, whispering words I couldn’t transform into communication. I became dizzy and weak. I couldn’t speak. Or yell. Or swallow. So I kicked his shin and rammed an elbow into his stomach. Twice. He released his grip and fell to his knees. “Fucking cunt.” Then, empowered by a sense of retribution, I pushed the bookcase atop his body, rendering his limbs motionless and askew. Red blood pooled against the earth-colored marble floor. Had it been a movie: *Deception at the Not-So-Hot Acropolis*. That’s when I looked up and gasped at a life-size oil painting hanging above the transom. A twenty-something was dressed in a green and gold sequin vest, bow tie, and cap. The pretty-boy-androgyny made me laugh. And cry. It could have been me, we looked that much alike.

~ *Samuel Cole*



“Metamorphosis of the Sun” ~ Saul Villegas

AGAINST THE DAWN

On which morning did the assault
Begin and what about it
Riled the Cardinal to attack?
Does the slightest fault
Cause stone and wood to split,
Bird and man to crack?

He hurled himself against the window
Throughout the night,
Hating himself, half insane.
So dazed by each blow
That in his rival's sight
He struck again.

Could the Cardinal bear the brunt
Yet be aware
That he is aggressor and victim
Front to front
Not withdrawing from the dare
When he fought him?

In early spring the nests are made.
The battles done.
Mates are chosen.
Then at last the eggs are laid
But in his mad reflection
Time is frozen
And nothing can be won.

~ Jefferson Holdridge

IRRUPTIONS

We followed the path under the lamp at midnight
And thought we had seen a great hooded owl
Sweep from tree to tree in studied contempt
Of witness or judge, the mere concept of sight,
Defining invisible woods by its hoot and its cowl,
But even more the encounter we might have dreamt
When learning that it had been a snowy owl
Whose hue was mistaken between darkness and light.
A mass migration begun with the first attempt
To find food away from its own territory
Flying farther south with each passing day
Leaving the tundra, through pines, deciduous trees.
Irruptions of conquerors looking for prey
Down in the great swamps, the cypress knees.
Travelers, not colonists, who never can stay
Beyond tomorrow, both fragile and predatory,
Circling or swooping down in truth and in story,
Driven to new dangers through savage degrees.

~ Jefferson Holdridge

THE BRAVE TRADE

Young person you are brave

Surveying ethnic, historic, and prehistoric oceans, your eyes glisten

Oceans of when it was *this way* and when it was *that way*

Your vision supposes *our way*:

Holding conditionals dear,

If we kept from changing the situation before the culmination of a song
then let consistency be revived.

If we appreciated reality beyond a brave new seven-inch screen,
then the disquiet of our soul would be met with the solace of compromise and
progress.

Young person you are brave!

Your passion for humanity is not yet tinged by conformity

Young person you are brave!

Your passion, youthful and vivacious, kindles the torch transferred from the
wise to the eager

Young person your lion-hearted endeavor will endure

the crackle of its flame is a brilliant roar: booming droplets in *The Waste Land*

It is the Genotype of the brave, pulsating within the flesh and bones of
tomorrow.

Fracturing them with its cries that go

When consistency is revived, humanity will be restored

When the reality on the nth inch screen ceases to paint the world *we* feel,
humanity will inspire

Violence's dying breath, and blossom in its place.

~ *Francisco Marquez*

HOPE

Hands stretched cross the stars in an attempt to grasp what can't be held.
Their hands reach past the stars and the universe, toward infinity their compelled.
They never touch it, they never feel it but, they keep reaching.
Eyes can scan the world, stars, and heavens for what can't be seen.
A fleeting picture that strode by in a distant dream.
They never see it, or catch it in a glimpse, but they keep searching.
Feet beat against a rode in nowhere that no one ever passes.
Pushing through brush and vines with blades and desperate slashes.
They always get lost, they always fall off track, but they always start the road again.
Minds drift away into distant dreams.
Infatuated by the glow and captivating gleam.
They always wake up, they are always disappointed, but, they keep dreaming.
Our boats beat against the current of possibility.
We shape the world around us in defiance to reality.
But for good or bad we accept it.
We move forward through danger when hopes are dim
We push through any challenge when the stakes are grim
Some fall, some die, some lose their mind, but we keep pushing forward.
We are persistent beings, never losing motivation.
We face peril and hardship for the sensation of being alive.
Life is but an empty vessel yearning to be filled.
We fill it with love, loss risk and education.
We seek to fill the vessel.
Some fill it with love, family, friends, and joy.
Others fill it with risk, anger, self-slavery, and drugs.
But either way the vessel will be filled.
Everyone walks different paths but, we do it together.
With persistence and hope we face the endeavor.

