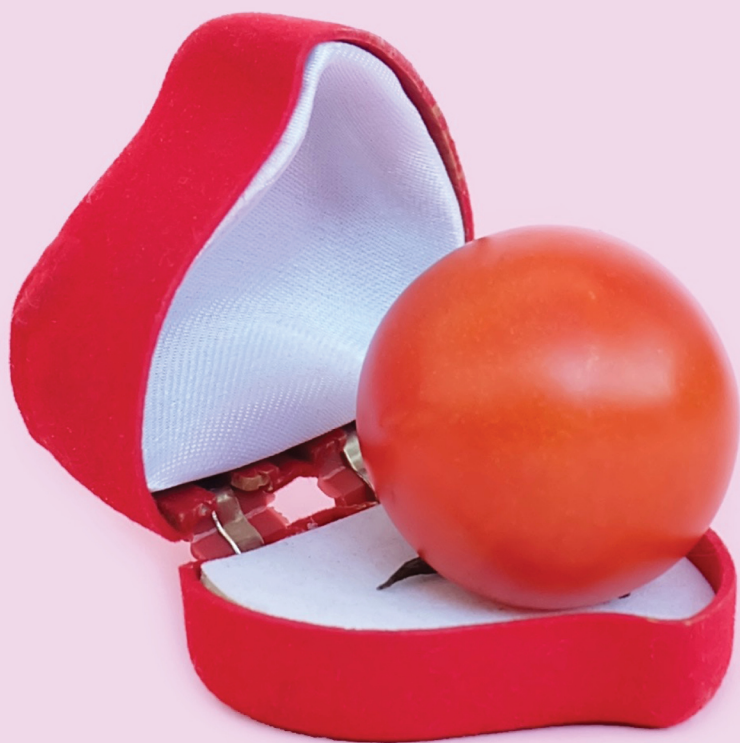


SIXFOLD

POETRY WINTER 2018



SIXFOLD

POETRY WINTER 2018



SIXFOLD

WWW.SIXFOLD.ORG

Sixfold is a collaborative, democratic, completely writer-voted journal. The writers who upload their manuscripts vote to select the prize-winning manuscripts and the short stories and poetry published in each issue. All participating writers' equally weighted votes act as the editor, instead of the usual editorial decision-making organization of one or a few judges, editors, or select editorial board.

Each issue is free to read online, to download as PDF and as an e-book for iPhone, Android, Kindle, Nook, and others. Paperback book is available at production cost including shipping.

© The Authors. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted without the written permission of the author.

Cover Art: Elena Koycheva. Online at [instagram.com/lenneek/](https://www.instagram.com/lenneek/)

SIXFOLD

POETRY WINTER 2018
CONTENTS

Bryce Emley	
Inheriting	9
Grief	10
Asking Father What's at the End of the Darkness	11
AJ Powell	
Butterfly-minded	12
Hike	13
Cliffside	14
Psalm	16
By Myself	18
Faith Shearin	
Old Woman Arrested for Teaching 65 Cats to Steal	19
Early Lab Mice	20
When The World Was Flat	21
Laika, Before Space	22
Biology	23
Claire Van Winkle	
Admitting	24
Fixed	26
Peach Picking	27
Mother Tongue	28
Rabbits	29
Sarah W. Bartlett	
Emptied of Heart	30
For My Sister	31
Fear of Falling	32
Sunset	33
Summer Cycles	34

Nooshin Ghanbari	
Holy War	35
Vincent	36
Blue	37
Light Rail Elegy	38
Meli Broderick Eaton	
When We Were Mud	39
Blackbird	40
The Afterlives of Leaves	41
Web	42
Flight	43
Jeddie Sophronius	
I Memorized the Lord's Prayer	44
Interlude: Refugees	45
Paula Bonnell	
To a Chicken Pie	47
The Who & How of Morning	49
When & Why It Got Wet	50
On The Bay	51
The Interior Decorators' Vow	52
In Winter, By Rail	54
Addison Van Auken Waters	
I Already Gotta Husband	55
Parasite	56
Girls.	57
Daniel Sinderson	
The Floor a Light-Year Away	59
Little Brother	60
Hallelujah	61
The What of the Machine	62
Fool	63
Andrew Allport	
All Nature Will Fable,	64

Marte Stuart	
Little House on the Prairie	65
Peach Death	67
Variations on the Word Breathe	68
What an Insult Time Is	69
Matthew Parsons	
Mountain Roosters	70
The Tools	71
My Father as an Inuit Hunter	72
Haystack, Highlights, and Silk	73
Genghis	74
Emily Bauer	
Gently, Gently	76
Simplicity	77
Things Better Left Unsaid	78
Slumber Party	79
How the Tide Saves Me	80
Bruce Marsland	
Picnics of jam and inspiration	81
A once lovelorn bard's final journey	83
This poem is already written	85
The cut flower's lament	87
Rhyme scene	88
Beatrix Bondor	
Night Makers	89
Titling	90
Red Telephone	91
Solving	92
Isabella Skovira	
String Theory	98
The Relativity of Space	99
Zeno's Paradox	100
Lessons in Anatomy	101
Lawless Conservation	102

Juan Pablo González	
The Tempest	103
Colombia, 1928	104
Colombia, 2018	105
Bucket	106
Molly Pines	
Coming from California	107
Hiking	108
Elmwood Cafe	109
The Pillbug	110
Jamie Marie	
On the Lake	111
Waning Interest	112
XMEA	113
Incense	114
The Resistance of Memory	115
William A. Greenfield	
Heat	116
If You Show Me Yours	117
Sonder After Dark	118
The Old Woman Sitting Beneath a Weeping Willow	119
Bill Newby	
Clean Pants	120
Tuesdays at The Seagate's Atlantic Grille	121
Photography 201	123
Blinds Down	124
Sending a Kiss from Third	125
Elder Gideon	
Male Initiation Rites	127
Female Initiation Rites	129
Lost Rites	131
Putrescence	133
#MarchforOurLives	134

Joel Holland	
Dim Lighting	137
Day Of	140
One in the Crowd	141
Departure	143
Dear Gi-Gi,	145
Martha R. Jones	
Ode to Writer's Block	146
Heart Beats	147
The Was Wolf	148
How Lewis Carroll Met Edgar Allan Poe	149
Contributor Notes	152

Bryce Emley

Inheriting

—for Erin

Maybe we ask too much of the stars.
They must be tired from the weight of our small lonelinesses,
tired of being cast in our stories
when all they want is to show us the shape of the night.
They must know there's so much space between them.
They must know how we talk of their dying,
how they're already gone before they reach us,
and yet all they do is reach with arms so dim
they can't even press the shadows from our figures,
the way we can't stop ourselves
from becoming our fathers,
who didn't know how to keep from hurting us.
It's good to be loved so much
we can hurt the people we love.
It's good to be always ending, and so needed, for now.
It's good to tell someone
Here, and here, and here
as you touch the parts of your face you want to be kissed
and feel warmth from their lips
like light from trillions of miles away on your cheek, your temple,
the curve where your jaw meets your neck.

Grief

You don't feel it. You have it
or you don't.
No one tells you it's like that.
They don't tell you to have it is to feel everything
you've always felt
but in new tongues, new colors, new coats
in the same bright, busy country.
They don't tell you feelings don't matter,
the way you don't feel
the bones you carry through the world
until you're too tired to stand,
all that love you kept sleeping
waiting for the ones who would take it,
all your wondrous youth.
You won't know it as a feeling.
You'll know it by a lightness: a gift
of one less thing to be afraid of,
an openness already collecting your breaths,
recurring dream
losing its shape as you describe it
and even now can't recall,
but know you had it.
You know you have it.

Asking Father What's at the End of the Darkness

He says I think too much of falling things,
of what comes next.

Lately buzzards have been flying circles in my head,

I'd like to know to what extent we choose
our nightmares. I'm tired
of how things have to end, how everyone we love

are bonfires night has just begun to swallow.
I think this is why he needs God,
why my heart is always playing jackstraw with my ribs.

I'd like to know it will matter if I pray
for him, I believe in God
the way I believe in Icarus and starlight,

in bones waiting at the bottom of the sea.
I think he needs to think I'll miss him when he's gone,
ashes sketching wild shapes on the wind.

If I don't speak it's because I keep a prayer
lodged in my throat: *Make me someone
worth hurting to see.*

AJ Powell

Butterfly-minded

Do you write upon delicate places?
Imagination is the storied underside of lepidoptera wings:
scales seamed together—papery and trimmed
to triangle arcs, graceful for flight,
wandering from thorn to blossom.

Do you feed upon surprising things?
Make meals from an insect's food-stuff:
fennel, milkweed, aster, daylily;
find shelter in a hollow tree
and travel among tall, wild grasses.

Do you grow in stages?
Nothing is certain except metamorphosis:
egg on leaf, caterpillar slinky-crawling,
chrysalis dangling susceptible,
and bodies winging wonder.

Have you journeyed generations in a day?
Poems are pollinators, flitting
across oceans, the migration always
for a flower's sake and
our survival.

Are you, like me, butterfly-minded?
Velvety in the dark, then
all manner of speckled and variegated,
and become emanations of alabaster, or
iridescent and sorrowful in blue.

Do you wish to unleash every fleet thought?
When the butterflies in your stomach
stir a hurricane with their wings,
churning fear and discovery, do you
wish to release them, through seppuku?

Hike

I like
to pick
my way
through
a trail
of rocks
and roots
a moving body
in the still earth
wild wind
companion creek
sun blaze
tree shade
lazy magpie
foraging squirrel
white noise of
waterfall descending
lichen-blanketed granite
beside wildflower bounty
and scent of
dust and dry pine
in the air
til afternoon
rain
releases
dampening life
and my soul
long buried in
paved tombs
exhumed
enlivened
and feet
find
their way

Cliffside

Half the world is drowning;
half the world is on fire.
The earth is warming and
our tempers flaring.
The total eclipse of the sun
marched across the length of our empire
northwest to southeast,
stunning us into silence,
its corona a net to rescue us,
stirring us to whoops and hurrahs,
then gone, and
a normal sun in the sky again.

The world is turning;
the world is ticking
toward some glory or menace,
slipping toward some
cliff's edge—wanting
to see if we have wings.
We are sending our castoffs
to hurricaned regions
as our sun sets red
behind the haze of
trees turning to ash.
We are driving with our eyes on our phones.
We are dropping our eyes from
each other's gaze,
for who can look and live?
Who can stand
beside our neighbors,
let alone reach a real
hand toward a real
forehead with a cool cloth?
We are left alone
and right alone,
brittle and stubborn
in our stances.
Humility is exiled
from our hearts.

Too many or too few signals
lurch out of the noise.
We are sound, fury,
friend, phony—
naked under the sky.

Psalm

Change is the invisible whisper
underneath everything,
the silent source of wild things—
green, growing, and filling
our senses.
Snow crystals become water drops and,
given time,
carve cleavage into mountain bosoms
to nurse life and wanderings.

Glacial blue ice peeks out
from a snow field's farthest regions,
nether-caverns of ancient colds and
deeper freezes than the ones we've known.
When the road curves or the cliff climbs,
and the way is blocked,
then the only way forward is back.
Find the future in geologic past—
realize it is all we've ever had.

Rivers wash rocks and float salmon
up to birthing grounds.
Shrubs bubble viridian on slopes
toward frothy, snow-topped peaks.
Every valley is a respite
in a climbing world.
The mountains are outside of time and going nowhere,
filling everywhere with
what was and is and is to come.

The wild is beckoning,
watching for our willingness to howl.
Peaks tease us toward heights
which halve our reason;
we are passengers in time,
lasting only a blink of God's eye,

too loose and shifting to last,
while the pack and density of mountains
adhere them to eternity.

Rain comes at intervals like a shroud—
a reprieve from wonderment—
dimming the displayed creativity of God.
I lift up mine eyes
to the hills.
I cannot look away.
They are on top of me and
I will bury myself at their feet forever.

Astonishment crashes like an avalanche
down to the highway of campers and
cars caravanning back to civilization.
The fools—abandon your vehicles!
Run for the hills,
walk until you must climb, clinging to vegetation,
to the highest holy places.

Holy is the variety.
Holy is the mutation.
Holy is the menace of predator.
Holy is the meekness of man in Nature's maw.

Multiply the leaves and tree needles.
Multiply the grasses.
Multiply the raging and rambling waters.
Multiply the salmon and the bears they feed.
Multiply the pollinators and the honeycomb.
Multiply the rainstorms.
Multiply the mosquitos who know to drink deeply
the lifeblood in the place.

By Myself

I spend time with you when we're apart.

Watch the sun drop behind the horizon from the back deck with you sitting next to me in an empty chair.

Wander a mountainside, circumscribe a meadow;

I am a solo traveler and you're by my side.

Sing along to old rocknroll as I drive down the highway—
you laughing at me from the passenger seat with no one in it.

Sigh inside a poem like a room unto ourselves
together as I sit alone.

Cry into my pillow and you place a warm hand
on my shaking back in my deserted bed.

Laugh at the joke you haven't whispered in my ear.

Dance in your absent arms.

Nest my nose in your distant neck.

Dip our toes in the sea, ankles lapped by waves,
a wide and solitary beach the setting for our excursion
by myself.

Faith Shearin

Old Woman Arrested for Teaching 65 Cats to Steal

after the headline in the World News Daily

I'm still trying to imagine how she did it.
Maybe she used costume jewelry

to instruct them, served tuna
each time they carried a necklace or ring

in their mouths, as a mother might carry
a kitten? They were her pets

but they worked for her, as thieves,
balanced outside unsuspecting

neighbors' windows on feet as quiet
as desire. She was an old widow

in Ohio, the sky low and gray,
and she was lonely in her flat ranch home

where her felines began to multiply, their
hunger like her own. She taught them

to bring her what was shiny—pocket watches,
earrings, diamonds—from a suburb

where things went missing
when someone closed their eyes in front

of a television set, or stepped
outside to get the mail: whiskers

against bureaus, velvet ears twitching
in the evening shadows.

