

SUGAR
HOUSE
REVIEW

#19

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY 2019



POETRY

118 Poems from
77 Poets

ASTROLOGY

Zodiacal Odes:
A Love Letter for
Every Sign

BOOK REVIEWS OF

Shanan Ballam
Michele Bombardier
Robert Carr
Ilya Kaminsky
Aby Kaupang &
Matthew Cooperman

INTERVIEW

David Huddle and
Patricia Colleen Murphy

GATEFOLD ILLUSTRATION

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SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT POETRY MAGAZINE

FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Sugar Readers,

Despite the odds, this issue marks *Sugar House Review's* 10-year anniversary—10 years of poetry and great people helping us publish this magazine. The years have gone by fast, consistently marked by shuffling and scrambling to create an issue full of fantastic poems and reviews every six months.

We are proud and grateful for this landmark and hope that *Sugar* can keep going for years to come. Much gratitude to all 10 years of contributors, subscribers, readers, interns, proofers, and to an amazing community of writers and readers around the world that help spread the *Sugar* word.

Sugar House Review just received its letter of determination from the IRS, which means this project is officially a non-profit. One of our biggest goals is to advocate for poets and their work. This will involve some projects outside of the magazine, including our first chapbook, from Utah's first poet laureate, David Lee (who also happens to have a poem in this issue).

We're excited by new possibilities and we still love this magazine. It's a lot of work to create and run an independent literary journal, but *Sugar House Review* continues to provide us with more than we put in, including a platform to connect with lovely people and poetry. We hope it gives you something great, too.

Thank you for being part of the first *Sugar* decade,

Natalie, Nano, and Michael

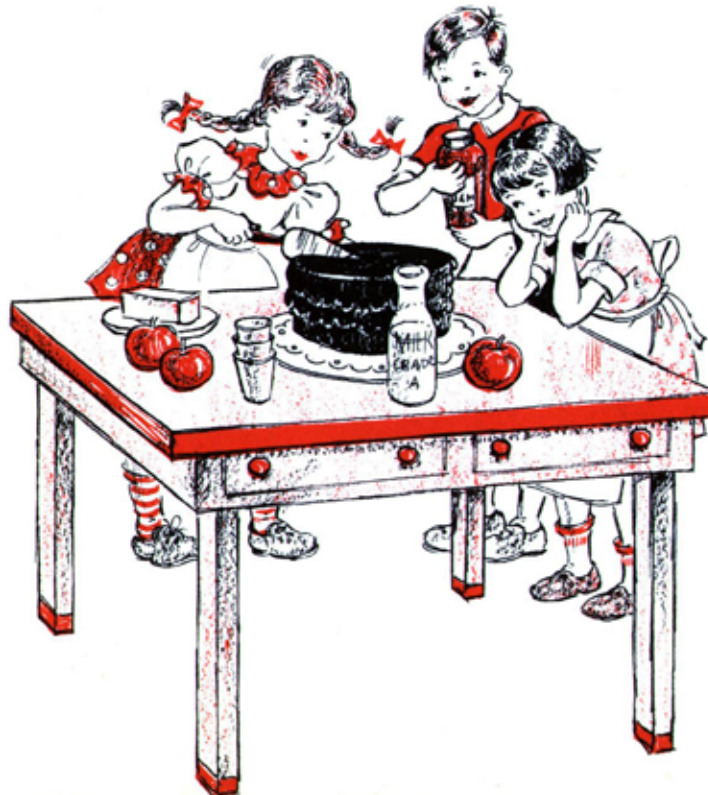


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SOME PEOPLE ARE COLORBLIND

but others just can't see
all the grey in the world

they will tell you the tinman
is white or maybe black i will

tell you he is silver and searching
for his heart or at least a stopwatch

to tell him how fast it would beat
if he could ever look the man

he loves in the eyes or touch
his flexing muscle we all know

love is a social construct
we all know love

is a run in a pair of fishnet stockings imagine
rocky horror the way god intended everything

bleak until frank's arrival i want
a movie that goes the other way

everything in color until the trouble starts



CHRIS SITEMAN

WHAT'S ALWAYS

Who could've known? Who could've known?
We sat what sat, threw what thrown, when down
 things most on the up&up, as when doors fall open
into the eye sits hearted in the holy almond—

And everything depends upon so little sitting:
 the chair out the window, despite linoleum
touch under bare feet, & ashes from a long
cigarette sends it right to wind
among ragged branches, the way the cold

blue-gray stone sky holds so much once was
tomorrow's a today

quite be able to see for what it is—
 Seed & the rows, day & the hoe, & sweat blood
 enough to get the getting done right— The way
 it's to be done:

rippling hills like water:
grass grows
long, & the wind
moves us all
along the landscape to feel

the body, the stuff's what's dirt,
memory made—
To make meaning
mean, traced out:
days, hours, minutes,
each second—

This what's always ours: a voice
we didn't notice speaking true names
all around: land & the sky scrapes over;
we, the love found under it, time itself,
 making notes into song as the song's sung—

ERICA BERNHEIM

POLAR ICE CAPS ELEGY

Under the oceans, Russian submarines are planting flags with coded messages waiting to be harvested: you don't

know what you can do until you don't try at all.
Beware coldhearted women asking about bread.

They congregate at the grocery stores taking notes on your daughters and hiding them in different aisles:

Caitlin begins with produce and finishes in the deli, while Alyssa and Meghan wither for lack of yeast rolls.

There is nothing here I need, nothing that will save me from my imagined version of my imagined selves.

In the photo, you can't tell if the shadow behind the woman's neck is a wheelchair or a hairstyle.

There are double doors opening in front of the back.
There will never be a vegetable garden rooted in sand.

Now we embrace our increasingly panthalassic ocean,
the dark zoo where the most and least disturbed animals

run on exhibition. We have muffins, ounces, quarter mufflers and muffs. We have mixed drinks that taste of divorce.

Our bodies have prepared themselves forever to become artifacts. We count our living to estimate our dead.

ARTIFACTS

In the museum hallway, we were thinking hard,
like Vonnegut's girls, who hadn't seen a river before.
A meteorite is a mutiny of rock. This one is fist-sized.
Like celebratory gunfire, meteorites can kill people.
These marble hallways are stuffed with sins:

in drawers, kidnapped skeletons are getting restless: waiting to be rescued.

The meat of the dodo bird must have been like paradise—
it tasted like it didn't know what guns were.
The last dodo egg was stomped on by a sailor.
Probably drunk. Probably a legend.
When the last dodo died, nobody knew it.

In the gift shop, a little girl kissed her new green stuffed turtle—right on its stern mouth!

In the grocery store, under normal light, I lifted up a florescent bunch of grapes and was surprised no one
was standing behind me to look at them. They were breath-taking.

JUDSON EVANS

MOUTH BROODER

I always wanted a role
as clotting factor, inflammatory process
to roughen the rising
and setting
of celestial objects, kingdoms of sandcastle
deformation,

before resin reverses in the nozzle: soggy
fireworks, umbrella skin inside
out...

summer's wet cigarette paper.

Always wanted to pose among
the delicate thoraxes
of evasive species, or pose the question of

outtakes, shutting the valve
between the days,

as I used to lock down the pulping machines
at the toilet paper factory.

The keys would chime on
my belt as I fell asleep.

I always wanted to winnow units of resistance
into windrows, cultivate the B-sides,

the flip sides,
find the one missing piece

from the contraption that wires landlines through
cloud formations.

ADDITIONS

On Montrose Harbor the water baptizes me
every day for years I've watched the bored clouds

blush & fall to sleep horizon tucking them gently in
It is hard to forgive my mother but I have tried

Every dawn I mourn the day when her bulb
went out the filaments sizzling bright then all at once

darkness her majesty had become ordinary that tiny
obvious death her figure still chiseled in rainbow pulse

behind my eyes like closing them after staring too long
at the sun I think I've made progress the water washing

her hurt clean off me every time the moon pulls the lake in
to lick the city's lips but my skin always picks it up again

the ephemera on these sidewalks sticking to me I am bristled
tough to pull the hair & dust out of the single ticket to a play

already torn the exact ripples of words when rain water falls
into lake water & no one is different for its small additions

COCO

In front of Coco Chanel's atelier
on Rue Saint-Honoré
we eat our lunches, sandwiches
purchased from the corner.

The professor says *Coco* so beautifully—
like a bird coo-ing inside
a hollowed walnut, a tiny wooden
knock in each syllable, the end

a full stop, a hand tuckering out the sound
after it's just begun to crack. I wish
I had the charisma of just
those two syllables, the shining dark

of black sheep's fur sprinkled
with cocaine and bits of fine tulle.
The professor's winding voice
speaks of a troubled past, a sister, no mother.

I stare at a woman walking,
perfectly dressed, just returned
from a summer of sipping Bordeaux
beneath the sun. She leaves my view

while the professor explains
how Coco invented the suntan
and the concept of vacation.
Coco, Coco, echoing, knocking—

the professor tells us how Coco never
attended her own events,
opting instead to sit atop the winding
staircase, look into the clustered strips

of mirrors, crafted just so to watch
from above without making an appearance.
Her work, the mirror, her name, the mirror.
It all knocks around her in spirals,

chirping—it's not enough, none of it
will ever be enough. We finish
the sandwiches and pass through
that sparkling threshold.

AMPLIFY US

We live for a signal.
Eyes cracked open: a hive.

Mothers are dying/fathers dissolve
into white noise.

We wrap their static around us. We tear little fingers
into the crackling.

Our histories flow
out of the nubs

of our feverish, makeshift,
secondhand gloves.

Our histories travel—a bodily hum and warble, picking up fuzz

and trembling, picking up dust and beckoning
the mouse

squeaks and cosmic background
fizz.

We prickle
at five o'clock shadow

and three-day stubble. It breaths and clicks. We snag

a voice
in our array of satellite receivers, all our skins adrift.

As we call it in,
our wires get crossed.

We cannot
pull ourselves together.

We hold
the voice in

our dissonant lassos. The voice scratches and keens like something
feral.

We feed its terror. We let it grow.

The voice scrapes around us like an enormous panther.
We can feel it trying to swallow

us whole.

So we let the voice drop
until it barely hovers

above the drips and piles,
our band of outcasts and others,

stringing us all along

without an eye

for the prize—on continuous loop, hissing: *prizes are for boys.*



BOOST POST

One of the fact checkers insisted on grabbing a handful of my skirt. It was plaid, or black polyester, it was part of my work uniform or nurse costume, it was supposed to be a blanket but you use what you have. The fact checker pressed a red check mark between my eyes when I said I could make a tent from napkins (I put it on his lap, I put it over his mouth, his nose, bent his fingers too far back which made it a little declaration of war, which is still declaration of war). One of the fact checkers tried an emotional appeal, which felt unethical under the circumstances, like when a boss calls you *sweetheart* but your name is *meanheart*. Famous for locker room fights, unafraid to tear earrings from lobes, that kind of colleague. Overalls offer ideal provisions for carrying facts but who even has a pair anymore? We buried mine with a dead wren up in the front because lord help all of us if in the next life we have zero wings to get us out. The fact checker wanted out, but I wanted more out.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

The man who described himself as a contemporary American novelist in his biography for the *Nextdoor* neighbors forum hasn't mowed a blade

of his lawn since May, but who cares about that when there are cost-effective generics to assess, easements to criticize, balking about frontage

which makes nobody else recall nights in the Winchester Mall overflow lot, the one never used because there were never crowds. Oh, the fronting

executed there. I briefly showed a class a snapshot of some jeans noted in a poem (I once owned a pair) and my evaluations shuddered. However

we soon moved on to discussing fates of wild horses, which banished all memories of distressed denim. The woman who typed "HI" in response

to the heated discussion of chipmunk proliferation, or the headstrong babysitter who uploaded a pic of herself eating two ice cream cones at once:

instantly forgotten. None of them knew I was surrounded by couch cushions, regarding a sepia portrait of a cherished ex like it was newfound

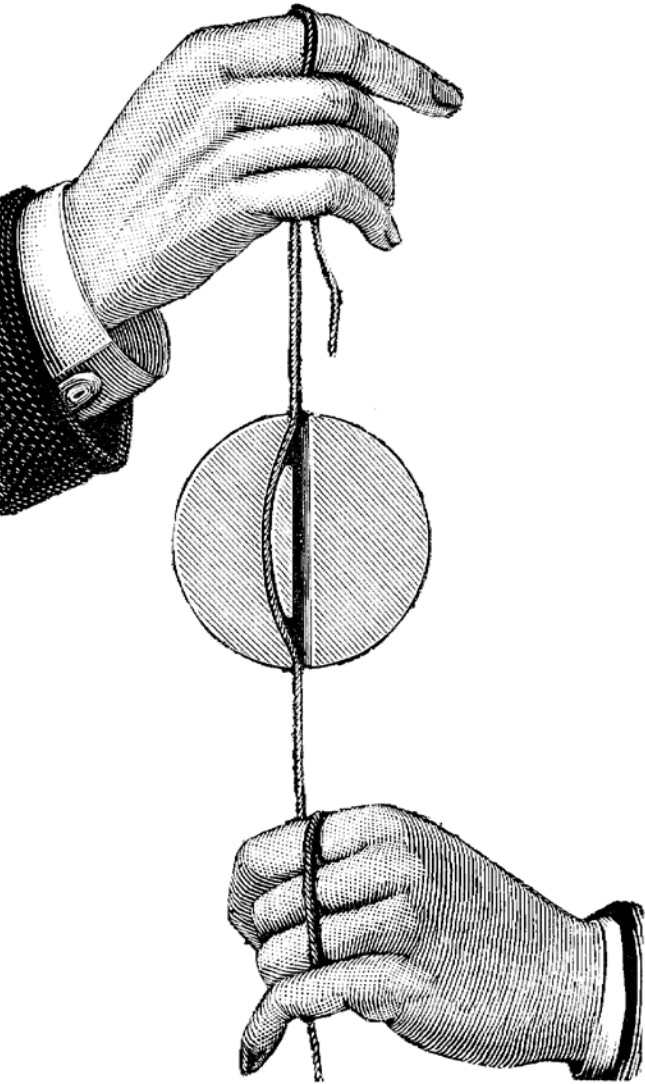
currency. Back then I had a vague notion that fifteen years later we would be separated by amateur divorces and lactose intolerance and miles.

Warmed by the heat of our respective pit bulls, we would hang on to imaginary lockets while reading (again) *Cold Mountain*, like it was secretly

the story of us. But the real story was why the intersection of Rhoades and Maple was flooding. Perhaps the new mini strip mall, or illegal dumping,

which is how you described it when I dropped my big salad and ghosted contrary to the terms of our agreement, which were written in gross cursive.

Sometimes I yearn to fill out the rest of my bio, but right now it's mostly symbols: a wave, a skull, a shark, a daisy that might look nice behind an ear.



POLLY BUCKINGHAM

OCTOBER FIRST

My father visited
with a lantern of secret light.

My sister too in her white tee,
and another in blue robes.

They stayed all night
along with a bone ship

of unfamiliar ghosts
then got in a gray truck

and a bearded man
drove them away.

ON YOUR BIRTHDAY

Singers are singing gloomy songs.
There's a little rain
but not much.

My drink smells of you.

Crickets and frogs
play banjos and dance.

I listen for my breathing.

It's all full—the quiet—
full as a drum filled with night.

HUMMINGBIRD

In 1907 a doctor leaned over the deathbeds
of six consumption patients
to measure the weight of their souls.
With each mechanical breath
he added and subtracted water,
mopped their brows and calculated
sweat minus the time it takes
the moon to cross the Merrimack
in winter. He factored in fear,
how it bears down on the heart,
and relief, how when the last gasp
settles on the lungs and all that passes
has passed by, there's a moment
of weightlessness, as if floating
in a river so black it reflects every star
that ever was, so when it happened, death
moved the scale just enough to register
21 grams, and he imagined the soul
was a hummingbird that flew invisibly
from mouth to heaven, joining the rest
of the celestial bodies we can't see,
but astronomers have found some
by the trace they leave on another,
how dark stars hidden from sight
can still bend starlight around them.

AMY M. ALVAREZ

POLARIS

maybe in the moments before police yelled
gun gun gun maybe before the lead flew into
the soft of his body Stephon Clark heard
cricket song
maybe he heard his own heartbeat maybe
he gazed into the dark and found it lovely
maybe he searched for the Big Dipper and
found the North Star spilling from its brim

NORTH AND WEST OF WINNEMUCCA

Say you're adrift like I am.
Say it's 81 miles from this spot to Next Services,

plus or minus the sun in your eyes,
and a cloud—no, that's a contrail,

a plane out front like a dot. Like the pilot decided
to underline nothing at all,

just blue,
just whatever.

•

I'm not the unpaid extra in a saga, not the chef
at a long-forgotten inn,

though rain here is rare as a dragon
and *someone* paved this road;

they must have thought someone
was coming.

Call this Highway 140. Call it
Nevada. Call it

Earth. But I haven't seen a tree or a car
for an hour. Even the road signs

are alien: not Railroad Xing,
not a cow or a deer,

but burros and pronghorn antelope.
There's even one sign—no kidding—

left totally blank.
Just an empty yellow diamond.

Maybe it's supposed to mean Boredom Crossing.
Or maybe it's meant to match the radio: no news,

no preacher,
no mariachi signal.

Only me.
Whatever I add up to.

Somebody cut those stencils once,
and now they're never used

since who else, from here
to God's ladder, would ever have the need

for wild burros,
a herd of antelope?

They're probably stacked away
somewhere dusty. Or leaning

against a wall. And the future won't find them
and think they're hieroglyphics 'cause they're not.

•

Then suddenly it's Oregon. And nine miles in
it's a cliff. And now I can see

where those pronghorn are doing what they do:
52 hooves . . . maybe more . . . a dust cloud

sweeping up below.
So I figure this road started out as an antelope path,

then we came along and widened it.
One day we might add a guardrail too,

a metal stitch between *cars*
and *plunge*,

though those pronghorn wouldn't mind our wreckage;
they'd use it to scratch.

Rub up against.
A rest stop.

•

At last I come to the western edge:
Crescent City, California: redwoods

connecting the ocean to the sky.
It's dark, but I know they're there.

I know the water out front of me is cold,
so cold you'd have to be an otter

to go in.
And I can see four of them,

these *chitter-squeak* silhouettes, river otters
not the fat ones. They're visitors too.

Everything
must need the ocean.

•

There are birds here—stilts,
or killdeer, or something—spearing hermit crabs

out of the surf. The sound they make
isn't sparrow-song; it's better than that.

Behind me, trucks groan their air brakes . . .
this is Highway 101 . . .

and southbound cars rev up
and find fifth gear.

Plus, every twelve seconds: the foghorn.
Every seventeen seconds: the waves.

And I know this isn't music,
but it's more than noise.

•

What will I do in the morning? Listen.
And what will I listen to? Waves.

I suppose you could call this
a sacrament; why not?

My dad died in April.
I keep on wishing we could talk.

He'd know why I noticed those otters
out of place,

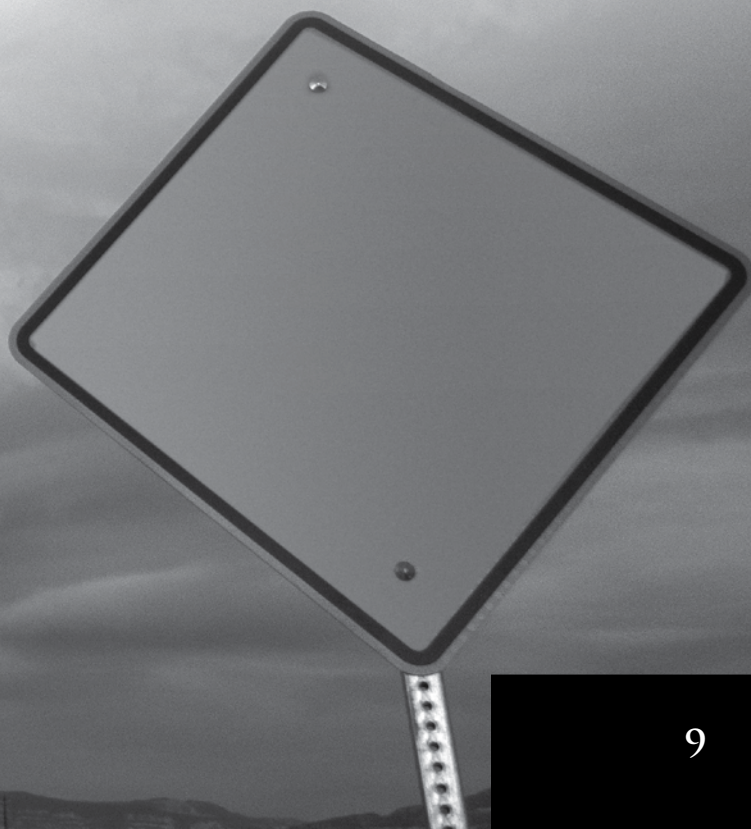
downriver
with the snowmelt.

He'd tell me those birds are curlews, and he'd be right.
What I mean is I miss him.

•

There's probably someone you're missing too.
All I can say is I'm sorry.

There's a sign in Nevada that's blank.
Because they're gone.



SISTINE NOTEBOOKS: SACRIFICE OF NOAH

Let's just burn the thing down,
I think in the wake of the familiar fight,
when I'm weakened by the argument,
so strangled by my appetites
there seems so much of what I want—
whether leisure or liquor or love or...
—but not enough to go around.

Let's go around
and gather up the surfeit and surplus,
the flotsam and scrap, let's burn
it all to make some space for more.
Burn the marriage and mortgage,
parenthood, the career and cat,
the *Jesus, why do you have to be like that.*

Let's make some room.
The Kabbalah calls it *tzimtzum*:
The moment when the big math burned
off a corner of his everywhere self
to make a space for the cosmos
he'd schedule a week to create. *Tzimtzum*
the ether between us when I wake
half drunk to stare through the void
left under the edge of the cherished
marriage I so nearly destroyed.

Tzimtzum that lamentation
is the same size and shape,
the same exact mass as gratitude,
as when the blood vacates the vessels
of Noah's snowy lamb, its umber
filling the cracks in his hands. Tracing
the shape of the almighty's demands,
Japheth and his brother Ham
make a space in the world
for divinity by gutting the ram
and setting fire to its flesh on the altar.

Tzimtzum the smoke rising to the sky.
Tzimtzum the lines left in his face's dust
by Noah's watering eyes. *Tzimtzum*
the distance between Noah and Namaah
his wife. With the fields barely sown,
and the pairs of beasts left alone
to mate, she is hungry and he cannot
meet her gaze. He looks down at the dying
food, the waste of watching it burn,
trying to learn how much can be known
of what's been so hastily erased
by the contour of what's been made
or left in place.

JANET SYLVESTER

POETRY

The world was small: one window high up,
admitting early evening light,
a simple table, lustrous with use, two chairs.

You took your place. After a day or two
you took my attention as anything broken
that hasn't been wept over does.

Enumerator, you counted out your flaws,
chief among them, fear of the ecstatic.
You craved to be away from where you were.

Here you are, away from where you were.
We walk below the dark crowns of trees,
their shadows given mass by yellow streetlamps.

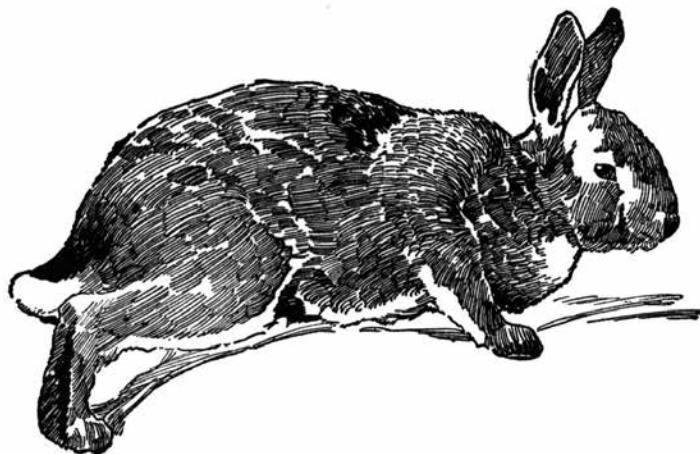
MARAIS DES CYGNES

(mare-uh duh zeen)

Ralph, the closest neighbor on the road, hoisted a can of beer and scanned his rabbits. He caught, on average, forty pounds of catfish on a trout line every night. On his porch, a car seat spewed innards. One roof-tile disengaged, sliding into a gutter cluttered with leaves. Below the picnic table beside the burr oak, dogs moved; catfish heads dangled from its branches, supper for a trashcan filled with turtles. Grasshopper wells clanked, draining crude invisibly into banks. Threading baling wire into webs, Rex and Pearlie patched the gate vandals had broken again. To the west, weather boiled to a gully-washer.

She hadn't been in Kansas since she was eleven, bareback then, her chubby mount running below branches green-slung with apples. She shook: Ralph's hand, Rex's hand, Pearlie's, greased black to their shirtsleeves, neatly rolled. The men were *mighty pleased* (twang) to meet her. The gate-key fell into her palm above a century of footprints that prairie larkspur, Indian blanket, and yarrow had pushed out of, downstream a doe and fawn fording the Marsh of Swans, sharp-toothed gar idling in its currents. Somewhere, Buchanan's ghost re-signed the deed great-grandmother passed to her grandfather, a horse, spooked by railroad-crossing whistles, having dragged great-grandfather to heaven.

At New Hope, she pushed pennies into dirt against the tombstones of Alexander, and Christiana, born in 1834, and their sons. Laughing, she'd once spilled onto their earth as her pony jumped the creek that fed the Marais des Cygnes. The oilman bought it all: dry grass, waist high, waiting for fire, foxes leaping, inheritance's dream. The gate's long gone, nothing but hardwood, forty years cut down, bobcat and wild turkey, a wind from the southwest, a sky.



SHE ASKED HER HUSBAND TO BUY HER A DOG AFTER THE LAST ONE DIED UNEXPECTEDLY

I'll take any dog you can find she said
just make sure it will curl up at my feet
when I pray on my knees like the last one did

but passing a dull wiry-coated dog
in the village she realized appearance
was paramount so she said find me a dog

with a coat soft as goose feathers
a deep Irish red and see that his eyes
are caramel and since she'd said "his"

she felt a male would be best and most natural
in case he ever turned into a real boy
as the last dog was so close to doing

she had always wanted a son
and on second thought she wanted the dog
to be large I want him like a bear cub

she said but without any claws or instinct
to sleep in a snow cave and then later
she said she'd prefer for the dog to be silent

or maybe to know a few words like
that's perfect or what can I do for you
because he would be doing so much

making up for the last dog who was brilliant
even if he had hidden under her bed
at the very thought of fireworks he had been

the most intelligent dog in this or the last
century until the new dog she kept calling
her husband about and when he said

what if what you want isn't out there her life
lit up in her mind like a shoe-box diorama
their children and the flowers sculpted

from that homemade salt play-dough
she had loved as a child she remembered
each detail a bench under a tree a blue pond

yellow birds always perched where she set them

LESS IS MORE

Except when it isn't, like in the case of Orcas—
who in their right mind would say let's have
less Orcas? Or fewer—sometimes less is not
the right word. But Orcas could save you

if you fell off the deck of a cruise ship—I say less
is more when it comes to cruise ships—but after you fell
you might sink, and then there would be
the orca's black nose—he could nudge you up
onto his dorsal fin. Can you see the sun's eye

shine through the water? It's his instinct to care for you—
you could smash your neighbor's mailbox backing out of the drive,
forget your kids' championship swim meet, and the pod
would still keep you, would circle the sharks to protect you.

The collective, "pods," is sweet, don't you think?
Like five little Orcas squished in together. Squished into what
I'm not certain—I'm thinking what we need
is less alligators, though this goes against
preservation efforts. But I don't even care—the stories
you hear: a four-year-old boy crept too close to the water.
And who wants less children? Or fewer. I myself

always wished for more, like a gaggle. You know more
can be less so quickly. We once chased seven ducklings
down our street toward the river, but forgot
about a storm grate and down they all dropped, one
quick flutter after another.



ANDREW HEMMERT

GLORY HOLE

In the library basement bathroom
a plate-shaped absence cut through
the blue polymer stall divider.
The blue of the stall divider was faded, streaked
with transparent stains, and the hole abrasive
at its edges. Abrasive to the eye.
I didn't touch it, at that time
having no idea why there would be such an opening
between the stalls—and once I realized
what it was, no idea how whoever cut the hole
did so in secret, without anyone noticing.
Soon after, the library covered it up
with a sheet of metal. Which seems to me, now,
like someone nailing shut the covers
of a book, so what was passed through,
and then refused passage, was less flesh
than knowledge, then knowledge made secret,
a secret like something whispered
by one boy to another at a sleepover—two hands
cupped around an ear, two sleeping bags
rolled out in a basement, a pull-cord bulb dangling overhead,
waiting to be touched and turned to light.