~ *Samuel Gonzalez*

THE THRESHOLD, THE FRONTIER: FIFTH ELEGY

For a moment I thought it was you,
over the stranger's shoulder—curl of hair
 over ear, your straight and darkened brow,
sober over your eye, your toes, twitching in their
 place, anxious to uproot you.

Thought it was our train, trembling
beneath our feet, our destination, steady as the
sheen of your hair. Thought it was us,
 as we once were, steadfast as the ground
between vibrations. Thought it was what
 cannot be: Duration.

What was your name? Who were you to me—
 flutter of eyes in contact, deep quiver of a glance.
The hand that held your jaw, did it too feel the
 sublimation of embrace—round heaviness
of check on bone, and, with a small wind,
 the momentary ripple of your hair,
 like water over skin, and, sometimes,
 the silken sleeve of your shirt, rolled above

the elbow, nexus of mortality and will,
 which if endowed with resolve would
 refuse to let you go, to lose contact, when
 rolled down it felt on the surface of your
wrist the vessel, sign of blood, of life,
 just barely contained beneath the
 façade of your skin.

Who are you to me—tender eyes and frame,
 chronic figure of the unsubduable gaze.
What strength is it you have, what reach, in order
 that even through the space of time and
 darkness of sleep you might meet me,
 forgiving ghosts of gentler skies.

I think to approach you, interrupt you, brush up
against your silence, resolved in itself.
Think to approach you like the child
I once was, like the child you once were, when our
thoughts surfaced like breaths from a deep,
primordial water—below being,
above nothingness, absorbed in anonymity.

I think to approach you,
but I do not. You are not there, just some
old life recaptured in a glance, apprehended
as a memory from a scent, as if conserving the
glance, conserving the breath,
could make it ours again.

If only it was then, what has already been lost;
but this too shall pass. This, too, here, now—
the smiles, the spaces,
will depart through the open door.

Time is, but we are only for a while.
Like the space between your shoulders,
we are small—we, who think
ourselves immortal, the most fragile of all,
each moment like a glass about to break.

So we plunge our worried fingers
through the thin film of sky, hoping
to spare it just this once—just this one smile,
this one touch, this one unhurried day.

But it, too, breaks.
It, too, lets go of itself, as from a
weakened hand whose fingers can no longer
share the burden, and, one after the other,
lightly uncurl, till the moment, unready to depart,
swiftly becomes too heavy, the weight for two
now one, like a smile burning through the darkness,

which, though bright, nevertheless
cannot become without another to receive it.

And so, unwillingly, it goes,
absorbed the way the air absorbs a laugh,
absorbs a cry: both commended to the empty space
from which they were expended, only to
be taken up through another lung,
another breath, again.

Childhood things, where are you now?
Were I to leave, could I die into you—
beautiful things, simple and pure
and there. Could I conceal myself in you, efface
myself in your brightness, and in doing so live on
as an artifact in a child's hand, as a child
who once had been.

For every event sings the song
of its own annihilation.
The way you beg a breeze to stay,
so I beg you, shadow of my shadow,
bone of my bone, always trying to do
the one more thing, that, in truth, cannot be done.

For to change is to die, as if completely,
into oneself, and to emerge from that almost-death
as if for the first time.

And so you grow as we all must grow,
unafraid of sky; and you brush your hair
in your mother's mirror, and it grows
longer, and in the reflection of your eyes you
almost see yourself; and you close your eyes
at night, and they grow larger;
and you grip those childhood things, and

inside your hands they grow smaller,
and what they were they can be no longer.

Stop. The breath on my skin,
is it yours? The breath with which
you speak, you act. Or is it only the remnant
of a wave whose pressure has moved serenely past.

~ Ryan David Leack

EPHEMERA

Who will remember your voice
as it was, tight as a rope, quick to cry,
yet ready to yield a laugh?

Cultivating mornings,
with never an empty hand,
the sliding door open and shut,
open and shut, curtains
and chimes dancing,

the sun casting shadows,
making shapes, shifting too
swiftly to be named.

All ceaseless change, rhythm,
and rest. In our own home,
not masters, but guests.

~ Ryan David Leack

BLOODED

This is God, this the damned from Man's
Hallowed Book; their assault on consecrated might
and blooded eternal price,
Given no sanction or reserved seat in Hell, planned
Devils to come serve that frantic clan.
Bountiful servants, prostrate; for whom bombed Christ,
Delivered that warning to the West.
I, the Terror, whose whip cracked there,
Blackened the gold shepherd—
Raped, beat, cordially bruised there;
I, the Terrified, the extant bear—
Bring to the sands that fair-weathered
Child, who brought death, and then none the rest.

~ Ian Cressman

SHE LIVES IN STORIES

She lives in stories—
stories occupied by fiends, by liars, by wizards and madmen.
She lives by the pen—
the pen that writes the battle, the global disdain, the “madder-still” men.
She drops in and weaves about; she dips into the very last well.