Early Lab Mice

Robert Koch hung a curtain between the place
where he treated patients and the lab where
he began growing anthrax in a cow's eyeball.
While his wife was upstairs, marinating

a roast, he remained in the basement,
dissecting an infected garden rabbit,
its ear under his microscope.
Robert drew whatever he observed so

the pages of his notebooks filled with
sketches of rod-shaped bacteria;
he noted how anthrax could be
active or passive, revived by temperature

or moisture, and he remembered the mystery
of a sheep eating from a spring field,
blood gushing from its nose.
Robert set mousetraps in the horse barn,

and when his daughter, Gertrud, was given
white mice as pets he took a few downstairs;
he told his wife to turn away all but the sickest patients
and went on working by lantern light,

his cultures growing over a low flame; I imagine
how Gertrud's mice watched Koch
from cages and jars, with haunted
pink eyes, balanced on hind legs,

their tails naked behind them,
sensing danger, discovery.

When The World Was Flat

It was possible to drift off the edge,
white sails billowing into eternity,

the earth sometimes in the shape
of a box, sometimes

like a dinner plate. You may
have read about the four corners

guarded by angels who held
the winds; once, we floated on air,

or rested on the backs of elephants
which stood on a sea turtle

swimming in an infinite sea.
When the earth was flat it had

a primordial tree at its axis, and the sky
was a canopy, and life ended

at the horizon, in the place
where clouds fattened,

growing round.

Laika, Before Space

Stolen from the streets of Moscow,
Laika was a dog trained for space

by living in a cage; in photos
her ears bend forward, as if listening,

and she wears a flight harness; she stands
in the cockpit of Sputnik 2: the satellite which

never meant to bring her home.
I have read that Laika weighed

eleven pounds, that she lived
on her own for at least one winter,

each day dark and narrow, snow
in her fur. One scientist took her

home to play with his children before
she was launched into the burning panic

of her final hours and I imagine
Laika in the back yard of her last November

chasing a ball that collided
with a fence: ice dripping from the eaves,

frozen earth, her breath floating.

Biology

My daughter's textbooks bring it back,
and her notes on a chalkboard where cells

go on dividing, mitosis and photosynthesis
exactly as I left them all those years ago,

the fetal pigs with their eyes closed,
dreaming of birth. An aquarium bubbles

in the corner and my lab partner has lost
her notebook in which she has been drawing

anthrax and babies who cry like cats
because of a deletion in the short arm

of chromosome 5, babies who won't live
long enough to learn about prophase

or anaphase, and now the teacher is leaned over
a microscope, explaining the vast

universe we cannot see: viruses, dust mites
in our pillows, time, the biology room itself

which stands in my imagination, at the edge
of a white forest in Michigan, 1985.

Claire Van Winkle

Admitting

for Kat

The woman in Admitting sits in her reinforced fish tank
all day, smacking her gum and scratching

between her legs when she thinks the wait-
ing room's back is turned. The light

flickers like a foot tapping or breath catch-
ing how sickness catches in a scorched throat.

Only this lock-and-key sanctuary could hold
such deviant light—its switch-blade of fluorescence

on bullet-proof glass, its warped waves and pockmarks.
The desk-girl doesn't know what we know. She hasn't learned

the art of knitting shadows, of fitting
tight into the corners one conjures in this labyrinth

of knock-kneed chairs. All she knows is hair
spray and fingernails—not cut short, like ours,

or bitten to the quick. No, from cuticle to curved edge
hers are sharps, contraband. Her hands tell us

that she is on the outside. Their thick nails
will pick the ward's lock at the end of her shift.

She'll clock out before the snug chain of electricity
is released from the overhead lights. She'll go out,

get a cab, get laid. We know she holds at least
one skill we can't grasp: we will still see

her bruised-berry lips long after she's punched out,
and the smell of her hairspray won't quit, but by six

we'll have vanished from her varnished world.
We admit it's not the glass or needles or men

in white who hold us here for our own good. No,
what keeps us guarded goes deeper: That bored girl at the
desk

is a mistress of the art of missing nothing
she's lost or left behind while we are stuck

here in this strip-searched light with our past lives
laid out like tarnished cutlery. We roll up

our sleeves, bare our hearts and teeth, and shock ourselves
as we attempt to commit

the theory of forgetting
to

memory.

Fixed

There is technical language to describe a cat whose ovaries have been removed, but the word they used was fixed.

As in:

The day we had her fixed we picked her up and she was stoned, heavy as a sack of rocks.

We hauled her home, doing our best not to stretch the translucent film of exposed skin—her shaved underside cross-stitched by that mad embroidery where they'd sealed her shut with one ragged seam.

As in:

She'd just been fixed and we were afraid we might break her.

Peach Picking

You said you picked me 'cause I wore white stockings & no lipstick & in the low light I looked a little like your kid sister Etta. Said you liked how I was all elbows. That you could tell from the get my pussy would taste like peaches.

You're s'posed ta smile now, sugar pea, you said. So I did.

Before long, you got used to me—your favorite pit-stop on that beat-up highway from here to heaven and back.

I figured you'd tire quick, come to see that stockings run & lips crack & no matter how fresh & clean a thing starts, if your hands are dirty it's gonna get stained. After some mileage I even told you plain: *Peaches ain't so pretty once they're bruised.*

True, you said. Then you spat on your rough palm, got yourself wet, hitched up my skirt & pushed into me. But damned if they don't taste sweeter.

Mother Tongue

for Stacy

Stacy dreamt of cocks that spoke
Mexico City Spanish—rolling hard,
every syllable requiring tongue,
the body's pestle grinding city dust
into its mortar. *Coño de madre*, she'd slur
through sleep, pressed into the dressing room's
beat-up couch—restless,
sucking her thumb.

It was the only time she'd shut her mouth all night.

Inevitably the phone would ring, or one of us
would run a stocking and curse, and Stacy
would stir—irritable, like a child
whose pacifier has dropped out of reach.
She'd smack her lips, twist them to bare
her ruined teeth, and hiss *What're you putas lookin' at?*—
her voice all throat, her dripping thumb jabbing the air, slick
as meat on a spit.

Rabbits

She named her rabbits Zyprexa
and Xanax. Zyprexa made me
uneasy; he'd get loose
at all hours, wander to our bedroom,
and make small sounds like
the sucking of old shoes
in wet weather. He was the color
of dirty bed sheets and he smelled
like cabbage, but she loved him.
She called him Zippy.
When I asked about the scat on the floor
around his cage she said
the greenish lumps were *pellets*—
that rabbits ate their own crap
to get what they'd missed
the first time around.
She told me she liked rabbits
because they knew how things worked
and handled their shit
accordingly.

Sarah W. Bartlett

Emptied of Heart

“as I get older, I feel emptier”—jbk

You sit, vacant eyes an island
on your inner landscape, emptied
for lack of desire for more. Emptied
of loves lost and leaving you
lonely and afraid. Emptied
of life, left only with pain. Emptied
of will unlike those valiant years
of hair loss, chemo. Emptied, too,
of relentless worry over holding
a job, putting bread on a table you sit at alone
without appetite. Emptied of things
as we consult and consign, pack up
on the eve of change. All that remains
is bleak dark, the vast fear
of fading away
empty.

For My Sister

All night your heart treads
the rough ground of uncertainties,
rumbling over their spiky terrain
like a hamster striking the spokes of his wheel

racing as if to outdistance pain.
Or outsmart the doubts strewn ahead
with careless abandon. You
could choose to pause and reflect.

Assess the landscape before you.
Select your steps intent
on placing your feet on smooth ground
to assure balance. Sense

the solid nurture of knowing
you are whole. The rough ground
but a transient truth. Uncertainty
the true texture of a lived life.

Fear of Falling

She fears falling in the shower
so I go first, set the water to welcome
then extend my steady arms for her
to grasp. Reassured, she steps

leaning against the wall, the bar,
my naked chest as she seeks support
that speaks safety. Slowly I seat her,
leg bracing the stool as I lower her down.

Water courses past her shoulders
blessing her trust, our bond.
I hand her soap and washcloth, hold
the spray above her head.

Unbidden, her hands unfold the motions
of life-long ritual. Side by side, we sisters
slake a thirst for simpler time shared
if not recalled—immersed

in laughter, leaning one
into the other, trust unspoken.
And now, her hair washed
and rinsed over and over

'til it squeaks as she likes,
I towel her dry in the warmth of the stall
as we plot our exit, her fear of falling returned
full force. I stand strong, lift

support her weight on me only
to discover her legs no longer hold.
She reaches arms around my neck
as I step slowly back, clutching her

withered body to mine, our shuffled tango
an uneven course the few feet to bed.
For the last time, I hold her close
before she falls away.

Sunset

dark gray puffs of cloud
interspersed with neon pink

backlit context of the day's
layered leave-taking, light
and gray intermingled at the end
of a too-short visit with a life too-long

lived in the gray of loss—appetite
or energy for life— the same
day in and out, no hot pink zip
or even the pretext of joy

just the occasional shimmer
of a few days together
yesterday and tomorrow
a soft glow fading quickly away

like the sunset over the tarmac
anticipating an on-time departure

Summer Cycles

I. Last night, I brought the first
red daylily of summer inside.

It had been bent, the quiet way
things happen, unnoticed.
By this morning it had wilted,

its short life shed into a single tear
shaped blood red pool.

II. How sweet my sister's seaside visit
last summer—her first

wheeling her on canary yellow wings
to float on waves. We never got
that far, it being low tide.

But we laughed a good deal
and looked forward to this
year's return. Instead, I revisit

her final trip, relive those firsts
and what I recall of her joy.

III. All day, I have been noticing things—
daylilies clumped along old stone walls,
daisies' ardent faces vying to be counted

as if pulling petals could tell
what I already know: *she loves me . . .*
she loves me not . . .

she loves me.

Nooshin Ghanbari

Holy War

after Gholson's "Border: Mirage Wire"

We fight after Sainte-Chapelle.

(When I break
away from my father

there is

a moment of peace. Notre Dame: a moment

of prayer. The rose window
is my new horizon. Fractured, refracted,

refracted.)

Outside the cathedral, gelato
drips sticky down one hand

in roads of orange and pink.

Vincent

after Van Gogh's Wheatfield with Crows & The Harvest

Crows crowd the horizon
Bleeding onto the canvas
In curves of inky black—

In a scythe, in a comma
Indicating a pause and
A procession, though not
Quite an ending—

In a Rorschach test that
Reads *where will you go*
From here, there is nowhere
To go from here.

*Home is on a different
Horizon.*

Across the way, a farmer
Burrows about in the foliage
In that insistent way that
Little clouds grow on trees.

Every ladder he has ever owned
Leads nowhere. Up, not away.

And yellow—
My god, there is so much yellow.

Blue

Hands to ears,
I can hear the bass of
my heart pounding.

There is a terror up here,
this state of looming above.
The water rearranges itself
in an act of God—

ripples outward—a pause—
then a great scrambling
to what it once was.

(Blue. It was once
and always will be the purest
blue I have ever seen.)

And you, superimposed
 onto the blue,
onto the syntax
of the Cornwall horizon—

you, swathed in black
like a bruise, rearranging.

Light Rail Elegy

after Tarfia Faizullah

We held each other's hands
but did not promise not to let go.
In Amsterdam, they let go.
Girl unmoored, girl shivering,
unfamiliar city spinning. Tram
shadows lengthen, recede.
Their blue and white bodies
could offer up shelter, reprieve,
but not tonight.
No one knows where home is
tonight. Girl unfeeling, girl alone.
Overhead, the moon winks,
extinguishes its flame.

Meli Broderick Eaton

When We Were Mud

Our nothingness was everything
when we were mud, still,
stirred, we stood
to be counted and forgot
our filth, the dirt beneath
the crescents of our fingernails. Maybe
we departed before the mud dried, maybe
we arrived before we were formed,
maybe we didn't remember
we were dirty.
We rose and forgot
that standing is just the start
of the need to lie down, to tie our eyes
with sutures of sleep eventually,
inevitably
a furrow begins in the first petal
the perfect cup of a tulip collapses
the wheel of each flower spins into dust
every leaf trades green for fire every stone
softens for the river every beat
of your heart is a pump closer to falling
back into the earth.

When my mud dries, open the heavens
to let the rain fall into pearls
on this skin I wear
wash the dust back to my feet
let my petals curl
out of the way, for the next
blossom might mean more, the next
leaf will rust into glorious tatters, the last
beat hammers into stillness
and we remember everything,
everything is borrowed.

Blackbird

Blackbird bobs on his branch
at first, I think his dance is the wind
but then I see it is his own weight
too great for the slender stem
clutched in the circle of his toes.

Through fleeing light he peers
with intense button eye—just one
as though he has found what he came to visit.
Behind his bright shouts beneath
his dark mutterings I hear
the things he doesn't say, the things
he can't wrap with sound.
I don't know the words either
but in the crimson thrust of his epaulets
as he bristles his throat I sense the urgency I hear
the boulder of his thoughts the fear
night will come with some pearl unsaid
some idea too big for his song some sigh
that can't be heaved because its weight
would break us would make us
fall from our tree.

With one flap he fades into the spilling night.
This darkness, known, is a kindness
maybe
the other is, too.

The Afterlives of Leaves

*(Komorebi: tree leaking through sun
the miracle of light, leaves)*

Cellulose bones strung
like ribs parched in the sun
woody webs spread over their own decaying
roadmaps pointing to their end.
Do they remember seizing the light
as it fell, driving cupped hands upward
in worship?