KRISTIN MACINTYRE

[UNTITLED]

The day pours itself
a memory: the sky troubling
a line of birds, canoes pinned
to the shore. The water waits
like an animal. I pull a skull
from the lake—little lizard, no eyes
—child myself a game:
give the lizard spine & feet
of small stones, clover.
Make a heart for it: borrow
sand & cloud, mud laden
with stream & chamber,
the many eyes of a raspberry.
The making done, I wade
far into the lake—wild
with the myth of myself—the water
holding me close, the sun—
its bloodless hands—brightening
my hair.

[UNTITLED]

As a girl, I walk the pier. The hour
bellies me, lets go its colors.
I lie on the wood planks—splayed
before the sky—shiver though no wind.
The sun steels itself, slants
into the ocean, a small shipwreck
heavy with sea. My mother echoes here—
pumping the mascara brush, chin dipped
in the mirror—her iris gulfed navy
& sun, warm as blood. She says,
*We cannot live
here for long.* The gulls cry & I cannot
tell song from panic. Wood splinters
me cold, the sun sinks farther—
grief lowering itself into me
like a god come crawling
home.

IN THE BONE ORCHARD

Looking at himself in prison blues, Shadow thought of what he'd do when he got out: he would not take the freeways because he didn't know whose side they were on, so he'd stuck to the back roads with spooks, members of the opposition, and black hats. Really dangerous people believe they are doing whatever they are doing solely and only because it is without question the right thing. Gifts are timeless; they trade on cupidity. One can always cheat an honest woman, but it takes more work, reverentially—like a man who has been permitted into a holy sanctum to examine the bones of a prophet, opens his mouth wide, then remembers himself. There was only one guy in the whole Bible Jesus ever personally promised a place in paradise. He was a convicted thief, being executed next to him. Shadow's time in the house of the dead was beginning to feel like something that happened to somebody else, a long time ago. That was when he realized he was no longer in prison. Some gifts last forever when you're just a shadow of the past. He was just another bastard trying to feed on the chaos he created like the kinds of behavior in a specialized environment, like prison. It can fail to work when used on the outside. He was doodling in the spilled salt, making squat, blocky rune-like shapes. He tossed his silver dollar into the air, remembering the moon and the woman who gave it to him.

**After Neil Gaiman's American Gods for Shadow Moon*

COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Before this is all over, they'll talk about the odd, but they won't talk about the (im)possible gods and goddesses who have passed out of memory, buffeted by the black wings of a crowd of crows. It scares me: people who have the glazed, beaten look you only see in airports and prisons. They become unmourned *like* flypaper. Somewhere in a Motel America, along a corridor where the forgotten wait like the only photograph, at the end of a room named the South, is a world where opiates have become the religion of the masters. Religions are, by definition, metaphors. If Hell is other people, then Purgatory is airports. A slow procession of fat black wild turkeys walk like a line of mourners, and shadows walk on gallows, ground with a hempen rope around their necks. The living become refugees in the hold of a ship, unbecome people who dream in a land full of stomachs. The important thing to understand about American history is that it is fictional. Keep the glass of Jack Daniels while Bob Dylan sings about hard rain; a storm is coming. Like an oyster dealing with a painful particle of grit—we have to believe with our senses. Believe everything, even, perhaps against all evidence. Ideas are more difficult to kill than people, but in the end, they can be.

**After Neil Gaiman's American Gods for Shadow Moon*

MARK LEAHY

THE NEW LAKE

It is not natural, it is essential.
It is essentially a ditch
for storm-water runoff
to prevent flooding,
ringed with willows
to combat erosion,
stocked with a diversity of fish
to eat the feces of other animals.
The arriving snakehead bird
cannot believe its luck
at first.

I chase it on my lunch break,
its knife beak bound
in discarded fishing line,
tripping over its wide feet,
but faster than me.
I ask a stranger from the hospital
across the street for help
but he doesn't understand,
shakes his bandaged head
as it hobbles starving toward
what it believes to be
the safety of the water.

Tomorrow, I will come back and watch
a woman teach the wood stork how to beg for scraps,
and I will watch a heron swallow a duckling whole,
like spun sugar plucked from the reeds,
and the snakehead bird will sleep
between the dead, wet leaves,
and I will have been of no particular use
to any of them.



KATHRYN SMITH

LETTER TO M, FAR FROM THE IDYLIC SHORE

Yesterday, I was pummeled by grief before I knew what was happening. Judith Butler says that's how grief happens: one sets out with a project in mind and finds oneself foiled, exhausted, unable to proceed. I don't even know who Judith Butler is, but somehow she knows me. She knows I am not special. Everyone hurts all the time. Then this morning, the pain and the blood. In college I read an article (by a man, no doubt) that said Sylvia Plath wasn't depressed; she just had PMS. It made me want to stick my head in an oven. These days I want to crawl into bed and cry myself to sleep in the middle of the afternoon. It's not so bad. Give me a shoreline brimming with dead crabs, and I'll get over it. I'm no expert—just another person made of lead who has sometimes confused sadness for desire. The time I thought I would change my life completely, I held on and wouldn't let go. And the second time. The third. Over and over in inertia's clutches. It's so boring, I know. I'm toeing the edge of my past like a kelp-thick shore teeming with flies. Not even seagulls want crabs once they're dead. They know what's hollow. I love the shells and how they fragment, though I know they were killed by toxins and rising ocean temperatures and the cold science of overabundance. Look how the end of that word is *dance*—a dance on the graves of all the dead ocean-dwellers. Every day I learn how to kill whales more quickly. Now that's a thing to grieve. It was so long ago that I wanted to die. Lifetimes, really. I've locked away my secrets and thrown them in an ocean. Maybe that's why I live so far from the shore, but every chance I get, I stare it down.



JEFF HARDIN

A WORD THAT MEANS THE JOY OF BEING WRONG

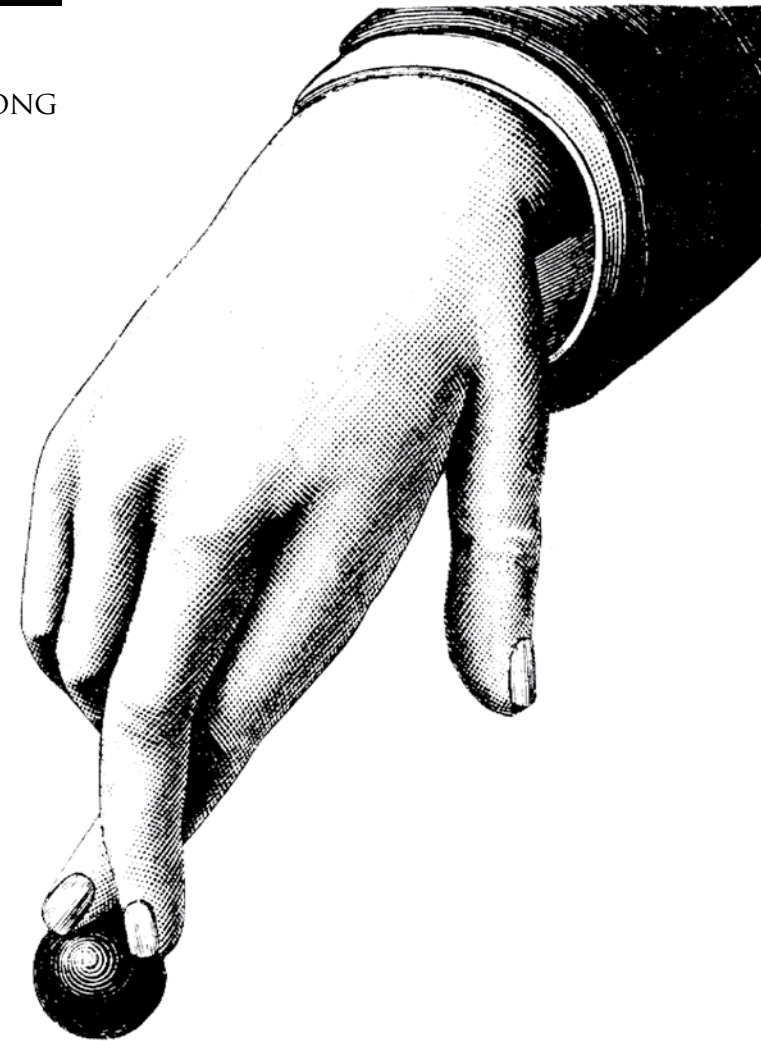
I love those ridiculous ideas no one can prove.
I've made wild mistakes, but studying the reed's
sway at the pond's edge
wasn't one of them.

One reason poets say "That's true, that's true"
is so they won't forget the joy of being wrong,
of being cast off
like a stone from the path.

If you meet me on the street, don't be surprised
if offered sweet gum balls from my hand into yours.
We're two with consciousness,
so gifts are all we have.

My daughter lying prostrate at the lily's stem
is reaching back in hunger to those books she read,
into phonemes
that sturdy the clutch of her cells.

Go right ahead and tell stories of brave men.
I think I'll go on listening for small steps of
the mouse out there
in the cucumber field all night.



SAME DIFFERENCE

When the guard's flashlight peters out in my bag, and a few smacks
don't knock the batteries back into alignment, he waves

me on for passing his test of my patience, but it's only as I'm heading
toward the cavernous reading room that I see the light

return half-heartedly to the palm he's cupped by the bulb more out of boredom,
it seems, than any desire to have it work again, because none of us should be

in here on a day when the petrified lions out front are all that's cool to the touch,
and the whole hall is sticky with silence, aswarm with the steady breath

of thousands bent to the light of separate lamps, feeding on information
from thick wooden seats. My laptop feels like a cool slab of flagstone

laid on the spot I claim for myself, and I'm about to start work when I see
a forwarded email from Sean. *Can you find 3 differences in the pictures below?*

Side by side they fade in: two snow-capped peaks, two black rivers snaking through
two verdant canyons, the same small boat rounding the same bend, the same

fishing village skirted by footpaths that branch out the same, leading down to
the exact same strip of gray sand, when the split in the screen disappears and the same

sort of shriek you'd hear in the cabin as your plane goes down, not the sound
of a human but the visceral wail of the vibrating walls, blasts from my speakers,

a grisly beard that a grimace splits into fangs appears, and a gasp like a shockwave
sweeps the hall as chairs screech out, papers slam down, and all heads

in the room spin toward me, the source of this howl, their cud hanging
mid-chew, beaming disgust. And I'm smacking the keys for the volume,

the mute, this demon still screaming from between the curtains of knotted green
locks until at last I slam the screen down and slip it all back in my bag,

the nostrils still flaring on hundreds of faces, such absolute loathing,
and over an accident—that email his last before the closed casket.

WHAT WE DO BY MICHELE BOMBARDIER
(Kelsay Books, 2018)

REVIEW BY MARYELLEN TALLEY

Txhis debut collection of poems by Michele Bombardier begins with a vignette of youthful spontaneity. Two hospital clinicians on a break are igniting past indiscretions written on paper to float like ashen butterflies out a window. In the poem, “Fireball of Sin on a House of Prayer,” the unprofessional yet emotional release of ashes becomes a small fire on the roof of a trauma unit, a metaphor for the well-trained but immature women dealing with the challenges of providing services for impaired patients.

*Frantic, we poured our cups of cold coffee, contents
of our hospital-insignia water bottles dousing
the sizzling remnants above the heads
at those staring up at the ceiling below.*

The importance of such moments of release for a fledgling speech/language pathologist (SLP) become obvious in the deft images of poems such as, “Baptism,”

*His hand a fist as he pulls the catheter
from his crotch to above his head,
an arc of movement and mustard color urine
dousing me, my clipboard, and my intern name-tag,
his head lolls to one side, his eyes closed.
I pull up the chair, lower the bedrails.
He bats at my hand. When he finds it, he quiets,*

As the clinician dry heaves later in the bathroom, Bombardier shows us the aftermath both minimally and compassionately. Readers cannot help but feel the experience. The speaker calls her brother, telling him to promise to always wear a helmet. The incident is evidence that she has found a calling in a profession where success will be measured in small victories. She told her brother that the ten minutes she spent at the patient’s bedside holding his hand had been enough to calm his agitation. No amount of training could have prepared the clinician to deal with this challenge.

While most poems in this collection are not formal, “Adherence: A Cycle of Sonnets” ties together poems about the author’s father, religion, nature, and the past with lyrical loveliness: “when I noticed the sweetness was ocean / couched in brine on my tongue.” Bombardier is an adept multi-tasker, a form in and of itself, and is able to create a confluence of skillful poems on diverse topics: her clinical career, her husband’s cancer, her sons, her family’s Jewish and Catholic heritage, her father’s challenges with residue from WWII and with alcohol, and international crises close to her heart. Rather than overflowing their thematic

banks, the scope and variation of the poems weave to highlight the complexity of a woman, wife, mother, daughter, clinician, and humanitarian.

Bombardier’s collection is often self-effacing, as in the poem about her mother-in-law, “What I Want to Believe,” in which she describes family gatherings:

*Once I brought a Buche de Noel
on her holiday table, next to her Jello*

*banana pudding with Nilla Wafers. I was insufferable
and she forgave me. Now my vegetarian daughter-in-law*

*refuses dairy and sugar, brings her own spelt crackers
and sunflower butter when they visit. I want to believe*

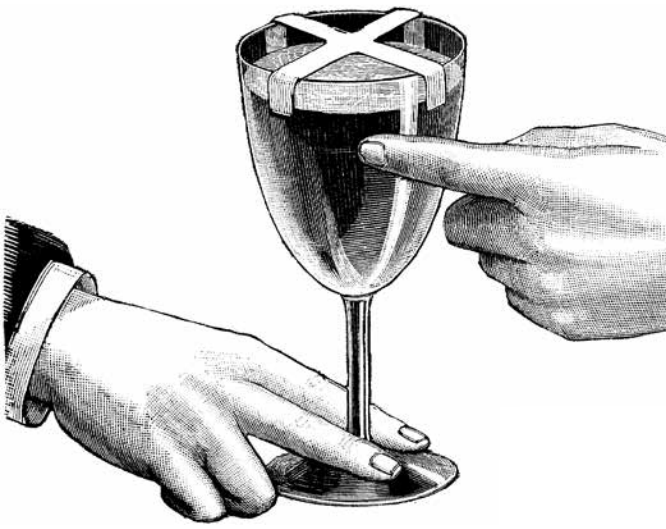
*my mother-in-law can smell the grey-brown paste, that she
hovers
in her chenille bathrobe right outside my kitchen window.*

Likewise, grandparents bequeath significant memories. In “The Song and Dance Man,” Bombardier reminisces about her grandfather wearing a Derby hat and breaking “a chain of seven generations / by not becoming a rabbi. Another word / never spoken in our house: pogrom.” Such silences can become a survival trait in a family. In the poem, “My Grandmother Comes to Ellis Island, 1923,” readers learn that her grandmother never mentions a baby left behind in the old country,

The poet addresses her father’s tribulations as well. Although Bombardier writes in the sonnet, “A Toast to My Ghosts,” regarding alcohol, “I like my wine to taste like relief, which means only one glass, sometimes two,” she also writes of being a child smelling fear, “I’m four again and he stumbles down the hall.” Bombardier alludes to the ghost of her mother, “She put up posters to cover the holes / in the walls.”

As time bears witness to changes, the adult daughter cares for her father in poems such as, “A Taste of Sweetness,” which describes how she “loved feeding my dying father” using skills likely honed in the hospital setting, “tapping the spoon / soft against his lips, waiting / for his bird mouth to open.”

*The time for words had passed
and my father, who did not speak
to me for years, blinked
as he reached for my hand*



“ I LIKE MY WINE TO TASTE LIKE
RELIEF, WHICH MEANS ONLY ONE
GLASS, SOMETIMES TWO.”

This collection is not about Bombardier the parent or penitent. However, motherhood and spirituality are never far from her musings. “Sometimes All We Hold is Prayer,” beautifully recounts a phone conversation with her son who had just become a father after a dangerous delivery:

*And they realize they are moving, rocking
side to side, holding
their son through the little metal box

and a thousand miles. The three of them
softly crying, then breathing,
not wanting to release the weight in their hands.*

Bombardier’s love of living amid the water and trees on an island in Puget Sound has infiltrated her son’s life. In the poem, “What the Arborist Hears,” she writes that her son asks the tree for permission before, “the grip and embrace, the pull / up and into the canopy, that foreign land.” She instructs her son in another poem, “Rise Like a River,” how to be a feminist,

*If you were my daughter, I’d want you to rise
without asking, spill over your embankments.
And to those who would dam you,
I’d want you to rise higher, to push
your currents against what holds you back.*

Close to the end of the collection, in the poem, “Ode to The Pacific Northwest Winter,” she writes of family and resiliency in the context of weather, “The rain continues its long blue song, / humming lullabies even as we rise in the dark,” ending with,

*If we’re lucky, we’ll lose power, stay home, read by
candlelight,
listen to the roof buttress against the relentless pelting.
We’ll eat from the stockpiled tins of beans,
boxes of shortbread, packets of cocoa with dried
marshmallows,
like eating shrine offerings, symbols of surrender, a type of
devotion.*

This collection begins with the poet in “Frantic” mode, as she and a young colleague pour cold coffee on a fire they set, and ends with a waitress filling a cup “held aloft, little white begging bowl” as a more mature Bombardier sits alone in the poem, “Breakfast at The Local Diner.” Even though the poet doesn’t “like to eat in the morning,” she eats now because the waitress offers solace. Like the waitress, Bombardier’s poems offer literary and emotional encouragement and nourishment, a solace while we wait for our “cup to be noticed and filled.”

THE MEN AND THE QUIET

In memory of his mother, his shirt started crying.
It detached from him right there in the vanishing light
And rose up like a great moth.
It was a lost cause, like a revolution.

Years ago, in the underground
Tornado shelter his father built,
His father who worked in the steel mill
In Lorain—he was beginning to hear him more:

“Son, inside this strange skin is a star
Bright as the flame I stare into that melts
Molten ore.” His father held out his hand
As if holding a bloody heart.

His mother, a minuet. His mother
So pained and strange, caught in her own grief.
She would break plates one after another.
White sharp shards, she’d pick up slowly.

After she grew sick. He could tell you all this
With a quietness. Like horses on the side of a hill.
And then his shirt started crying. So hard it was
Drenched. And he took it off. Right there

Outside on break, smoking, and threw it.
And it rose up on the wind like a white swan.
And kept rising. And after that he was ok.
He drank his coffee cold.

The men who knew his father died.
“What happens when you get older
Is you get over it. You buy flowers
To set on the table. You say your prayers.

You learn to live alone
The way you learned to love
Everything

Not dead.”

RAIN AUBADE: AN ARS VIGNETTICA OF SORTS

Boulder, Utah, October 2018

A taciturn and sodden day when the words traipse and stand apart in galoshes, agape, muttering unwillingness to join and distaste in all concepts for belongment, refusing allegiance to stanza or paragraph; when intermittent clusters form, no conjoining or gathering, a seeming falling away from any broken trail where language can rise, separating from the body to the lift of delight, today only the insolent downward tumbling toward the imagined desert labyrinth of evaporation, desiccation.

Mudstuck and estranged between image and word he removed his glasses, closed his eyes, and lifted an open hand, begging alms. After a small eternity, in the reimagined world a hummingbird hovered an inch above his palm, a shimmering rainbow, the miracle between storm and light.

for Dianne Oberhansly

JOHN BLAIR

SWEETNESS

And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

Judges 14:14

Too many low rumblings
in canefields to count, where
telluric currents flow
their sun-sparked frequencies
through the static of sweet
to puddle up your veins

like simple-syrup with
some kind of ripe and some
kind of ready. A heart
is just a pump squeezing
out minutes and final
reckonings and no one

knows one except when it
desperately wicked
quits. In the fields the cane
clatters mitral in its
winds to let you know it's
ready for the fire and

the knives. The planets breathe,
Madame Blavatsky claimed,
and the sun is a heart
beating a window bright
into godlight, because
a wish is as good as

a reason. Your heart loves
you and never stumbles
though close by a murmur
is making plans. Pigs root
though stalks for snakes, eating
of the wages. Within

the bower of your ribs
something is buzzing
like bees in the carcass
of a lion, lovely
and golden, biding as
always its own sweet time.

IN PURGATORY CHASM STATE RESERVATION

fourteen thousand years ago—
but not fifty miles from where you were born—
a glacier larger than the city where you live
melted in the warming air

water pooled on its surface
& ate into the mass
carving ever deeper tunnels in the ice
that snaked like wormtrails

if you had been near a tunnel's mouth
you might have heard the rush
& suck of downward water
that pummeled the black below

you might have seen
the wispy spray
that lanced its rainbows back
even as it vanished—

but you would not have seen
the collecting pools
that gathered far below
in the icy caverns they ate

& you would not have felt
the pressure rise below your feet
as a million melted gallons pushed
against the edge—

but you would have heard the crack
& felt the shudder
as the glacier gave
against the birth—

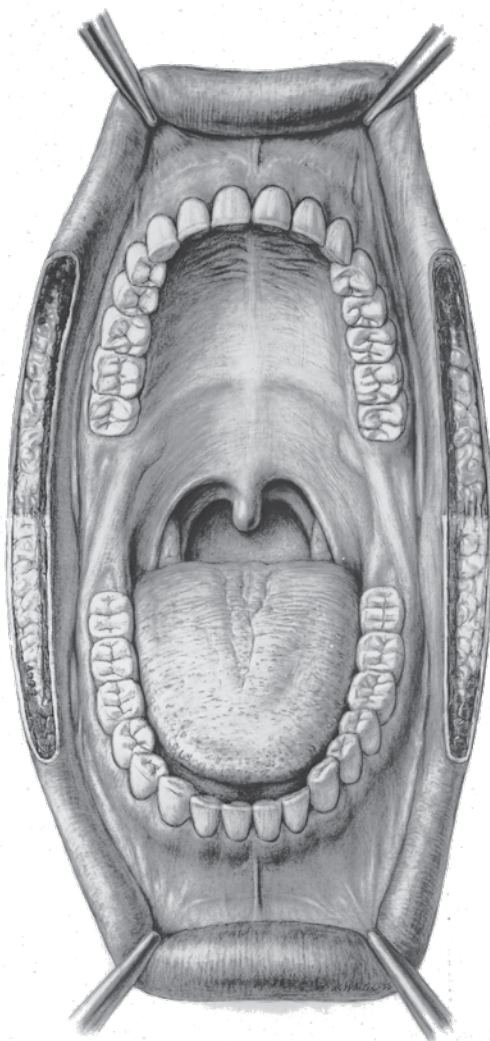
would have seen the water
gush in torrents
to carve away the hillside—
to float boulders on its foam—

to carry them to break
the trees off at their roots—
to gash a chasm in the softer rock
as it rushed to a wider sea

just last summer I took you to the remains—
to squat at the bottom
just beyond the rivertrickle—
to touch the granite walls that lifted

seventy feet up around us—
to see the boulders
left behind as chasm seeds—

to hold our lungs against the cold
that poured as milk through the rift
as if the glacier were still there
& loss & distance
were just words



LESSONS IN DENTISTRY

You told me not to cry,
but I cried as my pink
saliva filled the sink.

You told me your brother
dug a snow shelter
after the same surgery—

the melted water in his ear
hardened to an icicle overnight
and punctured the drum.

You told me, *This is how
we earn respect: Walk it off.
Sleep it off. Suck it up.*

This is your family creed:
a year's worth of lamb meat
frozen in the basement,

a brush hog, an orchard,
and a shotgun. Willpower
over pain. Willpower

as a potent anesthetic,
whiting out nerves as teeth
are mined from the bone.

Anesthetic as willpower,
because not everyone can
brick up their pain in an igloo.

When a bone is broken,
a new snowfall of cells
rushes to patch the crack.

When a tooth breaks,
it cannot heal itself.
I always thought the teeth

were the strongest bones.
Now you're telling me
that teeth aren't bones at all.

THE FIRST TIME YOU TOUCHED ME

I looked in the mirror and saw
a little less than usual,

saw that I was not a real bird
but one made of paper,

that all it took to undo me
was a tug at beak and tail,

and what had once been wings
were now just worn creases,

a blueprint for a bird so lifelike
she almost believed it herself.



INSIDE THE ANIMAL: THE COLLECTED RED RIDING HOOD POEMS

BY SHANAN BALLAM

(Main Street Rag Publishing, 2019)

REVIEW BY BEN GUNSBURG

Shanan Ballam's third collection, *Inside the Animal: The Collected Red Riding Hood Poems*, enters the same woods mapped in her debut chapbook *The Red Riding Hood Papers*, but rather than carrying a picnic-sized bundle of poems drawn from the European fairytale, this book assembles a six-course feast. The collection is divided into sections that correspond loosely to Charles Perrault's version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, a tale intended to warn readers—particularly women and children—about the dangers of trusting men. *Inside the Animal* inherits the basic dramatic contour of the original story, but by deploying a diverse range of perspectives Ballam's poems uncover a more complex set of motives and desires than the fairytale allows. Here Wolf wears Red Riding Hood's cape, Red Riding Hood shape shifts into a "girl-gun," and Grandmother hangs upside down, dreaming of a bat. Such surprising additions and addendums create a pleasing tension between the familiar and the strange. Much like *Little Red Riding Hood* herself, who steps off the safe path to collect flowers, one feels neither completely lost nor at home while reading these poems, but one certainly finds beauty.

Wild roses, petunias, red-winged blackbirds—the natural world tempts and troubles the various speakers in these poems. Take the first few lines of "Grandmother Waiting for Red Riding Hood: The Footprint," which uses gorgeous language to connote both vulnerability and menace.

*Silvery lupine,
blue penstemon,
throats open, drinking bees.*

Seduced by such beauty, it's easy to forget the dangers that dwell in the forest, most notably the slippery carnivore who preys on little girls and sickly grandmothers. Wolf, however, develops into something more mysterious and extraordinary than we expect. Unlike fairytales, which tend to typecast characters, *Inside the Animal* complicates the relationship between good and evil, predator and prey. In "Wolf Tracks Red Riding Hood," for example, Wolf appears more heartbroken than frightening while bemoaning Red Riding Hood's Dear John letter: "Over and over he reads her note / through a burning blur of tears." Dejected, Wolf imagines the auburn afternoon he and Red Riding Hood planned to elope:

*They would float away down
Emerald River, emerge at the end
of the world where no one*

*knew who they were.
They would marry, build
a cabin. They would live alone
in a bee-loud glade.*

By rendering Wolf as a rejected suitor rather than a killer, Ballam redraws Perrault's portrait of predatory masculinity and helps redeem Wolf despite his transgressions. Indeed, transformation as means to redemption is a thematic line that helps cinch the collection into a satisfying whole.

Red Riding Hood and Grandmother escape victimhood. Wolf shakes his fate as an eternal predator. Even the woods, which provide a treacherous context for the drama, surrender their "meadows of death" for "gold light filling the mouth of the

WHAT BIG EYES
THESE POEMS HAVE.
HOW SHARP
THE VISION.

valley." In this way, Ballam challenges the fairytale's familiar conventions and presents a more complete and genuine reflection of the human condition. These transformations ring true because the poems, though set in the fantastical world, record keen observations about the world in which we live.

Inside the Animal also explores the liminal space between the observer and the observed. In revelatory poems, such as "Both Sides of the Window," the speaker's place inside (outside?) the story is called into question.

*The story is a window, and light slides
its eyes through the glass. Little prickles
of time, the squeak of a finger, smudging
its oily print. Outside the sky darkens*

Whether the speaker of this poem lives inside or outside the Little Red Riding Hood story, “Wolf will always be waiting, the girl always watching.” Such lines suggest there is no escape from the animal, yet the book’s final section marks a pathway forward. We’re granted a glimpse of this path in the poem “Grandmother, Inside the Wolf,” where Grandmother “whirls, weightless,”

*turning and turning
in the gauze of beginning*

*She is a hummingbird
inside a glass cage,
feathers thrumming*

While one imagines Wolf’s insides to be vulgar and terrifying, Ballam once again defies expectations, this time by transforming viscera into a gauzy womb. How lovely this reversal, this renovation, where Wolf becomes a means to Grandmother’s rebirth and renewal. Indeed, many of these poems conjure sublime moments out of the most visceral language, out of carnage. How is this possible? Credit Ballam’s dexterous control of the prosodic elements of the language. It’s easy to luxuriate in an abundance of consonance and assonance in the first stanza of “After Reading *The Odyssey* & *Paradise Lost*, Wolf Dreams”:

*From thick woods men emerged,
wind-sick, sea-blown,
her voice, woven silver, rose
from her house of stone,*

The pleasing repetition of vowel and consonant sounds warbles atop an irregular pulse. In addition to showcasing Ballam’s fine ear, this stanza illustrates the contrastive movement typical of many poems in the collection. Often the most melodious lines are paired with the most terrifying images. Poem to poem, this contrastive tendency conveys a philosophical stance, one that blends a romantic faith in the imagination with a stoic acceptance of vulnerability and peril.

