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**2014 JOY HARJO POETRY PRIZE  
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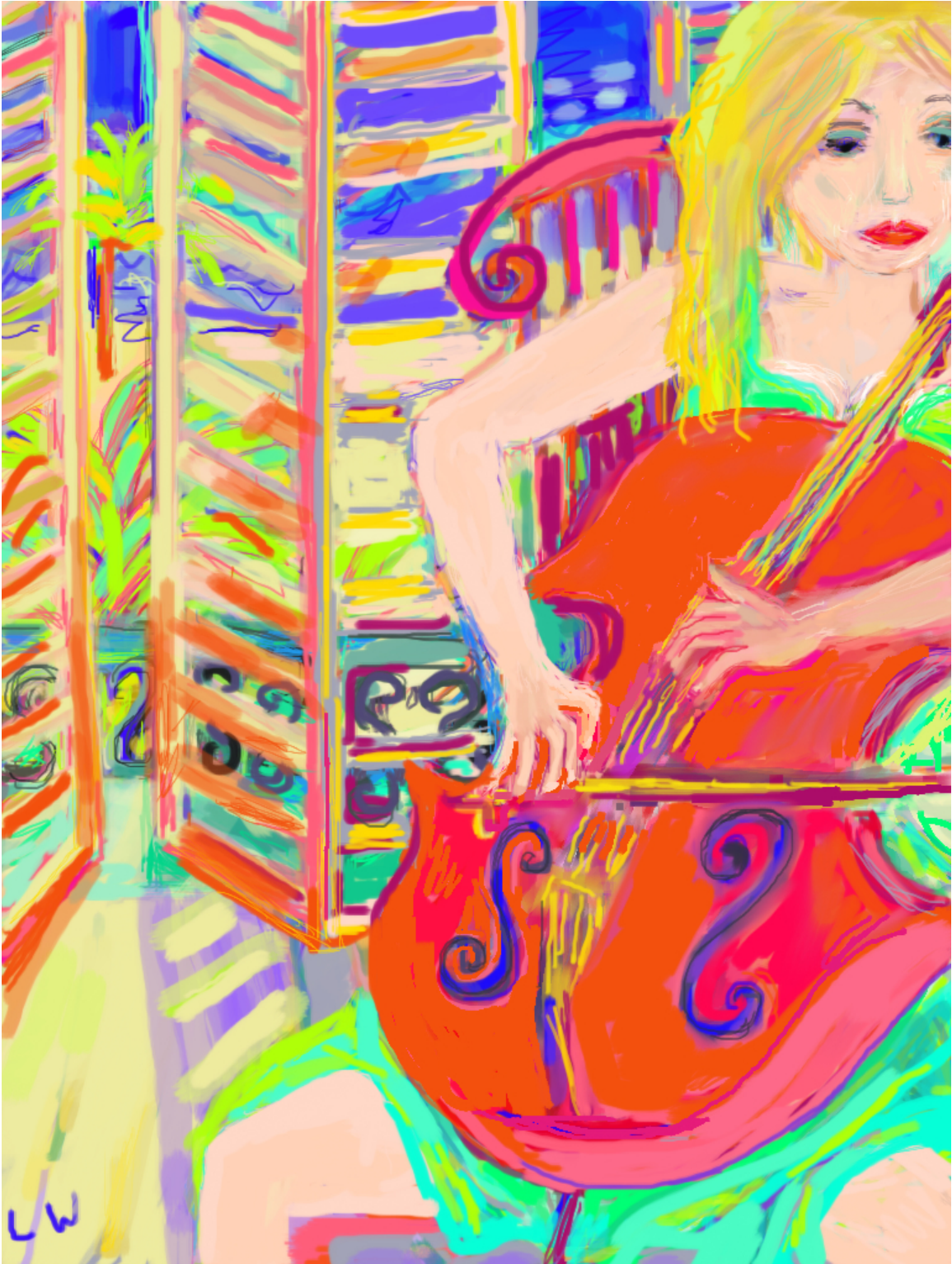
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**The Tangerine Cello**

**Watercolor**

**LaWanda Walters**

**Leslie McGrath**  
**ASTONISHMENT**

Here you are in Italy, leaning on a gate  
a poetry tote looped over an arm.

You wear blue: blue coat, blue scarf  
draped in the way of a European woman  
your long hair untamed in the way of a northern Californian.

I call you friend, beloved friend  
though you wouldn't recognize me  
in the grocery store if I turned to ask you  
how to choose a sweet melon.

We met on the coldest day Vermont had seen in ages  
but you stamped snow  
on the braided rug with what I've learned to think of  
as your everyday astonishment  
at the shattering cold and its glassy scent,  
mittens hissing on the radiator, all of it.

That was years ago  
when our letters were delivered by hand  
when there was time before we'd grow old

me grading essays on my porch  
you in constant orbit, audience to audience--

London and Umbria, Krakow and Seoul.

I'd know you, Dear One  
even if I never saw you again.

I'd know you in the way a bluebird  
not having seen her kin since learning flight  
knows her song.



**Leslie McGrath**  
**HOUSE PLANT**

Long ago, soon after you lost your first tooth,  
we watched your father re-pot his spider plant  
in the garden shed. Propping the door open

with a sack of potting mix, he bent down  
and gathered the leaves in a kind of loose ponytail,  
shaking until the pot let go the tangled roots.

With one hand I've held your hair like this  
and cupped your clammy forehead with the other  
to comfort you a little as you vomited.

He must have done these things too, through  
stomach bugs and flu, experiments with booze  
(and more I won't go into) in your furious adolescence.

He sliced open the bag of soil, half-filling  
two terra cotta pots, then eased the roots apart  
as I would a knot caught in your My Little Pony comb,

dunked them in a bucket of fertilized water  
(he always had a gift for strong beginnings)  
then tucked the soil around them like goodnight.

All the incantations at the altar come down to this:  
*Do for each other.* And I suppose we did, through you.  
Can a child feel wholly cherished by one parent at a time?

The clump I took in the divorce now crowds a window,  
its pot white-furred with lime and cracks resembling hieroglyphs  
in a language none of us can decipher.

One bump with the vacuum, one infelicitous turn  
toward the winter sun and the pot would fall to pieces.  
This the last shared thing-- aside from you, our daughter.

**Leslie McGrath**  
**RAGE BRACELET**

Women create the beast to know  
the depth of their desire

*every prison wants a warden*  
*every tablecloth a stain*

A matched set of bruises  
at the collarbone    round the wrist

*every guru wants a devotee*  
*every amulet a chain*

Women forgive the beast and learn  
the depth of their despair

*every landscape wants a shadow*  
*every abattoir a drain*

**Jeff Alfier**

**PACING INLAND FROM REDONDO BEACH IN WINTER**

At the shoreline, I turn from thin rainbows  
that flash in the spindrift of light-struck breakers,  
head homeward to the house my woman  
and I share. She'd split with another man a short  
while back on account he'd come home to her  
with the reek of late-night strippers.

Coming up on Vista del Mar Apartments, a new  
occupant's replaced the blight of gaunt blue  
curtains I thought would be up forever, with a rebirth  
of green. At a first floor window though, a cheerless  
white drape remains canted, as if a shut-in's  
furtive eye tracked strangers on the street.

Along the storefront of Inge's Fashions,  
the blue-haired owner outfits manikins in gold  
and glitter, slides outsized sunglasses on  
and slips out the back to light a Marlboro,  
puffs a gray cloud through heavy red lipstick  
as my hand shields the glare of the winter sun.