When you get there
will you know if you are broken
into fractals of yourself or
just broke down with your back to the light?
Will you remember the last time
laughter fell from your lips as you sipped
time from the silty swirl
at the bottom of your cup?

Look up at the heavens where
it all starts over, where
we strung our words on the spokes
of the stars for later, always later.
They flutter and rustle where we sift for order
where we cling to each other hoping
to hold the light before it passes.

Web

Untethered
tiny spider mariners
set sail into the unknown dusk
their entire lives
strung between trunks
that must seem like planets stationary
unmoving as the wind sways them
from one galaxy to the next
and they never know.

Beneath
our feet seethes
the coronary flow of this earth
the whole reason
we stand in the first place
but the rock we cling to, sink our anchors
seeking warmth is forever reforming
pushing us away from its churn
and we never know.

Buried
in our hearts
sits a seed placed there
before we came
out of the darkness
sliding into the arms of our family trees
the fertile carbon fingers that start
the heart seed's tendrils drawing
our map back home.

Flight

Is there wonder is there light
when time has fled when
the heart trembles its last when
your hand is not there inside your hand
 this was always meant to happen

Do you stand balanced between mountains
or are you wrapped inside a cloud or
do you drink the river whole as
you swim like a salmon to completion
 this is the natural order

What sky do you feather with raindrop wing
can you still see the shiver of a lily stem can you
feel the last paint of sunset brush your skin do you
hear the hawk scree as it streams toward the earth
 you need to get over this

Will you remember a black so black
it reflects green a song so sweet
you can't possibly think when some tiny miracle
makes you catch your breath
are you still
still

Jeddie Sophronius

I Memorized the Lord's Prayer

I memorized the Lord's Prayer
& with every wrong kingdom I named
I met the teacher's cane

I raised the Five Pillars of Islam
the night before I kissed a Moslem girl
outside the invisible line of *pardah*

According to the sacred texts
Krishna is the God of love
& one of us is going to *naraka*

There was no way an old man from China
could have believed in the God of the Israelites
But what do I know?

—*For thine is the kingdom,*
In her sick bed, I tell my mother
about Saṃsāra

—*& the power, & the glory,*
God, she is coughing blood
& insulin

for ever & ever.
Amen.

Please, I don't want to lose her in heaven

Interlude: Refugees

If I were
a bird,

I'd be too
claustrophobic

to sing.
I'd drown

my wings
long enough

to become
man again.

You can call it
evolution,

except
that it isn't.

We've all
been here before:

singing and drinking
until our lungs

collapse
like buildings

during
an airstrike.

Indiscernible
refugees

die every day
without their names

ever mentioned
in the newspaper.

Children born
of war
die in war.
But why

bother? The work
of God is this:

for every snowflake
that kisses

the ground
a child's sand angel

gets closer
to getting buried,

and so does
the child.

Somewhere,
a farmer shares

his last cigarette
with a soldier

over a field
of limbs.

Paula Bonnell

To a Chicken Pie

Dearly beloved, you were there
to greet me with a smile of steam
when I walked home from school
on those winter grade-school days,
home to avoid the abhorred squishiness
of lunchbox sandwiches and the softball games
of the noon recess. You were there,
consoling, in my young married days
on the nights when we got home
at 10 p.m. from work and night school.
You were there in my civil-servant days,
transmogrified to a turkey pie
with a touch of cinnamon in the gravy,
made by my co-worker on her turkey farm.
Those were the days when I came home late
to you, having enjoyed the privilege
of rank: unpaid overtime.

And I recall, too, how even before
grade school, when I looked at the illustrations
showing rivers of milk
and islands of cake, I always knew
that the pies growing on trees
were you, O chicken pie.

And now, dear friend (as my nephew said
to his big wooden truck when he carried
it down the stairs), I do not question
your coming to mind as I stand here
in my near-vegetarian middle age
on the subway platform,
a vision of your browned crust
rising rotundly.
I simply greet you with pleasure.
When broken, your crust will—I know—

release fragrant hints
of the white, orange, and green
nourishment deep in your inland sea
of gravy, cradled in your crinkled silvery pan.

The Who & How of Morning

The rooster hauls the sun
from the bottom of the sea
and the little birds
with the fine mesh net
of their songs
lift it inch by inch
over the horizon

And by the time
its bottom edge
clears the horizon
the seawater
has all drained
out of it and
it is light
and can rise
of its own accord
to the top of the sky

When & Why It Got Wet

Noon:
and the sun has risen
so high that it can see
how little we have done
all morning, how much we
have omitted, what bumbles
we have begun. Changing
its angle hardly improves
the picture. It
notices certain small
worthy persistences,
its slant rays reveal a
good deed, inspirations
here and there, but the sun
sees everything. It is
heavy-hearted, molten
with grief, unwilling to
face the wrongs that might be
done after dinner when
what is kind is streaked with
what is cruel. It paints
a canvas that mingles
shame with a flowchart for
glory, then the sun
lowers itself in its
bath and the world
floods with darkness.

On The Bay

Rain salts the air
Vagueness erases the horizon
Blank sky seared with
white from a hidden sun,
a diffusion of clouds

Bright!—
the air pops open—
Thunder slams it shut.
Once
and once only . . .
Rumbles fall off the edge

Yes, we all saw it, all heard it—
No, all the trees seem intact—

House silence:
Tearing lettuce,
choosing the green bowls,
milk glass, a blue plate
Talk of our mothers,
torn bread, fish chowder
Amen.

The Interior Decorators' Vow

When my partner and I took on this job
we were clear from the beginning
about what we wouldn't do.
We wanted to avoid
even the idea of a concept.
Two rooms in a millionaire's penthouse
and a little vestibule anteroom
that he called a "lobby." (A
million isn't much these days,
when you think about it.)
Manhattan.

In the lobby we placed
a low cedar chest. And beside it
an African sculpture, upright,
the kind Picasso admired.
A warrior, this one—I'd say maybe
related to his Don Quixote
drawings. Nothing else
African in the place.
(I don't count, of course,
the faux zebraskin rug
beside the ormolu table
on which rests a bakelite box.)

Our fakes were the real thing:
fakes. We didn't overdo the faux
thing, though; that would have
been too much of a good fling.
The bedroom had color:
rich reds, deep blues. The
living room tried to be almost
without color. Not neutrals, though.
Nothing gray, for example.
There was glass, open-textured things,
some greens mixed in.
No pure whites. A lot of
stuff in that room made

of natural materials that were variegated as hell (or as hell wouldn't be, if there were such a place)—baskets in which the tones were an astonishing mélange of straw yellows, reedy browns and clay reds, the whole thing quite the mixed discourse. I'd say "airy," but that's a concept, and what we were trying to avoid.

In Winter, By Rail

Black shine on water
Shadows precede
each of the trees

Marsh stubble dull copper
Loops of river water
coppery, smooth

From the train:
rivers disclose harbors
birds land
and hold themselves in their wings

Old blue clothes
caught in a tree
beside the harbor

Redbrown leaves, stones,
trunks rising—
branches V and branch again

Muting whistle
a feeling of mist
beside trees, beside waters

Causeway—
osprey nests on platforms—
a flotilla of swans

White-covered boats
houses on stilts
a toss of small birds

Addison Van Auken Waters

I Already Gotta Husband

I done dance marimba
uke-le-le.
Sweet boy lover boy
hundred sing say.
Sugar cake butter cake
Sycamore sway,
Pretty rain ova valley
Like-a-duvet.

Milk moon
Queen tune
Star-seat sky.
Big wing
black wing
Inda cloud fly.

Shush.
Malove sound like:
Alabama Muddy River
Zula TipToe

Amen
Amen
I'ma say it again

Alabama Muddy River
Zula TipToe
Stay forever sugalover
Boy don't go.

Zesty lemon chilepepper
Spicy rice tree
Wheat grass Virginia grass
Tiger grass Free
Left foot Right foot
Da ting ting Be

We got nuttin'
'less We got We.

Parasite

I have weaseled my way into
the guts of a peach,
a fig,
a fruit or
red red meat,
and bumped my head on the stone—

I was blind, too.

The worm wriggles
a hole in the sky—

or dirt.

Girls.

GENESIS

He wanted to become a Priest,
but he took all them girls instead.
All them girls
 and the maid,
kissed them,
gave them beds of gold,
taught them
 the rudiments of touch.

Him: CHIEF. Keeper of the Women.
(The girls some fair young virgins).

EXODUS

Them girls
 in royal apparel,
he stripped bare of leopard bodysuits or
 spandex purple pants,
and with penetrating steam,
 red-faced
 opens his mouth (as if wishing to eat)
 breathing up or down,
 the body and the organs rubbing,

The Bull drives.
He pours the Juice.

NUMBERS

Seven them girls
1 the one selling her virginity for \$300,000
2 Naomi (from Harlem)
3 the leggy queen (too old)
4-6 the maid, your sister, Mother Earth
7 the mermaid (he loved her more than all the others)

7 received his gift:
The Venomous Worm
stinging againandagain

JUDGES

Them girls
the Womb red with flame,
Ripe
fair fruits of earth.

Their vast egg
ripped from the follicle.

Them woman once strong by birth,
Lifted up their Voice and wept again:
Let no man hurt our bodies.
Poison infected me.
Bruises.
Beast of prey.
Hang him from a tree.

REVELATION

He returns to the mother's house
like a playful boy
to yield the milk.
Evidence destroyed.

Meanwhile:
the clouds wept ninety rivers
the poison hung in the sun
the breath lingered in the mouth, foul
Extinguished were the lights of men.
Extinguished were the lights of girls.

Daniel Sinderson

The Floor a Light-Year Away

This, as all the others, is a story of the mechanical flesh:
of dirt and ugliness and sunsets before a cool night
spent hiding cigarettes from the rain.

Eventually, we are all delivered home—
our boots mud-sucked and gray,
eyes looking past the glass to crushed leaves and soggy walls.
How do we feel so much with so little?
Hearts stop—not like a storm passes, but like a knot

pulled tight then cut. These are the things we make promises with,

these figures of flesh, these fragile houses
with the windows boarded and the doors ripped off the hinges.
In the closet is a suit on a hanger and it has been to three
weddings, including your own.
From that place a new house grows,
the saga repeats, and our prayers
confront their own clumsiness.
The windows swing open.

Looking to the sky we imagine the universe scrunched into a
fist, a single, crushed point
and through every telescope we fall back into ourselves at
increasing speeds
into confusion, just this thickness of a globe

strangled with life—our faces, our actions
staining some passing time and place.
And on a cool night the far is unfrozen;
it seeps right through your eyes with the rain.

Little Brother

Of bright monotony: I drink and watch the sun rise.
The news is red. I am
the little brother with his brain taped back together.
Dear sharpened light and deafening voiceless everywhere:
Do my cells complain too?
I know I am a man made of borrowed things

here, alive in the sun. I drop
like blood flowing to the lowest point
in a still life filled with too many too-crushed hearts.
Again in the hourless houses, outside the world that matters,
I pray for the sound of human blood in human veins—
for that inviolable voice choked and buried over by the dust it makes.
O bliss O world O music
 in a city of monsters, where the light won't end.

Hallelujah

Shipped the world over
to accost others, every angel arrives spent, shaking
on elbows like a drunk against the floor.
I listen, but I'm tired with pity.
Tired of their broken wings and wheezing breath.
Tired of the vertigo they say is truth.
Outside, emerging from the ragged past, the pear trees bloom.
It is Sunday. I stay outside
to watch the shadows we call creation;
to live in these meanings we make up.

The What of the Machine

I dreamed of genesis again but it wasn't like Genesis; saw our voices
as foaming marrow
building bones that could hold us. The image
sticks to the back of my eyes
where I smash the world flat

and call it seen. This room—books, clothes,
cats, fleas—bulges in the throat like a song
and I know it's not mine, but ours.
I know that regardless of the density of light, it looks like now—
like this song is a book, like this book is a mouth

where the dead are swallowed
and given houses to burn down

as bright as spinning wheels
through the teeth of a country. I drink
on the porch with the fleas, and listen
to the shriek and gospel of the world
from across the street.

I shouldn't stay awake like this,
smiling and embalmed below the buzzing light and the incinerating moths,
on this chair like a bed like a boat into dreamland where I drift with the
sewage to the sea
and good morning good morning good morning good morning!
To live is to sign our names across the everything
until nothing but mess is left—
a house of ill-made images, where the sun beats.

Fool

I watch the garbagemen outside
and sit on the edge of our bed.
Another day and it feels like church,
 and like in church I'm clueless;
I don't know the words, but I sing.

Andrew Allport

All Nature Will Fable,

Said Thoreau, if you lack ability
to express it in language, every rock's shine
becomes a myth.

Thus armed, our father and son go fishing
a pond below the railroad cut, bright bobbers
lacquered in a green slime.

Just then, an osprey folds its wings and bombs
into the water, rising with a tremble
as a Reno-bound freight train thunders by
above, machine in the garden.

Which machine? Which Garden?
When there was no more beauty, we decided
we could worship the loss of beauty, and so
nothing was lost. Lo, how the water sparkled

under the uranium mine, clear as lucite,
and the sky a monument to ignorance.

Monofilament in the bushes along the shore,
seabirds dying of thirst. Mommy and me
saw it once. Did you see sharks? Yes, some,

I lie. And where was me? You? An egg
we carried in our pale adaptation
of a mystery. You were one
conclusion in the middle of a line,
mine story, the end of life as we knew.

Marte Stuart

Little House on the Prairie

Death's entry awaits silence.
Gerda's chest sucks at air
uneven and ragged,
breath's undertone
hooks her here.
Listening is the last to go.

Friends croon old tunes for old times' sake
'f you only knew, dear,
my entire yesteryear
reverberate into every cell,
a relief when finally still.
Free too, clock's incessant itch.