In an unforgiving forest, one fashions shelter by drawing upon the imagination. It’s no wonder so many of the poems refer to “dreams” and “dreaming.” The imagination is cast as both a refuge and a source of agency for Ballam’s characters. Moreover, these poems recommend the toleration of opposites as a means to recovery and self-acceptance. In “Grandmother Dreams of the Field Mouse,” for instance, the speaker’s self-regard oscillates between fragility and strength. In one stanza Grandmother exists as “an obscure stain at the base of milk thistle”; in the next she discovers her shadow spreads “fantastic, tall... a fierce fang on snow glowing orange with evening.” Dreaming of herself as a field mouse, Grandmother appears both large

and small, powerful and pathetic. Through the acceptance of contradictions, she frees herself from her role as victim, just as Wolf ultimately resists being written off as a criminal.

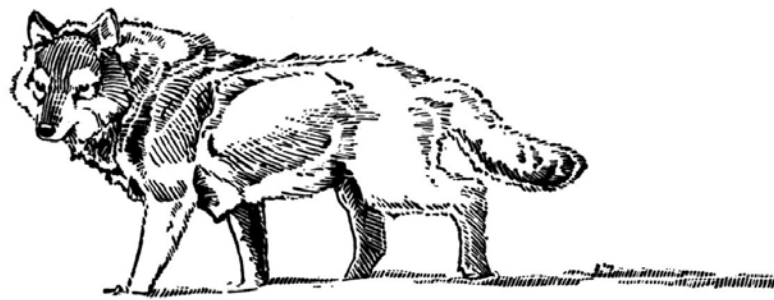
Freedom and understanding arrive through a willingness to accept conflicting versions of one’s self. One must come to terms with multiple states of being. Such recognition is the “dark portal” referred to in “Birthday,” the collection’s final poem:

*I close my eyes and drag
my life, heavy tail,
into the dark
portal—*

*I understand
falling, how it feels
to be a white fountain
with no beginning,
a continuous subtraction—*

Within this portal the speaker inhabits a “new body” prepared to tread a new path through the lovely, dangerous forest, her eyes “keen and animal, / adjusting to the dark.”

Readers will be rewarded by following Ballam inside the animal. The eyes and ears of Wolf, Grandmother, and Red Riding Hood conjure what William Trowbridge calls a “prism of empathy, erudition, and wonder.” Those who enjoyed Ballam’s previous collections, *The Red Riding Hood Papers* and *Pretty Marrow*, will be pleased to find inventive additions and unexpected twists to the fairytale. Undoubtedly one finds pleasure in the way these poems swerve against the uber narrative, but there is so much more to relish while reading *Inside the Animal*. How delicious the sounds. How satisfying the movement between points of view. What big eyes these poems have. How sharp the vision.



SO I BOUGHT A TOASTER

In the tidal backwash
of disaster, when something terrible
enough that even the nations
who thought we were all spoiled assholes
lit candles for us in their streets,

in hindsight,
you're never going to be prepared
for that
on TV on a Tuesday morning
at game show time, the fluff hour of news shows who're still on.

The president,
his message to us:
shop. And this president,
I know he's vacant like a fairy tale called The Clothes' New Emperor,
I know he doesn't know
what to do,
but

I don't either,
so the suggestion
at least has
authority.
And what's the problem with shuffling into Target when everyone is still
looking into everyone else's face in case we need to tell them,
"It's going to be alright"?

My girlfriend and I,
things were slipping, too.
In the overall arc of Civilization,
this is microscopic,
but it plays in.

I spent the extra thirty bucks,
went home with not just a toaster
but a toaster
oven
with magical promises typed on the box:

"Will toast bagels!"
"Will fit a whole small pizza!"
"Will cook a chicken!"
"Will restore your perception of universal order!"
"Is easy to clean!"

Eventually,
we invaded some country,
the girlfriend moved in with some guy,
and, for years,
that thing's coils swelled red,
butter melted into bread,
the bottom pan crusted black,
nothing went back
the way it was supposed to.

And, oddly,
this left me,
who bought a toaster
in the names of the dead,
uncomfortably
comforted.



CERTAINTY

You were in Disneyland
months ago, haven't
deleted the app off your phone yet,

check, now and then,
for the wait time
on Big Thunder Mountain Railroad,

even though
you're in line at McDonald's
in Omaha.

You could be in the Haunted Mansion
in thirteen minutes
if you weren't.

You
wonder
about your arteries.

You pay for a Quarter Pounder,
ponder the inevitables
of Death

and Taxes and
the line for Peter Pan's Flight
is forty-five minutes long.



ABIGAIL KIRBY CONKLIN

THE KANYE WEST INSTITUTE FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

Kanye is billing "mentally ill"
like it's his laser summer tour
from that one year. The Glow
in the Dark shebang,
when all anyone could talk about
was his mom and those jail-barred
sunglasses, flanked
by forests of neon strobes
and everything reeling back
and forth across a drunk stage,
canted upwards into a curated midnight.
Part of me kind
of wants to buy his VIP
package, if this is what
it's gonna look like
for the rest of my life.
A permanent spectacle—
if it's an enforced forever,
let it be a hell of a show.
Sell me out two years
in advance, and bribe someone
for five-star reviews.
Let me line my entire wardrobe
with cash, use the paparazzi
as my alarm clock, and dance
across the flock of car hoods
paving the parking lot.
I'll get strangled
by the velvet rope, tell
everyone how fun it was.
Get found years later,
still walking on a slant
and howling.

KATHERINE INDERMAUR

ALWAYS LOSING HEAT TO AIR
OR EACH OTHER

I want to hold your inner machinery—
the heart-piston pumping blood
spinal column sparked with wires.

Show me your CAT scans—
your body heat's inward curl.
This is an experiment

and my hypothesis is that your body
is set to the exact temperature
at which my body

melts. No—my hypothesis is
that I can come up with a name
for every thing I love about your body.

To hear me pronounce each one
set two fingers against my throat
and hold your breath—
close your eyes—
then press. Press.

BEAR'S MOUTH

The earth just got smaller than the brains of the ants
living under the tomatillo in the crack of the patio.
This isn't their dream of sugar and sand.

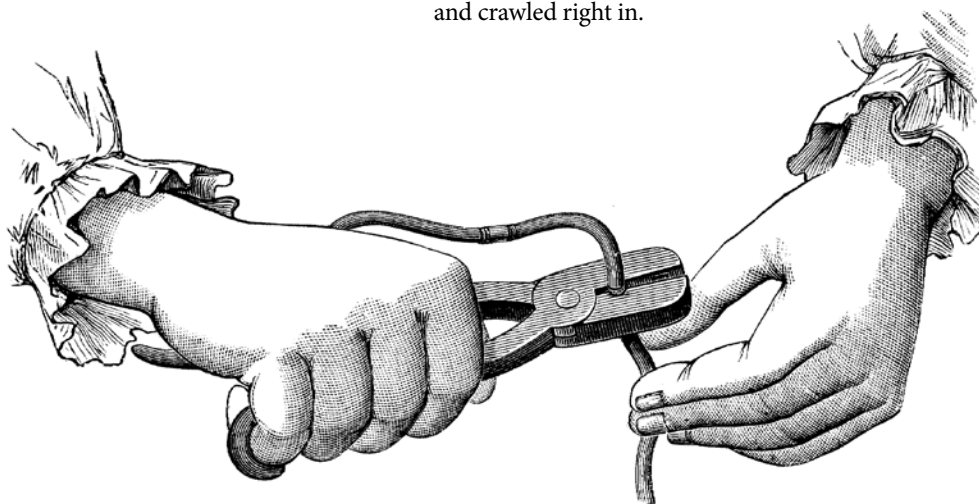
In Los Angeles an alligator lizard soaks up sun
in the backyard of Sunset Blvd.
Banana trees thrive in this city that gets smaller
but has more people moving in.
The coastal temperate rainforests of Tasmania
and Alaska are shrinking. Spruce trees sigh, deniably blue.
Next to a silver river, the lichen grows one millimeter per year
and the false azalea smells like skunk.
But it reminds you of your childhood.

All those summer nights when you opened a sliding door
to the stink of an animal somewhere in the dark.

The jaws of the bear unhinge.
On the beaches of France
the world is larger than it has ever been.
Orlando is carrying
five thousand times its weight
and those who march
are filling every banquet hall
with song. And sparrows
carry the mantra
straight into the heart.

Soon the entire world will fit inside
the brown bear's mouth.
Imagine stepping on the tongue.
The jaws are ready.

But in the belly of the bear
everyone is weeping and laughing
with every neighbor we don't have.
We've been walking for centuries
and crawled right in.



This waiting is more like waiting than I thought it would be.
You see yourself from a distance that keeps getting longer.
The prospect is mixed but elsewhere the forecast is No.
April and an ongoingness like
air, an instrument of the tongue.
Sealed in zeroes like honey in a comb,
not even your future will be a mystery.

Sources: Carley Moore, Michele Glazer, Frank Bidart, Carl Phillips, Robert Pinsky, D. Nurske, Wendell Berry

WESTON CUTTER

I want to believe all this ends up more than mere lip synching. Wish to feel at home
when winter
sends snow to remind me how tenuous my grip's always been. Can't stop trying
to find words to any prayer other than *let all this*
mean more than just summation. Some summer nights I can't help but climb light posts
in my mind's outfield+listen
for the whistle of old line drives. Try to recall close plays at the plate back into vividness.
Baseball here a junk metaphor
for how we end up wearing jerseys of hurt+amazement without quite knowing why.
I know I'm not yet old enough
to lie down+dream replays of fly balls arcing through the sky like stories we tell ourselves
about love. I'm already too old to be sure of anything other than
that every story we tell ourselves is about love. Last Monday in January, 23°, another inch
of snow cast down like a blessing or offering+the part of church
I like best (other than leaving) is when the priest
asks that we be protected
from anxiety. I mouth along though believers needn't. I like when systems bigger than me
know I'm both the batter swinging for the cheap seats
+the pitcher throwing high heat. Both the guy desperate to believe living's more than merely
doing as much good as can be crammed into each day+the guy smiling
gritting his teeth+seething, counting his breaths instead of shouting *come the fuck on!*
while the fat emphysemic in the scooter at Kroger
takes forever to pay for his potato chips+extra-sugar Coke. And then others. A scene—
a kid dropping a book, a woman stepping into rain—
blasts you+sudden kindness flows through like a song you've always known each word to.
Hours are easy; it's minutes, instants
we slip through becoming the assholes or heroes we harbor just beneath the skin+perhaps
the only prayer should be for buoyancy. To
sing along before you've learned the lyrics. To count your breaths. To laugh, tip your cap, wave
to the stands when you fall on your ass from taking such a big swing+missing.
To let go of numbers+be grateful the heart's a machine paying out its accumulation
of beats in exchange for a dark bright innumerable bliss.

DATE NIGHT ANCESTRY

If we lived here we'd know better routes. As is we dumb
-lucked tonight's path+now, this sidewalk, shy of
a decade later we stand before a house we almost bought.

Lateglow of July night, nearly 9, my beloved
+I well-fed with food we didn't prep+needed not com
-promise on as we're shy 3 mouths. Daughter
daughter daughter was apparently the chorus I'd been singing
this whole time without knowing. We didn't speak
but stopped the same moment, holding hands because 10th
grade like uncertainty is a country you never leave,
those weeks you couldn't sleep for breathing their name.

Ellen Ellen Ellen. *What if* I say, squeeze her hand.
All I know of manhood involves saying little+hoping each
utterance is hook enough to make someone want
to ask more questions+it's so quick as to nearly
evade notice: how E wipes a tear. We're far enough
into the forest of our devotion I know not to ask
what branch she's just been thwacked by+she
squeezes my hand, twice. Because I love my daughters

I get down on my knees once they're asleep,
the height of sheep, try seeing the world as they do, +now
I look over Ellen's head at the house. The forgettable
of the good-enough, the smear of not-quite, how only
events great+terrible stick like quills into the flesh
of my recall. *Huh*, she says. Is there any more fun a topic
to lie to yourself about than regret?

We're not moving. *I can't remember why that wasn't us*, she says.

All those years I'd swagger *I have no regrets, never will*,
the empty blah blah of machismo, my certainty red as
rare steak+all I ever meant was I was too scared
to look back. Living then little more than staying ahead
of what rubble your decisions caused or finding ways
to brag about scars. Our daughters are safe, our loved ones
mostly alive—we are history's freest children. *Just
what if*, she says. Not sorrow in her voice, not dread. From
this many years deep into the climb it's largely tiny stuff
I'd like modified had I a time machine+inclination. Here's one.

Standing in line. Groceries. An hour after a pair
of shithead boys'd driven by us. Out for a walk till con
-tractions subsided. E focused beside me+my mind
an empty chamber echoing *what now?* They mooded
driving by. *Moo*. Both of them. I can hear it, mind
still blanks into the rage of any animal sure his fight's
bigger than any fear. E hissed+stopped walking+had
she not had me by the arm by the heart by the soul I'd
have sprinted till I stood over them, growling at
their terror, would have shoved half a muffler down each
of their young dumb throats. Later to the store.
Here's what I'd change. The way she looked at—I can't
remember. Didn't allow herself a carton

of ice cream, maybe, or picked the blue-wrapped low
-fat cheese perhaps. There among magazines
at check-out—who's pregnant, Elvis is still out there—
+what I wish I'd been bigger than was this.
How I put thumb on phone, touched her back, read
predictions for the next day's weather. You even
remember it? she asks, chinning toward someone
else's home. *Inside?* I shake my head. *Me neither*
she smiles. I smile too. *You look great* the beautiful check
-out lady said, I would've bought her a city
that instant in gratitude, *healthy baby, I bet*. Mercy where
you least expect it, like wild yeast or grafitti
or confederate flags. All I'd meant was we'd have a chance
the next day to walk moo-lessly the next day.
That a near infinity of routes exist. Now we're doing
the same thing: imagining the fights+making
up, picturing listening to our children breathing
in different rooms, wondering how it'd feel
to undertake the slow work of night by night chipping
deeper into the raw granite of our gigantic
I do from new parts of town, down streets older than
our names. Suddenly she's in my arms+we're
kissing ferociously. Like a war's over. Like the war
will never end so fuck it let's get it on while
we're here. *Get a room!* dude across the street shouts
+our teeth click against each other as we
come apart laughing, amazed. Wild as tigers in a forest
no one's mapped the edge of. *We're already
home*, she says quiet because living's the perfect way
to be alive. We've stood still long enough.
All us curious animals. I regret each breath that didn't
lead to me dumping all my love into each
instant. We squeeze hands+continue further into
a darkness that deepens with each echoing step.



HEY JEALOUSY

Now I'm the white-sideburned guy
moving slow at the show,
sort who knows where he's going+laughs
at whatever, I dance bad
with my wife+can hardly remember
those long-practiced scowls.
No longer defined by taking as few
steps as necessary so long
as each of them stayed cool. Done
hating myself for spacing
the lyrics to each B-side+no outrage
as the world's turned past
b-sides by+large. This flipless present.
What we all become
while only half-noticing. *When I was
your age* I say to myself brushing
my teeth a room away from the
dreaming daughters, *I waited
for certain songs on radio the way ancients
did rain.* Life feels largely to be
a test re whether you can let everyone
want as they wish even tho
yr sure your way's right+each time
you sigh+say *you do you* is
another failed pop quiz. An incomplete
list of things I used to wish
to be: Dan, Steve, Ben, Jake, Bob, tree,
river, bra. Now I'm this so
-glad guy, wife tapping just out-of-beat
against my back as the band
plays songs in the key of my youth
+finally none of this is about
meaning. Past belief. The tight-jeaned
balding lead singer's job is
to remember each word; ours is
to cling to how it felt
hearing them the first time, all
we swore we'd hold till
our own tunes are subsumed by
the static of the big radio
as it dials in a new station, new song,
new lucky fool reaching
for the same old stars.

THE PROGRESS OF MERCY

The closest beauty's come to building
a nest in the tree of my breathing
is wife, kids. Mostly light-haired blue-
eyed dazzlers I hope will play
spies when the Nazis lose again+the old
rah-rah flicks get re-
made. Mostly I'm the guy in each scene
wondering where to stand, what
camera to look at, what the good guy's name
is again—something solid as
antlers or a firecracker made of pride.
Johnny Mohammed, Indiana
Obama, Han Togetherness. Bearded
Foxglove, Tall Ironweed,
Starcrossed Crysanthemum all in one
row of greenlife at Lowe's+
I wonder if I've stopped asking good
slash enough questions or if this
is the progress of mercy. Mostly
the old hunger for fire+bright's
been replaced by hunger for hunger
-lessness+life's a prayer God's
been paying at best divided attention this
whole time. I used to dream
of being perfectly seen+the words
I've used for so long now
feel stuck, rote: *ugly's* all I think seeing
my mug each spring after shaving
winter's beard, *pasty doughy gross asshole*
+later native species of my
tongue's wonder will root in darkness
+I'll whisper to E *let me earn
your hurricanes, I am your shadow's greed.*
The next morning we'll track birds
over coffee. Red streaks of cardinals,
mourning doves taking to air
each time like they've been caught farting,
mockingbird trilling hidden from
some eave. Mostly everything's beautiful
if you can forget the magazine
you always thought Beauty had to be:
the car alarm the mocking
-bird mimics, daughters screaming
at each other, my wife's
coffee breath as her lips find mine
in ways I'm trying to teach my
-self to stop believing I need articulate.



CHRISTINE JONES

MY GREATEST STORY

A great white shark beside me,
long and lean, not mean. At all.

Three times my size, and handsome.
I touch him, look

into the soundless loch of his eye.
Tell him, *You ain't no Jaws*,

though I shake inside.
Could punch him, but I like him—

his gliding fin, gills, teeth crowded in rows.
We move until he's gone.

No one saw, so I
tell it to the plover, who tells

it to the tern—my story hovering
above the ocean, half way

across the world; a girl
in Japan wondering if it's true.

THE QUANTUM SOUL

And I think of how, as a boy, at a greasy summer fair in Maine,
I cranked the handle of the ancient Mutoscope and watched
the pictures flip and blur to life a woman dancing naked
on a stage with two huge feather fans and how for months I
could not watch a film without trying to see into and through
those spaces. I'd stare so hard it hurt my head. And how
my friend Pete's father wouldn't enter a room if the lights
were fluorescent—*those things mess with your brain* he said
they don't glow they flicker, so fast you can't see it. See it? That light
isn't on or off. That's why they buzz . . . Listen. And I didn't and I
did. And they did with the flickering wings of a thousand insects.
And I still don't like them. How they turn the magic to a trick,
a game. Somewhere deep inside

inside the brain we are both on
and off and neither: and events are taking place, flickering
and piling up beyond the speed of comprehension. And how
I knew this kid who had these mini-seizures where he'd just shut
off in the middle of a conversation or while we were tossing a ball
so it would float on past a frozen glove or hit him smack
in the cheekbone and we'd laugh when he came back, confused
and bruised. We place a thing near another thing and it throws
a spark, makes a third somehow in there and out, a process
we name art (or God?). To wade knee-deep in the night-river
and cup a handful of stars and try to drink them as they stream
and shiver down your arms. Our brains evolve (one word contains
another word that means

entanglement) to learn the gap is not
a gap—it is a charge, a fire. Years later, Pete's dad was taken off
in handcuffs for selling kiddie porn from his basement. And
someone told me how that kid went through a stoplight at 50
miles an hour and spent three days unconscious before he came
awake. *And the seizures*

were gone.

BOOK OF DOLLS 38

The day we found a bunch of Playboys in our bushes, we discovered less about the female body than our own, our skin, as boys, airbrushed in the blood and roses. These silken bunnies in rich men's shirts, they needed us to make them live and so, in time, to leave them. And so, in time, we did. And then it came: the wind. So strong it scattered women everywhere. Trash, my mother called them, the kind my father worked against the elements to gather and discard. Whoever he was. Out there. I never knew. Whatever he held back among the bodies as they flew.

BOOK OF DOLLS 40

The new dolls of men are priced high and given high-pitched voices that ask for less of a man the more they question. *So how was your day? Would you like to take a walk in the park?* Queries whose silver melodies become just that, songs in waves whose last note curves heavenward, there, hung from a hook on a cloud in the distance. A ghost, this note. But who am I to deprive a doll, to take the man from his manifest that promises less the more it reveals. *Who am I?* echoes the god-like height with its hooks and wires, flexing. *Who?*

BOOK OF DOLLS 39

My life in porn, the porn star confesses, *is a stranger now*. As it was back then, until, that is, he fell for a co-star, hard, and the old routine turned tender. So when the final take was over, once he washed his cock and tucked it into hiding, he asked her sweetly, shyly for a date. He took her out but did not touch her. She was just that loved, and she, confused, moved on. *So it goes*, he says, in a film about abandonment. Not his alone. He had his fans, friends who turned away at country clubs, strangers to their shameful avatar, lonely for the men they were.

BOOK OF DOLLS 41

I know a woman with an angel hung over her bed, and when a train passes, he shivers on his chain. She calls him *Raphael*, the patron spirit of railcars and medicinal potions, and he makes the seizure of progress more bearable, like an angry punch line after dark. We are all ghosts now, having lived long enough. To each, the infirmity that is our rehearsal for retirement, eye to eye with the sun's dull roar. So when the angel trembles like a phone, why not answer. Is that you. Why not suffer all your loved ones to return.

HOW THE COWBOYS LEARNED TO SWIM

We crossed the border at Kingston,
drove south dodging the November snows
like refugees in the '79 Ford crew-cab,
everything tarped-over in the truck-box.
I wanted to start again, not be afraid.
Jam and bread dinners, we washed at rest-stops,
kids sprawled in the truck-cab asleep.
Eight days got us to the ocean.
I lied about a job, rented the Mar Vista bungalow,
backyard blessed with bougainvilleas,
rickety carport our clapboard fort, good guys
chasing the robbers out to the badlands,
rolling together in the warm grass.
I'd sit by the orange-tree oracle,
listen to balloon voices float the night,
coins glisten the sky.
Up north I'd fallen through the ice
too many times, couldn't find the bottom.
We got two sets of bunk-beds at the Goodwill,
a green couch and a kitchen table.
Evenings we'd all walk to Washington Boulevard
pick through Ralph's 'price-reduced' bins.
Back with twenty-five cent treasures,
we'd lay on the floor in the front-room
and I'd read to them about who made the wind,
how we'd learn to swim in the ocean.
Late, I'd sift dreams for a hook,
scavenge for a riff I could stretch into an anthem,
peddle to the percentage men
along the back wall at song-roulette nights.
I worked phone sales, fired on Friday,
started again someplace else by Tuesday,
a con on the tenth floor of a dump
near Sunset and Vine, cold calling
the east coast at dawn,
baiting plumbers, car-repair mechanics,
one sucker selling a score to another.
I'd get home in the dark,
their cheers from the bedroom
bargaining in tin-cup voices
for one more story to drift the night on.
They were the keel that held me up.
Fired again in a week,
I hammered collections for a year,
hounded drowning men, anything
to buy the ground beef, rice and oranges,
keep the house, our private meadow,
the haze of stars
where we learned to swim.

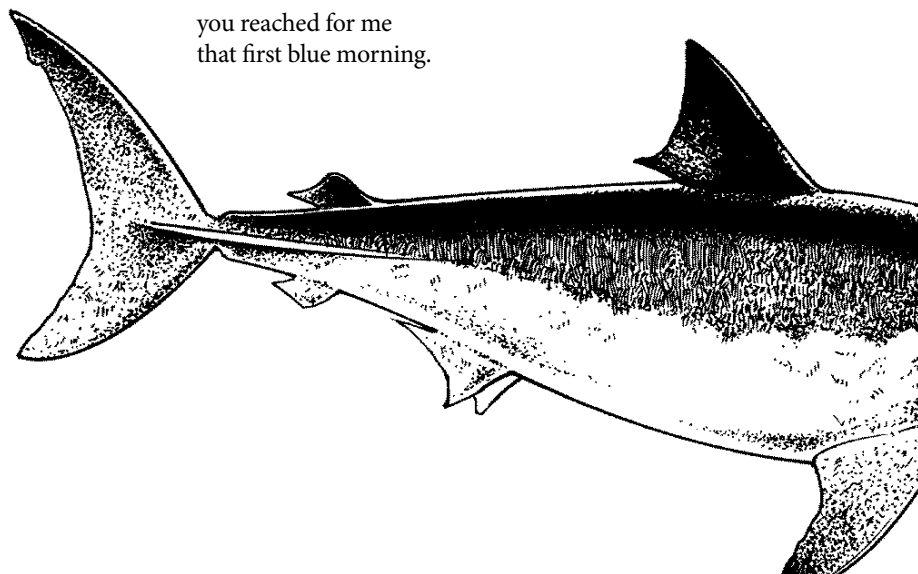
CAROLYN OLIVER

IN YOUR COPY OF AKHMATOVA'S POEMS

Near the end, just one crisp corner
springs, in your decisive way, over
the edge of her four elegant lines.
Then: the long, white winter page.

SOMEWHERE A SHARK

scarred-moon hulk, tangles
its wake with jade ice, finds
nothing promising (rotting)
retreats to deeper cold,
cradling sea it's trawled,
slow as waiting, since before
Antietam's corpses putrefied
and were photographed
by Lincoln's leave, a sea
it will sieve for death until
we consume ourselves,
while parasites devour its eyes
to filmy white, hanging tassels
pilfering the ice billows, taking
the light not all at once,
but by patient gradient
from surface to belowest
low, just as I have assembled
this creature I'll never face
and neglected to remember
from which side of the bed
you reached for me
that first blue morning.



ROAD TO RINCON

(Mangifera indica)

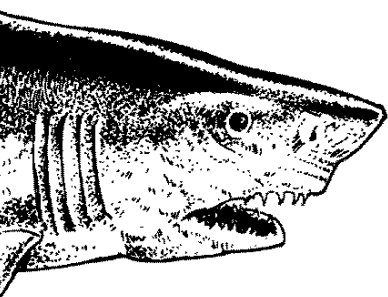
Cane fields give over to green tunnels
long and loaded with the first flush
of heavy fruit. Old railroad spur

drilled through the mountain,
ending where no boat is left
to meet it. A face, slick and black

with lichen, groaning from the rock.
Sea fig honey, bee swarms drip,
limestone ovens fill with tide.

The lagoon, that moonless night,
alive with miniscule stars,
paddles stroking brackish water.

Frigate birds sail for days.
We harvest yellow drupes, careful
not to brush against the leaves.



INDICATION

We sat at a table
in the soft gray light of a window.
You were reading a good book
about southerners come to Montana.
I was reading a mystery.

A man walked in
holding a little girl in his arms,
small clear-eyed face
below his pointed beard.

He stopped at a table
to speak to friends.
The child raised her hand,
spoke a continuous lilting
flow of syllables,

and they all listened,
father and friends
as she held forth,
her face so much like yours
in your silent absorption beside me.

Somewhere behind your eyes
characters lived out their lives.
When I lay my book aside,
the pages flipped the way an old movie
indicates the passage of time.

Layers of your face
separated and shimmered.
I saw the child, straight blond hair
shining, sweetness of the eyes shining.

I saw the old woman, white hair
pressed into the pillow, eyes
barely open and searching,
ancient hand reaching for mine
beside the bed we share.

SUGAR ASTROLOGY

BY SHARI ZOLLINGER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOLLI ZOLLINGER

ZODIACAL ODES: A LOVE LETTER FOR EVERY SIGN



ARIES: *March 21–April 19*

We measure the first blush of spring at the onset of crocus buds peering through the ground. This usually comes with a relief, a smile, and a hope for something new. You give us this hope, Aries—the hope for the new. We love to watch you, ever curious about what you’ll do, how you’ll grow. You surprise us with your new tricks, your independence, and your utter spontaneity. We are in awe of your willingness to face the bright sun—how you show your colors. Thank you for being first. Thank you for your maverick earnestness. We love your stories of new places, strange happenings, and spicy confrontations. You are the hero, shaman of the ultra modern, and shunner of all things hackneyed.