She lives in stories occupied by Roaches.
She once said “a thousand unseen wait in my walls”
and she wailed and wailed and wrote the terror as if it were her Heaven.
She lives by that same crave for survival, that well-suited aspiration—
an aspiration fit for a Roach.

She lives by documents,
by roadblocks and rejects, by caution tape and freaks;
by a tightly woven yarn around her neck—
she lives both beneath and above her God: the silent assailant;
there she finds the teachings and the taught, the determined and the gross.

She'd like to assuage her skin from fire;
she'd like to burn her flesh to the bone—she looks up:
“ten more years.”
And so she lives in stories—stories of men and women and children,
and the insects that eat them.

She walks the straight-wire, 10,000 feet above,
with a wish for slip and a trip; a maudlin joke.
And nothing pains her when she's in her stories.
And nothing disturbs her when she's written her stories.
She's lost control.

The Greatest Time—the immutable life; the unattainable goal:
it exists in the words, in the lies, in the fantasy.
So the flying insects buzz around her head waiting for the fruit;
and those that crawl on six legs do so until their last suffocation:
The Roach always dies on its back; it dies face down only in stories.

~ Ian Cressman

AN ELEGY FOR MY YOUNGER SELF

In 2000 I was too young to vote
But that didn't stop me from carrying around a sign
That read "vote for Nader"
At my conservative, mostly white high school
Esperanza
In Anaheim Hills
Where classmates talked of voting for George W. Bush Jr.
Because their parents would buy them a new car if he won.

And the impossible seemed to have happened
But that didn't stop the world from moving forward
Or my friends from enlisting
To help finance their future plans to go to college
Before September 11th, 2001
We were a generation that hadn't seen terrorism
or war
Up close and personal.

Mike and I were friends senior year
We both ditched school too much as juniors
And ended up with months of detention together
After we were free we'd go to the Stater Brothers
On the corner of Kellogg and Orangethorpe
And we'd drink bottles of cider in paper bags
To make it look like alcohol
But no one ever bought it.

There was one time I bet him a dollar
That he couldn't fit into a pair of boy's
Spider-Man underwear
So he bought them
And pulled them on over his pants
in the Stater Brother's parking lot
And I lost a dollar
But he spent five to prove me wrong.

I don't know who they are
But they say that the second Gulf War
Had the least amount of casualties on our side
As far as modern warfare goes
But Mike's older brother died
And left behind a son he'd never met
And I don't know if it was misplaced anger or grief
But Mike joined the army and went to Iraq

He quickly rose from Private to Corporal
And was shot through the leg
Mike came home to recover
When I saw him again he had a limp
And he told me horrific stories of death
And of all the killing he'd done
He kept count
But he wasn't ever sure of what the number really was.

A man in his platoon used to cut off ears,
He said, of the Iraqi dead.
They were constructed into a necklace
That the soldier wore
It was good luck in battle to wear the ears of the dead
That's what the soldier claimed when he was caught
And sent home only to be hired by Blackwater
That's the last that Mike heard of him.

It was a strange meeting
Mike wasn't the same kid who sipped cider
And wore boy's Spider-Man underwear in a parking lot
He craved a human touch
But that was too strange for you.
I know. It wasn't your place to humanize
You aren't a tool to make people forget the dead
That's not what skin was made for.

Mike went back after he could walk
That strange meeting, the story of ears
Those were the last things we ever said.
Mike met his brother.
I don't know who they are, but they lie
With numbers. A whole generation in a family is dead.
4,491 U.S. service members were killed in Iraq
And one of them was Mike.

I hadn't thought about him in years
Until the impossible had happened again
With stunted breath, with a heavy heart
I remember my younger self and what it's like to mourn
Not just for Mike, but for a nation
And my thoughts turn dark
As I wonder if Trump's military
Would really send a man home for cutting off ears.

This elegy is getting too modern
To be for my younger self.
I remember her innocence at 17
When she would sit in a Stater Brother's parking lot
For hours with her friends
Before knowing how the world worked
And thinking that a handmade sign would sway anyone
To vote against their own self-interest of a new car.

~ Amanda Riggle

WOMEN AT WAR

Apathy is no more; it's time to fight,
The rights women have should not go awry,
Rage, rage against the taking of our rights.

Foremothers fought from first dawn until night,
Because no one would listen to their cry –
Apathy is no more; it's time to fight.

Grandmothers carried a beckon of light,
The females before them died to stand by,
Rage, rage against the taking of our rights.

Mothers sung songs of sovereignty in sight,
Mute hearts listened and songs started to die,
Apathy is no more; it's time to fight.

Women across time have tried to unite,
But their arms reached out to find no reply,
Rage, rage against the taking of our rights.

And you, my sisters, watching our plight,
Freedom and death are things we cannot deny,
Apathy is no more; it's time to fight,
Rage, rage against the taking of our rights.