Lay hush, the struggle to receive.
Turn the dial low, beyond off,
through the os, to be reborn
an amplifying instrument,
an expansive bass-note set
onnnnnnn

The storybook read aloud echoes deep:
the girl blazes across an open field
of rustling prairie grass,
ears deafened with wind
blown from a limitless horizon.
Ploughs furrow creases in time.

Toil clamors just beyond the rise,
the din of measured work—
Pa's calloused hands
pounding heartbeats.
Death's resolute rap-tap-raps
send shingles to the wind.

Pack-up the covered wagon,
hitch-up the horses,
leave the old house behind.
Turn, wave goodbye
and keep looking back,
until you can't see the barn *off*

Peach Death

Puckered and soft
clings yet to the branch,
its rose blush plump
in the sigh
of late summer's heat.
The warm delight
of an afternoon's play
upon its surface,
dangling just
for sweetness, say.

Luxuriating too
in loosening skin,
in gravity's tease
at its grip. The moment
a blessed breeze
unhinges the—
pok

an easy release
and free fall,
trusting the rest
to its seed.

Variations on the Word Breathe

The bookmarked page left
beside your bed, like a secret
guide to your mind's last lure,
held Atwood's dreamy whispers

and likely drew you fully under
to the pit of your suffocation fear,
with no one there to whisper
the word of protection: breathe.

Beside me, your body lay lifeless.
Yet, you-in-the-room entered me
timeless, and I breathed for you
to allay all those strained years.

Gentle breaths, in and out,
bearing no clear distinction
of beginning or end;
taken only for the peace in it.

Mine, a gift of effortless breath,
while all-that-was-you filled me.
Yours, the small white flower
suspended in poem, to save me.

(A tribute to Margaret Atwood's *Variations on the Word Sleep*)

What an Insult Time Is

What an insult time is
since you died.
Cruel even,
ticking away
on and on
following life.

No pause
for death's
arresting nature.
Just more *now*,
the gap between
lengthening
like shadows
at sun's fall.

Matthew Parsons

Mountain Roosters

Woke in the morning, weak in the mind.
Grabbed the grain but could not find

one benny hen of my whole damned passel
and begun to think of the last night's hassle.

The cock on the hill, crowing at two
saw me sipping the morning dew.

Hung up and over, I woke at eight
to find the bastard crowing late.

In the night he stole my good Domineckers.
Mountain roosters—clever peckers.

The Tools

I'm a drunken fool
with a trunk of tools
and not one was stole nor borrowed.

Each one is mine,
both beer and wine,
and I walk the hill tomorrow.

The crest and fall,
the walk and crawl,
the holler calls me waken.

The moss and creatures,
the early peepers;
lost features frost has taken.

Does the man on the mount
make a sound
or does he ride one down around there?

Just let him ride,
of his drink, abide.
Let him drink his pride and founder.

I'm a drunken fool
with a trunk full of tools
and not one rule between them.

When I die, oh Lord,
take my shield and sword,
for I fear the Devil's seen them.

My Father as an Inuit Hunter

He chews the bones to make the boat.
He sews his jacket down to its leathery top
and looks a lot like a sea dragon,
dragging his pride behind him;
losing himself in the frozen water.
Gone huntin',
running reindeer down stream
until they collapse like a dream
on a rocky shoreline.
By the time he drags it home,
it'll be past supper.
He won't mind
and he'll skin the deer in the dark
to hang overnight like a roof over our heads,
which we also have him to thank for.
Lord knows he gets shit done.
And I grew up thinking
my father was a native.

Haystack, Highlights, and Silk

Ain't she a wise woman?
A sly woman.
A know-your-own-shoulders,
sit back and sigh woman.

T-shirt,
hard hands,
right for making a man.
Dang.
She done made me, didn't she?

There's more down the line.
They're thick as thieves.
Haystack and Highlights,
them cackling hens,
I wonder what they believe.

Silk is still sitting,
the prettier she's getting.
It'd put a good wine to shame.

Haystack and Highlights
would kill a man outright.
But Silk rubs her shoulders
and turns the world over
and surely I knowed her
by the back, so I told her:

Ma'am, I'm obliged
just to sit by your side.
Her face is hiding
but I know she's smiling
a mile wide and wiling
her whole life away.

Genghis

Jubal

Genghis rings the doorbell
and straightens up his robes
and precious jewels dangle from his ear lobes.
When the door opens, he enters.
He don't need no invitation 'round here
and 'round here is everywhere, in case you didn't know.

Genghis has his son,
and his son has his son
and so on and so on
until we reach the now.
Genghis likes culture
and by god, he's vulture
picking the bones of our holy cows.

We got our own Genghis
like everyone else.
Maybe you're too afraid
to see the Genghis in yourself.
But if you're scared of Genghis
remember he's long gone.
Praise be to our emperor,
the little Jubal Khan.

He's a ruler of rulers,
giving orders to yard sticks.
He's playing with oranges
in the floor at the market.
By god, he's a baby
who'll soon be a man.
He'll have no emotions.
He'll not give a damn.
If he scrapes his knee,
he'll not cry like a girl.
He may never love,
but he'll soon rule the world.

And that's the trade
that old Genghis made
when he conquered the countries
on a quest to get laid.

He don't talk about feelings.
He don't say I love you.
He don't think there's a God up above.
He might think it's him,
or the fate of all men,
who don't know what it is to feel love.

Emily Bauer

Gently, Gently

There is not a power in me
that mirrors the might of a mountain
or the intensity of the ocean.
I do not possess the ferocity of a
midsummer storm.
No. I am subtle magic.
I unfold slowly,
curling around you like tendrils of smoke.
I am quiet magic.
The kind found in the charm of a small town
or on the face of a still lake,
reflecting the sunlight,
making it dance around you.
I will not turn your world upside-down
or inside-out.
Instead, I will wade through it,
bathe in it,
let it coat me so that I know the
deepest
parts
of you.

Simplicity

Poetry is the backcountry three-finger salute,
my digits slowly rising from the steering wheel to acknowledge
the only other car I've seen on this county road
in the last ten miles.

It's the small café in a town of 251 people,
the waitress charging me \$1 for three cups of
Maxwell House Breakfast Blend,
throwing out a "Hey, honey" at every turn.

It's deep, dark dirt that makes up the
hidden lavender farm on highway 127.

Iowa soil can grow anything.

It's the rolling rows of harvested corn,
a solemn sacrifice not so solemn
because this is what they were made for.
Inconspicuous magic.

Things Better Left Unsaid

You said that I was a book
you'll always wonder about.
I said maybe that's the beauty of this entire thing.
What I wanted to say was:

I want to be your favorite book.
I want my words forever embedded in your mind.
Your fingertips,
stained black with the ink from my pages,
are extensions of palms that know my weight
as much as your own.
The earthy scent and cracked spine
on this well-loved body
bringing you comfort and joy.
Bringing you home.
I want to be the book you carry with you.
Keep me close.

Slumber Party

Anxiety makes a bed of down and cotton,
inviting me to curl up in her tight embrace.
Depression brings out my favorite blanket,
tucking me in tight,
making it hard to breathe.
I can always count on these two being there.
Being here.
They now whisper to me,
one in each ear,
asking me to stay awhile.
They remind me of how cold the outside is
and how warm this bed has become.
Perhaps I'll lie here
just a little bit
longer.

How the Tide Saves Me

I've always felt at peace
while watching the ocean's tide.
The rhythmic waves settling
a heart that often beats
too quickly.
The constant roar drowning out the
destructive thoughts that
bounce around
inside my head.
I taste salt on my lips,
feel the sand move beneath me,
and I know,
deep within these worn bones,
that I am home.

Bruce Marsland

Picnics of jam and inspiration

Let's start Euterpe's engine
and hum gently up the avenue.

It's crowded on the interstates
of angst and unrequited love.

Oh my heart, my spleen, my vandalized soul.

Death spins in perpetual roundabouts
clogging commuter routes with fatalism.

You'll find some irony in the glovebox.

But we'll engage the four-muse drive
to skip off road,

in search of rough terrain, the stony trails
of balancing philosophies,

the lonely thought less had.

Maps show T.S. Eliot's tracks
as faint impressions to the east

coming and going like Shakespearean extras,
gossiping with critics in the wings

while Whitman's yawp
still echoes in the morning air

above we loafers with leaves of weed,

and who knows what's awaking
in the cerebral woods of revelation.

*Pass me a coffee spoon, Alfred,
and tell me more about the mermaids.*

So let's go.

I'll pack sandwiches.

A once lovelorn bard's final journey

The Northern skies were streaked with signs of spring
as, embracing, we re-kindled last night's fire,
not yet knowing birch logs book-end everything
or how commencement ceases our desire.

*It's the heat of anticipation without fulfillment
that burns hottest in the splintered couplets of our after-years.
It melts the snow, it stokes the sauna,
and it leads to a series of the wettest winters on record.*

In the rising sun's own land, with grace we leant
into each other's shadows, racing fate.
Our Eastern moon began a shy descent,
attempting to avoid the burn. Too late.

*Oh hell. This stubborn pursuit of a classical love affair
gets clichéd in orienting a flambéed occidental heart.
Geishas cannot save it, nor can a struggling haiku:
Sunny afternoon. / Kisses hot, embraces warm. / My tea has
gone cold.*

I've played my games with you, and you're ahead.
My scrambled brain heads South in its despair
to Ipanema ladies who have fed
my flames but bossa nova'd different squares.

*'Euphemistic' up from 'Quixotic' would be double triple word
score,
but I'm stumbling with pronouns near the bottom of the board.
There's more than one thing to do in bed, you know,
though you couldn't tell from the magazines of picture poetry
on my shelf.*

Veni, vidi, vici, love has gone
to sleep. Romance dies cold when you need a catheter to pee.
You're my undercover policeman set upon
surveilling neurological austerity.

*My senile verse lies fractured.
Dog-eared, dog-Latin doggerel never won fair heart.
 $a^2 + b^2 = c^2 \times d^2$
Circle squared, I drift alone in the post-Enlightenment West.*

This poem is already written

Alice Springs, Australia

“One should perhaps visualise the Songlines as a spaghetti of Iliads and Odysseys ... in which every ‘episode’ was readable in terms of geology.”
—Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*, 1987

There is a well-worn path for poets
where every Google-mapped destination
holds an aesthetic scribbling,
revisiting lost love or lamenting urban indifference.

Centrifuges of literary movement,
impatient with yearning for dynamic innovation,
capture ink at instants of zenith or nadir.

This place, though, breathes a different sentient fire.
Here, the stories form in earth or rare drops of water.
Here, the poem is already written.

The muse springs round Alice, and Alice springs.

Many for whom the land speaks lyrics in their mother tongue
now hunt on the colonial road, hawk carvings in eucalyptus
or ochre-painted bark, whose symbols mean as little to tourists
as the hieroglyphs inside an ancient pyramid.

But the old red rock will not be silenced.

Histories, tragedies, comedies carved by and deep in the terrain
echo sunlight, loudly visible, comprehensible but to a chosen few,
until the dusk cross-fades to a soundtrack of drum and didgeridoo,
leaving the land to hum its mournful night-time dreaming.

The vibrant earth questions me about my ancestors;
wild parrots perch like notes on a telegraph stave
breezily whistling my tales, which the goannas already knew.

Daybreak brings the dance of clouds and the ballad of sand.

Departing in the warm embrace of dawn, I wonder
if the young pod forming on an acacia branch will grow to notate,
for those who can sing, a fleeting aside on my passing through.

The cut flower's lament

I'm beautiful,
you say,
as I die dismembered

in an agonizing
spectral bouquet,

blooms bursting
post-mortem.

I am cut.
I am slain.

I am forced
to give pleasure

to rapists with secateurs
who waterboard my foliage
in saturated foam.

Rootless, I wilt
in the hot sun of torture,

man-handled,
sniffed at,

waiting, just waiting
for my colors
to fade

in time
with her obituary.

Rhyme scene

“As most poetry practitioners in this day and age, we find rhymed poetry to be a thing of the past.”

—The Inflectionist Review, 2015

Our thesaurus lies indecent, face down still,
spine bent, splayed at the tear-stained lines you cried

in desperate explanation. I reach in guilty
shattered silence for filthy fingercourse

with salty specks of disembodied
DNA. Before divorce, your word rounds

had spat fire at me in deadly rhymes, fractured
semi-automatic iambs. Now I recoil

at spent lexical casings echoing
the air's confession. I taste the Conan Doyle

vignette with a tone-deaf tongue, and retch the dueling
interrogatives you flung into our swear jar

between Eliots, George and T.S., on your bookshelf,
where our abandoned dual-accreditation

doggerel awaits forensics.

Beatrix Bondor

Night Makers

Imagine the assembly of nights.
A zodiac conveyor belt tightens all their bolts
and tosses them across Mayan squares.
Everything must be exactly in place, precise
every nose, beaded bracelet, pair of gray
vans, limit. All ambition hardens in drizzle,
Thursdays left out to dry in the sun
stretched side by side with loose teeth and used condoms,
peace of all the body's cells, streetlight circles
lining the way home, the desire to break,
and other things that will vanish by morning.

This night isn't done, they may frown
before adding a walk alone
through rain prickles that fall only
between one and two AM, a stanza.
The finished nights must come out golden
brown, perfect pies with swollen bellies
and crusts puffed just right, the perfect resistance—

although I will never know,
not being a maker myself.
I consume nights passed to me
one after another, as they are dropped
into my round and hungry palms.

Titling

This is how you get a woman to tear her body apart,
not by crooning or cookies, but by the time to title.
Give her unlined. Mean it.

It isn't the carrying she'll do it for or even the lifetime
of doorways opening and closing with curfews and college,
white paint peeling a little but holding.