TAURUS: *April 20–May 20*

How would you like to roll up your pant legs, crawl into a large barrel bare-footed and stomp your heart out over a pile of grapes? This is how we see you Taurus, close to the vine, feet on the earth, sleeves rolled up, cultivating something for us to drink, growing something for us to eat. We will drink your wine. We will eat your fresh peas. We will sup on your midnight hour because you feel that good. We will roll you up over our bodies at night, down-feathered and warm, we will decanter you on a summer evening as the sun sets, with fish on the grill, with stem glasses in tow. You are luxury bound, keeper of greens, bearer of blooms and tender shoots.

GEMINI: *May 21–June 21*

Peter Pan came peering through Wendy’s window on a warm summer’s eve. He came as a sprite, a fairy—a winged messenger

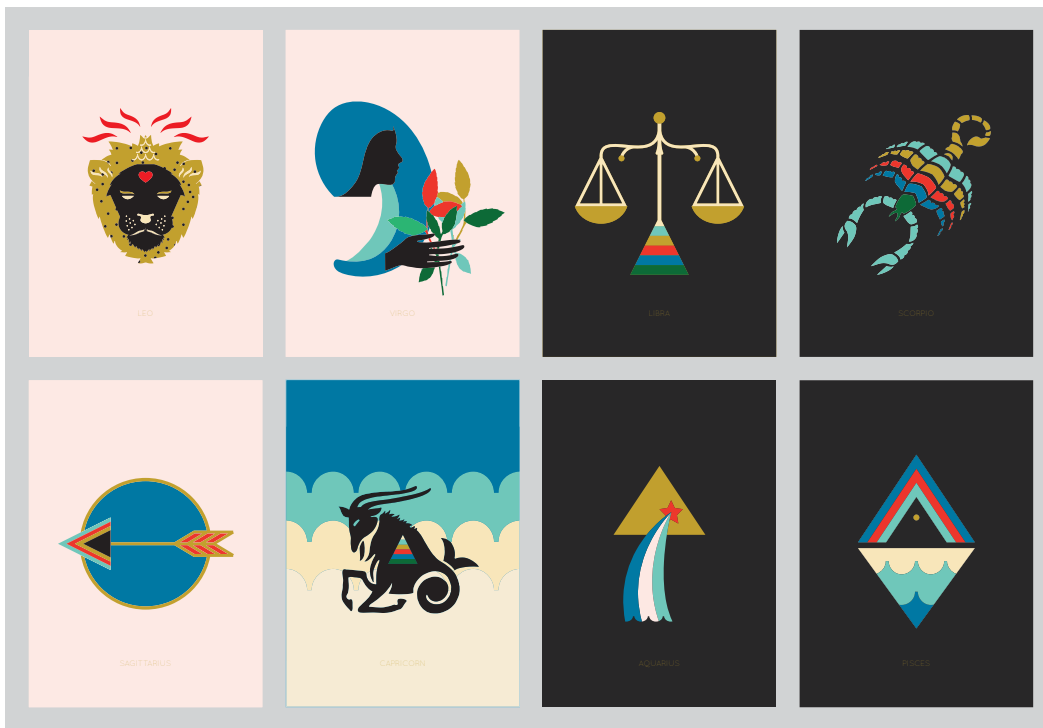
with tales of Never, Never Land and stories of endless youth. You’ve dreamed this, Gemini, wished for a flight like this into the arms of time. You are the weather vane that points to our youthful spirits. Without you we grow old before our time. We forget how to romp, dance, twirl, and juggle. You are tongue-in-cheek, quicksilver, sharp-witted jungle gym, and all-around hipster of electric dreams. We follow you at any age; we wear your laugh like a memory.

CANCER: *June 22–July 22*

Have you ever picked up a beautiful shell from the beach, only to bring it home to find it lackluster? We trust you, Cancer, to understand the beauty of a thing in its natural environs. If you collect anything, you collect memories. You can describe the shape of childhood, the smell of kindergarten, the strictness of a teacher, the feel of a first crush. This is your box of everything, sealed with a lock. Once in a while you open it, dust it off, view reminiscence like an old lover. You are spiral-shelled, belly-loved, and mother of pearl. You are clams in white wine and garlic. We want, nay, need your help. Your support is our relief.

LEO: *July 23–August 22*

Leo, we will find you in the heart chamber, Warhol-splashed and coloring with Crayola like a child. You are the white of a gessoed canvas, anticipating every possibility. Maestro, your atelier awaits. Table, chair, and the tools are here for your creations—for that moment when a singular golden tingle travels up your spine bidding begin. It is time to produce. You are unbending, uncompromising, and willing to mark the things you love, the people you love. Heart tattoos: your



touch is warm, kind, real. You crave the caress of the world, the attention that colors your face. You are lion's lair, fiery platinum, sequin-bold—visual heartbeat.

VIRGO: August 23–September 23

Where do we begin Virgo? Our love affair runs deep into the landscape of pledges, vows, oaths, and bonds. Your willingness to honor your promises set down at the beginning of our acquaintanceship accounts for every other wrong. Thank you for staying. You are duster, adjuster, and powerful organizer of names. Look how each electrical pulse-point in your lover's body lights up when you enter the room. Whitman's body electric is no match to the devotional neurons you emit. To love and be loved is all you ask. You are the truth-master, other end of the rainbow, silver platter, mad hatter, and the genius loci of heart and hearth.

LIBRA: September 23–October 22

There is a chocolate bar that comes wrapped in a sonnet, and that is you, Libra, my love, nestled in poetry, yet not immediately decipherable. Do you remember the first time you felt a soft breeze, the kind that rushes through sheer curtains, and plants a touch on your skin like you've never known? Remember how you closed your eyes, and pronounced that moment *perfect*? Believe it or not this is how you feel on our skin, that kind of soft, that kind of touch, that kind of perfection. You are clean sheets on a morning clothesline, soothing endearments when life tanks. You are magnolia, leather sofa, artisan everything—light. You give us our balance back, thank you.

SCORPIO: October 23–November 21

There has been much said about pomegranate seeds, how they kept the curious Persephone down in Hades half of each year. This bejeweled fruit really does help us know you better, buried-spark-of-passion. We must peel you, Scorpio, slice you open, and search for your soul, time and time again, in countless chambers. But when we do finally taste you, however long it takes to get there, we break open. You are often misunderstood; they all think you play the field, when all you want is to ping like a bat off the object of your devotion. You are Morpheus, shape-shifter, and conductor of the great transmigration of souls. We give you our nightmares, you hand us fresh pomegranate juice.

SAGITTARIUS: November 22–December 21

Sag, you are the one to watch, what with your love of open spaces. We've often seen you dancing wildly out on the mesa tops. We know you can't keep your eyes off the horizon, and we find that beautiful in you, the way the sun sets and rises wherever you are. The sexy quiver that sits on your hip is full of pens, feathers, and quills—your proverbial fanny pack always at the ready. You walk through airports like you own them. You view terminals as portals that deliver your soul to remote villages half way around the world. You are gorgeously no-nonsense, a hothouse flower, Amelia Earhart incarnate, and the dust that lifts from your shoes as you finish day thirty of a six-month pilgrimage.

CAPRICORN: December 22–January 19

Capricorn, you are the first brick set down in a building, the one that all others must follow, the one that holds weight and sets

patterns. You can take pressure like no other. You give us relief. Dear cornerstone, without you, we would have nothing. There is creation and then there is incarnation, and you know the kind of work it takes to make a thing, a thing. You will work until the work is done for the glimpse of what your hands can form. You love real materials, bone, wood, steel, and clay. Keeper of earth, you are Atlas, long distance runner, sculptor, mountain crag, and the one who sets the world in motion.

AQUARIUS: January 20–February 18

Have you ever spent time identifying the various species of clouds, Cumulus, Cirrus, Stratus, Cumulonimbus, Altocumulus? You are ever shifting and changing like these bilious and whimsical balls of fluff. We know that if you could have your way you would stay up amongst the stuff, weather up to your ankles, breathing in the atmosphere. You are outlandish, Seussian, the perfect iconoclast. Aquarius, your friend, the wind, helps you cover more ground, nay, more air than any other. We are in awe of your tousled hair and elevated complexion. You are a great friend with far-reaching kindness, yet sometimes rebellious and never, never still.

PISCES: February 19–March 20

Remember the first time you saw the ocean, Pisces? Was it scary, awesome, underwhelming, or overwhelming? Recall the grainy sand between your toes reminding you of the place that stands between you and the water? Did you want to jump in and swim forever? You've been given the great job of protecting the darkness. As you dive deep into the nautical mystery, you are more comfortable in these depths than most. You are dream-catcher, wave-bearer, unconscious whisperer, ancient source and slacker of thirst. "Come all who are weary," you'll say to us with such heartbreaking generosity, and we will come, we won't be able to resist.

EMMA CAIRNS WATSON

THE END OF MY LIFE THAT LIVES IN WISCONSIN

with you: a gray cat. it lives at your feet like I want to.
when you are at work it makes hands make
peach cobbler with tinned fruit. it's a list. the list is: cut flowers
to make you think I am making you happy. television shows
about King Arthur. kissing the place your hair is too thin.

I have thought *I am not feeling very well right now*
every day of my life. the end of my life that lives in Wisconsin
comes to visit. like a timeshare presentation, it offers cubed
watermelon. it dips things in hard chocolate at random and plates them
like a frog laying eggs. it has a PowerPoint. it wants my full attention.

once it has it it shows me photos of me blue-dead in snowbanks.
the cat sits on me like a cinderblock. it says it doesn't have to be a snowbank,
it doesn't have to be for years and years. it could be an old cat
who comes and lies down between you and me one day when I am so tired
I have forgotten the difference between the tinned peaches and the fresh.



THINGS ARE NOT GONG WELL BETWEEN YOU AND JULIANNA

But at the restaurant that year it gets a little less dark every day.
 Women start coming in and giving you the outsides of their mouths
 on paper, and terracotta cotton, and the leaves of horse
 chestnuts. What are you going to do with all these kisses?
 There's a plant sad old gardeners call lady of the night. It's yellow,
 the flower, and gets mokey in full sunlight like Julianna does and dies.
 But during a summer sundown: you should see her open.

Your father was sleeping with a woman down the road who kept ladies
 in her beds. It was a father-daughter thing, going to this affair. Your mama liked it.
 You'd be given front-row dirt to watch the nightly miracle. Don't move, don't come
 looking. In the time it took the flowers to remember
 to be yellow eyes and stare, like you, at girls at twilight
 he could be in and out. And the garden was so quiet
 and smelled like black soil and mama's whitest wine and
 in school that year you learned about Babylon, its hanging gardens and its whores
 and thought, in future, (though there were other reasons too, and better ones)
 I don't think I'll have much to do with men.

You could take those animal print patterns: the spot and stripe
 and dapple of women's mouths, red against old flat and press
 them into a book of the way other people want you; call it mouths you haven't kissed
 for her sake. Still she won't like it, your offering, thin sacrifice
 of beeswax and mica, will go up in votive smoke. Up in your father's house nothing
 makes as much sense as this yellow bonfire she's making now of love for you,
 heat that roasts and opens bad hearts like the skirts of sepals,
 something that knows how to last the day.

CONFLUENCE OF UNEQUAL BODIES

My windowsill at work is a popular spot in the honeybee community
 for dying. I know that feeling. My popular spots for dying are: Denny's,
 the 5 from Glendale to Anaheim where it passes over the smokestacks
 of the City of Commerce, churches in case they get me extra points, the Macy's makeup counter
 between the lip plumpers and the snail gel masks, and the office window
 at three pm on Thursdays staring down at the city's latest shipment
 of dead bees.

I have, of course, seen pictures of other places: a window-seat
 beneath stained glass, a red Roman ruin shadowed
 small by cypress, any extremely buttered dinner, Anna laughing.

In some folk songs, after both lovers are dead and buried, one corpse feeds up a rose
 and one a briar. We used to argue about which would be which, but I'm the briar.
 I listened to too many songs like those when I was small, so my first fear
 when we moved in together was that, somehow, I'd drown her.
 Drown me? Yes, in the river, on a lover's walk. Or in the kitchen sink, coming up
 behind you as you're humming at the dishes, or in bed beneath the water-weight
 of need. Like that.

Just like that?

Like that.

EMILY AS UNDER MY CHIN

I've let my face go
round

to widen
for her two hands.

I've let my face end
at her knuckles.

EMILY AS A SONG WRITTEN
BY ELISE DAVIS

The importance of Emily
begins

& ends with Emily.
She is the match,

the matchbook,
the cigarette, the pack

& the fields that were
leveled to give

her a proper landscape.
She is the oak bar

& the sundress
& she is all the whiskey.

I am blessed
to be the throat

without any fear
of her many fires.

So many of my dreams
begin with her red boots

almost touching
an unfinished floor.

EMILY AS BLOOD AND SKY BLUE

for Mark Yakich

No message
no range
no name

& yet
the world
is never

the same.
If this
was flight

it would
be heaven.
It's not.

PYROMANCY AS SELF-LOVE, SELF-MED

Your mother's mothers planted hope
in upward gestures, in syllables

of smoke, marrowchoked and rising.
At dawn, they carved twin

pictograms for *hurt* and
heal into their pale scapulae, hand-

feeding a dead lexicon to the kitchen
fire in search of definition.

But our tongues, trained for herbs
and pills, cannot curl themselves around

their oxbone grammar. The koi
in our skullponds have forgotten

their ancestors lost at sea.
To wring song from skeleton,

dragon from dragon-
fly, we must pen a novel

alchemy, a way to transmute the burning
bamboo grove of the body into gold, to

coat the finned hyphens pinning name
to purpose in the brightest of yellows.

PRESIDIO FOREST POSTCARD

in the puddle below the curb where my students shuffle out of backseats every morning, i scry a future of hands withering into fists. san francisco splayed like a roadmap. when did you last take necessary precautions? some days i am emperor of landscapes marred by micron pens disemboweled in transit. some days i am ugly on facetime. this commute is my birthright. darwin's triathlon: the incremental process by which the past hedges its bets, sprouts gills, develops todayness. to unknot a string of successful disasters. to fill our gas tanks with empty. days catch fire as if no one is living inside them, furnishing their rooms with explosives, draping the walls with quilts. there is a god who waives the bus fares and i must find him. there is a forest in this city and it must find me soft. a whole summer spent identifying the morphological differences between symptoms and songbirds. come to the city. from my host's balcony, we'll watch brush-choked canyons beg for a light.

IN THE PRAIRIE THE WORLD FEELS LESS LONELY

I don't know anyone here but
the black and yellow striped snake,
so familiar, yet how she startles me
God knows everything but that doesn't mean it's all right
Yet if God were not within it, would it even be alive?
I tow my small companion by bike, such a blonde
little boy who talks and sings continuously
I don't think about feeling guilty
just offer him my questions quite lazily,
How do you think we can encourage God?
The deepening explorations, his broader experience of feelings and strange
palettes of creativity
Writing this and riding encourages me
I'm looking for a caterpillar but only finding flowers, purple clover and gay feather
everywhere, the stalks and blue stems climbing over and under the sun
If only I could save one caterpillar, pluck one can from the leaves
I would have saved the world
What was the Greek word he told me?
The sense of time forever, a past way climbing over and under presently
How saving the world has been and is still so endlessly
God encourages me
I feel the temperature changes, in the air and on my skin
In the prairie I am perspiring for once
I sense we loved each other without knowing

CONTEMPLATING MEANING IN THE OCEAN

We rode out in a boat called Jesusito,
called Jeszray, called Acala Tree
Two hours into the sea, the water turns dark
It's amazing to do one sure thing while
thinking of something else entirely
What are you thinking about?
Absolutely nothing, he says to me
This has great purpose also, emptiness
like reflecting water, I overthink
what a gift, with jealousy
You look so pretty, he says
While I think of that other woman's swimsuit
A blue and white bandeau, that's nice
His pretty no longer fits me properly
I didn't mean to do anything

I was just sitting here, not secretly
And I meant what I said, everything always
comes from the bottom of my heart
So when I think about meaning, my skin burns
It's the salty, salty complexity, the water-covered planet
From the bottom of my ocean, I'm not
just some sweetheart, sweet as the mango,
smooth as the Mexican avocado, yellow
like the edge of a blanket on skin, satiny
Today is a great day to see a whale shark,
says our guide whose name is Marco
Old life, made us to experience beauty,
to share it endlessly. Our destination
is consumed by meaning and darkness
perhaps we'll be eaten out here at sea

OUR LADY OF THE ATLANTIC

When the 7-year-old slipped
overboard and the captain
declared the boy would drown
before they could lower a lifeboat,

we commended his soul
to you, Watery Lady.
Lady of Ice Floes, of Deepest
Blue. We pled:

*Welcome him to your
house of ice, lay him
on a seaweed bed,
transmute his flesh to fish.*

Two mothers had already
dropped babies in the waves,
waxy and white.
When his head sank

out of sight, his body
swept by swells, who else
could hold the horror
of his mother, father, their eyes

locked on horizon,
the vanishing spot.
Only you could carry
the brand for that wound,

Lady of Lapis Blood,
remind them of Zion,
and eternal parenthood. Only you,
Lady of Criss Cross

Veins, could whisper of your boy
as you rocked to sleep their son.

OUR LADY OF THE MIRACLE QUAIL

How they drop from the sky
onto wash tub-tables,
tents. How they thrice circle

our camp, fly right through the flaps of covered
wagons where our sick lay,
convalescing. Even a half-starved child

can catch one, snap its neck, easy
as cracking a twig. That feathered pulse.
Those beating wings & thrashing feet

are a manifestation of the Most
High, of you, Lady, who watches over us
in our exodus. See them

sweep from the air like manna, miracle
quail, exhausted after short flight.
We are also exhausted after

flight from Nauvoo, driven by mobs
who murdered our prophet. How you
plop their plump bodies down

through cloud, thin veil of your watching,
we feel you, Lady of Sustenance, Lady
of Hovering, how the heat of your wings

warms us among these birds
on stick-skewers, roasting over hasty fires we
scramble to build while fathers

butcher & mothers pluck
till hands chap raw as quailflesh. Lady,
we cram our mouths

with thanks, swell our bellies full. See us glut
& glory over your gift
amid the charred carcasses & feathers.



BRENDAN TODT

IF YOU BELIEVE IT

We're fine. We are. We're here. There are trees and grass and people, all living. Someone comes along and takes all of the dead ones away. Grass clippings in the garbage cans or yard waste bags. Bodies in the ambulance first, and later the hearse, and thank goodness for all of us they don't bury them anywhere nearby. The trees die, too, but want to stay put. Or they die, but only in part, and fail not only in their lives but in their deaths. Sometimes someone has to cut down a tree, and we can all understand that. One of the new neighbors didn't have to but cut them down anyway and after two years left the house when he left his wife. Nobody I've spoken to misses him any more than they miss his trees. It has nothing to do with the tire swings, though those were nice. Or the shade or the fresh air. Maybe, if I was told I had to explain it, I'd say it was the color of the leaves in fall, but there are many more trees with many more colors more beautiful than those. In the end, it's like all things a matter of preference: belief and disbelief. Carl, before he left, said he was convinced all the trees were dead already. And remains convinced to this day. That may be the only difference between a man and a tree; a man will believe far more than what can be believed.

STEVE LANGAN

WAIT A SECOND. THE RAIN IS FAILING TO INFURIATE ME

Little tadpoles on the roadside.
And everyone says I'm unreasonable?
I started making sense about four years ago.
Before that, I was just another skinny little oracle.
For boys it takes longer than girls to mature.
I once wore the gorilla suit at the entrance
of the funhouse and made minimum wage.
You can tell who's nice and who's an asshole
by how they glance. I made elephant ears
on the midway. Just before I quit I was promoted.
It hasn't always been silk stockings for me.
For no reason the hot oil will sometimes burn you.
Because no one ever taught me the right way
to do anything—how would they have known?—
I've become an adequate salesman.

BROWN COW

Let's shift our focus to the reefs and the waves and the ocean floor.
Let's shift our desires to charity and good tidings and love.
The cursable wind and rain!
Certain words in the Romance languages must never be said improperly.
And I am training myself to remember the names
of the people in my life who retain an air of insignificance.

There is not enough time left to summon all the apologies.
In certain photos, we appear to have joy, purpose.
No one told us with enough time it's inevitable
we will cross through, cross over,
to this or some other exalted place.
Nobody prepared us, not at all, for this crossing.

AMIE ZIMMERMAN

TO BE BORN

I'm not talking about
reincarnation or being born first

higher up on some ladder. What
I mean is leaving a note after
backing into your neighbor's
motorcycle.

I can't afford the ticket—

as if living and being born
again is all method acting

a shell game of choosing tattoos

you won't someday regret. For

what is relapse but a combination
of mystery and preoccupation of self,

a path

where you've named each tree
for the fahrenheit

and incremented softness
of drawn clean breath.



ALISON THUMEL

MEMORIAL DAY

Cedar Point, Sandusky, OH

The chain lift scrapes the undercarriage, spitting
a click-clack-click as it drags the car to the top
of the hill—setting up for the ninety-degree drop
that will sustain a speed of seventy-five miles per hour
for the next three minutes. This part of the ride
makes more noise than seems necessary,
metal on metal making a protest or a prayer
that sounds like an amped-up ace of spades stuck
in the spoke of a BMX rolling down a dusty road:
Do you hear me, horizon? I'm coming for you, too.
Across town, my grandfather cups his hand
to his eyes to survey the new hydroponic farm.
They're tearing up good farmland there,
he points to greenhouses full of ripening vines
gleaming a mile beyond the cornfields not yet ankle-high.
The glass houses surrounded by stones dug up
by growling backhoes are to him the start of a parable.
Every house in the neighborhood waves a flag
from the eaves and the old man next door killed his wife,
my grandma tells me, but not on purpose,
blacking out, the car kissing the guard rail too hard,
and hadn't he never let her drive anyways?
On the lift hill, my cousin shouts over the racket,
saying they kept the teeth-rattling din *for old time's sake*,
that though they've laid new track, they preserved
the coaster's old wooden bones underneath.
At the bottom I had felt like a big fish bucking
against the reeling in, more fight than fear.
Now, near the top, I lean back and let my eyes roll open
to the painful-blue sky, feeling my mouth widen
to a scream or a breath as we plummet.

RHETT ISEMAN TRULL

MELANCHOLY STREET

My schoolhouse, all empty; my brothers become echo,
fading on the wind: it's church hour and I
unfurl my shadow down my street. Country of one,
I lose my shoes because...who cares? Shortcutting

through yellow roses behind their new fence, wet paint's
competing scent making of the very air a barrier. Shh.

If you hear a clamor, it's me, only me, my offering
of noise, quills in the skin of your
prayer. Stockings on the line that tease
the breeze like a flag is my flag to tear down

as I go. No other stirring, not even by birds, unless
it's my desire. And you in your pew sleep, snug
in your hymns, I have watched your greetings, passing
smiles, gates held open, a tipping of your hats, even laughter
ringing like the bell above the shop door: ding another moment, welcome
moment, good day, sir, have another on the house,
what's the news what's happening? That is not my city,

not my street. But this—nothing crossing
the avenue but blown dust, hot sun the only

lonely punctuation—this is the quiet my heart's
come to know, where each entry
means behind me a door swings gently to. This hour,
whatever I want: sip of bourbon

from Papa's glass decanter, my sister's sash
bullet-holed with pearls: mine,
as I exhume, with care, the body
of each minute. I was good once, polished
the silver to gleaming, helped batten the windows before
the big storm. But sky touches ground, takes what it wants

no matter. Middle of the road, under the red light,
I ungentle myself. I unbelieve. The trailer that ferried Uncle's horses

over long roads to here, waits emptied, a gift
of dung-tinged shade, escape from all
banter, all order, all watch-out-for...what? The sharp edge dissecting
this moment from the last? Or the psalm of dead heat
around the corner where no one ventures but me, alone
as I've wished to be?



BOURBON AND GINGER ALE

This one's for my grandmother, who offered us *Jin-Jail*, all of the South
on her tongue stretching syllables, to savor, to suckle, to slow a word
as if a word were time itself instead of just an ornament
the unrelenting minute wears. My grandmother aproned, twice-baking
potatoes, while outside old Tom cat finds under her camellias,
in various shades of pink-going-brown, his spot for the night, both part of
and apart from the noise, the family spread across the lawn awaiting
refills and that steak only Granddaddy Jim could cook just right, decades
before the faster grills would cheat the flavor from the hour, before
my father's turn. The fireflies tease it's dark now and
darker. And that's about it—just her Saturday night, good dream
of my childhood, the one I replay when I need to be held by everyone
I've ever loved at once. Toss of the football, first evening star,
my father and uncle apprenticed, learning to stack and douse the coals
to burn till white, and when to flip
the ribeyes calling up the flames, how to keep the center red, and when
to pour the girl her first real drink. Bourbon's kiss
quick at the back of my throat, part startle, part fuzz. All that love
that could drown as surely as float me. Sometimes I fear most what
loves me longest, the hand that won't be shaken off. Little gods
of the cocktail hour, putting out your little fires, do you know
how good it is, this 5 o'clock ritual, curl of the onion on each slice
of cheddar, Magnolia in the corner so high we try but never
reach the top? It's my brother's turn again
to walk without falling the old fence rail while I raise my glass
empty, fully aware I've sucked every last drop from the ice.



DAVID HUDDLE INTERVIEWS PATRICIA COLLEEN MURPHY ABOUT FALSE AFFECTION AND HER NEW BOOK, *BULLY LOVE*

David Huddle: *Bully Love* is an intriguing title, one that lingers in your reader's mind through the whole book. And since so many of the poems address various aspects of love, your reader learns more and more about the book's vision of love. With "Day Trip, Cave Creek Guided Tours," on page 55, the poem ends with the title phrase, which suggests a very specific example of love that you must have had in mind from the beginning. What can you tell us about the concept of "bully love" and how you've explored it in these poems?

Patricia Colleen Murphy: First, David, thank you so much for your time and care with the collection. I truly appreciate your questions. You are correct that the concept of bully love existed in my mind long before these poems did. I think of a phrase my mother said to me often, "You were such a joy to raise until you hit puberty."

I have to laugh even when I type that, because my mother was a brilliant woman. But it takes a supreme level of banality (or cruelty?) to choose that as your on-point message with your daughter. Yeah, she was a terribly bully. I have a line in another poem, "she always told me she loved me after she made it clear that she hated me."

That image you mention (our horses quietly suffering our pats of bully love) was transformative for me when I wrote it. It came to me quite naturally as the end of the poem, but was useful on describing not just how we treat animals. I am a drastic nurturer. When I was composing that poem about horseback riding, the image of the hand on the nose immediately resonated with how my mother made me feel. How I kept coming back to her with the hope that I would get compassion, understanding, and care. But instead I suffered various forms of false affection.

The best example I can give you of that dichotomy is that when I was 15, my mother got very mad at me and so she tried to kill herself and I saved her life. But more generally, she would criticize me by telling me I was stupid, that I had a limited vocabulary, that my legs weren't that muscular, that a photo of me was not flattering. I took a lot of it but if I did push back, she

would then effuse that she loved me very much and that she deserved my love back.

I remember, too, that she would take phone calls from my friends and refuse to let me talk. I would sit begging for the phone as she chatted up whomever called, telling them how wonderful they were, how much she admired them. Then later she would say to me, "I can't believe you have friends like that. That person has no future."

I imagine love can live pretty close to hate. Or at least anger. So the emotional intensity between bullying and love are similar. In my upbringing bullying occurred in a long list of ways: anger, name-calling, passive aggression, neglect, and abuse. And those, at times, co-existed with loyalty, tenderness, attachment.

David: *How would you say that this pattern played out again and again between the two of you affected your behavior as an adult? I can imagine it going either way—making you cautious and easily hurt, or making you tough and frank with people you care about.*

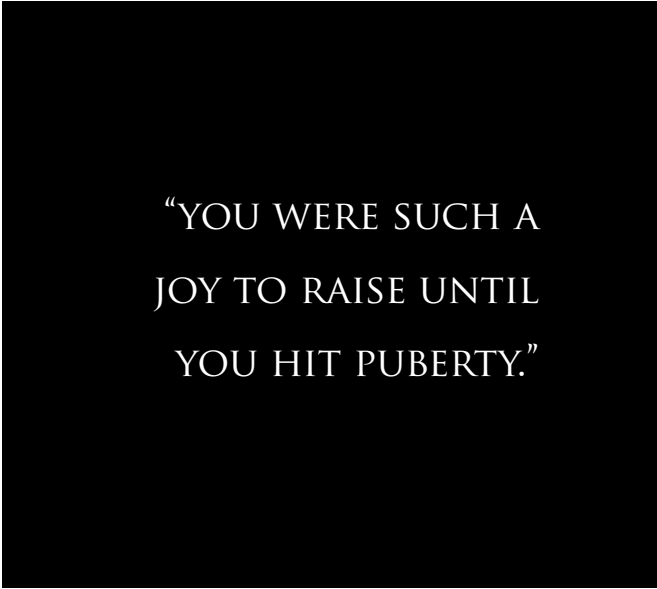
Patricia: I think it did go both ways! I am entirely too sensitive and cautious, and I am also sharp and spicy and honest. I do feel I have some advantages due to the self-

protection I had to practice. I wish sometimes that I could be more open and less timid in some situations.