In due course I reach the lettered avenues, rooftops  
with antennas that wait-out corrosive time  
for signals that will never return. At one house  
with immaculate lawn and spotless driveway, twin  
valentines gild the front door. They beam side-by-side,  
a scarlet symmetry of kisses printing the light.

***Jeff Alfier***

**SAN PEDRO HARBOR, WHERE THE MUSIC LAY**

I stared into gray morning light  
through a tear in the bedroom curtain,

heard our housekeeper down the hall  
on the phone, praying in Spanish

with her sister in Santa Clarita.  
It was the day I'd wandered down

to San Pedro harbor. At the pier, I shared  
an outdoor patio with Mexican families,

its deck of railroad ties, metal tables,  
pigeons ragged from the poverty of scraps,

and a clear view of the fallen countenance  
of Terminal Island with its blue-gray

Colby Cranes and shuttered shipyards  
bleeding rust from every ancient hinge.

A tugboat named Alta June ushered a barge  
without a name, the hunger of commerce.

In the upper air, the Goodyear blimp  
was a set-piece in the faultless LA blue.

The Mariachi band that always plays  
on the pier drifted near my table, music

I caught but a few words of, as the ballads  
echoed over the shipping channel behind me.

**Jeff Alfier**

**COLLECTOR CAR AUCTION, SAN BERNADINO COUNTY**

Touting free cocktails the American Legion would hand out at the hotrod auction, he lured her to the desert beyond Barstow in his search for a '60s LeMans, GTO specs. That morning on the drive from LA, he spoke little, tilted a smile her way every few miles over the lumbering grace of open desert. She knew he wanted that car on the sly, to cut an off-block deal with a skill. Out her window, her eyes follow the contours of a vanished river into the yawning emptiness of the looming Mojave.

On the auction grounds, she waits for him in the smoking area. Dead tobacco laces the air around her. She's losing patience, tips her ashes between pages of the Hemmings Motor News he asked her to hold. After mindless eons, he finally drifts her way. His eyes won't telegraph how the deal went down, but she hopes it went south as hell. The last thing she wants is some heap in her Malibu driveway – doesn't give two shits he's a true believer. Her real *frisson* would be the car editing her into its image, its rebuilt plague of low-brow loudness, her man gleaming in glandular pride and stink, grease-monkey groupies sure to flock his glittery, resurrected junk, all of it endured just to grant the wish that her own story did not end alone.

**Sheila Black**  
**CHICANERIES**

Madame Hansberry explained in her *parfait*  
*Francaise* the mysteries of conjugation, the twists of

tense--for instance *le passé imparfait*, which

meant memory was a country. And one might enter it knowingly, repeatedly  
at will--a dour closet feel in all those *woulds*  
and *oftens* or every day the way we would stroll the

playground to the border of the tennis courts, clutch  
our fists to the chicken wire fence, wishing for someone to love though

love like memory is difficult to access or  
retain.

.  
Madame  
Hansberry knew this, but I--none of us--paid her  
any mind. Instead we dreamed out

windows, we bit our fingernails, we painted  
them starlight, moon-glow, we laced our lips with  
glitter, we downed our eyes in blue.

Madame Hansberry told us stories--remarkable stories of  
people she had known, places she had lived. We  
did not listen.

Her brilliant niece died too  
young, a rare cancer, but not before she sang a  
raisin in the sun.

Who is not on the run? Madame Hansberry asked of  
us, who does not know what it is to be

defenestrated, kicked out, rootless, who does

not stroll the playgrounds of junior high, hands in  
linty pockets, drafting secret messages in the

margins as if on the lam from his  
or her life? Madame Hansberry spoke of Jim Crow days

"I had been to Paris but they could not have cared less," she said, her sharp black eyes

battering against our dull faces like a bird trapped in a room of mirrors--or unable to tell mirror from sky. While she spoke Gregory made paper airplanes, and

beautiful worrisome Marie outlined her lips with a black eye pencil and stabbed it into her open palm. Louis behind me

threatened to set fire to his hair, and I put my hands squarely over my eyes. "Myth," said Madame Hansberry, "can often be

consolation." She said her favorite words in French were the ones that could not be translated. We asked her for an example. She said:

"This one *se déchire*," which means 'to shred oneself' and she laughed.

Madame Hansberry did not admire my command of French, my punctuation, my way with accents. On the first and last full length

essay I wrote for her, on Racine's great (and to me deadly dull) play *Phaedre*, she wrote "You have a decent grasp of

the large emotions, but you certainly lack proper discipline."

She said another favorite word of hers was "Chicanery."

"Pretty as wrought iron isn't it?" she beamed,. "It means

shiny-bright, flim-flam, it means trickery. She lifted up her thin finger, crooked it at us. "It means you WILL be betrayed. It means you will lose who and

what and whatsoever you love."

She talked on, but we did not appear to listen--we knew she was not talking to us any longer, some odd sense of

discretion that made us look away. I would have said I didn't

hear a single word she spoke, but that proved not to be the case, for later behind the volley ball court where the sewer ran and the elm trees yellowed, dying slowly of

that odd, not-really-Dutch disease, I repeated under  
my breath "Myth, often, consolation," decided mine  
would be the myth of Daphne--the junior high version, where  
no one looked at me, no one pursued, no one  
noticed me gone until I was already tree,  
my branches  
shivering in the rain or snapping loose in any storm and a picture  
in my head of  
Madame Hansberry tracing on the board her  
sentences: the precise condition of memory--  
that you might freeze there one day as if at a  
window, gazing in at a girl so much  
like yourself.



**Sheila Black**  
**HOUSE**

To give all I could—the  
shambling rooms of windows cracked for  
  
even the birds to enter—the finches,  
red-polls, the jays which sound so boastful,  
  
steal from every nest.

I never wanted it to be “a house”  
dishes in the skin or the dryer running—  
that haze fluff over nights.

A house half-abandoned perhaps—  
as if by earthquake or flood,  
the battered dresser painted crushed rose,  
  
the mirror a silver so tarnished the faces  
within it shine like coins underwater.

Autumn leaves to sift the  
corners, black coffee boiled  
with chickory, an iron pot blue with heat.

I didn't listen enough to what you  
wanted and the wind that howls through,  
  
that says this was always harder than  
we thought.

**Sheila Black**  
**WALL OF SOUND**

We were made holy by sidewalks, the thin  
streams of water that ran down the gutters—those  
cobble alleys, and the high black stone buildings  
where girls hung bras from wire lines and shutters  
clanked deep into the night. Red wine from a plastic  
bag leaking over our fingers, staining our lips, and  
even the stones speaking--the yellow-painted stucco  
of the hotel where the poet was dragged out by the arms,  
shot in a place no one saw. But this was 1985,  
and we believed our shoulder pads and primary-  
colored plastic accessories were proof against any harm.  
*Lou Reed* and *Television*, the world-weary voices,  
the thrum of nicotine, morphine, the death-love spinning.  
We thought we knew it, but we were only young.  
Along the Ramblas, the tired trees in their dented  
metal barrels curling in against the summer heat.  
And the voices from windows pelting the air like  
scarves twisted in wind. Now I would say, Where did  
they all go? Where did you go? And why do I wait  
with my cheek to this stuccoed wall listening to  
a singer murmur about time while the digital clock  
turns the numbers—so agonizingly slow I feel  
my breath congeal and grow wings. I would fly  
backwards towards you if I could. Instead I please  
myself as best I can with this bitter-almond after—  
a kind of aura around—these meager words in  
which I hold you shimmering, a mere moment, in  
which I freeze you as you were, striding down the side  
roads, tilting your head back to look up the slim  
stripe of sky—two clouds, a black crow drifting by.