It isn't for the memorizing or finishing or slimming,
the coolness of a hand or season, not for the shower,
green park benches nor the railings penning
them in from the East river, not for being strung
or doing the stringing, hopes, fears, and meals
softening in a wide milk bowl placed on a weekday wooden table.

It isn't even for the release of something heavy.

This is the kind of pain that is worth it.
This is for the setting down, observing
footsteps down a long carpeted hallway, for learning
and fattening and heat, basketball courts and cobblestones
and wildness that hangs just above bicycle handles
and December dew. This is for the bath,
the cleaning, decades lined up like bowling pins
and brimming with the mystery of the place behind them,
somewhere only strikes and gutterballs know,
a place to push toward where speed is good.

This is for the naming,
the grace hung on the lips of a life
as it puts another into words.

Red Telephone

I think the green bananas are a kind of street sign, and that the wind behind the lens is misleading. Polka dots are classy, in a way only salt crystals could understand, and this striped world could learn by not hanging up the phone—the world could learn a lot by pronouncing the “tele”—and twisting its coiled cord like the ’80s, or the curls of a girl before straight was the style.

Seventeen failed relationships darken my mind tonight, and so does one successful marriage. So does the right choice, and so do the peppered canyons between the seconds before my very first

kiss. I hope the words don’t learn about caution. I hope they’ll tumble forever, without searching for another time. I hope you’re awake right now to share the night with me, because someone, somewhere, is tasting for the very first time champagne, crayons, red canyons, saltshakers, the bravest sand dunes, and the bladed bananas in all their terrestrial tartness.

Solving

Here is the problem. An unbalanced equation
is your banner, your alphabet. Today
is shiny floors and backpacked crowds;
you don't know your schedule.
Your shoes give you blisters, a growth
spurt is on its way, the bus pulls up.
Faces and pencils sharpen.
This is the stage of questioning.
Now is learning forms, names.

Here is the during. You are stumped.
Something won't balance, or the plugging was flawed.
Word stacks are crooked. Draft four takes hours.
This is when the boy doesn't like you back
and lab goggles begin to print red
on the bridge of your nose. There is no sleep.
This is combustion. The bus is on the Deegan,
you have fallen in love. Boyle's law
makes sense of pressure. Things heat up.
Nick Carraway has turned thirty.
We use machines to see through flesh.
People put themselves into tubes and call it flight.
The SAT is next Saturday. You move to a new city
and spend afternoons alone. Your brother leaves home.
The dog begins to forget old faces.
This is the Experiment. You'd give anything for more.
Objects are in motion; forces are unbalanced.

Here is the conclusion. You factored
correctly. Carvings around your eyes run deep.
Goggles are back in the lab cabinet, finals
are over, sneakers have molded to your feet. Bus
doors swing open, it is May. Now is for printing,
sending away, recycling. The good guys win.
Romeo and Juliet have separate funerals.
We have named the elements. Prom
is dancing to a song you know all the words to,
and your ears ring in darkness remembering.

He will be in a different time zone. You are over.
Forces have acted. The system is at equilibrium.
This is at rest.

55 Minutes in America Today

—*Thomas Hart Benton*

I. City Activities with Dance Hall

My head lay in your lap in a feed-me playground
when I realized I would never leave this planet.
It starts on the right foot, ten cents a whirl
between trapeze artists and cigarettes over sidewalks,
the only place where concrete steps
back, stilettos of mica
and chewed gum boots. Yellow dresses
are not my style, my grip was a strength
you wanted. We hadn't made landmarks.
Our ground was ordinary. My mind
had nowhere to go
other than here. Before reasons,
there were "why-nots." Because we wanted
to live, we called this instinct.

II. City Building

This is the part where I fall
and you mock everything I believe in,
then face it beside me and bear upon your back
the blueprints, paintings, pavements,
the making of nights and cities.
These were conversations that you needed
to be excused from. Our fingers scabbled
through broken glass for an earring
in the dark. The art of losing
excited you and the shards
we left behind. The people who built this spine
knew power, or at least got lucky.
Here where they dug the tunnels
we can only imagine how it felt to lay the tracks,
the makers of Sin City and electric lights
scraping the sky, escaping into the bowels
of the earth because this is their beginning,
they've been here since ours, and in the darkness
before traffic there could have been
only ambition and a mind to move.

III. Steel

Silver pushes us forward.

This is what we hold between stops, our rails
and our tracks and our turns, your shells,
my speed, something we both rode
and wrote. You think of steel's dense breath,
I hold mine high, this night
like the time we danced on the platform
coming home from Mulberry Street or the Oculus,
and this is what I think of when I see a rat.
I discovered your back, an alien swan
rippling with April inhales and chords, solid
as a moon pebble heading home.
Nobody had constructed this spine I wanted.
We pass our thundering words
from palm to palm, triumphant in our roar.

IV. Coal

This is what we've avoided, the dust
that clings to curved bones
where something straight once stood.
Your letters on a sheet scream
that you were here and thinking,
maybe of your pidgeon fear
or the caverns between their coos.
Tell me about Basquiat, his scribbled skins.
Faces eat each other in neon red
and green, your colors. Mine are missing.
All I can rely on are green bananas,
the ones I explained to me years ago
standing in front of a painting in a white
walled room that taught me everything I know
about love and slipping. You were in the background,
busy with musicians whose figures didn't fit
together, just the way you like bodies.
Ripeness was off with yesterday's dusk. We were green
and peeled before our prime.

V. Instruments of Power

We have so many: plastic combs, fearlessness,
promenade walks, goldfish, the sputtering
of one La Croix to another, stamina of self,
our own. We have pages, fish that spin on the scarlet
ceiling, and the blessings of Mother, Father, and Pa
who will be coming home just as soon as the panes
are there or not at all, our outlets sideways
and the rugs have all become carpets.
This floating sinks to skinning, the small loves
shifting into all our nights in warm socks, sunset,
cucumbers discs sprinkled with salt,
your pupils pooling into puddles of iris
with a tight black yolk at the center, 100 Barclay Street,
our freedom and lips of the buildings
speckle sky against the cold
even though you aren't here tonight.
Yesterday we inhaled those minutes,
standing in the shower in pajamas and clarity
under scalding water cradling our ankles,
the ink river that takes you home every time.
I must be cracking your eyes against the rim
of my metal bowl or your collarbone,
this smooth countertop and the tracks of my ribs,
and under the lamplight your breaking
looks more like magic, the kind that turns this
into something worth saving for last.

VI. Changing West

Do I know your handwriting?

VII. Midwest

Saint Louis in the sun of the continent, starry
eyes blinking like hideous eggs
into orbits of day. Tell me
how it feels to recognize the smell of storm
before it comes. Show me your precipice.
What was it like when you named this "rain"?

VIII. Deep South

A place we're happy to be out of,
just imagine all the dove to be tasted
and all the feathers that will interfere.

IX. City Activities with Subway

At first, I held my breath and plunged,
gorging myself on the grime, battering
again and again. The shame
scraped deeper than I'd like to admit.
The city doubled and I crusaded alone,
certain of speed. I am on my own,
for my own, the ownership
of occupancy. The man across from me
has a square face—has he been here, have I
had this since the beginning? It's been here.
I wouldn't call it love. It was triumph
without anyone to pull me back
from the yellow line that replaces the white.
The track splits road and we meet
in the middle, shifting our weight
from foot to foot, street into sight
into home that never needs balancing.

X. Outreaching Hands

Finally, the palms it always comes back to, the palms
that cup the seconds between our doors and our lips.
Certain that this is prayer, all the mornings
will be like this: 83rd and York the harbor
of our goodnight, the back of your neck bobbing
home, my anchor.
Our first and only, summits and telephones
make sense of our Picasso conversations,
our masterpieces framed in color and light,
shapes that come together.

Isabella Skovira

String Theory

Some scientists say there are more
Dimensions in our multiuniverse
Than number of days I spent with you.
But I tied so many strings between us—
Memories of your hair whispering its way
Between my fingers, how you put on socks
Standing up—that, in theory,
I can never be without you.

Maybe there are other universes
Stacked above and below our own
And in all of them we fail.
Maybe we don't even exist.
But there are echoes of you
Even in these flat, visible three dimensions
And if I close my eyes
I know every possibility is a reality
Somewhere.

The Relativity of Space

Sometimes I feel so small
Compared to you
That surely you must see me
From outer space
Where all things are curved
And nothing is absolute
(At least in the Newtonian sense).

I'd still like to believe it's true
That the shortest distance between two objects
Is a straight line,
But we've been talking
So many circles around each other
That I truly feel the relativity of space
And the distance between us,
So small before,
Now seems insurmountable.

But I still wish on stars,
Whose light might be past tense
By the time I'm seeing it,
That with the snap of your fingers,
With just the flick of your tongue—
If for once you'd just tell it to me straight—
There'd be no space between us at all.

Zeno's Paradox

I'm fragmented
By the fact that
I can only send you
Bits of myself
Which only become further
Diluted by distance
Which only ever
Tears me apart more.

Lessons in Anatomy

I read somewhere once
That the tongue was
The strongest muscle in the body.
This made sense to me:
Just the tip of mine carried the weight
Of questions unasked
And sentiments left unsaid,
The dreams I didn't tell you
When I'd begun to feel I was boring,
And the quiet, innocent declaration of emotion
That would startle your sleepy eyes.

I know now that was wrong.
The masseter is the strongest muscle in the body.
Located in the jaw.
Designed to keep your mouth shut.

Lawless Conservation

Catch and release
is a practice within
recreational fishing
intended as a technique
of conservation.

Just because
there was kindness
and compassion
from you at the end,
it doesn't change that
it was all sport.

If in protecting me—
and my rarity
and the way you
made me out to be
so adored and special to you—
you must let me go,
then I'd rather have been
slit, gutted, and flamed
just so I could live in your belly.

The ocean may be the same
and she'll swallow me whole with her love
the salt water will heal me
but I am different
because your hands
slid over my body
as I gasped soundlessly for air
and you still sunk your hook into my mouth
just to examine me,
decide I wasn't worth keeping,
and toss me back in.

Juan Pablo González

The Tempest

Another abandoned thought
submits to a ruthless windstorm.
This cruel gale I have created
to make ideas prove their worth.

If all my little miscarriages
were somehow to have lived,
I could have painted the world,
and vanquished my own grey.

Colombia, 1928

Waves.
The rocks.
The sea spray.
A friendly breeze.
And up the river,
where countries go to die,
the red in the flag spills o'er,
the blue and the yellow subside.
As the river mourns the death on its shores,
the violence borne by telegrams,
the derelict land where it flows,
shuns the cries of its children.
Carry this blood downstream,
O, Magdalena,
'til it dissolves
in the sea.
Washed by
waves.

Colombia, 2018

I remember the last day
before we returned.
The surf caressing your feet,
the wet sand between our toes

Two cliffs stood guard
to that unpolluted beach.
And the rustling palm trees
stood guard to us.

And we both danced with the sea,
with the tumbling from the waves,
as they rocked us from below
and turned us on our heads.

An ocean filled with you and me,
grew both angrier and tenderer.
Its silent, chaotic melancholy
upon the eyes of a dying emperor.

I thought about my certainties,
how they're out of my control.
The ones I'd like to have.
The ones I'm proud to hold.

How I wished to spend my life
conjuring images and words.
Round them up with sounds
to make mementos of the world.

There are no lines upon the land
and no limits on the sea.
My mind is taller than the Earth
and wider than myself.

Hidden waterfront,
eternal eventide.
And all the centuries that converged there
to where you and I went to hide.

Bucket

Sometimes it rains.

Once it rained when the sun was out,
and all the minute drops refracted the sunlight.
A cloud of diamond shrapnel floating in the sky.
Gleaming reproductions of the colours of the world.

Sometimes the sky is clear.

And I run outside, looking overhead.
For all that I fear is running to find out
there are not enough clouds to make it rain
and not enough life to write about.

Molly Pines

Coming from California

Winter seems to reappear
Month after month here. The old snow
Lingers in patches. The sun stays low.
Gray coats the dampened trees in blear.

It's April and I've been thinking of home.
These dark and darker months in Boston
Have been too long, too easy to get lost in.
To Berkeley streets and Stinson seafoam,

I miss you. But pride and age and some
Fascination with red brick
Pushed me here, and I need to stay.
The ache of being far away
Is cold and falls and seems to stick,
But I know it comes with the coming from.

Hiking

In Haiku

Climbing the sand dunes,
she squints at an amber world
of infinite noons.

Meanwhile I'm flushed,
my skin damp, burnt, and cracked as
my legs scratch the brush.

A lizard arrives,
and she sees kaleidoscope
skin and gray-green eyes.

I slap a bug from
my arm, smudge the blurry speck
off with my small thumb.

She follows along
the crooked lines in the sand,
like rivulets gone

or paintings evoked.
I stop to drink some water,
my t-shirt sweat-soaked.

She goes on, dreams up
dunes as melting pyramids,
hopes for mourning doves.

I'm glad to think and
look at things the way they are.
Sun is sun. Sand, sand.

Soon, we'll be leaving.
But she sits on a dune's crest,
still, bright, glad, seeing.

Elmwood Cafe

There is the always shortish line in front
of the pastries: cookies, lemon currant scones,
and only a few chocolate coffee cakes
left today. And there are the big, round cups
with faded yellow patterns round their rims,
filled to the brims with different shades of warm
brown-beige, a sprig of sage drawn out in white
on each of their nervous, foamy surfaces.

And there are the old men with salt-and-pepper
beards and unkempt, emphatic eyebrows wrinkled
as they talk morning paper politics;
and teenagers with eager fingers clasped
around their pretty lattes; two women, happy
and complaining: work, the kids, the gym, the drought;
a writer splitting time between her muffin
and her poem, brushing crumbs off messy pages.