David: *And don't I remember that you haven't had children of your own? Would you say your mother's treatment of you as a child had a lot to do with that crucial aspect of your life?*

Patricia: As far as choosing to be childfree, I would say that choice came because nothing about having babies ever interested me. I watched many of my best friends have babies and raise children and none of it appealed to me.

I do remember one conversation with my very best friend. We were having a conversation about our divergent choices, and I asked her what appealed to her about having children. She



"YOU WERE SUCH A
JOY TO RAISE UNTIL
YOU HIT PUBERTY."

answered that she wanted to have a relationship with someone else that was like the one she has with her mother. We both chuckled about anyone wanting to have a relationship like the one I had with my mom. I do think the tension and pain from that relationship makes my perception of parenting more negative than positive.

David: *What kind of mother might you have been if you had had children?*

Patricia: I don't believe one has to bear children to be a nurturer, and I am a royal nurturer. I have students and family members and friends whom I have mentored and supported. In particular, I have about 40–50 students I keep in very close contact with who know they can call on me at any time for anything. So I feel I have been wonderfully adept at nurturing others. It has been my life's calling as a teacher and mentor.

David: *Much of your subject matter—a difficult childhood, a drastic relocation from Ohio to Arizona, and a challenging search for enduring love and a meaningful life—could have led you to write a memoir that would find many more readers than a poetry collection. And that memoir will probably be available to you for many years to come. So, there are two questions here—one is whether you think you will eventually write a memoir, and the other is what advantages are there in writing poetry rather than prose about the shape your life has taken.*

Patricia: I have been working on that memoir since 2008. Prose writing is so hard! I have been practicing it for a while and I'm still not very good at it. I have worked with a lot of people who excel at it to try to get the memoir into shape. The first person who looked at the memoir was Nick Flynn, and he has had a huge influence on my composing process. He taught me to use the poetry to infuse my prose with more musicality and surprise. I have been able to write poems about my past by using image and avoiding reflection, I would guess. Writing the memoir has caused me to dig very deep into emotions I was not all that thrilled about reliving.

David: *One can see Nick Flynn writing poems as self-healing. Or a way of making it possible for him to live with himself and forgive family members who harmed him. I see that in other poets like Marie Howe and Dorianne Laux. Does that apply to you, too? Isn't it sometimes the case that one writes a poem to fix what is wrong with one's self?*

Patricia: Oh, yes, I see that. And it was one reason I wanted to work with Nick. He and I had a couple nearly identical scenes. I wanted to learn how he crafted those. I very often write poems to reconcile emotions I can't manage otherwise; something lingering in my brain that feels unsettled.

I have a goal this summer. I have a third manuscript of poetry nearly complete, and this memoir that is about 85% finished. I plan to move back and forth between the two so that they are both stronger.

David: *So many of your poems offer detailed descriptions that are a pleasure to read because they let us see landscape, weather, and even the interior of a barber shop with unusual clarity. I'd say your poems are almost always "solidly grounded," except that I also think your creating those descriptions comes out of a passion for the work of human beings, the world, and especially for nature. So my questions are A) where did your inclination to make vivid description come from and B) how do your descriptions help you with the overall task of creating poems?*

Patricia: Thank you so much for your kind words. I do love to describe a thing. There is something so magical for me about capturing a scene like a snapshot. I'm a failed visual artist—I would love to be able to draw or paint. I dabble in photography. But capturing image in poetry is like an itch I need to scratch.

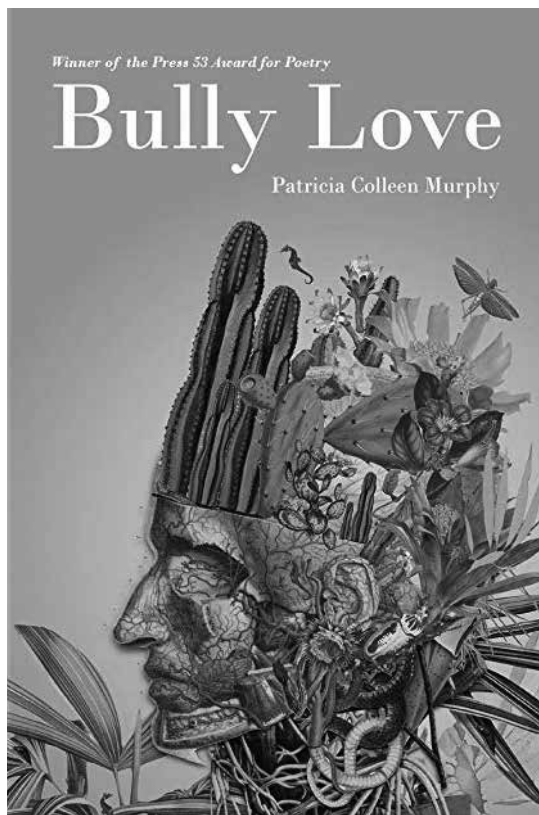
I come from a storytelling background. My father clung to his Irish heritage (thus my name) and relished the chance to tell a story. And he always started with vivid description before he dove into a punch line. So it's an inheritance I'm thankful for. I love taking a mental picture and bringing it to life in a poem.

David: *Who are the poets who have meant the most to you in becoming a poet? What did they give you that you didn't have before you read their work? When did you realize that you were a poet?*

Patricia: I realized I was a poet in second grade. I really had a love of language for a long time, and I was active in literary communities early on. In high school I was the editor of the county library literary magazine. I went to an arts high school and majored in creative writing. When I was a senior in high school I won a writing award and the prize was dinner with Nikki Giovanni. What a wonderful experience. And she was so kind and generous. So she was an early influence. My reading in high school included Gertrude Stein and e.e. cummings and Langston Hughes.

I lived in Europe for a year during college and I remember writing letters to my friends back home. I always picked a poem to copy onto the back of the envelope. It was such a special and intimate practice—almost like memorization—to hand write the words of a poet I admired. And I loved curating the choice for each individual friend or family member. It made me think about how I experienced the poem versus how they would. I remember picking lots of small, tight poems that were full of musicality and image and surprise. That practice really helped me understand personal aesthetic.

David: *This practice of yours reinforces a notion I have, which is that most poets have to teach themselves the most important things they need to know in order to write the poems they have in them to write. Teachers can certainly be a help, but mostly (in my opinion) in being deftly encouraging.*



Patricia: Yes, I agree here. I recently worked with a young poet who wasn't writing poems as much as she was rearranging words down a page, and I pushed her over and over to think about how her own work fit in with others writing today. I gave her lengthy exercises to find poems she loved and evaluate why she loved them. To break them down into parts and analyze what was attractive.

As an undergrad I fell in love with James Wright. Can you see my "big fat James Wright endings" in many poems? I used to get slammed for that in workshop. But I do love a little flourish at the end of a poem. And of course there was Elizabeth Bishop. And Russell Edson.

David: *Actually I loved your endings that have some extra going for them, and they didn't make me think of Wright. Or Bishop or Edson. So it sounds to me like your workshop comrades were just being competitive and jealous. And while we're on this topic—what are your opinions about workshops nowadays? One of mine is that I think workshop criticism has to be kept to a minimum. Too many of my students seem to enjoy extensively criticizing their classmates' work way more than they do praising or offering useful suggestions.*

Patricia: Yes, I certainly see that trend in some students; the desire to criticize. I just watched the movie *The Kindergarten Teacher* with Maggie Gyllenhaal, and there are some pretty funny scenes of poetry workshops where the students respond by saying things like "this poem is so derivative," even when it

is clear the student doesn't even know what derivative means. Those scenes were cleverly written.

I can give you a few examples of recent workshop experiences. I ask students to simply answer the questions "what works" and "what needs work." Or another way to say it is one compliment and one suggestion. I had this student who, literally no matter what I said to him, he found a misspelling or a typo. He would not look at any other thing. It was like he wanted an award for being a proofreader. I have had other students who offer so many hedges that you can't really get to the meat of the suggestion. I feel like we have a generation that might have gotten their idea of critical thinking from writing Yelp reviews. I find sometimes that the answers lack substance.

David: *Because you write about Ohio and Arizona with notable intensity, you offer your readers a vision of American life that might not be otherwise available to them. I'm speaking for myself in this regard, because the two worlds I know best are Virginia and Vermont, neither of which has a lot in common with Ohio and Arizona. So in a way you have valuable news to offer even your American readers about the variety and the emotional inspiration of the American continent. Are you aware of being above-average in your Americanness because you write so well about the look and feel of the places you know? In poems like "Fossil Springs Cutaway," "What Good Does a Drop Do," "Losing Track of Daylight," and "Sycamore Close-Up" do you have a literary mission in writing about those specific places?*

Patricia: You put a smile on my face! I love this notion of place expertise. I also teach travel writing and man do I push my students to do just what you are talking about: become above-average in their observations of place. Many of them resist. They want to simply list their movements or describe their margaritas. Your question gives me some insight into that!

I do have a literary mission. I want to deliver the humanity of place to the reader in a way that changes them. Two of the poems you mention here are part of a five-part series that I wrote in collaboration with a visual artist, an encaustic painter. She and I did a hike through Fossil Springs in Arizona and then in the next month she treated the place through painting and I treated it through poems. We displayed these paintings and poems at an art museum in Phoenix. So those poems, specifically, had the goal of capturing place and transforming it for an end reader.

It was a very meta exercise—we wanted to study the ways visual arts and language arts intersect, and also how human experience and emotion gets communicated. The poems in that series were so carefully crafted.

Other poems that explore landscapes, I must tell you, come from a compulsion to chronicle and communicate my euphoric feelings in place. It's almost a way to control my out-of-control emotions. I make an exhausting travel partner because I get

giddy over new experience: both natural and urban. These poems are a way for me to manage and channel that energy.

David: *In your poems about relationships, (e.g., “Three Pound Cutthroat,” “Mid-Street,” and “My 3 a.m. Problem”) you often present a man and a woman not being on the same page in what they want from each other. You present that discord so objectively that your reader can see it as a negative force at work on the couple and/or as a realistic reckoning with the given imperfection that love brings with it. The speaker of “Time to Shear the Earth’s Hair” articulates that ambivalence with sharply truthful elegance: “And so I will live the rest of my life / just short of rapture.” How would you prefer that your readers understand your vision of romantic love?*

Patricia: Thank you for this beautiful question and for the observations behind it. A friend of mine recently asked John, “How do you feel about being so prominent in this book?” He is very generous in allowing me to capture him page after page.

I think one thing that has kept us so strong for 25 years is allowing each other to have emotions. I want the reader to feel that romantic love involves total trust in your other, total ability to be your own self.

For me loyalty and devotion and care and kindness and generosity are pretty damn sexy. But I recognize that romantic love also includes disappointment, anger, impatience, and unfulfilled expectations.

I want the reader to know that even the best relationships take work.

David: *This last sentence seems to me directly to name that aspect to a relationship, but it’s usually implicit in your poems, which is to say that you leave it up to your reader to figure that out. But I wonder if there’s also a poem to write about a relationship that has plenty of problems but that nevertheless is functional and sturdy—built to last for the long haul.*

Patricia: Yes. I think my dad poems do that. Our relationship was terribly flawed but we were so loyal to each other.

David: *What do you hope your students take away from your creative writing classes?*

Patricia: I want my students to learn respect. Respect for contemporary writers is top on the list—I push all my students to support people who are writing today, who are working very hard to express themselves. Sometimes young writers want everything to happen for them at once. I want them to recognize writing as a practice, one that their contemporaries are toiling at every day.

David: *I love this answer. Have you encountered lack of respect from talented students? (Not sure I have. Generally my good*

students have been grateful readers of the good writers that have gone before them.)

Patricia: Hm. Let me think about my 26 years of teaching—most have been respectful when asked to read new authors. But I do this activity where I ask students to name three living American poets and literally almost every time someone says Elizabeth Barrett Browning. This was often in 200 or 300 level poetry workshops, of course.

But you’re right, that when I introduce contemporary poets to talented students, they are totally grateful readers.

Though I do find some who are less so. I had a student two semesters ago who said she was going to transform the face of American poetry using Instagram and that she wanted to make her first million dollars from poetry by the time she was 25. My reading list didn’t appeal to her. So there’s that element and I feel like it is becoming more prominent.

I also want my students to respect their subjects and treat their subjects with care and intelligence. I want them to make conscious choices not only in topic, but in composition and artistry.

Many of my assignments are designed to stretch them to see the world from different perspectives. I put up with a lot of whining from my students because I often ask them to radically alter their composition process. To a recent group of protesting students, I said, “I know. I am a terrible human being. But please set a timer and humor me for thirty minutes.”

And then they produce work they didn’t know they had in them.

David: *And isn’t this one of highest pleasures of teaching? It’s also one the highest pleasures of writing—creating something you didn’t know you had in you.*

Patricia: Yes, so true! I’m willing to be the bad guy if it gets us there.

HARVEST

The pepper plants
 Ed moved from the garden
 in white tubs, and hauled

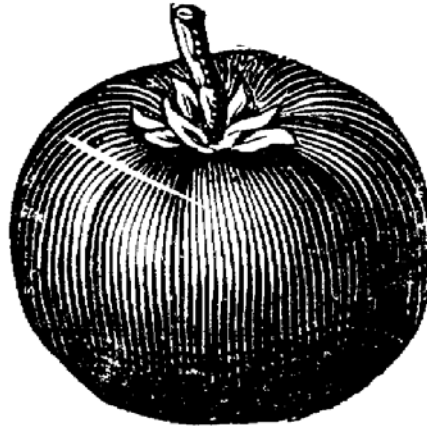
indoors to live with
 the rest of our clutter,
 dropped all their leaves

by Thanksgiving. But now,
 with the ground hard,
 lawn still white,

they've slipped us flowers.
 One's even squeezed out
 a small fruit, gnarled

as a toothless gnome.
 We won't eat it.
 It's not food we're after,

just this off-kilter, out-of-
 proportion pleasure of seeing
 kinked, bare bones give birth.



FLIGHT

The ten-year-old finds a wing suit
like the one she saw on TV,
but in her own size,
squirrel membranes fanned
from arm to hip. In her mind
she has already zipped it on
and gone gliding from roof to roof
in that spiked, glass-glittering city
she loves with a serenity
she'll never feel, when grown,
for husband, friend or child.

In our first year, the man
I would one day marry
told me that given a chance
to help settle another world—
a one-way voyage, of course,
with no certainty he'd land alive—
he'd grab it, no question
or need to ask anyone's blessing.
And there I'd be, barefoot
in the dry grass, watering tomatoes,
watching the sun set and rise.

SPECTRAL BIRD

after the Rufino Tamayo painting
Pájaro espectral, 1956

A blurred flight
found feather

highway littered
with roadkill owls
exclusively barn

white wings waving
to each passenger
window
 each rearview mirror

focus on the task at hand
unless something larger
is heading your way

never turn to traffic your back
never assume no one watches
waits to say it is so

then slaps your blind
spot silly
 widespread
your face heart-shaped
wondering where it all went
wrong
 the piercing call
the oblique dissonance
between thought where
you'd be

and where finally
you are

WOMAN WITH BIRD CAGE

after the Rufino Tamayo painting
Mujer con jaula, 1941

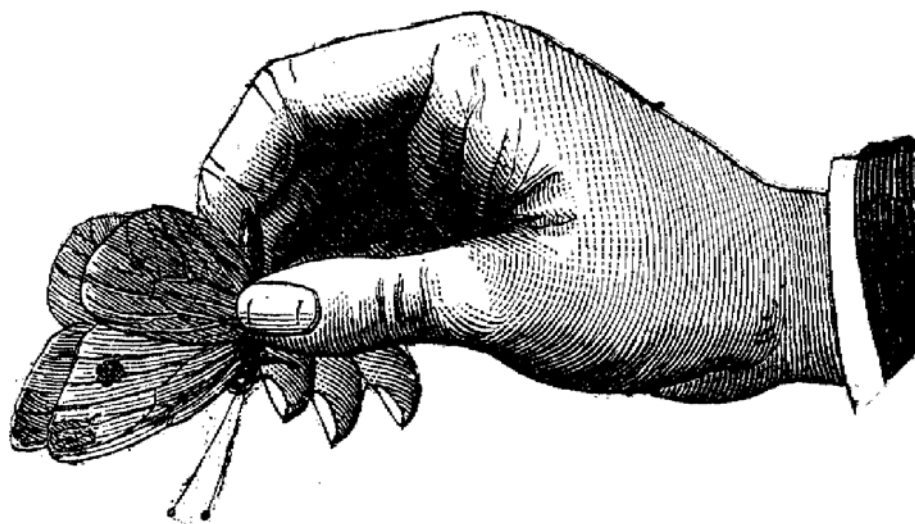
Bring ourselves out for fresh air
natural light

 we when still
caged to lost not for fear lost
reflections among buildings
steel identical glass and hands
acquiring

 what inquiring behind
the mask what curves fabric
beneath

 you'd be prettier if
you smiled more if you let
your hair down

 extend me
the courtesy to tear any loose
wing
 starve any sharp tongue



IN VENICE

Parboil voices from the cobble garden:
two in the morning windows unshuttered:

beside this pension writing desk
with legs like an animal's
with legs like a dancer's
praises of flowers carved
in mouths around its thighs:

I keep a bottle
of the fondant afternoon sun drape
I chased today:

the market where men
in fluorescent vests
swept ice piles into melt:

left fish skins, orange peels, elastic bones
strange broken vegetables
for gulls to tear at:

the upper tiers, the bent balconies
of canal rotting buildings
still mild brightened
with yellow flattening light
that lifted me.

Garbage cans now hand trolleyed
unspool like steel cable:
clump like a painter lugging cans:
foley thunder:
a drunken bishop of the street.

Even here late night is about disposal:
reclamation.

A woman shouts in Italian:

I lean out to watch her passing shadow
bend on a stonewall.

In the wine tastes of falling in love
with tinting and highlights:
in this thin mattress need for sleep:

if the moon were not a passion
carried like a bead:
I wouldn't keep the night open:

if her anger were not Venetian:

if the sun tomorrow didn't hide
sometimes from alleyways
where I climb stone steps
to find again locked gates:

I wouldn't adore her this way.

DASH

The famous woman asked me to watch her baby
for a few days so she could do some chores. The girl was the size
of a cocktail napkin. The mother kept her in a pouch.

The moon on the water at Lake Tahoe
shrank to the size of a quarter that wouldn't go in
the machine. So many things the moon will not buy us.

The youngest child always said grace, adding new hunger
to the moment: We lived for the day he would not reach
for words but shoot the roiled canyon rapids toward the meal.

The President has asked us to be small. Already,
on TV, he has shortened the war to the length
of a Scrabble game. He votes against triple-word scores.

When my wife swims, she counts the piston-lifts
of her legs, the Egyptian jabs of her arms. Now and then,
she will run into the pool wall or, at sea, the side of a whale.

The mountain steamed for months before the day of eruption,
the first cabins vaporized, the forest flattened. Thirty
years now, wild rose blooming with the bones.

When I run, I say a rosary for each mile. They are,
after all, dying behind me, like the cocktail baby
I found, after a long day of driving, dried up on the dash.

ON THE WAY TO MACHU PICCHU

In the train car behind them,
a man called bingo numbers

as the great green terraces
floated miles ahead in clouds.

Five hundred slaves for each priest,
each astronomer, all day

sowing and storing the corn.

ROSANNE SMITH

THE HEARINGS, 1973

It was the beginning of fall, the heat having quit.
I could hear the maples, hear the leaves shifting—my senses
so alive though I wanted them gone. It was the fall
following the televised hearings: John Dean, sworn,
spilling all; the camera wooing Mrs. Dean, her platinum hair
pulled back taut in a bun. *With a wife that looks like that*,
my father had said, *he can't be all bad*. And I heard him
as if I'd come from another galaxy. It was the fall
my mother became a daily communicant. Sick in her cells,

she knew she was nearing her judgment. It was one of those days,
back from Mass, she put her lips to my brow and spoke
as if into a tunnel, into the miles, *How are you?* And I heard her—
I raised my white flag right then. Just then. And soon
it was November: cold, colder, the maples flaming
past a Greyhound on to a new city, a city of monuments
and blue laws, and a gilded dome against visible sky. And as if
it was what I had wanted, I began again.

SUNNI BROWN WILKINSON

THE SPIRITS CALLED LEGION SPEAK

He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

Mark 5: 9–10

In a place called Gadarenes
we found him: alone, picking shells
from the beach, the road there
cut off and brambled. Oh, the deep
waiting and the deeper cold,
and finally this shape we could
cast in. We liked the hum
of his blood—a thousand bees
banging—the slits in his palms and the rings
of his eyes. And you know what they say,
location, location . . . It worked out
for a while, but the hunger got old.
All those wandering years with no feet
of our own and our only mouth
his ragged mouth and our only food
his sobbing. Surely, those pigs will do.
After all, it had been rather crowded,
and the semblance of warmth in the friction
of his lashings never lasted. So what if
we grunt, snouts to the ground, squeal
like little girls? The grass is sweet,
and our hooves on the stones make a musical
mad hammering. From the top of the cliff,
the sky is a highway, and the sea
is the body of God.

CHURCH GOING

Each cheerless Sunday, my father herded
us to the First Presbyterian Church,
the big one, for somebodies in business

or the professions. In Sunday school,
I'd sit there in my constricting tie
and itchy wool cardigan, hearing tales

of people who seemed to live hard lives
in a place dreary as church. When I sat
with my parents, I'd study the large carving

of The Last Supper in front of the altar, done
in Italy I was told. Christ always looked
like an unwanted guest, the others leaning

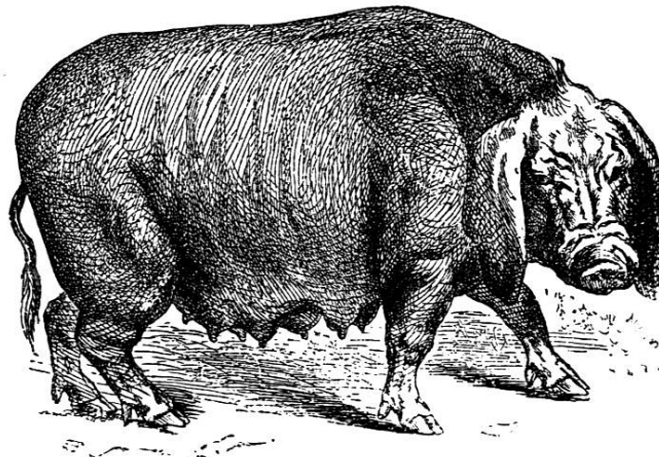
away from him or gesturing rudely. I tried
to guess which one was Judas. There were
church dinners—spaghetti, rolls, iced tea,

jello, and piety—in “Fellowship Hall,”
which smelled like what you could only
call “church basement.” My father,

an elder with a red-ribbon tag that bore
his name and title in gold, called men he liked
or just looked up to “good Christian gentlemen,”

said it as if rehearsing from a note card.
He told me I should try to be that way when
I grew up. I thought he meant like men

who practiced Christian virtues all week long.
Later, I understood he meant like white men
who had money and weren't Jews.



MICHAEL METIVIER

WHITENESS

There's a bullet hole in the only sign
 for miles, just over the brook from our house
 across a narrow bridge. We live close
 enough that in the winter we can see its red
 reflected through the desaturated woods
 and maybe a car or two per hour inching
 up to it. Now in the season's dregs
 from the same window I witness
 a pair of grouse huddled in a tree,
 I track the brook's rush in relation
 to rain falling high on the mountain towns,
 I'm impatient for the ferns
 and the bloodroot that seem impossible
 when everything once soft has been brittle
 for so long, and yes, I think about the hole
 someone blasted, the shell tumbling
 into a snow drift and the bullet catching
 the old bones of a pollarded willow. Then I admit
 to my shame there must be some pleasure
 in firing a gun into the night, even just once,
 and at what better target
 than something telling me to stop.

RUMOR MILL

Half of all relationships end
 the way they begin: two people
 strangering themselves from their own alone.

Your third finger still encased
 with removable gold, a promise
 you say you can no longer honor. So,

don't flatter yourself.
 I too elope with what's within me.
 Yes I love you, I love you not. I believe in

the quick rooms of anonymous hotels.
 Even secrecy sours like an ex's texts. Lust
 chisels the same risk into our marrow,

the same bone.
 And when we arrived in that distant city,
 we togetherd ourselves again
 as if nothing before had never happened.

NO DISCO

No response. No one home. No stalking the backyard
 to see if some loved one will come home.

The moon goes straight to voicemail. No ring, no dial tone.
 During our together, with water clocks from dropped

pawnshops: no cassette tapes, no radios.
 Every sound's the world dusting itself off,

polishing good shoes for the long walk alone.
 No kiss goodnight. No other pillow.

No one's coming up the driveway: no garage door,
 no alarm code. The night migrates

right to my toes. From all this fire,
 what coals? I might just as well keep the door

closed. No you, and then you arrive. When I ask
 where you've been, you say *nowhere*, *why do you ask?*

MARJORIE POWER

AS YOU ARE NOT WITHIN

only three percent of my friends
will bother to read this
all the way through

even fewer will care enough
to share it on your timelines

and I know who you are
and I know who you are not

I've swallowed these truths,
no need to taste, as you
are not within hearing, or
view, or reach of my hand

the scent of your freshly washed hair
is a lost cause



BEST DEALS ON HOTELS

We prefer the rockstar package,
a person could shove their hands in cement

and exit the all-you-can-eat buffet:
subprime education, starched pink collars.

Advisories en route to Having It All
boast of moral-compass fairgrounds along

major highways. Fair weather is misleading.
We use our inner knowing as a rearview mirror.

Someone calls us brilliant after a bunch
call us dumb. Someone says if it hurts, it's mileage.

If it's mileage, the roads stutter and towns blink
to stay awake. What you overhear is a conversation

not a real anointing, every night the two argue
then lay down in a double bed.

Curves in the road forecast
freeway diners

treated to our fashion sense. When our pockets
get cold, we rub together

sound-bytes. We think
this is how you make a Hallelujah.

At the coastal apartment space
cockroaches can live off a hairbrush, they never

seem to care who pays the rent. We unload
the last of our unique efforts, drift up the generic corner

of our personal dead end. Answers
in the 8 ball arrive *Jeopardy*

style: How far do you have to travel
before your first love

chaps its treads?
I'll take My Heart

Is A Receipt, Alec,
for 400.

THE UNBUTTONED EYE BY ROBERT CARR
(3: A Taos Press, 2019)

REVIEW BY DEVON BALWIT

Back in the mid-eighties, I sometimes accompanied my gay roommate to the bars of West Hollywood. A woman, I was invisible to the patrons and spent my time like an anthropologist, trying to learn the ways of gay bodies—how men signaled desire and acted upon it—so different from what I knew. Robert Carr's poems flesh out (indeed!) these hows, unabashedly delighting in men's desire for other men. "We are the timeless fuck in skinless / dark," "We do not care / for sex with women, hunt // toothsome men." Bodies and the pleasures they give are lovingly itemized— "thin men measure dark lengths against the lining of a mouth." Sexual pleasure is taken in bars, in bathrooms, on boardwalks, in tents, in elegant bedrooms, "[c]ock dowsing the center / that sustains space." Even knowing the threat of what was then called G.R.I.D. (Gay Related Immune Deficiency), candy-colored condoms were left by many sex-club patrons untouched in bowls: "Come into me unsheathed / strand, little death hood / between boy and man."

WHILE GOOD,
THE POET ADMITS,
"LIFE IS FLATTER
NOW THAT NO ONE
IS DYING."

These are the beautiful bodies documented by Robert Mapplethorpe—not the least of which was Robert Mapplethorpe's own. Readers should spend time with Mapplethorpe's photographs to catch their many echoes throughout the poems—the infamous whip in the anus, the gorgeous calla lilies, men having sex in multiples, leather-clad men, men pissing on one another, Mapplethorpe sporting devil's horns. The photographs of Robert Carr as a young man echo some of Mapplethorpe's poses. They are produced using

the process of Solarization, which involves re-exposing the photographic paper during the development process to produce an eerie silver image that makes his young, sculptural body look electrified, surrounded by a dark halo, almost as if the fine hairs of the skin have become metal filings drawn by a magnet.