**Margaret Karmazin**  
**GIFTING THE ENEMY**

The call came the morning after she'd overeaten and overdrank at her boss' Christmas party. She was not feeling up to par.

Her sister, who taught American history at University of Pittsburgh, called while ordering coffee in Starbucks, then driving to work. The calls were interrupted by traffic sounds, and Allie always felt a little hurt that Christen could never find the time to call her sitting down and paying full attention.

"Kevin needs our help, sooner than we expected," said Christen. "Didn't mom call you yesterday?"

Allie experienced the familiar jab in her gut. Though she was the eldest child, she felt she was treated as the youngest. For one thing, for some reason her parents (their father had died three years before) had always treated her as if she were irresponsible and dangerous to cars, machinery and electronics. As far as she could recall, she had never broken any machines her entire life and in fact was the one who ran, updated and took care of the computers in her and Peter's house. She covered maintenance and repair arrangements for her car, had never been in an accident other than a fender bender, paid the bills, was always on time, not in trouble with the law and took her vitamins. Why her family handled her as if she was a child, she could not fathom. Why didn't her mother call her first?

"No, as usual, Mom did not call me."

“Now’s not the time, Allie,” said Christen in her mature, teacher tone. “They want us to get some tests. Everyone, including the cousins, are coming in to Pittsburgh Monday for workups.”

“Pittsburgh?” blurted Allie. “That’s a seven hour drive from here! It’s the middle of winter! And tests for what? I don’t understand.”

Christen sighed. “Allie, this is it. Kevin needs a kidney. The doctor told him yesterday morning. He’s been on dialysis since the end of November and it’s inevitable where things will end. Mom and I both had the 24 hour urine test, and you’ll need that too. They do that first before anything else. Apparently ninety-five percent of donors are ruled out by that alone.”

“Wait a minute, slow down. What you’re saying is that they’re looking for a donor for him, is that it? From among us?”

“Well, yeah? Duh. They would naturally look at his relatives first.”

Allie was silent while her mind raced. She and Kevin had not spoken for nearly ten years. He had hurt her feelings numerous times before the eventual break and probably she’d hurt his back when the words started flying. And now everyone assumed this didn’t matter? Apparently, they all took it for granted that she, along with the rest of them, would gladly risk her life to fork over one of her organs to a person she pretty much couldn’t stand.

“I see,” Allie said. “I suppose Kevin is still an asshole? Or did being sick help him get over that?”

There was a silence before Christen responded. “You can really be a bitch,” she said.

Allie felt the rage she tried to keep buried rush to the surface like a flash flood. “Yeah?” she said. “How would you like it if you suddenly got a call with someone asking you to donate a kidney to your ex?”

“Really, Allie, you’re ridiculous. There is no comparison between my ex and our brother! Kevin shares our genes! We grew up together! What are you, nuts?”

Allie couldn’t believe she was yelling into a cell phone. She was standing in her laundry room, red faced and exploding into this tiny device. “I don’t care about freakin’ genes! What matters is how you feel about the person who needs the damn kidney! And Kevin is a cold, egotistical, calculating bastard who thinks he is way above me and Peter. He treated me, us, like shit! And you think I should risk my life for him? Fuck you!” she screamed before clicking off.

Now she’d done it. Christen, who thrived on being holier-than-thou, would be dialing their mother and within half an hour several more people would hear about Allie’s reaction and horrible, selfish nature. I’ve always known she is like this, would be passed from relative to relative. How she wished she had moved away six years ago when Peter was offered that job in Atlanta, but she’d talked him out of it, not that that had been difficult. “I never really wanted it anyway,” he’d said a week later, “Wouldn’t be able to stand the humidity down there.”

But if they’d gone, it would have been easier to break from her horrible family. As it was, though she and Peter lived near Scranton, they were expected to show up for at least one unbearable holiday dinner a year. Kevin avoided going at the same time, probably scheduling things at his wife’s relatives as an excuse, or more likely the entire family colluded with the avoidance.

“It is a good thing I read books about karma,” she told Peter. At the moment, she was into reports on deep hypnotism to past and between lives and, if there was actually anything to the stories, earthly relationships were extremely complicated. Supposedly, nothing here looked exactly as it really was and things carrying over from past lives contributed greatly to feelings of love or injustice now.

“If they’re true,” said Peter, the agnostic.

“There has to be some reason why Kevin suddenly became so rejecting of me.”

“And so condescending,” added Peter. “And not just to you.”

Allie assumed her husband was remembering how, more than a decade before, Kevin had taken an interest in Peter’s work and enjoyed sitting on the roof with him, star gazing and sipping whiskey. But then it had all changed. Suddenly when Kevin visited, he paid little or no attention to Peter, but spent the time reading in a chair, hardly glancing up and allowing Allie to serve and clean up after him. He never reached for his wallet when they went out to dinner or needed more supplies for himself or his wife. There were occasions when Peter could have used a hand with something (and this after he had spent several visits to Kevin’s house helping *him* with his wiring), but her brother would behave as if assisting Peter was beneath him. It was odd how Kevin had suddenly changed. She wasn’t imagining it.

“Well,” she said, “we’ve gone over this a zillion times. Maybe when he was promoted at work, his head swelled so much that he felt he was too high class for us. When he canceled going on that cruise, after we’d so painstakingly saved up for it, I certainly got that impression. I’ve never gotten over that.”

“What are you going to do?” said Peter. “They’ve put you in a terrible position. And do I enter into things? I don’t know that I want you to risk your life for someone who obviously doesn’t care about you. What do you get out of it?”

Good question. “I need to think,” she said. “But I’ll keep your feelings in mind. No one matters to me more than you do.”

Her mother called that evening. “I can’t believe-” she began, but Allie cut her off.

“Don’t even go there,” she said. “If you want me to participate in this and I don’t know yet if I will, you will refrain from saying one disparaging word. One word, Mom, and I am automatically out. Do I make myself clear?”

There was a long silence before her mother said, “All right.” Pause. “I’m calling to say that you don’t have to come all the way out here. You can call Dr. Fredo at this number: 724-555-9853, give him the name of your doctor there and he will FAX him the information for the tests you’ll need. His office hours are 8:30 to 4:30. Okay?”

Allie sighed. “Okay.” She waited a moment before asking, “How is he?”

“Well, not good. He’s pretty sick. I just don’t understand how he got diabetes this bad in the first place. No one else has it.”

Her mother was very forgetful. “Aunt Irene had it. Grandma said Grandpa’s mother had it. I think cousin Marlene has it, doesn’t she?”

“I don’t know, I just don’t know.”

“I have to go now, Mom, I need to get to bed. Gotta be at work early tomorrow; they have a shipment coming in.”

“Are you still working at that same place?” her mother said. This was a loaded question. She had never approved of any job Allie had ever had, since none of them

were on the same professional level as Kevin's or Christen's.

"I have to go," said Allie firmly and hung up.