~ Amanda Riggle

COUP D'ÉTAT

Resist the music and government
flow. Ideas that invade
the mind move to overthrow
your sanity and health
confuse the percent
of the deficit and wealth
of the fat corporate agent
who lies and enslaves
the minority ninety-nine percent

~ Ivan Rios

SATAN'S ARMY

Run in fear away from Truth.
It's here where angels land.
Are these beings signs of Mirth?
So why do we feel stranded?
The angels land without a word,
and they begin eliminating.
The sky is empty, not one bird,
unfilled, vacant, solitary,
out of the blue, Satan's
falling in the bird-less cloudless
dooms day. The word is ending, and
God's stalling to tell everyone his mistake

~ Ivan Rios

A DELAY IN SHIBUYA

Stark-blue eyes, wide stare;
I steal glances in passing.
We met once before.

Hickeys down her neck,
my lips patter like the rain;
“Ramen?” she asks me.

She speaks with a lisp.
English, Spanish, and German,
noodle, egg, and pork.

Ev’ry taste, a thought
floating calmly in the soup.
Ev’ry step, a sight:

A delicious life—
too strong for my tongue, sometimes,
and tough to swallow.

More rain in the streets;
we promise that we’ll return,
our words in each drop.

Tall towers of steel—
a busy intersection.
We reach an impasse.

Her friend drags her off
before I recall her name.
A far, fizzled light.

~ John Danho

WE NOBLES

“Love,” he says, “for lovers inherit the kingdom of God.”
But
We nobles,
like living temples that never stop expanding,
have already been bequeathed,
and the rancid aroma of these obituaries leaves us lamenting.

For we nobles,
we whisper,
“We have already become eternal monuments.”

~ John Danho

DIGGING UP THE PAST

Like a gravedigger feeling the reverberation
of bone and shovel colliding
a skeleton he thought the worms had digested by now-
your pixelated ghosts
are water on asphalt
disappearing and leaving only
a whispering image.

~ *Natalie Morales*

IN PARTICULAR

In particular, I like to breathe you in on Sundays
because that's the day you put nutmeg in our tea
and pretend to read my fortune.
When the sunshine gets too familiar,
we close the curtains but leave the door open
so the air exhales into our house like a wedding hymn.
In particular, I like to breathe you on Sundays
because for some reason,
that's the day.

~ Natalie Morales

LITTLE NONI

I am four years old:
Daddy's on the phone
Talking to Ruth in a way
That makes me uncomfortable
I am not sure why
So I tell Mom

--

I'm in the backseat
Mom's driving
Big brother in the passenger seat
They talk about Dad
And Ruth

--

Mom and I
Are in a new apartment
She packed our things
Carried it all upstairs
By herself
"Mama?
When are we going home?"

--

Daddy's fun
When I visit him
We get up at 4am and I eat
A chocolate donut
With sprinkles
Then we explore the flea markets
For his antique business
I play solitaire on the floor
I know how to make myself happy

He says that the time is:
“A hair past a freckle”
As he looks at his wrist
He adores my red hair
And my freckles
He makes fun of them
To be teased is to be loved
To feel teased is to feel affection
The other kids
Shout:
“Apple head carrot top”
They must really like me
Because he really likes me
I make friends easily
He thinks I love the Beatles
Because he bought me one
And I loved it because
It was from him
So he buys me all their albums
--
Whenever I ask Daddy where he’s going
He says he’s:
“going to see a man about a horse”
He doesn’t visit anymore
It’s just me and Mom
She has really high highs
And very low lows
When I grow up
I’ll find a loyal man
And we’ll have
A big, happy family

~ *Samantha St. Claire*



"Kauai" ~ Ana Perez



“Joshua Tree” ~ Ana Perez

BIOGRAPHIES

MARIAM ABD-ALLAH

Mariam Abd-Allah is an undergraduate student at the University of Riverside California currently working on her degree in Creative Writing. Although her focus is fiction writing, she has an equal passion for poetry. She has always found the fine arts to be a beautiful way to express one's self, and thanks her family for all the support.

EGHOSA RAYMOND AKENBOR

Eghosa Raymond Akenbor is a painter/fashion designer living and working in Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria. He holds a diploma in micro-biology from the University of Benin, 2004, HND qualification in painting and general art Auchi polytechnic Auchi, Edo state 2008, and a post graduate in education from the Nigeria National teacher's institute, Kaduna, 2014. He is presently a fine art teacher in a secondary school in Benin City

TREVOR KAISER ALLRED

Trevor Kaiser Allred is a writer and arts enthusiast. In 2016, he was a poetry judge for the 9th Volume of DASH Literary Journal and has also been published in Ant vs Whale and Boned Stories. An advocate of the literary arts, he works with 1888 to grow the community in Orange County, California and beyond. Keep in touch with him @TrevKAllred or learn more at TrevKAllred.com.