People in coffee shops seek different things.
For me, this is the world of little joys:
the bit of sugar that lingers at the bottom
of a coffee mug, the smell of peaches baking,
the quickness of a whisk against a bowl,
a ripple in a passing cup of tea,
the happy murmur of all the working and thinking,
all the talking and nodding, warm and sure and always.

The Pillbug

When we were young, we liked to play with pillbugs,
Those little armadillos of many nicknames.
We really only liked them for their one trick,
The one we learn in the dirt by the sandbox. Well,
Trick or torture, I never could decide.
But still I poked them, thrilled by the perfect globes
Of their bodies. They never learned that giant fingers
Were not to fear. We didn't hurt them, really.

More fun was when we turned one on its back
And watched its legs, thinner than the wrinkles
Of our palms, its translucent abdomen stretched tight
Across its underside, like cellophane.
What kind of stuff is underneath the skin
Of something with an exoskeleton?
What was it like, to see the whole world flipped?
And could it back-flip back to life? And how?

It didn't look like much. But then, somehow,
It worked. This bug flipped, it somersaulted!
It carried on, unfazed: its shell still smooth,
Its legs still quick, its thin antennae reaching
Calmly, matter-of-factly, like before,
Towards green and rain-soaked earth, towards dirt, towards home.
Its legs all pattered down my palm. *Squash it!*
Said a friend. But I let it go instead.

Jamie Marie

On the Lake

As we float above, hunger inspires us to great lengths.
Bearing down on an offering from the local grocery store,
we didn't know the "right" way
to coax a pomegranate. We hacked—
one step up from rocks, with a wicked sharp bottle opener.
Each garnet aril a juicy heart
salvaged from the bleached, pitted husk.
We tossed those white remnants to the water,
a lazy offering to the gods.

The azure sky darkened. "You know,
Persephone was trapped in the underworld
after eating one of these buggers . . ."
Your fish-bone print bikini turned sinister;
your pale skin blistered
where I'd been too timid to rub in sunscreen.
Though smiles still flickered like silver minnows
as we sought the hidden stars on our way back—
lying to be with you,
that would truly be hell.

Waning Interest

This was the first time
I didn't steal a glance at your house
while going by on my way to work.
Nothing personal of course, just in a hurry
just like we've both been before, during, and after
the time we finally moved closer.

Everyone's just busy, don't take it personally—
but it's a little hard not to feel defeated
when there's so much lonely time on the road.

When we eventually meet again,
we just have to pretend everything's fine
(though we never had to pretend as much before)
because there's no way we could catch each other up
on all those moments of loneliness missed
by not being closer anymore.

XMEA

Note: X-linked Myopathy with Excessive Autophagy (XMEA) is an uncommon form of muscular dystrophy. It is usually passed down through the women and may affect their male children.

And the Lord said unto them:
let an angel mark some of your children
with blood to spare them;
let the males of your line be more vulnerable
to this defect (like Pharaoh's own).

This will come with tides of regret, a flood
of hesitance—have you no faith,
o fallen woman, or do you wisely brace
yourself against the plagues of medical bills?

Which will you be then, a Jonah or Job—
complaining and worrying over nothing and
roiling in the centrifugal whirl
or gratefully praising the good that remains?
Either way, you'll probably still feel betrayed,
bereft of a vindication for your indulgent tears.

Incense

By far more pleasant than other types of small scale smoke,
rivalled only by the earthy cracklings of bonfires.
A part of the charred stick droops, a fragrant pendulum
that drips ashes below (a dry puddle of grit),
as the pale smoke spirals into ribboned arabesques.
Whenever I watch these lackadaisical trails pushed gently
in the air, I think of Sister Rita, who admitted in whispers
to me and my fellow first graders that she would watch
the incense smoke while the other sisters prayed each night.
I remember wondering, even then, what was wrong
with gazing on something beautiful, the thin strips like gauzy tulle.

The Resistance of Memory

My grandma used to paint with oils
until she grew tired of warning her seven children
and all their friends that streamed through the house
to be careful they didn't smudge the canvases.

My mother idolized her cousin who went to art school
and when she went on fishing trips with dad and me,
she brought colored pencils and sketched wildflowers.
I flickered back and forth between them,
reeling in bluegill and drawing my own crooked daisies.

I often watched Bob Ross with grandma
in the room with her largest surviving painting:
a cabin's window the only light given to a shadowed forest path.
Mom mentioned dad had been so good, he could have done
comics professionally, sharp and photorealistic.
Her cross-stitch picture of a bobcat that won \$25
at the county fair hung in the hallway.

Years later, one of the only questions grandma could still ask,
when she thought the sunset caught the house on fire each night, was
"Are you still drawing?"

William A. Greenfield

Heat

A tall bad boy
with perfect round holes in his earlobes

she flaunted an intricate butterfly
from shoulder to shoulder

they intertwined like some alien
performing reverse meiosis

hands and arms in a moving and
feeling frenzy that

bordered on public
indecenty condemning

them to a future of disappointment
when the *thrill of living is gone*.

In a booth eating was an
interruption like

a draft that cools the flame
like dinner with family

that torturous imposition that
only serves

to stoke the raging fire

If You Show Me Yours

It's a game we played when
Bugs and Daffy became passé.
When the best part of the Sears
catalog was no longer Lincoln
Logs and chemistry sets, we
exchanged peach fuzz peeks
behind clapboard garages or
under schoolyard elm trees.
There were rules.

We had to be *normal* children
just under the curious influence
of estrogen and testosterone.
We had to have working parents
who gave us lunch money and
took us bowling on our birthday.
We had to be mainstreamed
with goals that went beyond
tomorrow's ride on the small bus.
If we were overtaken by this spell;
If our lustful simplicity suggested
that a clueless child should handle
our ripening fruit, we would
surely be put somewhere.
And, of course, there had to be
an invitation, a furtive glance
from the girl painting her toe
nails on the back porch steps.

Sonder After Dark

I don't know if this word should find itself in The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, but since the author attempted to write poetry, I will acquiesce to his definition, although I may not find *sorrow* in the face of the retired policeman as he has his last smoke late at night. Yesterday, he brought home a Table Talk pie and tried to remember the last time he ate beef.

When I see him at the window, I know I'm not alone. His life is a simple one; he eats, he plays, he watches his wife undress. But his thoughts are complicated. I don't know why I think this. And here we have the rub, like when you see the small Mexican man blowing leaves across the asphalt. How do you explain your connection to him, your acceptance that he may also be watching you and wondering if your wife is as beautiful as his. Mr. Koenig has attempted to "fill a hole in the language." There is more work to do, as it seems the hole is ever widening. The river of emotions runs deep.

The Old Woman Sitting Beneath a Weeping Willow

I'm certain it was my mother because I put her there; I guided her down the porch stairs because her knees could no longer bear her weight. I gave her this tree on these grounds so she no longer had to point out its elegant beauty from the old red station wagon as we passed farms and groundhogs along the parkway; she no longer had to covet the polished pine and ivy vine she saw in picture books. I served her sliced strawberries with whipped cream in the shade while she whimsically reached for the tears of rain left by an early morning shower. And I gave her a dream. She climbs upon a spirited appaloosa and wraps her arms tightly around The Marlboro Man, weathered and full of western bravado. She wants to pen a romance novel about the cowboy of her other dreams, the one who sings to her on AM radio. She sings to herself now, beneath this tree of wisdom. She sings the same song she sang to me as a child, when I thought she would, one day, have her own porch to laze upon, her own horse to feed sugar cubes to, and maybe a cowboy to share her dreams with.

Bill Newby

Clean Pants

Freshly washed jeans hug my legs
and girdle my waist.
The button hole and stud

behave like feuding neighbors
and need a tug across my belly's street
before they're forced to shake hands.

And each pocket is similarly unaccommodating.
My handkerchief has a reservation in the left rear,
but the door is tightly closed

and I need to force it in to get it seated.
On mornings like this
I check the mirror or step on the scale

to see if I'm getting fat.
But I'm just myself garbed in American Casual,
the un-pleated bridge between rich and poor.

And as the hours pass the weave relaxes,
as if attending fabric yoga
where space is breathed into each pocket
and comfort is restored.

Tuesdays at The Seagate's Atlantic Grille

*Ponce de Leon sought a fountain.
He should have looked for a band.*

In aquariums walling the dining room
sharks slide back and forth,
and jellyfish contract and release
in puffs of translucent motion.

Stone floors and glass shelves shine under soft light,
and the crowd and din grow toward eight.
Table talk is shouted over appetizers
and orders are placed before menus are folded.

But the real meal walks the floor
with a deep tan, smile and gold necklace,
slinks through the arch in high heels
or sits on the next stool.

Some believe in out-growing,
shed clothes that no longer fit,
and leave some sports behind.

Others still hunt and hunt.
Like nomads they trudge from oasis to oasis,
climb rung after rung, squint over bifocals,
and stretch for one more apple.
For them, tonight, *Joey and The Gigolos* will play,
and play tonight they will.

The room is soaked with sock-hop longing
spiced by seasons of holding and stroking,
lying down and snuggling close.
And while some seek sleep in the hotel above,
many by the bar hope to stay up all night.

The dance floor holds more leg than a meat cooler,
more cleavage than the Canyon Lands,
and dresses tighter than Cling Wrap
and more inviting than an open house.

The band plays in the key of yesterday.
The drummer's pulse is now.

The market's open till ten-thirty,
and next week waits for those still hungry.

Photography 201

Smartphones in every hand,
on every bridge and stair,
in each park and chapel,
at every meal and market.

Here's a beautiful picture.
Now, add me.

Here's a miraculous fresco.
Now, add me.

I took a trip and saw the canyon.
Look. I'm there.

No more waste or mess,
carving initials into a tree or desk,
spray painting a bare wall.

Look at that tower,
the canal and statue.
*See, I was wearing blue,
and the wind whipped my hair.*

I know, this one is truly amazing.
Took them three centuries to complete.
*And don't you think
that's a good picture of me?*

Yes, I do too.

Blinds Down

The highway concerto plays all night.
Sixteen wheelers groan and moan
below the alto hum of tread on concrete
and the rising arias of sporadic speeders
who've found an open lane to fly across stage
instead of slowly stepping toward an exit.

An occasional siren wails,
then dies in the wings,
and a rare car tire thuds
dropping from curb to gutter.

And while the rest of us seek sleep,
a trash bin's clang
as a truck drops its load
reminds us that others are at work
cleaning our mess
so the sunrise will feel fresh and pure.

Sending a Kiss from Third

Every infield is different.
The ground may be as smooth as tarmac
or loose as a hiking trail –
groomed like the Masters
or as shaggy and snarled as the Turner's tree lawn.

But the only way to play
is with hope for a true bounce
and prayer to snatch a liar.

The game is slow
with lots of room to itch and scratch, spit and stare,
but the window for strolling and shifting shuts
when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.

Then it's time for low, ready balance –
each foot dug in, hugging the earth,
and arms long and loose before bent knees,
like willow branches nearing the ground.

But as low as you get, your head must be up,
as if you've crept close in a tiger crouch
with your muscles loaded and ready to pounce.

And in these key seconds the world must disappear,
for the only story's at the plate
where you need to read
the back and arms' unwinding torque
as the bat flows in a wide circle
and greets the ball with a crack or ping,
that darts like a bullet aimed at your head
or skitters like a stone skipping water,
seeking a pebble or divot that might shift its course.

This is what you've trained for
and why you've oiled your glove,
pounded a predictable pocket
and even taken dance lessons.

In this instant, the only time is *now*.
Now you must welcome its flight,
delight in its arrival,
and reach wide or close, low or high,
to draw it into your mitt,
embrace it with your free fingers,
and hug and grasp it as you slide toward first,
skating left while loading right,
loading your arm like a jitterbug back step
before pulling your partner into another twirl,
gripping the ball like a door knob
before flinging it wide open.

Then whip your arm, free and relaxed,
free and flowing across your body,
as you turn around your spine
and look at the first baseman's mitt,
like a lover's face arced up and begging for a kiss,
as you let the ball go.

Elder Gideon

Male Initiation Rites

In fulfilling their obligations, men stand to lose—a hovering threat that separates them from women and boys. They stand to lose their reputations or their lives; yet their prescribed tasks must be done if the group is to survive and prosper. Because boys must steel themselves to enter into such struggles, they must be prepared by various sort of tempering and toughening. To be men, most of all, they must accept the fact that they are expendable.
—David Gilmore. *Manhood in the Making*. (1990)

enemies anytime everything
nothing gives of itself nature tests
hunger and thirst is to be alive
if you fall back in fear we will die

your world is still her little hut
because you're blind you cannot see
what waits to wrest you from her arms
beyond her bed and soft embrace

every male worth seeding must resist
running back into the arms of his
mother's hut feminine mysteries
ceased the night you awoke in your dew

if you refuse to stand and fight
or know what pain it is to live
before your burning eyes you'll see
your kin be swallowed whole and end

where will we be without testing you?
women are born into women but
men are not born but are made into
men who must turn their face to the threat

we show a boy what life is like
to tear him out his mother's womb
to seize and strip him down by force
to face the task awaiting him

whip his legs lash his face tear his ears
sear his skin scar his back make him bleed
It is not we who test not at all
life is far harsher than warriors

Female Initiation Rites

“The goal of the initiation is not merely to make a better, stronger, or more knowledgeable person of the initiand, however much this may be desired, but to transform her utterly, make her totally different from what she had been, and radically separate her from her childhood existence.”