Her doctor was cooperative and she started the tests two days later. The twenty-four hour urine collection was difficult to do at work, but she managed. When the nurse placed the band aide on her arm after the blood tests, she felt a sudden onset of nostalgia. For some reason (maybe the needle reminded her), she recalled the time she needed a tooth extraction, when she was twenty-two or three. The dentist was giving her sodium pentothal and she didn't want her mother to go along. Sodium pentothal was the truth drug and what if she blabbed about her sex life? It would flabbergast the woman. Not that Allie was wanton, but for her mother, anything beyond kissing was promiscuous. She'd asked her brother to take her for the extraction and he had, back in the days when he was her friend and they'd found endless pleasure in each other's company. Taken it for granted, to be sure, but never doubted it. Afterward, they'd gone grocery shopping and she, still a bit high from the drug, kept grabbing things they didn't need from the shelves, while Kevin gently put them back.

She still did not understand what had changed. What would make this person with whom she'd felt so utterly comfortable, had laughed her ass off with, this person she'd trusted and believed loved her...what would suddenly turn him into someone who didn't like her anymore, who would betray her, put her down, make her feel bad about herself? Ten years had passed and she still didn't know. The one time she'd tried to discuss it with their sister, Christen had said, "I don't want to get in the middle. I can see both sides."

Huh? What "side" did Kevin have? Allie had been nice to him, been there to



listen to his endless complaints about his job, worries about parenting, his thoughts about everything! He had called her almost every evening, often when she didn't really want to talk since Peter was home, but she'd usually entertained her brother for a half hour or more. She had seriously enjoyed him being the only person in the world who agreed with her on all political issues. They had often discussed their feelings about their sometimes stressful childhood. To Allie, he was the sort of person with whom you could sit around in your jammies while stuffing popcorn in your mouth and forget to wipe the grease from your chin. Other than her husband, Kevin had been her best friend in the world.

Then suddenly he wasn't. "I wonder if we'd even be friends if we hadn't grown up in that house together," he said.

What did that mean? How many people would be friends with their brothers and sisters if they hadn't grown up in the same house? Of course she and Kevin would not have been friends if they hadn't "met" in that way - their paths would never have crossed! He moved in the world of finance and the city and pretending to be "upper middle class," while she lived in the country and hobnobbed with new age, literary or artist types. But what did that have to do with anything? They had grown up in "that house" and she had mistakenly assumed that they really liked each other on top of that.

The doctor called two days later. Not her own, but one from Pittsburgh. "Mrs. Polzin, I am calling to inform you that you are a six out of six match for donating a kidney to your brother. That is rare, even among family members."

The news did not fully sink in. When Allie remained silent, the doctor said, "You will need to be evaluated by a psychologist. I know a good one in Scranton and can set

up an appointment with her this week.” He waited. “Are you there?”

“Yeah,” she mumbled. “I guess I’m sort of in shock.”

“Well,” he said, apparently not one to coddle future organ donors, “if you’ll make sure you get that psychiatric evaluation ASAP, that’ll be helpful. My receptionist will call you this afternoon with the appointment time.”

Her first reaction was to feel a dull sense of doom, replaced in a while by anxiety. What if she died on the operating table? All for what? Why should she end up dying instead of Kevin? What if, after all that trouble, he rejected the kidney?

Could she even get off work for all this? What if they fired her? It was an organic greenhouse and they barely made ends meet. The owner’s nephew had recently dropped out of school and wanted a job, and they would be quick to replace her if she was out too long. She and Peter needed the money; his own business was in a slowdown. The paintings she occasionally sold did not bring in any serious money. She was expected to turn her life upside down for people who put her last in the family hierarchy, for a brother who thought so little of her?

“Damn,” said Peter that evening. “I can’t believe it. Are you the only one?”

She realized she didn’t know the answer to that question when the phone rang.

“Amazing,” said Christen drily. “You are the only one who matches. No one else came close.” A heavy silence followed during which Allie could read her sister’s mind. You of all people. Was Christen jealous? How weird if she was.

“Does Kevin know?” Allie asked.

“They told him this morning.”

In spite of her jumble of emotions, Allie found herself smirking. “How did he

react?”

“I don’t know exactly, I wasn’t there. Ask Mom.”

“Hmmmph,” said Allie.

Within ten minutes, her mother called. “You’re going to do it, right? You’re going to help him?”

“I wonder,” said Allie coldly, “if the shoe was on the other foot, if you would be asking him that question in just that tone of voice.”

“Well, of course I would! How can you ask that? You always have to say something horrible!”

“I have learned over the years, Mom, to say what I mean. Trying to be nice did not earn me any love in this family.”

“My son is dying. I don’t have the time nor energy for petty squabbling.”

“Petty to you, but not to me. It would be *my* body, not yours that they’re ripping a piece out of.”

“Please don’t start. Are you giving him the kidney or not?”

“Maybe he should be the one to ask. Did you ever think of that?”

God, how she should have moved to Atlanta. She could have refused to answer any calls from family. She could have changed her name.

Her mother slammed down the phone.

“I feel terrible,” she told Peter that evening. “Every time I deal with them, they bring out the worst in me. I don’t know how this all began, but it seems like it’s been this way since I was born.”

One track minded, Peter said, “What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know, Peter,” she said. “The shrink appointment is Tuesday. At least it’s before work, so I don’t have to take off.”

The psychologist was female and, though rather forbidding in appearance, easy enough to talk to, which was to be expected. Allie told her what she could fit into the time allotted.

“So you have many doubts about this,” summed up Dr. Devons.

“Yes, I do,” said Allie.

“I can certainly understand why.”

“It doesn’t mean I won’t do it though.”

“I understand that too,” said the doctor.

“You do know that if you don’t go through with it, they can give him a cadaver kidney or possibly another donor will come into the picture.”

“I do,” said Allie.

“You would need to prepare yourself for family backlash if you refuse, but I want to make it clear that you have every right to make the choice that is best for you. No one in the medical community is pressuring you to make the donation. If you decide not to go through with it and have problems with your family, please feel free to call me or see another therapist.”

The Pittsburgh doctor called the following day. “You passed inspection. However I understand that you’re not sure about donating. We need to make a decision relatively soon, Allie.”

“How soon?”

“Well, within a week would be good. Though I need to tell you that he has a rather severe upper respiratory infection. We’re treating him aggressively. He has let himself get pretty rundown.”

“What do you mean?”

“I can’t go into detail about a patient even if he is your brother. But I can say that he has other health problems besides the kidney issues.”

Allie called Christen to ask what that was all about. “I don’t know anything about it,” she said, and for once Allie believed her. “You know he smoked dope a lot, he always has. He had a cough. He never took care of himself.”

Allie remembered her brother’s bad eating habits, the way he drove himself too hard physically, stayed up too late, gained weight then lost it too fast, acted like he was made of something inorganic instead of flesh and blood. He’d used other drugs besides weed.

“I have to think,” she told Christen softly.

For the first time Allie could remember, her sister was kind in her response. “I would be terrified to be in your shoes,” she said before hanging up.

That evening, she and Peter started to make love, but gave up after neither of their bodies cooperated. “I can’t get in the mood,” Peter said. “Not when I’m scared something could go wrong, that I could possibly lose you.”

“I haven’t even decided to do it,” she said.

Peter sighed. “I wouldn’t want to live without you. I know donating is the right thing to do, but-”

“He hasn’t even asked me,” she said. “And my chances of dying are slim.”

“But it does happen, Allie. I just read about a case online.”