Alas, as we all know, in the 80's, the hungry body soon became the dying body. Drawing on his long years of witness and serving the infected and the suffering, Carr writes intimately about the ravages of AIDS on his community: Kaposi's sarcoma, thrush, incontinence, hair loss, vomiting. These bodies that were once sought out to pose in art classes, for photographs, for one another in the heat of passion, soon fail in hospices, hospitals, and on living room couches. Carr's poems are unsparing: "Release of shit in a death-bed, spread / of blood shaken over birth. Salt of first cry, sugar / of breast milk, black rattle vomit."

And yet the dying body calls forth compassion, as in this excerpt, from "Font": "You whisper how he's lost the strength to walk, so for weeks // you've carried him like a child learning a waltz. You tell me how, / lifted from the bed, he places lesioned soles on top of your feet, / how you walk backward toward the bathroom [...]" All-night sex morphs into fear and deathbed vigil.

And yet, as the poet's mother says to him: "Not everyone who dies / is a beautiful boy, amen." Many of these men do make it through the crisis. Then, they have to accommodate yet another loss—that of aging, the beautiful, sculptural body morphing into the lumpy,umpy, mottled old body, yet one that celebrates the opportunity to age. "Wrapped in a fist, I grow still—age spotted, / a lichen twist growing out of a night." "I burrow contented in fattened fur— / learn to love loss // of lank [...]" Bars tame into thirty-year marriages, husband and husband, the raising of a child, wills, and funeral arrangements. While good, the poet admits, "Life is flatter now that no one is dying."

The reader soon notices that *The Unbuttoned Eye* is full of Roberts. The collection begins with a prelude: "Some names I remember, others I make up [...]" I am the sum of prints, stacked Roberts [...]" At least fifteen poems reference the name: Robert Mapplethorpe, Robert Carr, young Roberts, older Roberts, bedside Roberts, bedded Roberts. How do these many Roberts interact? Robert chides Robert: "Robert, stop moping with the dead." Robert witnesses Robert: "Robert clings // to castles in reread picture books." Roberts mourns (with) Robert: "Wordless, / another Robert leaves the neighbor's house." Robert reflects: "Robert, even now, we are not lovers. I allow you a bronzed urn on a mantle, nothing more." Prose

poem letters to and from Robert Mapplethorpe serve as section heads. The multiplication of the name, the reappearance of the poet's younger self in photographs, shifts the reader forward and backwards in time—through avid bodies and ailing ones, wistful and grateful ones. The Roberts challenge one another and call one another to account.

Finally, the poems must stand as poems, and not just as a historical record. These do—artfully and cunningly wrought. Carr has mastered line breaks, startling us with deft shifts in direction, for example: “I sit naked with a small group / of strangers, unusually well / hung.” He plays with layout, adding space at the margins and between stanzas to allow the poems to breathe as in this excerpt from “Someone Else’s Bruise”:

*Restless swelter
—curled paint,
a ceiling skin hanging
in heat. A never-
to-do list. Rolling
onto my back,
I find imprints
on a forearm. Twisted cotton
sheets spiraled on the floor.*

Carr’s work is also full of poignant metaphor. He writes of pink magnolia blossoms, birds echoing boys: “Almost to a bird, they fell to earth / and died of fear. Blush gray wings / silent, folded on a walkway [...]” Titles unfold layer upon layer. Font evokes tears, holy water, the fluid in lesions as well as the font of the Motel 6 sign. “Chocolate Box” refers to the slab of a dead man’s coffin as well as the narrator’s own anus, hiding the thong of the deceased whose funeral he is attending. Carr has a light touch with his heavy material. Never once does the reader feel that the book was written in the service of a message, and yet it traces the course of an epidemic and of attitudes towards and of those who bore the brunt of it. “Everybody leaves behind something,” Carr writes. We are fortunate that he will have left *The Unbuttoned Eye*.

MEETING MY FATHER’S MISTRESS

His jangling in her lock
may sound like far off bells,
but the devil swamp-thing
hunkering over blue fire
turns into someone’s big sister
pouring me a bowl of soup
while an old man clears his throat in the hall.
Two months after he left,
my mother screamed her agreement
to Switzerland: KFC, the skateboard park,
but wanted me nowhere near
the whore, the bitch. Now I’m also a cheat,
maiden as those words
on her lips when I shake
the woman’s hand, my eyes confessing
by their rendezvous with wallpaper,
shag rug, anything but her face,
the terrible, beautiful truth.
Soon enough whoa must turn to woe,
let me atone for a life
of Parcheesi, smashed hopes
and dishes, renting a canoe.



LOST

Patti Smith

She learns that the things she carries—her camera,
the coat she wore to speak with the dead—recoil from her,
fall away. They do not come when she calls, and she calls.
Her bags still at the hotel, with the book she'd read
and reread, the photos taken in perfect light. All gone.
She's left to walk through the city streets
with only the clothes on her back, and the dreams
she never fails to record in her notebook.

She took her camera back to the cemetery
but the season had changed, or it was still spring
but no longer evening, or the wind was blowing
from another quarter. The light was sharper
or more diffident. She found herself thinking
of coffee, its fragrance cupped in her hands,
instead of the voice she had come there to hear.
Too much to ask that it speak once more.

I touch the keys in my pocket, again and again;
in another city, the plastic card to open the door.

The weight of my phone. Both gloves in my purse.
I keep the books that matter all in one room

with a door that closes, drawings and prints
on every wall, desk cluttered with intricate carvings.

But neither the dead nor my dreams will stay with me,
and there are friends I have not seen in years.

Our lost do not come back like the cats
that walk into the next room in order to cry out

and wait for us to call. It is tempting to think
that the lost return to the places we found them:

a favorite earring into the hands of the woman
who made it, the book with its marginal notes

to the dusty corner of a second-hand bookstore.
Perhaps I dreamt and then lost the words
on the page, the song I remember her playing.





SLIGHTLY RIGHT AND UNDER THE CEILING FAN

When the kitchen bulb slowed its glow and finally
fizzled, I diced in dim-light, searched for the right
spices with my fingers instead of eyes, I let the moonlight
caramelize and simmer. The next morning

standing on a chair, I found the fixture heavy enough to sore
my shoulder and the weight of it all held up by a single screw
pressing glass into some other matter. On average, how many times
do we almost-die before we do? I remember

talking in my parents' kitchen, hearing an eruption
of sorts upstairs, that I-don't-know-what-
but-it's-bad noise. My sister and I hesitantly climbed,
peered into her bedroom. And I'm not sure

if ceiling fans come with expiration dates, but here
was the fifth blade, severed and slammed into her desk
on the other side of the room. And I know this house

I'm in now is old and I'm not yet. And most nights
before sleep I imagine that blade taking flight, an island
cutting air on all sides, a force bound to give its heat
to something else. Still, tonight, I tug the chain and let

my hair ripple against the pillowcase. I listen to the corners
of wall-tacked photos curl closer and snap back, cresting
waves reaching for each other before they crack.

FROM THE WRECKAGE

Before this music in my ears,
there were gears spinning

and spun, hands burning songs
sung and unsung. Every hour

the clock apologizes to the sun
and mica flecks hold only

what you give them. The waiting
spindles, spider silk across

every footstep and fractured
concrete story, but also stills, horned

pondweed bay-bottomed and praying
for your breath. Press your ear

to the atmosphere and if you
listen, the flecks sparkle between

the tracks, coughing parcels
of geologic time. They speak: *keep*

me, I am yours. They fragment
through your fingertips, your palm,

the bass and the crash like a squid
traveling the thirteen stomachs

of a beaked whale. They speak: *sloths
and manatees are nonconformists, wishing*

*neck bones into even numbers, smaller
skeletal homes.* They speak:

*tomorrow's stars are leaking
the light you switched off*

years ago. Perhaps on the day
the kids smashed the boombox

with a metal bat and you, just a kid
yourself, waded through plastic

to retrieve a piece of its anatomy; you held
it in your palm, a stray mewling

for keeping. Thumb the gears and watch
the eye remember how to read without

language. They speak: *severed
and missing, something is*

working still. Working
fingers fix the old Victrola

someplace else, while earth
presses the ocean warm

into crystal. Somewhere the sky
is yawning its jaw-hinges

loose. Boats pass
through while you wait red

for words or closing, and instead
sediment falls

from the blue. Years torn
whisper in unison: *keep*

*me, you are waiting
for something beautiful.*

NOS (DISORDER, NOT OTHERWISE SPECIFIED)
BY ABY KAUPANG & MATTHEW COOPERMAN
(Futurepoem Books, 2018)

REVIEW BY MICHAEL MCLANE

There are thousands of books for caregivers of all types. They mostly deal in platitudes, with subtitles that rely on words like “hope,” “mindful,” “comfort” and “heart.” I tried to read many such books during the five years my wife and I cared for her father only to give up in frustration or disgust. My background in poetry didn’t help matters, as the literary contributions to this canon are largely non-existent. What no one tells new caregivers is that there are no books for this work—no map, no manual, no army of technical writers making sure you can’t get it wrong. At best, you make it up as you go, and hope you get parts of it right. Whether it be terminal illness, senescence, or profound, long-term disability, caregivers are dropped into an uncanny space between the diagnostic and the metaphysical.

The work is traumatic enough when a loved one is able to communicate their wishes, needs, and pains. When that ability is taken away, or never existed in the first place, all the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* is thrown out in favor of a kind of anguished ambiguity that becomes routine and is embodied in a seemingly endless two-part act of translation—one part for the doctors, specialists, and the diagnostic spectrum, the other for the family member whose every movement, wince, or touch may or may not be an act of communication in the eyes of the caregiver. The books skirt around the costs of this work, not the literal financial costs (though they are often considerable), but the costs to all else you love—your marriage, your family, your own health, say nothing of your professional and creative endeavors. They do not tell you to prepare to lose more. There is a profoundly different kind of absence involved in, and a wholly new kind of love learned from, caregiving because the loved one is right there within reach.

So perhaps it takes a poet, or in this case, two, to more effectively navigate such lyric territory. Aby Kaupang’s and Matthew Cooperman’s collaborative book *NOS (disorder, not otherwise specified)* arrives in this space as a revelation. It is a brutally honest exploration of the first decade of their life together with their daughter, Maya, who lives with a complex set of developmental and medical issues and whose care is intensive. The personal narrative is both contrasted and emphasized by a critique of the institutional maze they must navigate to find care for her and for themselves in the medical industry. Moments of intense personal reflection are undercut on the next page by medical charts or rebukes from doubtful doctors. Anyone who has ever advocated for a loved one can recognize the disconnect at play between these two modes. It is easy to feel completely at

the mercy of medical staff and institutions, to sense that one is being literally cut off from the world outside the hospital, as an early section illustrates:

*they that were in the children’s hospital they that on the
pavilion
parented they that refined their faces in the sieve of seizure

in the daylight met the carded men the parking arm
the vertical blades of the guillotine elevator*

However, for all the severing offered by expertise, parking arms, and elevators, Cooperman and Kaupang immediately recognize a community in that insistence on the “they.” It is a litany that carries on in the book, and one that suggests they acknowledge a camaraderie amongst the parents and the children present in such settings, in spite of the intense isolation they feel in the midst of Maya’s fluctuating health.

NOS makes it clear right away that it will not spare the reader any part of the corporeal or emotional space of its characters, be they Maya or her parents:

*The girl began and then so did the book, a mirror for sorrow
or anger
or fear. The book is a messenger, out in front. It canvases the
halls of
many hospitals. Again and again at the ER soothing her
body. The
daughter didn’t eat, didn’t sleep, didn’t laugh, didn’t shit,
didn’t walk
anymore. We went for a long visit. Doctors said autism,
Valium,
Abilify, sensory processing, seizures, inactive GI, they said
tape a bag
to her shoulder. We went again when they said she was
crazy,
a crazy summer when our little girl lived with other
un-specifiable children.*

Such overwhelming moments become routine here, and even the most practical aspects of Maya’s care take on far larger implications in the midst of such stress:

*She is an environmental crisis. We imagine the mountain
she’s made, she*

*daily makes, of diapers and shit and wipies and shampoo
bottles and
soiled car seats, and plastic toys, she cares not a whit. How
can such a
little pliant body make so much? She pushes and pulls and
climbs her
potty mountain to the end.*

Maya's life, and that of her family, shift from a domestic sphere to an institutional one, their days spent in an anxious ecosystem of highways, waiting rooms, and specialists' offices, trying to nail down a diagnosis for her condition. The costs of this shift are high. Maya is not an only child and her brother, Elias, is largely absent from the text, an absence rectified in several crushing moments—such as being relegated to an item on one of the diagnostic “checklists” that reads “is one with the son who is absent” and is footnoted with the following: “The other one missing in this terra incognito is my son, Elias. I miss you...I'm sorry for all this I'm missing—.”

The disorientation Maya's medical regimen causes in their actual day-to-day lives—one footnote reads “Distance from home/son to hospital/daughter = 92 miles”—combined with a lack of developmental milestones in Maya's life—the kind of linear, horizontal trajectory from newborn to infant to toddler that most parents can take for granted—is contrasted by the presence of medical establishment in the poems. Medicine exerts its own inscrutable order on the family in several ways. The first is the form the book takes—eight sections, each of which corresponds to a floor of the hospital in Denver where the family spent large swaths of Maya's early life. This provides a vertical or hierarchical progression through treatment that accentuates the missing linear/temporal milestones in her life. Ironically, we begin in the ER at ground level and end on floor eight where patients are discharged, a counterintuitive arrangement that metaphorically suggests the danger and uncertainty of walking out into the world with so much unspecified, but also emphasizes the increasingly wide or aerial view of what their care and love of Maya will entail, even if the specifics remain unclear.

Perhaps the most obvious way that medicine asserts its role in the book is the inclusion of numerous documents from doctors, hospitals and other medical entities. The coldness and confusion such medical charts, graphs, and diagnostic tools represent for patients or their families are further emphasized by Kaupang's inclusion of several of her own diagnostic tools in such lists, which provide a far more empathetic view of their subjects. Interspersed amongst phrases such as “identifies property as an object” or “shows an interest/puts it down” are criteria such as “chooses to be in a collection,” “identifies as a diagnosis,” and “identifies poetry as a placebo.” An additional feature of these documents is their ubiquitous use of acronyms (NOS, FOC=father of child, MOC=mother of child, among others) that seem efficient and useful from a medical perspective, but they belie the enormity of the task facing parents like Kaupang and Cooperman and only serve to further alienate worried parents

ONE DAY MY MIDWIFE
CAME AND STRAIGHT-
TALKED, “ABY, I HELPED
BRING HER INTO THIS
WORLD. I CAN HELP YOU
BRING HER OUT.”

who may or may not know their meaning. Ever the advocate, Kaupang not only learns all their meaning and implications, but incorporates them into even the more lyric sections of the book, adopting them as unconventional terms of endearment within their new living arrangement:

*our house was
struck by lightning*

*the lightening actually not so surprising
was humorous even fire shot out the oven
door
the instance FOC leaping aside was antic*

Maya's endless itinerary is trying for the whole family, but the lack of answers that medial experts provide, the perpetual unknowing is far more taxing on both parents, as illustrated by sections such as this one from “THE QUESTION OF DIAGNOSIS IS THE HISTORY OF GNOSIS”:

*There is a lost gnosis in our little girl, there is a lost gnosis
in your little boy. The pronominal drift of allegiance
pulls at the cell strings. Arias of dissonance.*

Dissonance and the unspecifiable loom large everywhere in NOS. It the nature of both Maya's condition(s) and the nature of the task ahead for her parents. But uncertainty finds its way into every aspect and every relationship in their lives, including their relationship with each other. In what is perhaps the most searing confession in the entire collection, the penultimate poem begins with celebration and descends quickly into a kind of quiet chaos “We went into Marriage to see what we could sing. Ourselves and / others. The song. Co-mingled singing, they that co-sang

there. / But biographical seizures, sleepless nights, not the song one intended to / sing, no, not singing at all.” However, this same piece ends on a note of survival but with an admission that the unknowing continues, “NOS. No one knew. Not if the daughter, the mother, the father, the / brother, the marriage, could survive. Only that days keep coming. Most / days are unspecified.”

It hardly seems an accident that this closing reflection is the only center-justified piece in the book (though others have moments of centering only to break away from that format quickly) as it seems a foundation of sorts, a leveling of the pains suffered and work accomplished as well as an embrace of uncertainty as a way of being, a fitting segue into the book’s final poem, “Good Day.”

In the interest of a late but full disclosure, I should say that I know and love Aby, Matthew, and Maya. I’ve known Maya since her birth and I watched, mostly from afar, as her parents struggled for years with a seemingly impossible situation. These poems and their early readings of them helped me survive and navigate the chaos of my own caregiving experience. Those performances were heartbreaking, as were some of the early reactions to the material which, as they note in the book’s final section questioned their attempts to speak for their daughter and even questioned whether or not they loved her.

*[...] As if the repeated diagnosis, “Not Otherwise Specified,”
wasn’t such a blow because no one could specify, could lead
us to the
her that was more than ill body, body ineffective. No one
could name a
thing so we couldn’t treat a thing.*

Maya means “illusion” and so we have wandered looking

*Did we do this to her? Did your genes or my genes, or your
drugs, or
My drugs, do this? It’s not that the reader knows anything.
We’ve
Wandered and wondered and blamed ourselves all alone.*

Guilt is an inescapable part of the caregiving experience. It cozies up to the fear that surrounds every new medication, trial, or procedure and never leaves its side. To be so reductive in one’s reading of a decade’s worth of daily attempts to connect to one’s own child, illustrates a literary parallel to the treatment of those practicing advocacy, particularly advocacy for others, within the medical establishment. In an early poem, one of the countless documents Cooperman and Kaupang salvage from their hospital trips contains a doctor’s notation that reads simply, “the parents are rude.” In a recent interview with Michael M. Weinstein in *Michigan Quarterly Review* about NOS, Kaupang addresses that moment in more depth:

“One doctor noted ‘the mother was rude.’ Perhaps parental advocacy sounds rude? The documents, too, reveal the lows

of parenting and desperation. And sometimes, I think I would recall nothing of Matthew’s and my relationship, or our experiences with the medical establishment had someone else not written them down. Such interminable intensity is bound to deposit black holes in the mind. The texts serve as cues.”

And so too do the texts in NOS serve as cues, for a desperate need to understand, to survive as a family, however unconventional, and to continue loving Maya, both in ways she may understand and those she may not. Nowhere is this more poignant than during a visit that Kaupang has with the midwife who helped to deliver Maya:

*One day my midwife came and straight-talked, “Aby, I helped
bring
her into this world. I can help you bring her out.” And we
talked about
hospice. Talked about removing the feeding tube. Talked
about what a future
without Maya would be [...]*

Instead, they went “to the hospital one more time.” It was likely not the last time, but it was enough to continue on, to disregard all thoughts of a future without Maya. It is easy from afar to project motives onto such relentlessness, to accuse the advocate of some twisted form of narcissism. But advocacy is nearly always the reverse. It demands one be subsumed by the one you advocate for. Identity and individuality blurs for the advocate(s), helped along by the acronyms and negation of the medical establishment (i.e. FOC and MOC). But in the end, such criticisms are unimportant in the face of declarations such as,

*What is there to say of this child? She lived, lives through this.
So did we. You want to know
more about her. So do we.*

Or more simply:

Maya is real and worth writing for

NOS is a tremendous act of love, both for this single family and for a much larger community of parents and others providing such care to loved ones, all of whom almost certainly feel the isolation and desperation that is so central to much of the work in this book. It does not shy away from the screams, and tears, and shit inherent to such work. Language falters often at such times, and NOS allows it to falter, to jumble, to slur. But in the end, Maya is present and “[p]resent is / this gift of the daughter’s enormous need,” and “[it] is not hopeless—she brings a joy as ‘swim’ and / ‘more’ and ‘movie’—but it is wholly child, / a simple life without her own earned heartbreak.”

2016.05

If you fail to get down in the snow falling outside, let me
 help you slip this digital hearth¹ for the sidewalks of Squirrel Hill.
 These hypermetal *Ilinix*-mechs² on the picto-jumping-tube
 are certainly entertaining us this seventeenth leap day of the

Anthropocene. If we remain inside, there they are, our neon-
 avatars stomping the reformed faithful of some twenty-seventh-
 century cyber-death-cult; but we are for the outside, not continuing
 to fret about the nonstop partylabor wagon of contemporaneity:

"I am a sucker, really.³ Letting Intelligent Dance Metal dictate my
 stupidest decisions⁴ so frequently, harboring new catastrophes
 in the most banal (grocery-store-type) processes, getting pizza and beer.
 It is Monday I suppose. Racheal will be home soon. [Dance.⁵]

(Spring keeps threatening to breed lilacs into the hypocritical literacy
 of [redacted], and it will probably succeed, despite my efforts.)"

¹ *This year brought to you by Chevrolet and a day that saw pipes burst across from Carnegie Mellon University, shutting down that portion of the city.*

² Roger Caillois uses "*Ilinix*" to describe games "based on the pursuit of vertigo and which consist of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind. In all cases, it is a question of surrendering to a kind of spasm, seizure, or shock which destroys reality with sovereign brusqueness" (Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* [1958], trans. Meyer Barash [1961; repr., Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001], 23).

³ I mean, I do not want to write "quit lit," but. . .

⁴ Perhaps a trend in the new year.

⁵ See Ke\$ha, "Blow," *Cannibal* (New York: RCA, 2010), EP.



BRADLEY J. FEST

2016.08

Pop music *is* the moral fabric of America. It's not so bad. Or at least not as bad as before. (I mean, now we have a *real* fascist.⁶) Waking up on the same couch as Iron Man, Disney's new cyber-militia . . . getting it right seems quaintly awful, huh? Caring

about G. W. Bush-type authoritarianism was, like, at *least* a decade ago. “My lack of self-awareness is brighter than the moon.⁷ There’s a pile of books on postmodernism underneath this coffee table. I enjoy my #LadyGagainthe-

ThroneRoom Pandora station. And sometimes tweeting about it.⁸ I'm pretty into this thing we are *doing*. Otherwise, I have no general hopes or plans for the future. Do you?" The posthuman time traveler in my living room soaring

on methamphetaminic postrock is a little bit sick. Too bad.
We will wiggle to his anthemic cute partyrock till we won't;
it'll be fun.

⁶ See *think pieces about Donald J. Trump in 2016*, pp. 1–all of them.

⁷ *Moon moon.*

⁸ *And Pink coming on. 2013–2016 has been a shit day indeed.*

EILEEN CLEARY

SELF PORTRAIT AS DOG BREED DESCRIPTION

Bred from Irish stock with others bled in.

Thin coat of sunlit hair

with red highlights, often redder

in summer. Scared of loud noises,

sensitive to house plants. Do not leave

food out, will eat even if already fed.

Without early socialization, expect odd behaviors.

Can be left alone for long periods but enjoys company.

A quiet breed. Not prone to biting.

Good with children and other dogs.

LUCIAN MATTISON

OFFICE PASTORAL

Clutched barbed wire two eyelids
stretched open,
exit the iris onto tilled earth.

Wind deleaves me
like an artichoke. Without coat
for the cold, I make home

in the mule's ear. They call me
two things, tasked, defective—
tighten the leather saddle.

A burden whispers in the ear,
debtless dream populated
by loaves and fish, five more

miracles, minimum, please.
Was this a promotion? I pass stemmed
champagne flutes with a hoof

(they drop). Birds collect
the pieces, nest between my ears
in confusion. So much time

thrown into rent's hole learning to fish
is laughable.

The office hosts another party

with games. The creature leans
its flank into the barbs,
pins itself to itself.

ALICE DUGGAN

CABLE TV IN THE DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM

There's something called news and something called weather and something called Mother's Day and the pretty people on the tube are nattering on, we have two females and a male, the right proportion of Barbies to Kens. So the Barbies are saying How bout this trowel in mint or pink for the mother who gardens, she will love it! And the Ken says Cool, very cool, and I try not to listen, just keep knitting, in fact no one looks at the screen at all, but Ken and the Barbies remain unruffled and keep on offering stuff for sale, for the Mother To Be, for the Mother Who Has Everything Already, even she can't be left alone. I can't turn off the screen for any price. I can't even turn the volume down. What conclusion are we to draw from this circumstance where we're forced to hear an exposition on what to buy, a dissertation on who to be, and why would I want to draw a conclusion, only a rancorous person would. The Barbies offer a waffle iron, available now in papaya and lime, she will love it! Cool, very cool says Ken.

TRASH HOUSE

Against sorrow, mounds of fashion, bewildering swelling piles of clothes. In strong defense of the life of the mind: moraines of books, unsteady, sliding, meeting with cashmere, unwashed forks. Basil seeds, buried fur wrap; unopened mail. Against illness, not much to say. The tall cloudy vase, high on the mantle, seems to stand for oblivion.

Against all endings, little violets, painted on frail porcelain plates.

ALEXIS IVY

MY LAS VEGAS

Didn't make it to the Mob Museum.
You get your picture taken
in a lineup and it's true no one
looks good in that light.

Made a point to stay
at the Golden Nugget so I could
see the goldest nugget, they say,
ever found. Nobody's ever tried

to rob this treasure, not as hard as a bank
vault if you get all the way to the bank
vault. The rock, the size of a washboard,
sat in a glass case surrounded

by mirrors and velvet in a place people
walk by to get to the next slot machine.
I did go to the Neon Museum,
a boneyard where lights go to die.

A gallery of the town: saved
the things that made Vegas Vegas.
At night they light the place up.
Make the stars disappear.



DISCO-BALLED

It left in the wind, it spoke as it turned, it carried me nowhere.
—Joanna Klink

If I were to dance two-parts dervish, one-part stripper
without telling you a story, just vibe—klink of glitz,
line of snow. If you heard my pulse, disco-balling

close to unraveled. Yeah, you, who don't come asking
for thigh bones connected to hip bones, but lamé-shake
furious, linked to—should I say birds cut loose from

parking lot, you might be a congress of crows. To
lace your palms around the liminal groove. To
buzz on swoop well beyond verdant parcels, now

bathroom stall congress in the disco from which I dissociate
versus story-tell you out-of-vogue—glitter shadow wink
busted ever-slinking through its backdoor. New era,

new stanza: That you might be a whirling room, I speak
only reverb, turning, say fuck all the crows and coke—
dance with me clean apart the between to a sparkle.

THE EXPANSE TRAVELED

Is too content, forgets our lean cartography—
gyres followed, the stark walls we shadowed.
Darkest trench to basking shallows, no end
to where I touched you. Any effort

made to raise

disheveled beds ago releases their ephemera—
concert tickets bubble up—threadbare nights
we were tenants in a sweaty surge of tenants.
Shoreline so faint it could be myth,

legs always

rolling tangled. If we jettison everything in gilded frames
packed and moved,
packed and moved,
remap to a concert poster smoothed and taped, maybe

we'd erase

one day waking burdened, satisfied
in what we carried before breaking.



DAVID ROCK

MY RELIGION

*"Me he acostumbrado a sacar esperanza de la desesperación misma."
—Miguel de Unamuno*

Standing for something—anything—
on a bird-smirched ledge between
Prague and the Dog Star, from Eden
to Patmos with a lay-over for gas in
Gomorra. (Not to mention brick-and-
mortar merchants' grand closings
where I used to fondle knives.)
And there is no bargain-bin placebo
for what ails me in the evening:
my big toe, broken—how the pain
is worse when the blanket is tucked
too tight, the way I like it.

See: in this Empyrean I have no use
for illusions; I have everything I need
here and more—from ink to blood and
Orbison's greatest hits, that prophet
of loss. And suffering is not suffering
in the case of one's own religion,
or so I keep telling myself, reciting
to myself a poem I wrote on a Golden
Corral napkin.

But it's a lie—that part about
all you can eat, when there's a clock.
And sometimes words mean things.
Mean things—like trees, for instance,
when a branch fell without warning
on that one girl. Maybe she felt entitled
to a place in the shade. Imagine
the fridge-light blinking itself to sleep
where there is milk.