—Bruce Lincoln. *Emerging from the Chrysalis*. (1981)

Widen my hips burgeon my breasts
Darken my groin—

I am the weal of descendants
Ancestors wheel about my nave

Cut their lines and circles
not on a tree stone or bone but me

I show by the iron in my blood
Running from eternal symbols etched in my flesh

That I am the earth speaking to you now

Δ

In our daughters stirring She dreams us

We are Her ways She taught
She is our ways we keep

In every daughter’s bloom She dawns
From soil for crops to grow

Our hearts need only feel with their fingers
To know how She is here

Δ

Rouse her who left us take her limp hands
Lift her to us from where she’s come silence speaks

Join her to us sing songs to our brave traveler
Touch the future from where she's come time unties

Feel her with us gaze into the eyes of our young envoy
Receive her gifts from where she's come goodness floods

Embrace her to us meet this woman who left a girl
Behold her transformed from where she's come changes everything

Lost Rites

Existence

“is a series of passages from one age to another,”
wrote Van Gennep, analyzing the ritualized life (1909)
of human development in traditional lineages.
In each culture, ceremonies for every individual
were marked what he called “rites of passage.”
By these, people developed fully in their society

through every physical change, so that “society
will suffer no discomfort or injury.” Another
pattern reveals phases within every ritual passage—
separation, transition, incorporation. Life
held continuous, sacred meaning for individuals
in community, despite their social position or age.

Without initiation rituals, fewer come of age
to a viable place of incorporation in our society,
making more painful, uncertain, “an individual’s
transition from one status to another.”
This in part explains modernity’s malaise. Life
for young people seems arbitrary as their passage

of fulfilling desires lengthens. Forbidden passage
through straits of longing can often damage
fragile psyches. Without myths to guide life,
disfigured youth reflect a dehumanizing society.
Youth culture reacts against exile as *other*—
exposing the trauma of becoming an individual.

Angry youth who push back, individuals
who unconsciously seek their rite of passage,
are just as vulnerable to approval of another
force that eats its young. The marginal vantage,
that “novices are outside society and society
has no power over them,” often costs their life.

Having shattered every spiritual way of life,
colonialism continues to splinter individuals
into tinier figments of an imagined society.
Without conscious, communal rites of passage,
Western storm and stress will only ravage
what's left of a way forward, one way or another.

[Separation]

No wonder youths of our societal mirror rage
against serving life terms—others beneath
elite individuals—without passage out.

[Transition]

We are heirs of our imperial society,
Are the aging cannibals of history—
Indigenous individuals sentenced to text passage.

[Incorporation]

Societies that desecrate their sacral image
send individuals adrift through another
Far harsher passage in eternal, liminal life.

Putrescence

All conceive in flight
All are heir to air

Few are parent butterflies
More are parent common flies

Few are eggs that hang up high
More are eggs that lay down low

Few are larvae born above
More are larvae born below

Few are fed by what still lives
More are fed by what has died

Few will molt and spread midair
Most will molt in search of sky

Few souls hatch from chrysalis
Most souls hatch from carcasses

If I had not nearly died,
Bored my way out of what is dead

An essence in putrescence—
This iridescent slick—chose

Me to break out breathing
Far beyond my body

#MarchforOurLives

Awaking with a start,
the President was shaken.
By a dream that no one,
his cabinet nor any
his soothsayers, could interpret,
save some youths imprisoned,
famed for dream interpretation.
He summoned them. To tell him
what it meant—

“I was in the Astrodome
filled with thousands gathered.
intermittent power caused
arena lights to flicker.
When the lights went out,
you couldn’t see a thing.
Instead of football on the field,
Every one was looking up
armed and aiming at the ceiling.
Where I stood made hard to see
their target in the smoke.
When I looked below, I saw so
many piled up empty cages.
Then I knew that every person
there was shooting for a prize.
When the lights would blink back on,
their guns would fire all at once.
Rounds of shots erupted like
a dozen awful bombs that
stung my ears and seared my eyes.
No one turned to see one fall
down maimed or dead from ricochet.
No one shouted out
for help that never came.
I saw others no one noticed
Doing something strange.
Standing there with walking sticks.
They waited ‘til the lights went out

And all the shooting stopped.
It fell quiet.
Enough to hear another speak.
In that darkness spoke the name
another one nearby.
Gently held his ear.
Natural that it drew their eye
away to look out to their side.
Though they didn't know this
other speaking, something opened.
Do I know you? he would ask,
Of course you do! Remember when—?
So they'd talk like neighbors as
shooting all around resumed.
So engrossed in stories long
forgotten, the one who heard his name
had set his gun down at his side,
unaware it turned into
a walking stick. On they talked.
Face to face like two old farmers
resting hands on tops of handles.
As lights went on, they turned away
To face another near them. Waited
for the quiet of the dark to
speak another's name.
On this went, as one by one,
responding to their names,
others paused to hear their name
and reminisce until their rifle
turned into another stick.
When lights returned, I finally glimpsed
the birds that flew above us.
rounds exploded everywhere
as people fell from ricochet.
In and out the cloud of gunsmoke
up against the metal dome
flashed a convocation.
Fledgling eagles crying out
against no where to go.
My heart sank where I stood,

so powerless to stop.
Feathers snowed as shattered wings
could no more lift the air.
I witnessed many eagles fall
To mauling crowds that fought
and brawled like savage dogs.
Lights blacked out in riot kills
That chill me still to tell.

What say you, youths,
the meaning of my dream?"

Joel Holland

Dim Lighting

I.

Stained snow presses against our window,
light paw-prints stamp where the cat walked
an hour ago. “He’ll come back”, I assure you,
but I’m not sure he will. “It’s too cold for him out there.”

You’re distant, beside me, back turned to the edge
of our white couch. You won’t stop sighing at
dissonant documentaries. Swimming in small pools of water,
a nursery below reflected trees as sentries.

Swimming in community for seven years
where their mothers did before them.
Your feet are freezing, arched over my knees, dangling,
I pull the cross-stitched blanket, overwhelmed by the feeling.

You kiss me on the hand and check your phone again.
I start to fall asleep. The narrator soothes our
ice-cold afternoon, “*swimming from shore,*
fluorescent fins are seen trailing silhouettes . . .”

The sharks spread out. Fish they hope they’ll catch are swimming
to the open sea. “Do you want to go with me?”
You look up, and I can tell you mean it.
“Let’s start travelling.”

The screen wants to know if we’re “still watching,”
and I can’t explain it, but suddenly I’m sick to my stomach.
We bundled up and braved the cold
“for some air” to talk of travel and lemon sharks.

II.

The yard across from us still had a manger set glowing
by their door. My hands went numb immediately, but I held yours.
You talked of college debts and that night you kissed a stranger
I hated that story, but the curb cut your words for me. You stopped short.

Three houses down the street, across our own,
screams swirled into the curse of a sky.
The clouds never looked darker.
Sounds howled down our road to that long grey house.

They stopped just short of our own and I heard my ringtone. Jacob was
calling.

Ben Howard's *Small Things* started playing in my pocket,
and you said the guitar riff was fitting. The sirens stuck to your words.
They loaded a body onto a padded platter and slid him in the back.

He was wrapped in white cloth and moaning. When they shut
the doors behind him in the glow of his
street light, he saw his own blood dripping. We saw it too.
When that ambulance started singing again, we were left
with our lives wondering what we could do on someone else's last night.
The cat never came back. We got two tickets for June.

III.

That night, you asked me when I first realized I was going to die,
and I told you I didn't know. I was nine. Sent down a site road
at the campsite we were staying with my dad's side.
Uncle Bill gave me some dishes to wash by the grill, I threw the bag
over my shoulder as I walked there. The old rusty sink spit its cold drink
all over my hands. They shook in the wind. Even then, I had talked
about death, but we never properly met. There was something
about that night, because the boy who laughed at his
great-grandmother's funeral realized he wasn't terribly far behind.

IV.

I don't always answer honestly because I love you, but I don't
always trust you. Sometimes, if let out, I think my words would
escape you
or make you leave, so I keep them bound tight in loose-leaf. Stacks
of rambles and journal entries, by me and to me, that I'll never read.

I used to wonder why my favorite writers
fought depression and then, after heartbreak
my pen seemed to press deeper for words
I couldn't find myself. Fighting the pitch-black winter nights
as I tried to describe them.

Day Of

“Do you pity me?”

“Yes, I do,” she answered.

“Then I love you.”—William Blake

Painting affection, she glazed his nails with her coating,
pale purple, and he leaned his head against hers
until their hair tangled together in a dirty blonde cluster.

Closer than ever, as the nails began to dry, she avoided
their reflection.

Stepping outside didn't stop the appetite.

In her light blue skirt, she was dressed for the confession.

One half-tucked-in-mess, he devoured the mention of
his name in the downpour.

He wanted more, and she gave it to him.

He ran his thumb over her wet lips and she shuddered.

“I shouldn't have done that.”

“We shouldn't have done that,” he corrected her.

And they did it again.

One in the Crowd

*"If hope was the letter I'd never send,
then love was the country I couldn't defend."
—Gregory Alan Isakov*

Beets and pistachio's blend at the end of the bowl,
side of cherry tomatoes topped at this green salad in Marrakech.
I refuse, but they hold it to my face and there's not much left to do.
It's delicious. And they told me heartbreak couldn't taste food.
Market streets are bare before dusk, bare feet run through us,
over a cheaply made stool. Baskets of fruits and nuts pass long tables.
Henna artists trace lines from side to side like the snakes that rock by
the charmers behind them, and I stare. The square transforms.

I'm hours from our resort, where you intend to stay until Monday,
because we were both too stubborn to call it off, until it was too late.
"I'll see you at the airport," you'd say, and I'd grit my teeth
until you walked away. You're good at that.
The shop keeper, Ahmed, pours thin pasta into a soup with
lamb shavings and chick-pears. Sweet dates are served beside them.
A passing motorbike blinds me as spirited marketers offer me salted snails.
They convince me their tent, no. 74, was put up just for me.

I sit back with fresh squeezed orange juice,
watching steam come off their pans. Ahmed speaks English,
tells me his name means "most worthy" and that's why he runs the shop.
His wife's name (Hasan) means beautiful, and he says it fits her. I believe
him.

At 7:00 he laughs and walks home. I watch his workers work their hands
slowly
turning the roll of lamb. Another night in their home, another night
they've fed me.
"I just need space." I think you've had plenty.

We came to this country together, and we'll leave it the same way,
and I hate it. I hate that the words I needed to say finally came
when you were miles away. I wrote them down and hold them beside me,
just in case they help. My notebook keeps filling with scents, imagery,
memories,

but the cover is ripped. You're probably snorkeling, making friends, and looking for lemon fish. Your face turned red when they said there are no sharks in Morocco. Just fossils. I'll probably stay in these streets until their stores close. So full it feels empty where nobody knows me, then two women catch my sight as they're walking away.

Draping down, dark hair tries tracing covered legs,
familiar shapes, curve to the side of your ears.
But their hair is not yours. Blurs wave me by in the street,
like they're keeping me from somewhere I'm going.
I feel a slight breeze and think of your hatred for snow, and the cold.
Now, in this heat, I wonder how long you might sit with me
before explaining your family was waiting and you had to go.
The sun tries to soothe me, gives up, and goes home.
I scrape the side of my bowl, I savor the cold broth.
Each flavor fights for attention as strangers yell past me to loved ones
across the street. More file into the square.

The dangling tent-lights seem to take a color of their own,
their shades taking the place of a deliberate dusk.
Even in the darkness I find many sun-stained faces.
In all of these places, I'll keep looking for yours.

Departure

June 26th, 2018

Strangers shuffle down stilled aisles, exchanging quick kindnesses,
loading overhead bins and stopping short of their seats.
A business man is lost in the trail of a black-lined dress
and a child is lost in the fog through the window.

Two childhood friends are seated together without notice,
and one of them can't place the face, but will have
the whole flight to figure out its name. They're both going to
the same funeral, and neither of them have cried yet.

Gritting her teeth, a woman in her thirties won't sit
until she's told. Her small diamond necklace disappears
below her neckline, shaking as she taps her feet.
She's waiting on a text that isn't coming.

Somewhere between worried and carefree, a couple sits
in first-class seats they couldn't afford, working out their plan
for all the places they'll eat when they land. They have eighty-three
dollars
between them both, and they're going to spend it all in Nashville.

A twenty-two-year-old woman asks to be moved
by someone in the Navy to thank him for his service.
They share courage and numbers before the wheels
leave the runway. He's nervous.

The girl to my left holds her white pillow against
her sunburnt skin: she smells like a hotel.
The man to my right is reading Hitchens'
"God is not great" and wondering if it's true.

A flight attendant named Sophia raises her voice to make sure
headphones hear her, and we all agree to the responsibility of the
exit row.
She waves a pamphlet as she marches to the back. Several whisper
about her.

the plane stirs. Cold air blows over closed eyes and sighs
as belts are buckled and protocol drones through the speakers.

Our plane hums like a radiator working overtime and the flaps on the
fold start to rise.

The binding of the planes creak against the blow of the wind as if it was
going to cave in.

Several passengers think it just might, some fearful, some fantasizing,
All going the same place for a different reason, none of them ready to fly.

Dear Gi-Gi,

inside, my aunts and uncles step over your boxes,
each claiming the oak hutch was theirs.

If I'm honest, I hope we get it, but mom is silent and so am I.

Grandpa is sitting in the corner, telling a story we've already heard before.

Remember when I asked you what was floating through
your living room? Those dust-mites are still here,
apologetically bumping into one another,
but the light cuts clear through, without permission.

I hold one of your glass birds to my side, light blue.

The one you always put in the front of the tree.

"Make sure we can see it!"

you hollered from the kitchen, taking out another coffee cake.

I place another Andes mint in my mouth,

mixing memories,

and while they're dissolving

aging stone stairs lead me away from mixed company.

Outside, fluorescent lights stare over me

from your garage. The lights shine through

raindrops dripping down side-gutters,

and onto your tangled water-hose. I try to un-knot it.