The telephone rang. Before Peter answered it, she knew who it would be. Her husband’s voice was brusque, not friendly. “Yeah, she’s here,” he said and handed it over.

“Hi,” her brother said, his voice low and soft.

“Hi,” she said. Her heart thudded.

“Got myself in a fix here,” he said.

“So I hear.”

“I don’t know what to say, Allie. If you decide to do it, I will be forever, and I mean forever, indebted to you. I know things haven’t been good between us and probably a lot of it is my fault.”

Oh? she wanted to say. You just noticed that now?

“I certainly don’t blame you if you decide not to go through with it. Please know that I won’t hold it against you. I totally understand.”

She wanted to punch him, yet hearing his voice gave her some form of comfort she’d not felt in a long time - the illusion of their friendship, back when she could feel safe in it.

“I haven’t made up my mind yet, Kevin.”

“I totally understand,” he said.

There was no point in asking him about the cruise, in asking why he had treated her the way he had. How many people went to their graves not understanding why others did what they did? But if she did give him the kidney and he did get well, then for sure she was going to ask him. She would have every right in the world to know.

Peter took the phone from her and set it down hard on the night stand. He gave

her a long look. "I know you have to do what you have to do," he said gruffly.

She curled against him. "Turn over, will you? So I can hug you tight."

His body was warm and cuddly. He did as she asked and after a while, snored softly. How dear he was to her. If he needed a kidney, she wouldn't hesitate for a second.

Sometime during the night, she awoke with a start. What was wrong? She looked at the clock and thought instantly of her brother. Two-thirty AM. Weirdly, she remembered walking across the Drexel campus with him in her early twenties, and one of his acquaintances they ran into mistook her for his girlfriend. Kevin hadn't shown any distaste about this; apparently, back then he'd been proud of her. This led to her remembering the time he visited her in New Hope and they'd driven into New Jersey. "Hey," Kevin had said facetiously, "Jerseyites look just like us!" He was fun then; they'd been fun together, laughed till they almost peed.

She made her mind up. The kidney was his. She would call his doctor in the morning.

By six AM, she had just mixed her yogurt and granola and settled into her chair at the table when the phone rang. Peter was still in bed.

"Hello?" she said, mouth full.

It was her mother. "Allie, he passed during the night. Kevin is gone." She was sobbing so hard, she couldn't go on.

Allie felt a sudden appalling coldness as if someone had opened the door to a bottomless deep-freeze.

"What happened, Mom? What happened?"

Christen got on the phone. “His fever shot up,” she said. “They were pumping the meds in by IV, but it didn’t work.”

In her numbness, Allie managed to remember something. “What time did it happen?”

“Around two-thirty. There was no reason to wake you.”

“I was going to give it to him,” said Allie. “I made up my mind last night. Right around that time.”

Someone must have removed all of her insides. What was this emptiness she felt?

“Well, he won’t need it now,” said Christen.



**C. Ann Kodra**  
**INTUSSCEPTION**

*for Florence Elizabeth Bashaw*

*Definition: A taking within; a slipping (telescoping) of one part within another*  
*[Webster's*  
*Dictionary]*

November, my grandmother warned,  
*is the saddest month.* I try to find this in leaves,  
in the cascade of starlings from baring trees, gray  
afternoon sky tinged maroon. She, a lover  
of lilacs and pansies, rambled barefooted  
through pasture, urging rust-patched Jerseys home,  
their keening lows a comment on fullness  
and need. She mourned the passing

of day before nine, the moon stealing light  
before sun has set, whippoorwills and owls  
marking its drift across midnight. The eleventh month  
carried her to confinement, to darkness that set the day on edge  
too soon. The barn cats curled in the loft, the pony's coat grew  
long. Hens, wearied of laying, tucked their beaks  
into breast-feathered comforters. Fieldstones cradled  
sparks of sun deep in their pits, hunkered down to meet

the cold and snow. My grandmother must have buried  
sparks of spring in her waning veins to bear her forward over  
the treacherous hump of northern winter. I wonder, was it the colors  
of dying, the rusts and browns of dried blood and excrement,  
sallow yellows of exudate, a muted mural of decline that held  
her hostage, turned her ruddy farm cheeks pallid, quelled  
the wish to wake again on that one frosted November dawn,  
when she slipped through summer and fall, then fell beyond?



**After Matisse: The Red Piano Painting LaWanda Walters**

**Teri Hairston**  
**COCKROACHES**

What's to be learned from cockroaches?  
...a fist cocked ready to fire at my face  
my momma smiles a toothless grin  
her teeth fell from her mouth  
and shattered like broken dreams  
my daddy's un-kept promises  
swelled her belly as each new  
baby growing inside her  
depleted her calcium

The cockroaches like proud patriots  
paraded across the counter as she cooked  
she'd scream at them throw a shit fit  
and a spatula to try to make them scatter  
she tried too hard

I don't think he ever loved her  
he looked at me  
I cringe but don't blink  
and fell to touch after murderous touch  
Into a cocooned existence  
my spirit hides in the  
splintered pearl pieces of her teeth

I wanted him to love her  
to be *her* knight in shining armor  
and kill

the cockroaches on the counter  
...to un-cock the fist that destroyed us both.

## *EDITOR'S CHOICE*

**Teri Hairston**

### **WHITE HOUSE**

It's always there. Close. Right behind me. I can feel its breath searing the skin on my neck. I should be afraid, but I am not. Or maybe I am because I don't make the slight gesture to turn my head and look death in its face.

It's always the same white house with its wrap-around porch and six stairs leading to a large white door positioned between two un-curtained windows on each side. I am drawn to it, and I always walk up the stairs. I have a strong feeling that I know this house even though the only place I have ever visited it is in my dreams. It feels warm and comforting. Every time I come to this house I want to stay. I have only walked up the stairs and stood on the porch. I have never touched the door, turned the knob, peered into the windows, or gone inside the house.

Some nights right before I fall asleep, I hope that I will go to the house. Sometimes I go, sometimes I don't. When that happens, I am disappointed. It seems to be enough to simply walk up the stairs and be close to the house, to stand on its porch, bathed in its white glow. I always wake too soon and am frustrated. It leaves me feeling like I am an infant being snatched away from my mother's breast as I hungrily suck her milk.

She was locked away in a mental institution. I was three and didn't know that, only that she was gone, and that when my daddy bathed me he had lathered his finger with soap and thrust it deep inside my vagina, it stung. His face blurred. I couldn't see

him anymore. Just her face, but she wasn't there to help me, to cradle me, hold me close, and replace the pain in my heart and vagina that trapped tears in my throat. I couldn't even cry out to her to help me. Then it wasn't just him I hated but her, too.

The first time I tried it, I was thirteen. Back then you had to have a prescription for Benadryl. I was always breaking out in hives. The doctor said it could be food or stress. I knew it was stress. By that time my father had been molesting me for ten years. God wasn't answering my prayers to kill him, and I knew that I couldn't tell my mother or depend on her for help. I felt that she was too fragile and that knowing what my daddy was doing to me would only push her further over the edge. I was old enough to know now where she went on her long absences from home. It was Butner, a state owned psychiatric hospital.

There would always be a big embarrassing event prior to her being involuntarily committed. This time she had rear-ended a white lady with her car, and, when the woman approached her, she said, "God told me to do it." Frightened, the woman got back into her car and drove home. My mother followed her, and, when the woman pulled into her driveway, my mother drove into her yard, got out of the car, took off all her clothes, preaching about God, snakes, and that the voices were telling her the lady needed to be killed. She went back to Butner.