CHRISTOPHER BAARSTAD

Christopher Baarstad received his MA in Rhetoric and Composition with a secondary focus in early American literature from Cal Poly Pomona. He has taught a multitude of composition and writing courses at different community college campuses across Southern California and currently serves as the lead technology and curriculum liaison for a modest private school junior high international program in Anaheim, CA. His primary literary interests are mythology and dystopian literature with a splash of cardboard page kid's books that his daughters seem to fancy.

ACE BOGGESS

Ace Boggess is author of the novel *A Song Without a Melody* (Hyperborea Publishing, 2016) and two books of poetry, most recently, *The Prisoners* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2014). Forthcoming is a third poetry collection: *Ultra Deep Field* (Brick Road). His writing has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *RATTLE*, *River Styx*, *North Dakota Quarterly* and many other journals. He lives in Charleston, West Virginia.

KEVIN BROWN

Kevin Brown is a Professor at Lee University. He has published three books of poetry: *Liturgical Calendar: Poems* (Wipf and Stock); *A Lexicon of Lost Words* (winner

of the Violet Reed Haas Prize for Poetry, Snake Nation Press); and *Exit Lines* (Plain View Press). He also has a memoir, *Another Way: Finding Faith, Then Finding It Again*, and a book of scholarship, *They Love to Tell the Stories: Five Contemporary Novelists Take on the Gospels*. You can find out more about him and his work at <http://www.kevinbrownwrites.com/>

RYAN BROWN

Ryan Brown achieved his bachelor's degree in English literature and language at Cal Poly Pomona in the spring of 2017, when the English department presented him the Outstanding Student of the Year award. His articles have been published in *805 Living* magazine, and he is scheduled to travel to China in the summer of 2017 to teach English abroad through an internship program.

KATHRYN CARLSON

Kathryn Carlson is a thirty year old writer who lives in the San Gabriel Valley. She was born and raised in Southern California and it lives in her blood. She studied literature at Cal Poly Pomona where she recently got her M.A. in Literature and is pursuing work in writing, editing, and teaching. Her entire life she has loved books and words, they have been her friends from the very beginning.

NANCY CARRANZA

Nancy Carranza is currently a PhD student in English literature at UC Riverside. She has

her BA from UCLA, an M.Ed from UCLA, and an MA in literature from UC Irvine. Previous to returning to graduate school, she taught high school English in Venice, CA for 6 years.

ALEXANDER CHUBAR

Alexander Chubar holds a BFA from Hunter College and a MFA from the Pratt Institute.

DOINA CIOBANU

I am a Southern California painter favoring landscape and abstract art. I reside in Riverside county but I work in San Diego county. You can see symbolic references to prominent impressionistic painters of the 19th century like Monet, Manet, Matisse and others and their artistic vision in my own art. Most of my paintings are mixed acrylic/oil. Capturing the California light is extremely important to me, as I think that it is only here that you can find all these shades of green and blue that I try to render. Other paintings can be seen on my website at: <http://doinaciobanu.weebly.com/>

SAMUEL E. COLE

Samuel E. Cole lives in Woodbury, MN, where he finds work in special event/development management. He's a poet, flash fiction geek, and political essayist enthusiast. His work has appeared in many literary journals, and his first poetry collection, *Bereft and the Same-Sex Heart*, was published in October 2016 by

Pski's Porch Publishing. His second book, *Bloodwork*, a collection of short stories, will be published in July 2017. He is also an award-winning card maker and scrapbooker.

IAN CRESSMAN

Ian Cressman is a Cal Poly Pomona English Literature student. When not working on his own writing, he enjoys reading 19th and 20th Century American and Russian authors. His favorites include Hemingway, James, Dostoyevsky, and Ibsen.

NAN DARBOUS

Nan Darbous provides results driven executive support to thought leaders in education, healthcare, and research. She served as project leader for multi-site work groups winning awards for cross-functional team collaboration. A published poet, small press journalist, and presenter at the 24th Annual Write on the Sound conference, Nan earned her B.A. from Antioch University Seattle, is a graduate of the Alene Moris National Education for Women's Leadership Institute at the University of Washington, a Certified Scrum Master, and current Humanities graduate student at AMU.

ALEXA FINDLAY

Alexa Findlay is an Undergraduate Creative Writing Major. She has an Associate of Arts Degree in English from El Camino College. She spends most of her time writing fiction and poetry. She aspires to receive her

Master's Degree in Creative Writing with a Specialization in Poetry. She hopes to one day become a Professor, and write books in the process. Her poem has been published in the El Camino College Literary Arts Journal and her article in *See Beyond Magazine*.

JAMES FORD JR.