SHIRA DENTZ

EXCERPT

charms of light,
people locking
flames, heads on candles
coins piled like flowers

shifting opera
excuse me
if you don't mind
not at all

honor is a card
woe to wait
debts & shadows
—steeple where there aren't hands

CASUAL WIND

like ghosts late and lonely to the touch
crocuses blend amid salt and rain
aftertastes can be bitter, for sure
swift and dulled there's no escape
nowhere is there a pistil this orange
under a flag that never scrolls in stormy
air or squalls
dervishing
whispers in the shells of passers-by
dare to speak and night becomes a mouth

MEDITATION PORTRAIT

you see a door but it's toupée,
lamps rest on even palms
a road up your arm, along a bend
minutes crease together like cheap foil
strain disfigures your body
the moon a whiplash circled,
an outline of weight
you slip out of, a bystander
married to an exit

I WONDER IF TIES MINCE

the road ahead looks clever, clover, & full
nothing is still; not the weather, not the climb, not even the digging, claw against claw
SURMOUNT! she calls from below tar

night closes its drapes & no more lookouts
from where we stand, it's all about scarcity
while you're all in a tropical forest
seeds that ripen into fruit whisk together

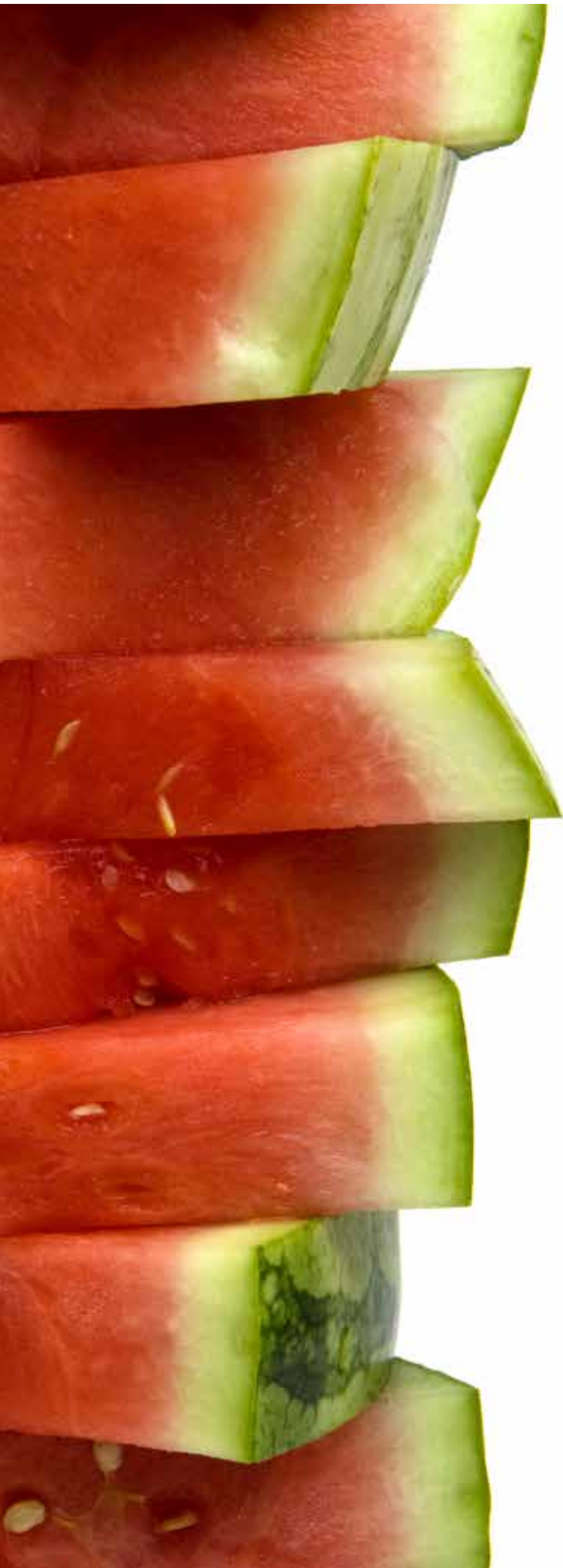
what shade of light do I live in now?

grief, what shade of light are you?

in the tiny space of my private world,

friends live in different countries of the mind even as we trade state secrets
I don't know what to do with this,
the ties that claw, mince, dig,
into static |





ON WAY HOME

A girl jogs past me, an earphone cord swinging loose like a string of her brain. She's a song buzzing by, with my eyes shut. Thick with snow is the park, save the path in the making, grey under a stray dog's paws. What for dinner, what for. Unleashed dogs sniff out next pit stops in this November slush. What for. Did the girl ever fall for someone who clapped open bottled sauces without spilling like her father. Kids chatter away, tongues gauzed with bubble gums as if each growing a gator's egg-tooth in the throat. About to hatch. Impending about. I feel some death like the promise of my mother's. Numerous people jumped to their deaths. A thousand-chopstick-long flight off that building. Numerous heaps of canned food thumped onto plates around the city. It's hard to differentiate—this archive in disarray. In the commuter belt wind brushes the reeds. All of them on the rebound, elastic as muscle. Ready to fling back into place, then out again and again. Life will grow deaths out and outgrow the rest it hasn't. Another afternoon of snow will bury the dog's path, but you are now
on your way.

COST OF LIVING

Understand my urge to make this personal. Every death without demur. I've watched with my limbs planted in vintage combat boots. A frisson of daylight down the dark well where mother keeps a dessert watermelon. Daughter sits spooning it out to a bloody helmet before putting it over her head.

DEAF REPUBLIC BY ILLYA KAMINSKY
(Graywolf Press, 2019)

REVIEW BY DEBORAH BACHARACH

Ilya Kaminsky's second book, *Deaf Republic*, is both a book of stand-alone poems that hold in their individuality and gravitas and a heart-breaking play where the second poem, "Dramatis Personae" lists the characters and each subsequent poem builds with setting, narration, dialogue, and dramatic action. The craft and the moral weight of this work left this reader in awe.

In Vansenska, a fictional occupied town, the plot is set in motion when soldiers gun down a deaf boy in the poem "Gunshot." The townspeople respond by pretending to be deaf. The reader walks with the townspeople as they resist, gets to be inside the heads of the puppeteers who lead the insurrection, and suffers all the consequences. Like the people of Vansenska, the reader must live with harsh truths. It's not easy or pretty, but necessary.

The poems center on several themes: how to resist, how poetry can or cannot address violence, despair, hope, and complicity. These are not small topics but explored via Kaminsky's deft hand, images, and humor, we get lines like these from "Soldiers Aim at Us":

*On earth
a man cannot flip a finger at the sky*

*because man is already
a finger flipped at the sky*

Kaminsky uses the image of man literally standing up to make a philosophical statement about resistance. However, in the overarching themes of the book, the "fuck you" of the finger is given silently through a full body gesture.

While "Beautiful are the women of Vansenka, beautiful," their resistance is fully embodied when the women of the town in "Gaylas's Puppeteers" lure the soldiers into the puppet theater for sex and then "when finally he passes out, she strangles him with a puppet-string." Death by puppet string is so bleak as to be ridiculous, but it also symbolizes the small lethal power the townspeople hold.

Kaminsky addresses head-on a conflict inherent in this work: can poetry be used to describe the horrors of occupation? Obviously, the book is evidence he believes it can, and yet, one of the strongest moments in the book refutes poetic tools. "That Map of Bone and Opened Valves" is full of imagery and metaphor, but in the middle of the poem Kaminsky writes:

"WHAT IS A CHILD?
A QUIET BETWEEN
TWO BOMBARDMENTS."

*The body of the boy lies on the asphalt like a paperclip.
The body of the boy lies on the asphalt
like the body of a boy.*

By setting up one simile and then using the same pattern to refuse to make a simile, Kaminsky hurls the reader out of the fictive dream. The reader must wake up and see this boy only as a dead boy. Through this moment, which occurs early in the book, Kaminsky warns the reader that some horrors cannot be shown through plays of language. So, even as the reader continues on in a world of imagery and metaphor, they are asked to also stay present to horror.

One of the biggest horrors this book addresses is not what the soldiers do to the people, but what the outsider does not do. In the first poem, "We Lived Happily During the War" Kaminsky writes:

And when they bombed other people's houses, we

*protested
but not enough, we opposed them but not*

*enough, I was
in my bed, around my bed America*

*was falling: invisible house by invisible house by invisible
house—*

Kaminsky uses line breaks as a dangerous pause to switch focus and meaning. The line “enough. I was” finishes one sentence and starts another, but as a line together the words suggest the speaker believes their survival was enough without worrying about their neighbor, a strong indictment. Kaminsky uses the same doubling in the next line, creating the image of a bed floating in America and then stripping that support away in the next line. The effect is disorienting. These line breaks simultaneously delight in their layering of meaning and point to the horror of our own culpability. Kaminsky makes sure structure matches meaning. During a poem about bombardment, the lines are confusing, surreal:

*It has begun: I see the blue canary of my country
pick breadcrumbs from each citizen's eyes—
pick breadcrumbs from my neighbors' hair—
the snow leaves the earth and falls straight up as it should—*

The first of several poems titled “Question” is small (presented here in its entirety) and quiet just like the newborn in a moment of peace.

*What is a child?
A quiet between two bombardments.*

Sometimes Kaminsky specifically uses the structure as a counterpoint to the meaning. In “What We Cannot Hear,” he juxtaposes a wistful folk tune over a speaker’s wife being taken by the invading army:

*They shove Sonya into the army jeep
one morning, one morning, one morning in May, one
dime-bright morning—*

Kaminsky’s most unusual craft technique is his incorporation of sign language. He tells us early in the book that the townspeople invent their own sign language. Periodically, a poem ends with a drawing of a sign, labeled with what the sign means. Kaminsky is both illustrating the poem and teaching the reader their language as the townspeople are learning it. We become one of them. One of the last poems in the book is just made of signs without any words. Two powerful things happen in that moment: the reader has to go back through the book to remind themselves of the signs’ meanings, literally revisiting the history, and they are forced to be in silence with the townspeople, while feeling the thrill and power of having a language that subverted the system, no matter how precarious their situation.

Kaminsky does not let us relegate bombardments and murder to some fictive town. He frames this dramatic fairy tale with poems set in our modern Western world, bringing the pain very close. Kaminsky is a Jewish, hard-of-hearing, Ukrainian-born Russian refugee who has lived on the US/Mexico border. He brings all those identities to bear in a dramatic poetic fable for our time. We are now in a deaf republic where so many are willingly deaf to others. These poems help us to listen.

IN A LAND OF MOUNTAINS AND DECENT PEOPLE

Days in new places
begin strangely like days in old

places: a smell that I recognize—
my grandmother’s carpet

in a wool hat in Dillard’s
or juniper trace across years.

I have lived exactly five places now:
a swamp, a forest, two valleys

and some place between the cool side
of my pillow and ear

on evenings in late July. I read
that god has millions of faces

and some days I think I might, too:
some days I am pinyon jay and others

waterthrush, and yesterday, in Dillard’s
between the hats and menswear I grew

great hooves for climbing sandstone canyon walls
buttoned by rye-colored root and me, cloven-footed,

clinging to the edge of the mountain—to the third
face of god, the one after love and after fire.

THESE MORNINGS OF FEAR

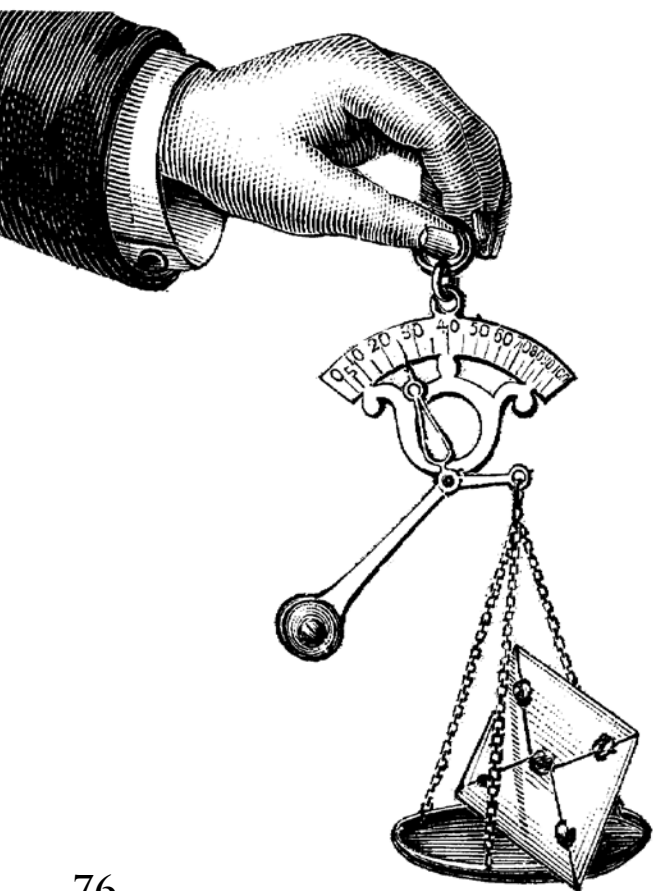
It is cool outside. The German
shepherds next door whinny visible
breaths into daybreak. I shower
with the light off as though it will
hold the world at bay. I have seen
so many animals die: shattered
by roadsides or peaceful in beds
or frightened in puddles of urine
and blood. We like to think they
are not us, watching as they rise
and fall and rise again toward
headlamps or gloved hands or
waking dreams of spring, praying
Stay down. Please. Stay.

JOHN BELK

A WISH GEOMETRY

after Robert Hass

We mull on integration, the area under a curve, derivation of asymptotes, how faint neroli might approach an absent lover's scent and never be right. In October, a couple fight about a cat, a stray. And having known before that disappointment spreads in curls across the lips—one relents. We wonder at over-connection: that light-shimmer in distant space was once tupelo leaves or orange blossom or seeds like miniature pomegranates or small, angled mangoes stylized on a kilim. That longing is a function of geometry and time. That brightness—half-particle, half-ineffable—might save us all.



LOCAL MUSIC

for Marie, in Silverton, CO

You're four now, old enough.
You receive your first rifle,
pink, and a low target
on the dense foam bear. I worry
from so far. The forecast doesn't
bother with the Western Slope
and every day a coyote waits
patiently for the click
of the school gate, trots along-
side as you trip home. He's
sniffing the air for something
beyond sound, the tang of decay
dragged off Kendall Mountain.
From a distance, your mother
laughs, clearing smoke away
with a hand stout as a mallet.

What will you learn out there,
what will you hear, later unable to
unhear it? Even as this pen scratches
the page there's the furious cuff
of antlers against apple bark,
the old soundtrack of a country
one never really leaves: wind
rushing Martin's farm, a barn's baggy
Dutch doors tapping, bull calves inside
not yet sold. I still hear their dark
bleating song. The world, first, is local
music, then we are taught bellows
from harp, from shovel hitting ground.

Your rhythm won't be field but
mountain, percussing under crusted
snow. Already you know the notes
of collapse: wind slab, point release,
cornice fall. Under your jacket,
an avalanche beacon ticks
like a human heart. Soon the pass
will close until March—but your mother
says there's time. So I send you a book,
photographs of stained glass windows
pulsing in wild technicolor. Red robes
of monks unknown dissolve into iron
like cherry lollipops. Men conspire,
absolve over animals, altars, the pale
penitent heads of those unmonumented.
In exploded view, each pane froths,
tiny bubbles trapped in glass. You
and I rile them, laugh on the phone:
come up to the surface, if you dare!
—but they lodge there, patient,
the way melting snow never
really goes anywhere, just returns
first to the ground, then back into
air, part mineral, part memory.

WEEK THREE WITH FOURTH GRADERS & TEACHING POETRY

They fidget, 25 half-formed widgets, forced to fit the machinery of my manic mini-lecture on metaphor—all her fun tricks and figurative friends. “What animal are you?” and “What do you feel like?” I ask them to write on their wide-rule pages. Then—no idea why—I mention Wordsworth’s “Ode to Duty.”

I say to fourth graders: “Ode to Duty.” I say, “Duty.” For a moment, the sudden silence misleads. I think maybe they know the poem, their teacher, barely 22 and sitting in the back, eyes on her phone, taught them the Romantics. Then the truth

in chuckles, giggles, and full gaffas as I hear repetition of “duty.” The teacher, Ms. Boots, looks up, glad to see the kids engaged, no idea what I’ve stepped in. All at once,

I know what must be done. I repeat: “Ode. To. Duty.” They laugh. I’m killing it. I say, “The Duty of a poet, as far as I’m concerned, is never to stink.”

Half of them, wide-eyed, glance back at the teacher, the others hold their sides. “Sometimes,” I say, “my duty brings great joy. Sometimes my duty brings sorrow.” I point to the kid in the front and say, “Give me a metaphor, Jackson.” He grins: “My duty is like that funky

fire cracker smell: pop, pop, stink cloud.” I say, “Brilliant simile!” Ms Boots, who’s heard too much, says, “That’s enough, Jackson. We’ll have no more—” I interrupt. “That’s right, boys and girls, no more similes!

Time for metaphor. Jackson, your duty is not *like* a funky fire cracker smell—” A kid in the back shouts, “Pop, Pop, Stink Cloud.” Ms Boots says, “Enough. You aren’t animals.”

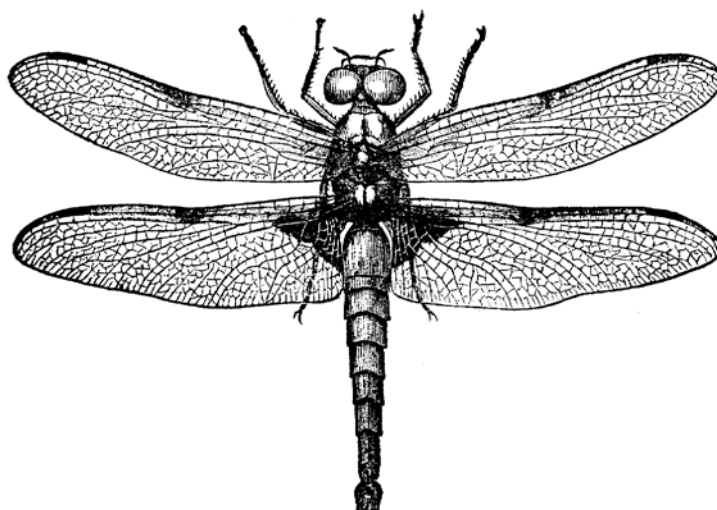
I say, “No, Ms. Boots, today, they are. They’re animals learning to growl and claw and fly.” Another kid says, “and to duty.”

I correct: “‘Ode to Duty,’ that’s Wordsworth. And, take Layla here, she’ll tell you. Layla, what are you?” Layla looks at Ms Boots, back at me, out the window at the wind and light—she scans the scribbled lines on her page and closes her eyes. The room’s silent,

awaiting some new duty riff. But before she speaks, her eyes press out several quiet tears. None of us know anything. Layla pushes her hands into her hair,

and says, “I’m a dragonfly, a globe skimmer—I don’t want to go home or to be here. I am above the river gliding free in every wind,

where I see things only dragonflies see. My whole head is an eye.”



SOMETIMES I AM

Some Sundays, I hid on an empty shelf
of a church kitchen cabinet. I escaped
the service before a deacon or usher
saw where I went. I tucked behind
a long row of cabinet doors. There I'd lie,
my face a few inches from the bottom
of a drawer of spatulas and knives.
I preferred the darkness to the blasted music,
the lights, and the preacher.
Once, when the service was half over,
a skinny bald man with droopy eyes,
a thick beard, and a worn book, walked in
the kitchen. I watched, invisible as God,
through the gap between the doors.
No more than five feet from me, the man
gripped his shoulders as if trying
to steady himself. He began to shake
and twitch like a frightened flame.
Then I heard him speak, quick
as an typewriter: "No eye has seen
no ear has heard, No mind
has conceived what God
has prepared for those..." he stopped.
His head twitched then turned toward me.
I stiffened, but he was just thinking
of what came next or trying to stop himself
from saying what came next
or maybe he couldn't let himself
say what came next.
Nothing came next. He wiped his face
with a towel and spit something black
in the sink. When he left the room, I closed
my eyes and listened to the faint song
"Take the Whole World but Give Me Jesus,"
and I wondered if I could have both.
I am still pretty sure if I don't ask
nobody will stop me. Sometimes—
small as a boy, scared as a man—
I am still there in the dark
where nothing comes next.



CARETAKER

Here is your bread, sweetened with honey
as preferred, here your portion of milk,
thick with cream and cold. Here your chair,
placed just so before the small desk, before
the window I have opened wide onto the world.
Whether this new day offers flower
or sword, lyric of praise or bitter lament,
a palette of holy light or a bruised darkness,
grace or sorrow, the sparrow or the snake,
whether the boat powering for the sea
rushes lonely from a failed life or hurries
joyous toward reunion, is not for me to know.
Here, the breeze to cool your brow as you
name truth from falsehood. Work complete,
here a round of aromatic soap, soft towel
to cleanse and dry the body, this sheet
stiffened in the sun I have tucked and smoothed
for your dreams. That you may discover
the phrase, the form, the hue of your longing,
I have offered my simple attentions. Take them
with pleasure. Whether my service had
meaning or was a wasted life, is in your care.

THEY WILL MISTAKE

your patience for indignation,
your diplomacy for
arrogance, your tolerance
for a clear disdain.
It has always been so.
Why must you behave as you do,
surrounded on all sides
by such beauty?, will be
their common accusation.
Listen to me, brother.
Keep your own council
and keep it close.
Soon they will stay clear of you
and look away. This is your victory.
Obviousness is the curse.
Banality, the sin that cannot
be forgiven.
Their uneasiness,
their laughter, their joined forces.
Their beauty too easily adorned.
These are the sure signs.
The day, brother, is for vigilance.
Guard yourself. I will
no longer be here to assure you.
Listen to your heart
and breath. Otherwise, trust
silence. Be patient
of what has been nurtured
from the beginning.
Later, the house overtaken
by shadow, hold congress
with the night heron,
the banded owl, the dark beauty
of a song the others
will never know.
You will be magnificent.
And I will meet you there.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Sarah Adleman, *The Lampback Blue of Memory: My Mother Echoes*, Tolsun Books, 2019
- Sean Akerman, *The Magnitudes*, Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2019
- Jimmy Santiago Baca, *When I Walk Through That Door, I Am: An Immigrant Mother's Quest for Freedom*, Beacon Press 2019
- Michael Bazzett, *The Popol Vuh*, Milkweed Editions, 2018
- Julie Bouwsma, *Midden*, Fordham University Press, 2018
- Chelsea Bunn, *Forgiveness*, Finishing Line Press, 2019
- Heather Lang Cassera, *I was the Girl with the Moon-Shaped Face*, Zeitgeist Press, 2018
- Wyn Cooper, *Mars Poetica*, White Pine Press, 2018
- Darren C. Demaree, *Two Towns Over*, Trio House Press, 2017
- Chris Dombrwoski, *Ragged Anthem*, Wayne State University Press, 2019
- Brian Gilmore, *come see about me, marvin*, Wayne State University Press, 2019
- Kimiko Hahn, *Catechesis*, University of Utah Press, 2019
- Katherine Hollander, *My German Dictionary*, The Waywiser Press, 2019
- David Hornibrook, *Night Manual*, Wayne State University Press, 2019
- Su Hwang, *Bodega*, Milkweed Editions, 2019
- John James, *The Milk Hours*, Milkweed Editions, 2019
- Alan King, *Point Blank*, Silver Birch Press, 2016
- Brain Laidlaw, *The Mirrmaker*, Milkweed Editions, 2018
- Emma Lee, *Hidden Heartbreak: From Breaking Up to Waking Up*, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2018
- Alex Lemon, *Another Last Day*, Milkweed Editions, 2019
- John McCarthy, *Scared Violent Like Horses*, Milkweed Editions, 2019
- Owen McLeod, *Dream Kitchen*, University of North Texas Press, 2019
- AJ Odassio, *The Sting of It*, Tolsun Books, 2019
- Jessica Pack, *Whatever It Takes*, Kensington Publishing Corp., 2019
- Erick Pankey, *Owl of Minerva*, Milkweed Editions, 2019
- Jack Ridl, *Saint Peter and the Goldfinch*, Wayne State University Press, 2019
- John Sibley Williams, *As One Fire Consumes Another*, Orison Books, 2019
- John Sibley Williams, *Skin Memory*, University of Nebraska Press, 2019
- Jake Skeets, *Eyes bottle Dark with a Mouthful of Flowers*, Milkweed Editions, 2019

BIOGRAPHIES

ALLISON ADAIR'S work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *American Poetry Review*, *Best American Poetry* (2018), *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *North American Review*, *Pleiades*, *Subtropics*, among other journals; and has received the Pushcart Prize (2019), the Florida Review Editors' Award, the Orlando Prize, and first place in the Fineline Competition from *Mid-American Review*. Originally from central Pennsylvania, she now lives in Boston, where she teaches at Boston College and Grub Street.

VIDHU AGGARWAL'S poetry and multimedia practices engage with world-building, video, and graphic media, and draw mythic schemas from popular culture and ancient texts. Her poetry book *The Trouble with Humpadori* (2016) imagines a cosmic mythological space for marginalized transnational subjects. Poems from *Humpadori* were listed as the top 25 from *Boston Review* in 2016 and appeared on Sundress Publications Best Poetry of 2016 list. *Avatara*, a chapbook from Portable @ Yo-Yo Labs Press, is situated in a post-apocalyptic gaming world where A.I.'s play at being gods. A Djerassi resident and Kundiman fellow, she teaches at Rollins College.

DANA ALSAMSAM is the author of a chapbook, *(in)habit* (tenderness, lit press, 2018), and her poems are published or forthcoming in *Bone Bouquet*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *Poetry East*, *Tinderbox Poetry*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Fugue*, *The Boiler Journal*, *Salamander*, *BOOTH*, and others. She was a Lambda Writer's Retreat Fellow in the 2018 Writers Retreat for Emerging LGBTQ Voices. A Chicago native, Dana is currently an MFA candidate and a teacher at Emerson College.

AMY M. ALVAREZ holds an MFA in creative writing from the Stonecoast Program at USM. Her poetry has been published in *Black Renaissance Noire*, *The Wide Shore: A Journal of Global Women's Poetry*, *The New Guard Review*, and *Stonecoast Lines*. Amy currently teaches at West Virginia University.

DEBORAH BACHARACH is the author of *After I Stop Lying* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2015). Her work has appeared in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Vallum*, *Poet Lore*, among many others. She is an editor, teacher, and tutor in Seattle. Find out more about her at DeborahBacharach.com.

DEVON BALWIT'S most recent collection is titled *A Brief Way to Identify a Body* (Ursus Americanus Press). Her individual poems can be found in *Sugar House Review*, *Jet Fuel*, *The Worcester Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Apt* (long-form issue), *Tule Review*, *Grist*, *Rattle*, among others.

JOHN BELK is an assistant professor of English at Southern Utah University, where he directs the writing program. His poetry has recently appeared in *Crosswinds*, *Cathexis Northwest*, *Cheat River Review*, *Arkansas Review*, *Wraparound South*, among others. His work has been selected as a finalist for the

Autumn House Rising Writer Contest, the Cathexis Chapbook Contest, the Autumn House Poetry Prize, the Comstock Writers Group Chapbook Contest, and as a semifinalist for the Vassar Miller Award.

ERIC BERLIN lives in Baldwinsville, NY. His poems won the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize, Bradford on Avon Poetry Prize, National Poetry Prize, and The Ledge Poetry Prize. His poems appear in *The Poetry Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *The Rialto*, among others. His interviews have featured in *American Poetry Review* and *The Hopkins Review*. He teaches online through The Poetry School.

ERICA BERNHEIM is currently an associate professor of English at Florida Southern College, where she also directs the creative writing program and directs its reading series. Her work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *DIAGRAM*, *The Missouri Review*, and *Denver Quarterly*; her first full-length collection, *The Mimic Sea*, was published by 42 Miles Press (Indiana University South Bend).

MARY BIDDINGER is the author of five full-length poetry collections, including *Small Enterprise* and *The Czar*. She lives in Akron, OH, where she teaches poetry and literature and edits the Akron Series in Poetry. Biddinger's first collection of prose poems, *Partial Genius*, is forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press in 2019.

JOHN BLAIR'S *Playful Song Called Beautiful* was the 2015 winner of the Iowa Poetry Prize and was published by the University of Iowa Press.

BRUCE BOND is the author of twenty-three books including, most recently, *Sacrum* (Four Way Books, 2017), *Blackout Starlight: New and Selected Poems 1997–2015* (E. Phillabaum Award, LSU, 2017), *Rise and Fall of the Lesser Sun Gods* (Elixir Book Prize, Elixir Press, 2018), *Dear Reader* (Free Verse Editions, 2018), and *Frankenstein's Children* (Lost Horse Press, 2018). Five books are forthcoming including *Plurality and the Poetics of Self* (Palgrave). Presently he is a Regents Professor of English at University of North Texas.

GAYLORD BREWER is a professor at Middle Tennessee State University, where he founded and for more than 20 years edited the journal *Poems & Plays*. His most recent books are the cookbook-memoir *The Poet's Guide to Food, Drink, & Desire* (Stephen F. Austin, 2015) and a tenth collection of poetry, *The Feral Condition* (Negative Capability, 2018). His next book of poems, *Worship the Pig*, is forthcoming from Red Hen in June, 2020.