I saw them take her once. The police and an ambulance came, and there was a big struggle to subdue her. She was fighting four white men in uniforms. They were trying to get her tied up into a straight jacket. My daddy didn't do anything to help her. They seemed to be hurting her. She was kicking and scratching them. Her teeth fell out

of her mouth. They were dentures. She was bleeding and crying. The only thing I could do was to pick up her teeth and put them in the glass jar filled with water underneath the bathroom sink. I was four.

I stood at the sink, feet trembling on the cold tile.

The sound of my blood roaring in my ears drowned out the sound of her psychotic tantrums.

I swallowed one pill after the other.

It was the first time that I saw the house. I had fallen into a thick sleep. It felt syrupy like the dark molasses we used to sop my momma's homemade biscuits with and just as tantalizingly sweet. I gave into the feeling and was bathed in the brilliant white light coming from the façade of the house.

I was home, safe.

I woke up and vomited.

I was angry that I was alive.

**Christian Anton Gerard**  
**LOVE POEM**

It's a bench in a park where interesting things happen  
and a park bench where nothing happens, or  
it's a frame of mind. Audre Lorde, Audre Lorde,  
rationality is not unnecessary. It serves the chaos  
of knowledge. It serves feeling. Ezra Pound, Ezra Pound,  
make it new, make it new. The lawn, that crosscut pattern.  
I used to say my dad gave the world a haircut  
every Saturday, but that's a child's thought, right?  
And this is a poem and for some reason I'm not  
seeing the meaning behind it all. I'm hearing the birds.  
I'm singing their madrigals, thinking of a paper I heard  
comparing sixteenth century dance patterns  
to sixteenth century poems, Sidney's, Philip Sidney's  
always with the Philip Sidney. I'm imagining myself old,  
rocking in my wife's great grandmother's rocking chair  
talking, lecturing the wallpaper on the initial strike in  
the voice I heard in *Astrophil & Stella* those years ago  
when Rob Stillman stopped time and read out loud  
those first few sonnets. My life was changed.  
And when I say that out loud I want it to mean something.  
I mean, of course, it does for me. One minute  
I'd never heard Sir Philip's name. Then I knew.  
I don't know what happened then, why I heard it  
the way I did. I spent a good two years believing  
we shared some DNA or all of it. I found some  
relief when they confirmed all humans carry  
Neanderthal DNA. I wrote a poem about it  
like I do when I think I'm the world's center.  
It's Friday afternoon. I'm living around me.  
The birds are still making madrigals, the lines  
in the lawn look like a parquet dance floor, couples  
all over are holding hands and I'm in love like they are.  
Who would want to make this new? I've spent two bucks  
on two Cokes and despite our tight budget,  
my wife will forgive me the way people in love do  
who won't let themselves become the sad characters  
in fictions we read over and over as if we know it all.

**Christian Anton Gerard**  
**PASTORAL**

It is now illegal to herd sheep  
through the canyons and their accompaniments  
in the lower forty-eight. How then

are we to read America's story?  
What will become of the strong silent  
cowboy. Can we say cowboy anymore?

I have made camp half way up a nameless  
mountain. Tomorrow I will see the fifteen  
sheep I purchased from a southwest Virginian.

I will heard the sheep to my home  
in eastern Tennessee. I am an outlaw without  
a gun. My world is taking off its blouse.

Samuel Daniel was right. The wise are above  
books. It is for the General sort that we write.  
The man who used to own my sheep kept

a large white farmhouse clad in a black roof's armor.  
He said the white cools in summer, the black heats  
in winter and he lives accordingly up or down

in the house in which I saw no books.  
Now that I walk with sheep I feel the wolves' circle,  
though he said none are here. I feel the black bear's

taste for flesh, though he said bears are afraid of man.  
I've bought black electrical tape and have crossed out  
the Cowboy printed on my tee shirt. I walk back

to Tennessee a general sort of man who believes  
the cowboy man I left yesterday to be wise and  
above what I am doing here.

I'd thought these letters would find you  
somewhere after I had returned with my flock,  
after I had taken them to market or wherever

they're supposed to go. I'd thought this waterproof



paper would be the key—surviving my story into what  
I cannot imagine. But for safekeeping I will

print these words on the skins I've skinned and  
tanned. This will be my legacy, my way  
to bring America's story back into view or rather

my story is not the words on the skins of the sheep  
who have helped me outlaw in a time without outlaws,  
but the skins themselves, which you hold in your hands.

**Jesse Waters**  
**MISSION WORK**

If you're taken, held for ransom in the jungle, kept --  
and those forces who've had you now for six months protect  
you from the government fire when it comes in hot  
and feed you in the nighttime, learn their names.  
It's not often there's the chance in life to get this close  
to preservation of the other for money's sake, and pain.  
And hide a grapeleaf stem beneath your tongue  
if you have the chance that one first night when the rebels come  
for you. Dried, it can poke through the bars of your cage.  
Take a page from this book, and secret it on your person.  
Whatever that means must be totally up to you  
in that (this) foreign place where they're likely to eat  
whatever you've been petting all your life.

**Doug Anderson**  
**BREAKING THROUGH**

At eight, I thought it normal too *see* music when I listened,  
    long bloodlines of strings and fire-burst brass,  
    rain-slick street of the cymbals.  
Folks thought, *That boy needs help*, and out driving,  
    see that red barn, blue sky and gold cone of wood chips,  
    is that not a major chord?  
You've got to make something something else for it to show up  
    in imagination.  
Trane, Bird, Cannonball, did it  
    and Errol, Yes,  
forced their instruments past the job description.  
    Tatum sweet-talked his hulk of wood and ivory  
    like a big tooth horse,  
    made it kneel or cantor.  
Ornette with his reed menage  
    puffed up like a blowfish,  
    blew a hive of neon incubi inside your skull.  
Diz turned up his flugelhorn to catch the rain in a cistern  
    of spangle-gowned mermaids.  
Monk wove his brain with Beckett-Kitaj out through his star-fruit fingers.  
Left-handed Evans with his modal underwater sculpture  
    made *Kind of Blue* his cage of light.  
Miles soul-plugged into Dante and made the Devil dance,  
    with his extended similes of gold smelt.  
Chambers, dream drunk, a heart-lantern in the bar-dark.  
Mulligan and Terry trading fours on *Blueport*,  
    fine as any Sophoclean stychomythia.  
Peggy Lee with her soft hands cupping you where you live,  
    whispering  
    right up your cock into your heart.  
Ella scat-sang altos, flutes, and muted bones and there's Billie  
    coming honey-graveled back up the road into the horn's cave,  
    like, *watch this, fools*,  
    *saxophone got nothin' on me.*  
*Baby, there's a place where love gets tangled up in everything you see.*

**Doug Anderson**  
**HORSE MEDICINE**

*New Mexico State Prison, 1980*

Had them packed ass-over-elbow into in a space  
meant for half as many and the food, well,  
somewhere between cardboard and baby shit,  
TB and brother hepatitis living in the walls.  
So understaffed the guards built snitchworld  
to enforce the unenforceable. No one inside  
surprised when it came down,  
leastwise the guards, beaten, broken, raped.  
Most inmates just wanted to survive  
but the sicker meaner mutherfuckers  
torched through the bars of segregation cells  
and blue-flamed the pedophiles. Into which blood  
waded the National Guard whence black convicts  
and some others sought refuge among them in the yards  
while the psychopaths dismembered snitches  
with chainsaws so thoroughly that afterwards  
when they did the body count they couldn't find them all  
so finely had some of them been diced.  
Cleaned up the blood with acid (stains still there).  
Brought in a warden smart enough to build a concrete pen,  
filled it with mustangs every bit as crazy  
as the torch-tongued mad. Those most eaten  
by their demons got to work with them, feed them,  
I dare say *love* them, and for a while  
something like a human village found its heartbeat  
and prevailed. Warden after that took away the horses  
to please politicians who'd been elected  
on the prisoners-oughta-suffer song, and Hell returned  
to what some righteous gasbag said  
Hell oughta be. Well there you are. And so are we.