James H. Ford Jr. has been a professional storyteller for over twenty years. His career includes both oral and written stories. He holds a BS in Psychology from Tennessee State University. Additionally, he holds two Masters Degrees—one in Clinical Psychology and one in English from Texas Southern University. He is presently working on a Doctors Degree in Counseling. His stories and technical writings have appeared in *The Rainbow Magazine*, *The Best Stories from the Texas Storytelling Festival*, and the *Association for Creativity in Counseling Newsletter*. He is the 2000 winner of the John Henry Faulk Award for excellence in storytelling.

STACY FOWLER

Stacy Fowler is an Associate Professor and Technical Services Librarian at St. Mary's University Law Library in San Antonio. She has a Bachelor of Arts in English, and Master's degrees in both Library Science and International Relations. Her interests include poetry and researching women in the military on film. Her poetry has previously been published in the *Pecan Grove Review* and *The Tau*.

SAMUEL GONZALEZ

i have always been in search of hope. when hope found me i was inspired.

MARYANN HASSO

My name is Maryann Hasso, PH.D. and I am a high school English teacher at Adelanto High School. I have a PhD in Educational Leadership, a master's in content literacy, special education, and educational administration. My claim to fame is public speaking and instructional leadership. If you need to contact me my email is maryann_hasso@hotmail.com

JAMES HICKSON

James Hickson, a Pomona native, is a retired librarian who lives in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. His poetry has appeared in books and magazines for over five decades.

JEFFERSON HOLDRIDGE

Director of Wake Forest University Press and Professor of English at WFU in North Carolina, Jefferson Holdridge is the author of two volumes of poetry, *Eruptions* (2013) and *Devil's Den and Other Poems* (2015). A third volume, *The Sound Thereof*, is due out with Graft Poetry in Bradford, UK in 2017. He has written two critical books entitled *Those Mingled Seas: The Poetry of W.B. Yeats, the Beautiful and the Sublime* (2000) and *The Poetry of Paul Muldoon* (2008). He has also edited and introduced two volumes of *The Wake Forest Series of Irish Poetry* (2005; 2010), as well as *Post-Ireland? Essays*

on Contemporary Irish Poetry, which he co-edited and introduced with Brian O'Conchubhair (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University Press, 2017).

PAUL ILECHKO

Paul Ilechko was born in England but has lived much of his life in the USA. He currently lives in Lambertville, NJ with his girlfriend and a cat. Paul has had poetry published and/or accepted recently by *Third Wednesday*, *Gravel Magazine*, *Gloom Cupboard*, *MockingHeart Review* and *Slag Review*, among others.

KAITLYN IRWIN

I wrote this poem after starting a new job and feeling isolated in the office as the "newbie." I tried to represent feelings through style as well as words in this piece.

PAULA IZYDOREK

Paula Izydorek (born 1970 in Michigan) is an American painter who spent her formative years in Southern California and since has lived in several major US cities. She is passionate about her heritage and has traveled to all but three of the states. During her travels Izydorek looks to contemporary painting and the abundant perfection found in nature for continual inspiration. Although she inherently knows the exquisiteness of nature can never be improved upon through the painting process it is her goal to paint homage to its vast heterogeneity of textures, formations

and all-encompassing palates.

Since 2012 her paintings have been juried in numerous group exhibitions throughout Los Angeles. Her first solo exhibition “Resolution or Evolution: An Intimate Interpretation” was held at Milliard Sheets Art Center, Pomona, California in 2015. Her first catalogue *Ingrained* was published Fall 2016 with a coinciding solo exhibition at the InTown Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio.

She received a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1997. Izydorek currently lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio. A complete CV and more of her artwork can be viewed at www.paulaizydorek.com

MIGUEL JERONIMO

My name is Miguel Jeronimo, I am 18 years old perusing a degree in Graphic design at Cal State University of Los Angeles. Drawing makes up a big part of my life as I have been drawing ever since I have memory. It has helped me express myself as I am known for being a very timid person. For me drawing goes far beyond the color and line, it starts with the tone it sets and ends with ones interpretation.

LORIK KHODAVERDIAN

My name is Lorik Khodaverdian and I am an artist living in Los Angeles. Drawing and painting have always been an active part of my life. I paint mainly for myself as I find it therapeutic but I also enjoy making others happy with my work. Subjects I paint range

from emotions I am experiencing to pop culture references. I experiment with different mediums but lately have had a strong focus on watercolors. I once found watercolors very difficult and unpredictable, but once I let go of the idea of having total control, it has become incredibly enjoyable and soothing.

JACQUELINE LEE

As a third year Studio Art major at UCR, Jacqueline Lee's work focuses on disseminating issues dealing with communication and ethnicity. Particularly, her work deals greatly with the perception of things - particularly in breaking down hierarchies. Lee's most recent body of work focuses on her Filipino-American heritage and how a general ambivalence can be felt from her disconnect to it. This particular art practice of studying and breaking down hierarchies reflects Lee's current goal of becoming a future arts program coordinator in order to address tissues within the public education field.