I let it go, knotted and wrapped around itself,

flopped over a small stack of bricks, turning by the grass,

reaching for the road. I kneel by the curb alone.

Your white Pontiac glows in the rain.

I thought the sun was done for the day,

but by the mailbox,

through your windshield,

I still see some light coming through.

As the water drips back into the side of the hose

it used to flow from, I admit how much you're missed,

wondering when you realized you were getting old.

Those doors swung back for me as I rushed out of the room.

I'm sorry I laughed at your funeral.

Martha R. Jones

Ode to Writer's Block

My writer's block is sturdier than tungsten, iron, or steel.
No river can erode it. No lava can congeal
To form a craggy mountain or a formidable rock
enough to rival my unyielding, awesome writer's block.

My writer's block is doubtlessly my hero's dearest friend.
It keeps the villain helpless, so there's no need to extend
his sword in mortal combat for a damsel under lock
and key, or even scuff his armor, thanks to writer's block.

My writer's block is massive, yet it's lighter still than air.
More constant than a freckle, more unruly than a bear,
It's exhausted all my calendars and run down every clock,
but it is mine, and I am its: my fit of writer's block.

Heart Beats

The heart loved in bushels and bunches,
while the body threw nothing but punches.
They fought the same foe,
but the heart would lay low,
'til the body was knocked on its haunches.

The heart would proceed to defeat
every bully it happened to meet.
When the body asked, "How?"
the heart took a bow
and said "Hearts break but hearts also 'beat.'"

The Was Wolf

When the werewolf is a was-wolf, 'cause the "were" has all worn off,
the pelt is shed, the claws retract, and skeptics start to scoff.
They tell themselves how brave they were in battle with the beast.
The danger is behind them ('til the next full moon at least).

Some like the was-wolf better than the werewolf she becomes.
They wish that she was dead or cured or under someone's thumbs.
Yet, she loves me when I'm virtueless. She should deserve the same.
Love withheld when we're not lovely is unworthy of the name.

How Lewis Carroll Met Edgar Allan Poe

In a land free from time in a world that is nether,
far from work-a-day woes like “bad news” or “bad weather,”
on a plane of existence where good writers go,
that’s where Lewis Carroll met Edgar Allan Poe.

Mr. Carroll had gone flying and saw at a distance
some trees through some fog in his “Plane of Existence;”
not Joyce Kilmer-style trees. These were twisted and bent.
One tree caught his plane in it on its descent.

Mr. Poe came to help after he heard the noise
(broody walks in dark forests were one of his joys).
“Are you hurt?” asked Poe. “Have you an ill or a maim?”
Mr. Carroll said, “I’m fine,” and Poe said, “What a shame.

Oh well. No one’s perfect. Let’s get you straight down,
Unless you would like to fall flat on your crown.”
“Not today,” Carroll said. “Let us make the day rue us,
not vice versa. By the way, my name is Lewis.”

Mr. Carroll was unharmed. His plane surely was.
He’d been seeking adventure and found it because
he’d wandered from Wonderland’s miles and acres
toward Poe with his black crows and gaunt undertakers.

The two men climbed gingerly down from their perch
while boughs bent beneath them started to lurch,
and just as they both got their feet on the ground,
the tree top gave way with a deafening sound.

Down fell a tangle of branches and plane.
“Phew,” said Carroll. Poe grieved, “Not even a sprain?
A good luck streak. How horrid.” Said Carroll with glee,
“Today’s my unbirthday. Won’t you dine with me?”

Then, calmly and casually, Carroll released
from his pocket, some mushrooms on which to feast,
plus some crochets and tarts. Both were heart-shaped, in fact.
Poe imbibed only sorrow and scones as they snacked.

The pair got to talking of life and their works.
Carroll quizzed Poe on angst and the murderous quirks
of most Poe-ish “heroes.” Poe held Carroll nimbly
made up a word if no rhyme could be made simply.

The problem that hadn’t occurred to them, yet
was the “Plane of Existence” is not quite a jet
or a plane or one mere, single thing. It’s the land
where dreams can come true; both the small and the grand.

But the dreams Poe and Carroll had started to mix.
As they spoke, the March Hare started playing his tricks
on Roderick Usher, who was not amused.
He chased the March Hare, but in vain. Then, confused

The Red Queen’s tell-tale heart, filled with regretting
each instance she pardoned instead of beheading.
The Mome Raths were buried alive in a grave, an’
The Cheshire cat spat at Lenore’s husband’s raven.

The Hatter went madder. Tweedles Dee and Dum
had a jolly time riding the pit’s pendulum.
And as Alice waltzed ‘round Red Death’s own masque.
The white rabbit drained the Amontillado casque.

When Carroll and Poe looked ‘round where they’d been talking
and noticed the strange goings on, they sat gawking
a minute or more. They were shocked, but not fretting.
Carroll smiled and said, “I had better be getting

back to my own realm of odd rhymes and mock turtles.”
Poe said, “I concur. That’s the path with least hurtles
to un-weird this world. Thanks for lunch, and make haste.
Take care (though safe journeys are not to MY taste).”

Then, Mr. Carroll, sans plane, wings, or propeller
produced from his coat a gigantic umbrella,
which soon caught the breeze, and away he did go.
And that's how Lewis Carroll met Edgar Allan Poe.

Contributor Notes

Andrew Allport holds a PhD in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Southern California. He is the author of *the body of space in the shape of a human*, which won the New Issues Prize, as well as a chapbook, *The Ice Ship & Other Vessels*. His work has appeared in numerous national journals, including *Orion*, *The Antioch Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Denver Quarterly* and *Boston Review*. He lives in southwest Colorado, where he helps edit *Cutthroat, A Journal of the Arts*, and is frequently mistaken for someone else.



Sarah W. Bartlett's work appears in *Adanna*, *Ars Medica*, *the Aureorean*, *Minerva Rising*, *PoemMemoirStory*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Wellesley College Women's Review of Books*, and several anthologies including the award-winning *Women on Poetry* (McFarland & Co. Inc., 2012); and two poetry chapbooks (Finishing Line Press). Her work celebrates nature's healing wisdom and the human spirit's landscapes. She founded *writinginsideVT* for Vermont's incarcerated women to encourage personal and social change within a supportive community (www.writinginsideVT.com)



Emily Bauer, a born and raised Iowan, heard the call of the mountains and decided to answer. She currently resides in Portland, OR, where she is the lead barista at a local coffee shop. She spends her free time drinking too much coffee, eating all of the vegan food she can get her hands on, and writing poetry. She hopes to one day start traveling and never stop. Catch her while you can.



Beatrix Bondor is currently a freshman at Princeton University, but grew up in (and hopes always to live in) New York City. This is her first appearance in print outside of work from her high school, Horace Mann. She could not be more excited to continue studying English and creative writing in the coming term!



Poems by **Paula Bonnell** have appeared in *APR*, *Rattle*, *Spillway*, and more; and won awards from *Negative Capability*, the New England Poetry Club, the Chester H. Jones Foundation, and the City of Boston. Mark Jarman chose her *Airs & Voices* for a Ciardi Prize and Albert Goldbarth selected her "Eurydice" for a *Poet Lore* narrative-poetry publication award. Bonnell's collections include *Message* and two chapbooks: *Before the Alphabet* and *tales retold*. More at <http://paulabonnell.net>



Meli Broderick Eaton developed a reverence for nature through a life in the outdoors of Oregon. At Sweet Briar College, she studied in workshops and independent studies with poet Mary Oliver and author John Gregory Brown. She took a long break from poetry after graduation and returned to it as a method of evolving through loss. She lives with her family on a suburban microfarm in Oregon.



Bryce Emley is the author of the chapbook *Smoke and Glass* (Folded Word, 2018). He works in marketing at the University of New Mexico Press and is Poetry Editor of *Raleigh Review*. Read more at bryceemley.com.



Nooshin Ghanbari received her B.A. in English and Plan II Honors from the University of Texas at Austin, where she was awarded the Board of Regents' Outstanding Student Award in Arts and Humanities for excellence in poetry. Her work can be found in *WILDNESS*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Apricity Magazine*, and elsewhere both nationally and internationally. Nooshin currently lives in Austin, Texas, where she works as an AmeriCorps English literacy tutor in low-income elementary schools.



These poems from **Elder Gideon**'s first book *Without Passage* come from his life as an educator, visual artist, and faith leader of a Gnostic community. For over twenty years, he's worked with diverse, underserved young people, whose stories continually impact his imagination and spirituality. He structured these experiences into a chapbook trilogy that section "Without Passage" into meditations on the anthropology, sociology, psychology, and mythology of adolescent development.



Juan Pablo González is a journalist, musician, writer and designer from Bogotá, Colombia, born in 1995.



William A. Greenfield is a youth advocate worker and a fairly good poker player. He resides in Liberty, NY, with his wife, son, and a dog. His poems have appeared in dozens of journals, including *The Westchester Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, and many others. In 2012, he won *Storyteller Magazine's People's Choice* award. He was a finalist in *The New Guard Literary Review's 2016 Knightville Poetry Contest*. His chapbook, "Momma's Boy Gone Bad", was published in February 2017 by Finishing Line Press.



A senior Christian-studies major from Union University, **Joel Holland** is the oldest of four. A traveler at heart, Joel feels most at home on a plane, but misses the people he meets as soon as he leaves. He sees his life as a piece of a larger picture and enjoys it better that way. He also claims his name is a palindrome for frothy in mandarine.



Martha R. Jones is an author, illustrator, lyricist, and part-time nurse (three of those descriptors are how she wishes to be remembered when she is dead. The other keeps her lights on). Her primary sources of infamy are her novels, *Faust Forward* and *Corn on Macabre*, both of which contain humor so dark the publisher's daughter is not allowed to read them until she is eighteen year old. www.selfwriteousness.com



Jamie Marie holds an MA in Literature and recently rediscovered her passion for library work, book repair, and book arts. She was active in a writing group with her high school friends, unofficially published in their collective anthologies, and previously published in her college's literary magazine. Growing up in a Catholic Appalachian family gave her an interesting perspective on things before broadening her horizons. She lives with her spouse and their two cats.



Bruce Marsland is the author and editor of several works on language teaching, most notably *Lessons from Nothing*, published by Cambridge University Press. Born and raised in the United Kingdom, he has also worked in Finland and Bulgaria. He currently lives in Portland, Oregon, working as an editor and writer. He was winner of the Sentinel Literary Quarterly poetry competition in February 2016 and a runner-up in the Prole Laureate poetry competition in 2018.



Bill Newby enjoys using poetry to record, reshape and reflect upon daily experience. His work has appeared in *Whiskey Island*, *Bluffton Breeze*, *Ohio Teachers Write*, Palm Beach Poetry Festival's *Fish Tales Contest*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *Panoplyzine*, *Sixfold*, and the Island Writers' Network's *Time & Tide* and *Ebb & Flow* anthologies. He is a 2018 Pushcart Poetry Nominee.



Matthew S. Parsons is a homesteader from eastern Kentucky. He is an instructor of traditional music at Morehead State University's Kentucky Center for Traditional Music. Parsons is currently serving as an acquisitions inter of University Press of Kentucky and earning his MFA in Creative Writing from Eastern Kentucky University's Bluegrass Writers Studio.



Molly Pines grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and lives in Amherst, Massachusetts. An English-Spanish major at Amherst College, she is currently working on a senior honors thesis on poetry and psychoanalysis, looking at how language, affect, and interpretation all converge in the act of poem-reading. When she's not reading or writing, she's probably swimming, eating, or napping.



AJ Powell is a once and future teacher who raises her children, serves on a school board, and attempts to write in the wee hours of the morning with varied success.



Faith Shearin's books of poetry include: *The Owl Question* (May Swenson Award), *Moving the Piano*, *Telling the Bees*, *Orpheus*, *Turning* (Dogfish Poetry Prize), and *Darwin's Daughter* (SFA University Press). Her work has been read aloud on *The Writer's Almanac* and included in Ted Kooser's *American Life in Poetry*. She has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Barbara Deming Memorial Fund, and The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. She lives in Northampton, Massachusetts.



Daniel Sinderson writes a lot and is occasionally published. He is married and has two cats.



Isabella Skovira started writing poetry in grade school as a response to LoTR. She had an elf name. These days, she writes poetry to fit big emotions into small spaces. If you read one of her poems and you think it's about you, then it probably is. Isabella lives in Spain, works as a higher education admissions consultant, adores her dog, has never drunk coffee, and whistles too much.



Jeddie Sophronius was born in Jakarta, Indonesia. He received his B.A. in English: Creative Writing from Western Michigan University. His work has been recognized by *The Adroit Journal*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *Proverse Hong Kong*, and has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Cincinnati Review*, *Juked*, *Vinyl*, and elsewhere.



Marte Stuart gravitates toward poems with scientific and theological underbellies. Her current fav is “A Backwards Journey” by P. K. Page. Once while shipwrecked, Marte laboriously scratched words onto coconut husks and set them adrift, which initiated her writing craft and lessons in impermanence. Marte Stuart’s ongoing work is to continually notice her own perceived reality.



Addison Van Auken Waters grew up in Massachusetts and currently resides in Asheville, North Carolina. She received her master’s in creative writing from Durham University in 2017. Together, Addison and her husband have lived in England, Australia, and three out of the 50 United States. She is an emerging writer dreaming up her first novel.



Claire Van Winkle writes poetry and prose. She teaches at several CUNY and SUNY schools and is the founder of the Rockaway Writers’ Workshop. In addition to her creative and academic pursuits, she works as a writing therapist researching and applying creative workshop strategies to inpatient psychiatric care. She is the recipient of several honors and awards. Her work appears in various publications including anthologies by *Black Lawrence Press* and *Rogue Scholars*.