**Doug Anderson**  
**ROUGH BEAST**

*On a troublesome poem of Yeats*

We are aware that Jackboot Jack,  
if not kept busy rutting at the bar,  
will outshout the quieter music,  
trample the part of us that knows  
we can't kill off our ugly spirit  
but strive to sooth his arrogance,  
fill his cage with mirrors  
so he doesn't see the bars,  
merely licks and rubs himself  
upon them. We do not lack  
all conviction, but neither do we  
let him take his bludgeon out  
and cloud the night with blood.  
His passionate intensity  
is neither passion nor intensity  
but a knife sunk in the heart's eye.  
How simple to kill off the mind-snakes  
we've invested others with.  
It *should* make him slouch  
but close by where we can see him,  
humor him in his reptilian play.  
It's called being human,  
and it's a ploy, but it keeps us whole,  
this double soul, this responsibility.

DOUG ANDERSON: A PHOTO ALBUM  
SHOTS OF THE MILL 2014













## EDITOR'S CHOICE

**Lio Diaz**

### **BROKEN GLASS: A MEMOIR**

I was holding Junior tight in my arms while he sobbed, soaking my t-shirt in tears and slobber. I guess it was the first time I ever felt brave, well, brave enough to know that what Papa was saying and doing wasn't real. He didn't mean any of it. That day started out fine. It was fall, around the time the mornings and evenings began to freeze. Mom had just gotten home from a long day of lesson plans and chasing first-graders around the classroom. I was only five. When I was thirteen, I delved into it again, asking my mom if she remembered that day as well as I did.

It was a Friday but I didn't have to go to school because Aunt Ramona was bringing Junior to spend the weekend with us at the ranch. I remember being thrilled that Junior was coming because I had someone to play with besides the older neighbor boys who were always too rough with me. Junior arrived around noon, the same time Papa started drinking, before he got around to fixing the heater, before he got too faded to remember that Mom loved him so. I remember pulling Junior past Bear, who was barking and excited to see a new face, probably because he thought Junior, small and pudgy, was another puppy to play with. Junior and I were in the yard with Bear, running with him and teasing him with the Nerf football he cherished.

The whole time, Papa was in and out of the house, doing everything except fixing the heater as he had promised Mom. Every time I saw him, the bottle in his hand seemed to get lighter and lighter, his music turned louder and his voice larger.

It was after five when mom finally walked through the door. I ran to her, as did Junior, and she kneeled and hugged us both, embracing us in her love and in the coldness of her jacket sleeves. Papa was sitting on the couch listening to music and playing a card game. He sipped on his Corona and squeezed the segment of lime into his mouth, winking at my mom and calling her over. She put her bags down, took off her jacket and walked towards him. He stood up, wrapped his large arms around her and kissed her. I was in stitches, laughing and teasing mom. Mom always knew when Papa was drinking. He was loud, talkative and he told the story of his day to her in every single detail. I listened, too. I watched his mouth move with excitement to the rhythm of his slightly slurred words, his glistening eyes, showing both happiness and what I didn't recognize as frailty.

At dinnertime, Mom called on me to wash up and to help Junior do the same. We walked into the kitchen, the radio playing soft country songs as it always did and Papa in his chair waiting for Mom to set the table. I don't recall what we ate, but I remember that Junior had it all over his shirt. When dinner was over Junior wandered away from the table. Mom asked me to get Junior's bag, probably to put a clean shirt on him. Then the phone rang, an alarming, sudden blare that would change everything and nothing at the same time.

Papa answered the phone, as he always did, "Bueno?" he asked. The call was for my mother. There was a man's voice at the other end. My dad looked at Mom with nothing in his eyes, nothing but an overwhelming sense of curiosity fueled by bottles upon bottles, bottles of mischief and blame and anger. The phone call was quick, maybe two minutes long, if that. Mom hung up the phone, walked to the table and began clearing the dirty dishes. Papa sat there, watching her every move. I sat at the counter with

Junior, sharing a big bowl of ice cream. I saw papa's face turn red. His eyes looked like mine when I cry. When mom came back to the table, Papa grabbed her hand and asked her to sit down. I watched carefully while Junior teased Bear with a spoon of ice cream. I watched Papa's mouth move as he talked softly under his breath to ensure I wouldn't hear him. I saw his fists tighten. The veins in his neck and arms began to show, but he kept talking, his mouth moving still, but not like before.

My mom stood up, shaking her head and walked back to the sink. At the crash of glass, I jumped off the countertop and grabbed Junior by the waist, pulling him to the floor. My mom yelled, "What the hell is wrong with you?"

Dad yelled back at her, throwing everything off of the table, "You think I'm stupid, huh. Do you?"

Mom grabbed my hand and pulled me and Junior with her into the bedroom, closing and locking the door. By this time Junior was frightened and crying, holding on to me tightly, making sure I wouldn't let go. My mom held us, our backs against her stomach with her arms stretched around us, shielding us from the harsh words and violent acts of Papa. I looked up at her. She looked down at me. I could see the tears in the corners of her eyes but she was careful not to let them go. I was holding Junior and I wouldn't let him go.

I guess we fell asleep because the next thing I remember is sitting in the living room watching TV with Bear next to me, and Junior still asleep. Mom was in the kitchen, Papa was passed out on the couch. I looked over at him lying shirtless on his back, his neck turned towards the wall with his forearm covering his face. I was mad at him. I was mad

at what had happened and I was mad at Mom for eventually letting us go.

When Mom told Papa what happened, the things he said, I watched him shatter in front of me. Not like the glass, though. More terrifying. I watched a man fall to his knees, crying and begging us to stay. It turns out that the man calling my mom that night was the principal at her work. He reminded her of a staff meeting that would take place the following Monday. He called to ask her to pass the message onto the next person on the phone tree. My Papa's face dropped into pure embarrassment and he cried and apologized endlessly.

Papa didn't stop drinking after that. This wasn't an epiphany for him. No message from god or his angels made him stop. His inner indecisiveness would lead him for the rest of his life. Fire doesn't burn out when it's drenched in liquor

I was never afraid of my father and when I look back now, the only time he scared me was when he wasn't himself. That night, he wasn't himself. He was broken, broken by the idea that who he loved may no longer love him back. Broken like the bottles on the floor. His tears snaked down his face, down the wall. They dripped into pools of beer on the kitchen tile. He was sorry and even then I could recognize pain, the way it stretched across my father's face. After that he was reluctant to spend time with me. He felt he hurt me unimaginably and as I grew older, his reluctance grew stronger. I didn't blame him. I blamed his fear, his belief that what he had done couldn't be undone. He was afraid that he turned me into an angry person, a bomb waiting to be triggered, one touch: boom, it's over.