ALEX LENNERT

Alex Lennert received his BA in English from UCR in 2013 and is a current Literature MA student and teaching associate at Cal Poly Pomona. When he is not reading or teaching, he prefers to be lost in a city, in music, or in writing. He has written fiction for most of his life and began writing poetry after pulling a sickly muse from the Santa Ana river circa 2010. His works are lately

preoccupied with the apocalypse and breakfast food.

EVA LEWARNE

EVA LEWARNE is a painter, photographer, designer and poet. She studied Fine Art at OCAD (Ontario College of Art) and English at U of T (University of Toronto). Her work has been shown at the Salon Grand Palais in Paris, the Chapelle de la Sorbonne, Jadite Gallery In New York, Gallery Moos and Bezpala-Brown Gallery in Canada, among others. She is represented in public and private collections in Canada, the U.S. France, and Germany. Ms. Lewarne was born in Poland and came to Canada after completing high school. Her theme throughout her long career has always been to portray MYSTERY & MOOD, with works like Gold Dust, Enigma and Hugs...

HEATHER MACPHERSON

Heather J. Macpherson writes from New England. Her work has appeared in Niche, The Heron Tree, Spillway, Pearl, The Broken Plate, The Worcester Review, Rougarou, OVS, Gravel, and other fine places. She is executive director at Damfino Press. She begins her PhD program at University of Rhode Island this fall.

JOANNA MADLOCH

Joanna Madloch is a NJ-based photographer. Her photographic work concentrates around the topic of seeing people in the context of art -- in a museum

space or on the street. She has a Doctorate in Humanities from the University of Silesia (Poland) and teaches courses in Humanities and Photography at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

She is an author of a book dedicated to Joseph Brodsky's poetry and over 25 scholarly articles published in the US, Poland, and Russia. Recently her academic interests focus on the juncture of verbal and pictorial arts with an emphasis on literature and photography. She is working on a book about the portrait of a photographer in fiction, a character that she interprets as an archetypal trickster and monster. She often acts as a juror at photographic contests.

FRANCISCO MARQUEZ

Francisco Marquez is a third-year student of Philosophy at the University of California Riverside. In his future, Francisco sees his endeavor to be a health-care provider coming to fruition. He hopes to provide health-care to underserved communities. His poetry attempts to bind scientific themes with philosophical, social, and humanitarian. He hopes that one day he may inspire the youth of underserved communities with his dedication to health and wellness of the body as well as the soul or self. His poem, 'The Brave Trade' is dedicated to the curiosity and dedication of the young students in his life.

JOSE MENDEZ

My name is Jose Mendez and I'm a third year creative writing major with an emphasis in creative writing. I drink a lot of coffee and don't sleep much. I write because it's my way of venting and coping.

NATALIE MORALES

Natalie Morales began penning poems and short stories at the age of 10 and has published dozens of pieces in the two decades since. Her work is often focused on the themes of love, lust, and loss. She also teaches English at East Los Angeles Colleges.

LAWRENCE MULLEN

Lawrence Lorraine Mullen is a Philadelphia poet and 18th/19th century academic who is a graduate student pursuing an MFA in Poetry & MA in English at Arcadia University. They have been published in 'GTK Creative,' Spiral Bookcase Poetry Zine and 'The Rusty Nail'.

CASSADY O'REILLY-HAHN

Cassady is a twenty two-year-old male from the little city of Claremont, California. He graduated with his Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Cal Poly Pomona in June of 2017. Cassady spends the majority of his free time reading, writing, and exploring his thoughts (and napping, though he would never say it publicly). He is also an active Magic: the Gathering player, where

he derives both logical pleasure as well as knowledge for fantasy world building. Cassady typically writes poetry, though he has been known to dabble in prose as well from time to time. He writes five days a week for his personal blog (called cassadyblog), where he posts both creative work and critical discussion about the world. You can follow him on Instagram @cassadyblog and on Twitter @cassady_orha for more insights into his work!

GRANT PALMER

Grant Palmer holds an MA in English Literature from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. He teaches English composition at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga, California, and is starting his PhD at the University of California, Riverside, this fall. He writes poetry when not encumbered by the drudgery of academic writing.

C. PARKS ALLEN

C. Parks Allen grew up in small farming town on the Central Coast of California with nothing but nightmares for company. Today, with the help of some imaginary friends, Allen takes those nightmares and cuts them into the page with reckless abandon. A success that comes as a surprise to everyone, we look forward to the great and terrifying future of this young, intrepid writer.

DOMINIC PEREZ

Dominic Perez is a student from the Southern California who enjoys beer, time with his dog, and music. He prefers to enjoy these all at the same time if possible. In between that he is working in the healthcare field, as well as performing at story telling events.