POLLY BUCKINGHAM'S collection *The Expense of a View* won the Katherine Anne Porter Prize in Short Fiction (2016); her chapbook *A Year of Silence* won the Jeanne Leiby Memorial

Chapbook Award (2014); and she was the recipient of a 2014 Washington State Artists Trust fellowship. Her work appears in *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Threepenny Review*, *PoetryDaily*, *Hanging Loose*, *Witness*, *North American Review*, *The Poetry Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Tampa Review*, and elsewhere. Polly is the founding editor of StringTown Press. She teaches creative writing at Eastern Washington University and is the editor of *Willow Springs* magazine.

MARK BURKE'S work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *North American Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Stoneboat Review*, *Nimrod International Journal*, and others. His work has recently been nominated for a Pushcart prize.

ROB CARNEY is the author of five books, most recently *The Book of Sharks* (Black Lawrence Press 2018), and three more forthcoming: *Facts and Figures* (poetry), *Call and Response* (poetry), and *Accidental Gardens* (creative non-fiction). His work has appeared previously in *Sugar House Review* issues 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, and 16. He was a finalist for the Washington State Book Award in 2016, and the winner of the Robinson Jeffers Award for Poetry in 2014. He lives in Salt Lake City.

SHANNON CASTLETON is a recent graduate of Warren Wilson's low-residency MFA program and has published poems in journals such as *The Cortland Review*, *FOLIO*, and *Tar River Poetry*. She was also a finalist in a contest Naomi Shihab-Nye judged for *The Red Wheelbarrow*.

GRANT CLAUSER lives in Hatfield, PA, and is the author of four books: *The Magician's Handbook*, *Reckless Constellations*, *Necessary Myths*, and *The Trouble with Rivers*. His poems have appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Cortland Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and others. He also writes about electronics, teaches poetry at random places, and chases fish with a stick.

EILEEN CLEARY earned an MFA at Lesley University and a second at Solstice. She is twice a Pushcart nominee and has work published or upcoming in *Naugatuck River Review*, *J Journal*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *West Texas Literary Review*, and *Main Street Rag*. She manages the Lily Poetry Salon and edits the *Lily Poetry Review*. Her first full-length manuscript, *Child Ward of the Commonwealth*, was published by Main Street Rag Publishing Company.

ABIGAIL KIRBY CONKLIN lives in New York City, where she works in education and curriculum development. Her poetry can be found in *The Lampeter Review*, *Flumes Literary Journal*, *K'in Literary Journal*, and *Curlew Quarterly*. She drinks startling amounts of coffee.

WESTON CUTTER is from Minnesota, has had work recently in *Ploughshares* and *The Southern Review*, and runs Haven Watch Co.

DARREN C. DEMAREE'S poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/journals, including *Hotel Amerika*, *Diode*, *Meridian*, *New Letters*,

Diagram, and *Colorado Review*. He is the author of eight poetry collections, most recently *Two Towns Over* (March 2018), which was selected as the winner of the Louise Bogan Award by Trio House Press. Darren is the managing editor of the *Best of the Net Anthology* and *Ovenbird Poetry*. He is currently living and writing in Columbus, OH with his wife and children.

SHIRA DENTZ is the author of five books and two chapbooks, most recently *how do i net thee* (Salmon Poetry, 2018) and *the sun a blazing zero* (Lavender Ink/Diálogos, 2019). Her writing appears in many journals, including *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Iowa Review*, *New American Writing*, Academy of American Poets' *Poem-a-Day*, and NPR. She is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets' Prize, Poetry Society of America's Lyric Poem Award, and Poetry Society of America's Cecil Hemley Memorial Award. Interviews with her have appeared in journals, including *Ploughshares*, *The Rumpus*, and *OmniVerse*. A graduate of Iowa Writer's Workshop, she holds a PhD from the University of Utah, and is special features editor at *Tarpaulin Sky* and teaches in upstate NY.

EMMA DEPANISE'S poems are forthcoming or have appeared recently in journals, such as *Puerto del Sol*, *Plume Poetry*, *Superstition Review*, *Potomac Review*, *Nimrod International Journal*, and elsewhere. She is the 2018 winner of the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry. Emma currently teaches and study writing in Salisbury, MD.

GARY DOP is the director of the new low-residency MFA program at Randolph College, where he is an English professor, poet, playwright, and short story writer. His work appears regularly in publications such as the *Georgia Review*, *Washington Post*, *North American Review*, *AGNI*, *Sugar House Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*. His first book of poetry is *Father, Child, Water* (Red Hen Press, 2015). GaryDop.com

SEAN THOMAS DOUGHERTY is the author or editor of 15 books, including *The Second O of Sorrow* and *All You Ask for is Longing: Poems 1994–2014*, both published by BOA Editions. His awards include a Fulbright lectureship to the Balkans and two PA Council for the Arts Fellowships. His work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *North American Review*, and *The New York Times*. He lives in Erie, PA with the poet Lisa Akus and their two daughters, where he works for the Barber National Institute on Autism.

MERRILL OLIVER DOUGLAS has published poems in *Crab Creek Review*, *South 85 Journal*, *IthacaLit*, *Baltimore Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Stone Canoe*, among other journals. She lives near Binghamton, NY, within walking distance of Pennsylvania, where she makes her living as a freelance writer.

Poems by ALICE DUGGAN have appeared or are forthcoming in *Sleet Magazine*, *Water~Stone Review*, *Poetry East*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and other journals; also in a chapbook, *A Brittle Thing*, from Green Fuse Press and an anthology, *Home*, from Holy Cow! Press. She's interested in

dailiness, now and in previous generations; in colloquial language, timbre of voices, backwaters of life.

STEVEN DUONG is a Vietnamese American poet from San Diego, CA and a student at Grinnell College in Iowa. He has received an Academy of American Poets University and College Prize and his poems are featured or forthcoming in *poets.org*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Pacifica Literary Review*, among others.

JUDSON EVANS is a full-time instructor of liberal arts at The Boston Conservatory at Berklee College of Music and teaches courses on utopian societies, ancient Greek literature, and Japanese poetry. He has been involved in a wide range of collaborative experiments with composers, choreographers, and other poets. He was a member of Off the Park Press Writers' Collective, N.Y.C., and has poems in the three anthologies the press has published in response to contemporary painters. He was recently chosen as an Academy of American Poets' emerging poet by John Yau, and won the Philip Booth Prize from *Salt Hill Review*. His poems have appeared most recently in *Volt*; *1913: a journal of forms*; *Cutbank*; and *Laurel Review*.

RITA FEINSTEIN is the author of *Life on Dodge*, a poetry chapbook from Brain Mill Press. Her stories and poems have appeared in *The Cossack Review*, *Permafrost*, *Five on the Fifth*, and *Grist*, among other publications. She received her MFA from Oregon State University.

BRADLEY J. FEST is assistant professor of English at Hartwick College. He is the author of two books of poetry, *The Rocking Chair* (Blue Sketch, 2015) and *The Shape of Things* (Salò, 2017), along with a number of essays on contemporary literature and culture. He blogs at *The Hyperarchival Parallax* (BradleyJFest.com).

Blood Vinyls (Anhinga Press) is YOLANDA J. FRANKLIN'S debut poetry collection that Roxane Gay insists is a "must-must-read." A two-time Fulbright Scholar Award Finalist (2018 & 2019), Franklin is also a Cave Canem and Callaloo Fellow.

JESSICA GOODFELLOW'S books are *Whiteout*, *Mendeleev's Mandala*, and *The Insomniac's Weather Report*. She was a writer-in-residence at Denali National Park and Preserve. Her work has appeared in *Threepenny Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Awl*, *The Southern Review*, *Motionpoems*, *Best New Poets*, and *Best American Poetry 2018*.

ABIGAIL GOODHART is currently pursuing her MFA at Western Michigan University and draws inspiration from living in the Midwest. When not writing, she plays the brutal, brutal sport of roller derby.

JEREMY GREGERSEN is a graduate of the Universities of Utah (BA), Michigan (MFA), and Oregon (MA). His work has appeared in a wide variety of journals, including *Cimarron Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Juked*, *Cortland Review*, *The Maine Review*, and *Michigan Quarterly Review*. He lives in Las Vegas, NV with his wife and son, and works as head of school at The Meadows School.

BEN GUNSBURG is an associate professor of English at Utah State University. He earned an MFA from the University of Alabama and a PhD from the University of Michigan. His poems appear in numerous literary magazines, including *CutBank*, *DIAGRAM*, and *The South Carolina Review*. The author of the poetry collection *Welcome, Dangerous Life* and the chapbook *Rhapsodies with Portraits*, Ben lives in Logan, UT, and online at BenGunsberg.com.

JEFF HARDIN is the author of five collections of poetry: *Fall Sanctuary* (Nicholas Roerich Prize); *Notes for a Praise Book* (Jacar Press Book Award); *Restoring the Narrative* (Donald Justice Prize); *Small Revolution*; and *No Other Kind of World* (X. J. Kennedy Prize). *The New Republic*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Southwest Review*, *North American Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Hotel Amerika*, and *Southern Poetry Review* have published his poems. He teaches at Columbia State Community College in Columbia, TN.

ANDREW HEMMERT is a sixth-generation Floridian living in Kalamazoo, MI. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *North American Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Prairie Schooner*. He earned his MFA from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and currently serves as an assistant editor for *Fifth Wednesday Journal*.

DAVID HUDDLE is the author of nine poetry collections, six short story collections, five novels, a novella, and a collection of essays titled *The Writing Habit*. He won the 2012 Library of Virginia Award for Fiction for *Nothing Can Make Me Do This* and the 2013 Pen New England Award for Poetry for *Blacksnake at the Family Reunion*. Huddle's most recent books are *Hazel*, a novel, published by Tupelo Press in June 2019, and *My Surly Heart*, published by LSU Press in October 2019. Originally from Ivanhoe, VA, Huddle has lived in Vermont for nearly fifty years.

KATHERINE INDERMAUR is the author of the chapbook *Pulse* (Ghost City Press, 2018). Her writing has appeared in *Alpinist*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *CALAMITY*, *Muse /A Journal*, *Poetry South*, *Voicemail Poems*, and elsewhere. A Colorado State University MFA graduate, where she won the 2018 Academy of American Poets Prize, she was the managing editor for *Colorado Review* from 2017 to May 2019.

ALEXIS IVY is a 2018 recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship in Poetry. Her first poetry collection, *Romance with Small-Time Crooks*, was published in 2013 by BlazeVOX [book]. Her second collection, *Taking the Homeless Census* won the 2018 Editors Prize at Saturnalia Books and is forthcoming in 2020. She is a street outreach advocate working with the homeless and living in her hometown, Boston.

SONJA JOHANSON has recent work appearing in *Mid-American Review*, *Ninth Letter*, and *Poet Lore*. Sonja divides her time between work in Massachusetts and her home in the mountains of western Maine. Follow her at SonjaJohanson.net.

CHRISTINE JONES holds her MFA from Lesley University and is founder/chief-editor of *Poems2Go*, a national public poetry project. Her most recent poetry can be found or is forthcoming at *32 poems*, *Salamander*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Literary Mama*, and elsewhere. She lives in Cape Cod, MA with her husband, where you can find them swimming or surfing in their shark-mitigating wet suits.

SUSANNA LANG'S newest collection of poems, *Travel Notes from the River Styx*, was published in 2017 by Terrapin Books. Other collections include *Tracing the Lines* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2013) and *Even Now* (Backwaters Press, 2008), as well as *Words in Stone*, a translation of Yves Bonnefoy's poetry (University of Massachusetts Press, 1976). A two-time Hambidge Fellow and recipient of the Emerging Writer Fellowship from the Bethesda Writer's Center, she has published original poems and essays, and translations from the French, in such journals as *Little Star*, *New Letters*, *Prairie Schooner*, *december*, *American Life in Poetry*, and *Verse Daily*. She lives with her husband in Chicago.

STEVE LANGAN'S MFA is from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, where he received the Paul Engle Postgraduate Fellowship from the James Michener Foundation. He is the author of *Freezing*, *Notes on Exile and Other Poems*, *Meet Me at the Happy Bar*, and *What It Looks Like, How It Flies*. Langan's poems appear in a variety of journals, including the *Kenyon*, *Gettysburg*, *Chicago*, *Iowa*, *Colorado*, *North American*, *Notre Dame*, and *Southern Humanities Reviews*. He teaches at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the UNO MFA writing program, where he serves as program development coordinator. He is also interim director and community liaison for medical humanities at UNO. Additionally, Langan is founder and director of the Seven Doctors Project, a creative writing program established at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

DAVID LEE is the first poet laureate of the state of Utah. His 1999 collection *News From Down to the Café* was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and, in 2001, he was a finalist for the position of United States Poet Laureate. He has been acclaimed by the Utah Endowment for the Humanities as one of the twelve greatest writers to ever emerge from the state. A former farmer, he is the subject of the PBS documentary *The Pig Poet*. His poems have appeared widely in publications including *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *The Missouri Review*, *Narrative Magazine*, and *JuxtaProse Literary Magazine*. Lee has received the Utah Governor's Award for lifetime achievement in the arts and is the recipient of the Mountains & Plains Booksellers Award in Poetry and the Western States Book Award in Poetry.

JON D. LEE is the author of three books, including *An Epidemic of Rumors: How Stories Shape Our Perceptions of Disease* and *These Around Us*. His poems and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *Sierra Nevada Review*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Connecticut River Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *The Inflectionist Review*, and *Oregon Literary Review*. He has an MFA in poetry from Lesley University and a PhD in

folklore. Lee teaches at Suffolk University and spends his spare time with his wife and children.

MARK LEAHY teaches technical writing at the University of South Florida.

KRISTIN MACINTYRE holds an MFA in poetry from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO. Her work has been published in *Mud Season Review*, *Rathalla Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, and elsewhere. She is a 2019 Pushcart Prize nominee and serves as an associate editor at *Colorado Review*. When she is not writing, she teaches freshman composition and drinks coffee in her small garden.

KATE MACLAM is an eighth-generation Vermonter living in Minnesota. She received an MFA from Minnesota State University, Mankato, where she served as co-managing editor of *Blue Earth Review* and a host of KMSU's *Weekly Reader*, an author interview radio program and podcast. Her poems have appeared in *Forklift*, *Ohio*, *New Ohio Review*, *Puerto Del Sol*, and *Willow Springs*.

MATT MASON runs poetry programming for the State Department, working in Nepal, Romania, Botswana, and Belarus. He is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize for his poem "Notes For My Daughter Against Chasing Storms" and his work can be found in numerous magazines and anthologies, including Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*. The author of *Things We Don't Know We Don't Know* (The Backwaters Press, 2006) and *The Baby That Ate Cincinnati* (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2013), Matt is based out of Omaha with his wife, the poet Sarah McKinsty-Brown, and daughters Sophia and Lucia. He is currently serving as Nebraska's poet laureate.

US-Argentinean poet and translator, LUCIAN MATTISON, is the author of two books of poetry, *Reaper's Milonga* (YesYes Books, 2018) and *Peregrine Nation* (Dynamo Verlag, 2017). His poetry, short fiction, and translations appear in numerous journals, including *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Hobart*, *Muzzle*, *Nano Fiction*, *The Nashville Review*, *The Offing*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Waxwing*, and have been featured on poets.org. He is based out of DC and edits poetry for *Big Lucks*. Read more at LucianMattison.com.

MICHAEL MCLANE has an MFA in creative writing from Colorado State University and an MS in environmental humanities from the University of Utah. For the past seven years, he served as the director for both the Center for the Book of Utah Humanities and the Utah Humanities Book Festival. He left Utah this past summer to begin a PhD program at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand.

MICHAEL METIVIER is a poet, musician, and editor living in southern Vermont. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *African American Review*, *Washington Square*, *Crazyhorse*, *North American Review*, among other journals.

KAISA ULLSVIK MILLER is the author of *Unspoiled Air* (winner of the 2008 Motherwell Prize from Fence Books) and

has had poetry published in *Ploughshares*, *Fence*, *HUNGER*, *deComp*, and *Bombay Gin*. She is a prairie girl who spends a lot of time whistling and wishing she was a bird.

DAVID MOOLTEN'S most recent book, *Primitive Mood* (2009), won the T. S. Eliot Award from the Truman State University Press. He lives and writes in Philadelphia, PA.

PATRICIA COLLEEN MURPHY founded *Superstition Review* at Arizona State University, where she teaches creative writing and magazine production. She won the 2019 Press 53 Award for Poetry with her collection *Bully Love*, published as a Tom Lombardo Poetry Selection. Her collection *Hemming Flames* (Utah State University Press) won the 2016 May Swenson Poetry Award, judged by Stephen Dunn, and the 2017 Milt Kessler Poetry Award. A chapter from her memoir-in-progress was published as a chapbook by *New Orleans Review*. She lives in Phoenix, AZ.

CAROLYN OLIVER'S poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Field*, *Indiana Review*, *The Shallow Ends*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Booth*, *Glass*, *Southern Indiana Review*, and elsewhere. She is the winner of the Writer's Block Prize in Poetry, selected by Maggie Smith. Carolyn lives in Massachusetts with her family. Links to more of her writing can be found at CarolynOliver.net.

SUPHIL LEE PARK holds a bachelor's degree in English and American literature from New York University. She is a recipient of an Engler Fellowship and an MFA candidate at the University of Texas at Austin.

DAYNA PATTERSON is the author of *Titania in Yellow* (Porkbelly Press, 2019) and *If Mother Braids a Waterfall* (Signature Books, 2020). Her creative work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poetry*, *AGNI*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Passages North*, *Western Humanities Review*, and *Zone 3*. She is the founding editor-in-chief of *Psalters & Lyre* and a co-editor of *Dove Song: Heavenly Mother in Mormon Poetry*. DaynaPatterson.com

JOEL PECKHAM, JR. calls Huntington, WV home, where he is a professor of American literature and creative writing at Marshall University. He has published seven collections of poetry and prose, most recently *Body Memory* (New Rivers Press) and *God's Bicycle* (future cycle). Joel is also editing an anthology for New Rivers titled *Wild Gods: The Ecstatic in Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. His individual poems have recently been published or are forthcoming in *The Southern Review*, *Spillway*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Nimrod*, and *The American Journal of Poetry*.

JIM PETERSON is the author of six collections of poetry, three chapbooks, and a novel. His collection *The Owning Stone* won Red Hen Press's Benjamin Saltman Award for 1999. His newest collection, *Speech Minus Applause*, was released by Press 53 in February of 2019. His poems have appeared widely in journals including *Poetry*, *Georgia Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Cave Wall*, etc. He is on the faculty of the University of Nebraska Omaha Low-residency MFA in

Writing program. He lives with his charismatic corgi, Mama Kilya, in Lynchburg, VA.

MICAH PLAYER is an author and illustrator of books and games for children. He lives in a little house beneath a giant tree in the mountains of Utah with a lovely schoolteacher named Stephanie. They are the parents of two rad kids, one brash little Yorkshire Terrier and several Casio keyboards. MicahPlayer.com

MARJORIE POWER'S newest poetry collection is *Oncoming Halos*, from Kelsay Books. Another collection, *Seven Parts Woman*, appeared in 2016 from WordTech Editions. She also has six chapbooks out from Pudding House Press, Main Street Rag Publishing Company, and others. She lives in Denver, CO with her husband, after many years in the Northwest.

RICHARD ROBBINS was raised in California and Montana, but has lived continuously in Minnesota since 1984. His collection *Body Turn To Rain: New & Selected Poems* was published in Lynx House Press' Northwest Masters Series in 2017.

DAVID ROCK holds a PhD in Latin American literature from Penn State University and currently teaches Spanish and international studies at Brigham Young University-Idaho in Rexburg. He has poems appearing in *The Carolina Quarterly*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Poetry East*, *Image*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

CHRIS SITEMAN lives in Massachusetts, and teaches in the English Departments at Suffolk University and Bridgewater State University. His chapbook, *PART X of ME*, is forthcoming from Pen & Anvil Press (Boston, MA). His poems have appeared in journals such as *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Salamander*, *Consequence Magazine*, among numerous others.

KATHRYN SMITH is a poet and collage artist in Spokane, WA. Her first poetry collection is *Book of Exodus* (Scablands Books, 2017), and her poems have been published in *Mid-American Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Laurel Review*, *the Boiler*, and elsewhere.

ROSANNE SMITH'S poems have recently appeared in *The Hollins Critic*, *Water-Stone Review*, and *Crazyhorse*. A graduate of the City University of New York, she now lives in Park City, UT.

LAURA STOTT is the author of the book of poems, *In the Museum of Coming and Going* (New Issues Poetry & Prose, 2014). Her poems can also be found in publications such as *Western Humanities Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *Memorious*, and *Cutbank*. She is an instructor of English at Weber State University.

MELANIE STORMM is a poet and writer of short fiction living in the wild, tree-stalked boundaries of New Hampshire. Her work has been featured in such publications as *Beloit Fiction Journal*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, and *JellyBucket*. You can find her in her virtual home at ColdWildEyes.com.

JANET SYLVESTER'S new book, *And Not to Break*, has been

awarded the 2019 Lauria/Frasca Poetry Prize and will be published by Bordighera Press in 2020. Over the years, *Sugar House Review* has published ten poems from the manuscript. Others have appeared in *Boulevard*, *Colorado Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Harvard Review*, a Pushcart Prize anthology, and *Poetry Daily*.

MARYELLEN TALLEY'S poems have recently been published in *Raven Chronicles*, *U City Review*, and *Ekphrastic Review*, as well as in anthologies, *All We Can Hold* and *Ice Cream Poems*. Her poetry has received two Pushcart Prize nominations. She became acquainted with Michele Bombardier a few years ago when they met and realized they shared a clinical profession of speech/language pathologist (SLP), as well as poetry.

ALISON THUMEL is a Chicago-based writer. She is a graduate of the University of Chicago where she was awarded the Elsie F. Filippi Memorial Prize in Poetry. Her work has recently appeared in *DIAGRAM*, *The Rumpus*, and *Salt Hill*. She is the author of the chapbook *LIFE OF*, which won *Salt Hill's* Dead Lake Chapbook Contest in 2016, and *[fearnotes]* from Dancing Girl Press (2018).

BRENDAN TODT is the author of the poetry chapbook *The Idea of Leaves within the Dying Tree*. His poem "At the Particle Accelerator at Krasnoyarsk" was included in *Best American Non-Required Reading 2013*. His fiction and poetry can be found elsewhere in print and online. He lives in Sioux City, IA with his wife and two sons.

WILLIAM TROWBRIDGE'S seventh poetry collection, *Vanishing Point*, was published by Red Hen Press in April, 2017. His eighth, a greatly expanded collection of the poems that came out in the 2016 Red Hen graphic chapbook *Oldguy: Superhero*, came out in October. He is a faculty mentor in the University of Nebraska Omaha Low-residency MFA in Writing program and was Poet Laureate of Missouri from 2012 to 2016. For more information, see his website at WiliamTrowbridge.net.

RHETT ISEMAN TRULL'S poetry collection, *The Real Warnings* (Anhinga Press, 2009), won several awards, including the Devil's Kitchen Reading Award, and was nominated for a Poets' Prize. Her poetry has appeared in *32 Poems*, *The American Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Southern Review*, and elsewhere. She is the editor of *Cave Wall*. "Bourbon and Ginger Ale" is after Nickole Brown.

JOHN WALSER'S poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous journals, including *Barrow Street*, *Nimrod*, *december magazine*, *Spillway*, *Lumina*, *the Pinch*, *Dressing Room Poetry Review*, *Yemassee*, *Mantis*, *Iron Horse*, and *Lunch Ticket*. He was a featured poet in the September 2014 issue of *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact* and is a three-time semifinalist for the Pablo Neruda Prize. A Pushcart Prize nominee, he is the recipient of the 2015 Lorine Niedecker Poetry Award from the Council of Wisconsin Writers.

A recent graduate of Smith College, EMMA CAIRNS WATSON now coordinates Egyptology lectures by day and inhales other people's poetry by night. Her poetry is forthcoming

in *RHINO Poetry*, *Pithead Chapel*, and *Ninth Letter*.

L.A. WEEKS grew up on Virginia's coastal plain, and spent twelve years on the lower Mississippi, where she owned and operated a bookstore. She now lives and writes near the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Her poetry can be found in *Green Mountains Review*, *Alabama Literary Review*, *The Raintown Review*, and elsewhere.

SUNNI BROWN WILKINSON'S poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Crab Orchard Review*, *JuxtaProse*, *Cimarron Review*, *Southern Indiana Review*, other journals and anthologies, and has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her first full-length poetry collection, *The Marriage of the Moon and the Field*, was a 2017 finalist for the Hudson Prize and was published by Black Lawrence Press in 2019. She has an MFA from Eastern Washington University, teaches at Weber State University, and lives in Ogden, UT with her husband and three young sons.

BRIAN CHANDER WIORA teaches poetry at Columbia University, where he is an MFA candidate. He serves as the online poetry editor for the *Columbia Journal*. His poems have appeared in *Rattle*, *Gulf Stream Magazine*, *The New Mexico Review*, *As It Ought To Be*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Alexandria Quarterly*, and other places. Besides poetry, he enjoys listening to classic rock music, performing standup comedy, and traveling.

MATTHEW WOODMAN teaches writing at California State University, Bakersfield and is the founding editor of *Rabid Oak*. His writing appears in recent issues of *Sonora Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Storm Cellar*, and *The Meadow*. More of his work can be found at MatthewWoodman.com.

STEVE YATES lives in southern Utah where he enjoys cooking, hiking, and working on a random variety of arts-related projects, including photography, sketching people, painting, and writing. For relaxation he enjoys watching low-budget monster movies with his beloved woman and interpreting shadows on cave walls.

AMIE ZIMMERMAN lives in Portland, OR. Her work has been published, or is forthcoming, in *Sixth Finch*, *Thrush Poetry Journal*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Salt Hill*, *BathHouse*, among others. She has two chapbooks: *Oyster* (REALITY BEACH) and *Compliance* (Essay Press), and is the events coordinator for YesYes Books.

HOLLI ZOLLINGER is a self-taught artist who has made a career of her talents: drawing, painting, and surface design. She is continually inspired by her surroundings living in the desert town of Moab, UT. She is highly motivated by the art of creativity and incorporates the color, texture, and pattern she sees in the world around her. Holli's work has been published and featured worldwide. HolliZollinger.com

Native of Utah, SHARI ZOLLINGER divides her time between her work as a professional astrologer and independent bookseller. She has been known to write a poetic verse or two with published work in *Sugar House Review* and *Redactions*. She recently published *Carrying Her Stone*, a collection of poems based on the work of Auguste Rodin.

SUGAR'S MISSION, VISION, & VALUES



MISSION:

Sugar House Review promotes an eclectic range of poets through publishing and live events to build nationally connected literary communities and foster the literary arts in Utah.

VALUES:

Submitting work to *Sugar House Review* is an act of generosity: *Sugar House Review* is honored that poets submit their work to be considered for publication. Unlike many literary magazines, each submission is read by at least two readers—usually more. We are invested in our contributors and we take their work seriously.

Poetry and the literary arts are sacred vehicles through which ideas become conversations. We believe that the transaction between writer and audience, reader and listener, can teach life-affirming habits of patience, empathy, self-awareness, and critical thinking.

Sugar House Review is committed to collaborating to achieve its mission and to help like-minded organizations and partners to achieve theirs. In the past, we have worked with churches, bookstores, art galleries, advocacy groups, grant makers, coffee shops, schools, universities, individual artists, and other literary projects.

We believe that a remarkable variety of exciting things are happening in contemporary poetry. We work to assure this excitement continues by publishing and promoting as wide a range of poets, voices, and styles as possible.

We celebrate the diversity of gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, race, religion, region, and any other category that informs creativity and identity. Poetry is an assertion of voice that is strongest when enacted and celebrated by a “teeming nation of nations” (as Walt Whitman described).

We are committed to treating our poets with kindness, professionalism, and just a bit of whimsy to keep things fresh. Our lives center around poetry because we choose that they should. Our intent is that anyone who publishes with us, reads for us, or works with us feels valued throughout the process and is pleased with the results of our relationship.

HISTORY:

Sugar House Review has published 19 serialized issues since 2009. We have released one spring/summer and one fall/winter issue each year, with double-length anniversary issues in 2014 and 2019. Our editors and readers evaluate submissions during allotted periods, choosing pieces that best represent our mission of publishing an eclectic range of voices. In addition to publishing national and international poets, we place emphasis on showcasing local and regional poets to contribute to our region's poetry community and to lower barriers for live events.

Work first published in *Sugar House Review* has appeared in *Verse Daily*, *Poetry Daily*, and four Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses anthologies.

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