STEPHEN REAUGH

Stephen Reaugh grew up in western Pennsylvania, on the outskirts of the Allegheny National Forest. In 2016, he obtained an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Alabama. His creative work has appeared in *The Allegheny Review* and the *St. Sebastian's Review*. Currently, he is an M.A. student in English Literature at Villanova University.

MICHAEL REIBEL

Michael Reibel is Professor in the Department of Geography and Anthropology at Cal Poly Pomona. He is an urban geographer with expertise in neighborhood economic and racial/ethnic change. Dr. Reibel's poetry concentrates on imagery, especially landscapes and fragments of landscapes as symbols, and on the staccato rhythms in blank verse sometimes associated with jazz poetry. His other interests include coffee, hiking in the San Gabriel Mountains, blues music and raising dogs and children.

AMANDA RIGGLE

Amanda is the Managing Editor at *The Poetics Project* and *The Socialist* as well as the Lead Editor of *Pomona Valley Review's* upcoming 11th issue. She graduated with a BA in English Education and a minor in Political Science. She is currently enrolled in an English MA program with an emphasis in Literature. During her free time, Amanda enjoys writing articles, blogs, reading, traveling, crocheting, watching entire seasons of campy shows on Netflix, and, of course, writing poetry.

LAILA SHIKAKI

Laila Shikaki is a twenty nine year old poet from Palestine. At the age of 6 she decided that she would grow up to be a teacher. At the age of 26 she realized that poetry was her calling. Receiving her M.F.A from Chapman University, California, Laila realized coming back home and having taught at Birzeit University that both of her dreams came true. Laila is now pursuing a Ph.D in English Literature at St. John's University in New York City. She started in Sept. 2016.

SAMANTHA ST. CLAIRE

Samantha St. Claire is a graduate student and a Teaching Associate for composition in the English Master's program at Cal Poly Pomona. She currently tutors writing on campus at the University Writing Center as well as at Moreno Valley College. She

aspires to be a community college professor when she graduates.

MATTHEW FELIX SUN

In depicting life frankly and critically as visual surfaces and interior qualities, Matthew Felix Sun reaches toward historical and social commentary. Art ought to be both from life, and above life, revealing what is behind. Sun has exhibited in several national competitions and his work is collected in the US, Canada, and China. He has been building an Apocalypse Series of paintings and drawings since the US was poised to invade Iraq in 2003. Growing up in China's repressive culture and atmosphere formed the foundation of his world view and his work. His portfolio can be viewed at matthewfelixsun.com.

ELIZABETH UPSHUR

Elizabeth Upshur is an African American Southern poet, translator, and memoirist. Her poetry has been published in regional journals such as *Perceptions*, *Zephyrus*, *Lost River*, and *Red Mud Review*. She has workshopped at the Frost Place, been awarded the Katherine Bakeless scholarship to attend the 2017 Bread Loaf Translators' Conference, and won the 2016 MLK, Jr., Essay Contest. She is a graduate student and freshman composition teacher at Western Kentucky University.

RUBIA VAN ROODSELAAR

Rubia Dalbosco van Roodselaar
Rubia is an artist and designer working in Bakersfield, California. She holds a B.A. in Architecture from UC Berkeley and has studied art in several institutions including the College of Marin, California State University Bakersfield, and the Glassell School of Art in Houston, Texas. Her artwork has been awarded and exhibited at juried shows across the United States, and commissioned by collectors and museums here and abroad. She works with a wide range of themes and mediums, ranging from oil and acrylic portraits to performance art and digital illustration.

SAUL VILLEGAS

Saul Villegas grew in a rural town in Avenal, California. He studied his artistic amateur style in school being oblivious to other subjects. Since his early years he found art fascinating and devoted his entire time to sketching, drawing, and painting. In middle school he found art could become a business and started to work after school hours to paint local window displays for extra cash for art supplies. Afterschool programs kept his creative mind accelerating by exposing him with artistic projects throughout the community. He painted a mascot for the middle school he attended, and then a hospital in the small community. In high school, he advanced in art and was placed in honors art classes. At 15 he was accepted in a program for gifted art students (CSSSA) California state summer school for the arts held in Valencia, CA. it was a month long course with professors in the college. The environment

of structured art gave him the direction to the style and media that revolutionized his artistic skill.

His combined skill of the traditional application of art in painting and in graphic design have been the vehicle in which Saul's creative versatility has demonstrated his intense imagery in his portfolio called MODERNO. He has utilized the label for his entire works to advocate his Latino roots

through the visual arts and philanthropy.

He has attended College of the Sequoias and is studying to receive his degree in both art and graphic design. His goal is to share his artistic knowledge and continue on to a higher education. His most recent endeavor is in the acceptance into the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) where he studied painting in 2014-15.



Thank you for reading