Years later, after the untimely death of my Papa from an electrical accident, I

thought about that day again. I remember the fear and the anger I felt, I remember the sound of glass shattering against the wall and against the floor, but mostly I remember forgiving Papa for what he had done and said that night. I was mad, but like the freezing days of fall, it wouldn't last long. I realized, along the way, that you can shut everyone out, that you can shut yourself out and freeze. Or, you can take the harsh weather, survive, be happy, and hope for warmer days.

**Bill Yake**

**AN ABBREVIATED LITANY OF HAIDA SPIRIT BEINGS**

- on reading Ghandl, Skaay, Swanton and Bringham<sup>3</sup>

First we acknowledge the Raven, known also as Honored-Standing-Traveler; grandchild of the gull-white Voice Handler. Better not to speak his names, better to simply say •*the one of whom we speak*• or •*it's the one it usually is*• or Voice-Handler's Heir. No offerings for him, he steals enough already.

Then Riches-Tinkle-Round-Her-Ankles, sister of the Raven; and *Jilaquns*, inconstant wife of the Raven: mother of Quartz Ribs and all Eagle families including the Witch people.

The Snag who takes down canoes. The voracious Sea Wolf, *Wasco*.

Sea Dweller, spirit of wealth, who can appear as a giant saltwater frog or when dressed in potlatch finery as The-One-Upon-Whom-Clouds-Rest. *Wealth has big eyes*, the people say, *and is wary of those he suspects*. So Sea Dweller's eyes can droop like tears.

The Southeast Wind, who lives beneath the sea with ten brothers. One is called He-Who-Takes-the-Tops-off-of-Trees, another He-Who-Rattles-the-Stones.

The spirit-beings who wear hats whose brims brim with roiling waves, and those who anchor the islands and quake them with their love-making.

Whole clans of Sea-People and the Forest-People also called The-People-of-the-Supernatural-Being-Upon-Whom-it-Thunders.

A diverse, lively, and potent collection of spirited ladies: Copper Woman, Mouse Woman, Dogfish Woman, Fair-Weather Woman. Ice Woman whose story reaches back to the great glaciations. Foam Woman of a hundred breasts spouting the sea spray of tsunamis, the one from whom all Raven families descend.

And of the Raven families — that most mysterious clan — the extinct Pitch-Town-People of the wild west coast. Of the last Pitch-Town man, they say, he was huge, barbarous, and could smell whales from miles off.

Honor especially Master-Canoe-BUILDER, well known as Master Carpenter. Beware Master Hopper whose body has one side only and is He-Who-Jumps-About-on-One-Leg and also that dandy, the seducer, known as Swimming-Hermit-Thrush.

You see, the world abounds with spirits and ancestors. It must seem crowded as a winter dance, crowded as a war canoe, crowded as the dreams of shamans who fast, except for that bitter-tang of that chaw-leaf, the single-flowered wintergreen.

Acknowledge all and at dawn, on waking, you too may greet She-Who-Make-Waves-in-the-Daylight-by-Walking.

**Bill Yake**

**BOUNDARY OF THE WORLDS (Xhaaydla Gwaayaay)**

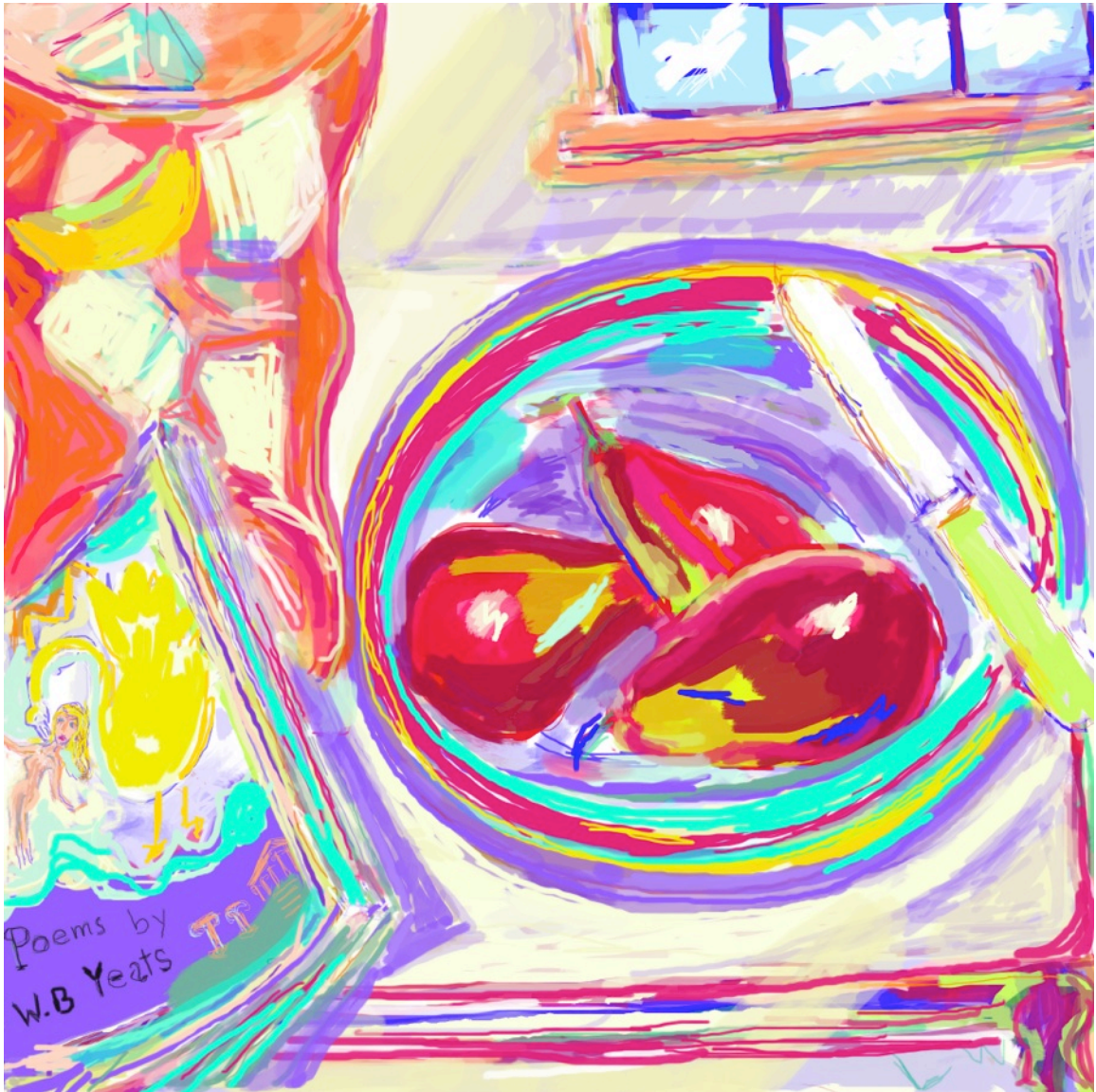
At the fringe of this world, at the lip of the tide  
raise your eyes from sea to starfish  
from sea asparagus to black lichen — then  
higher yet — into a forest woven with cloud.

On this thin blade, an intertidal wave-whetted gap,  
the Raven strutted and flew alternately, coming at last  
to the horizon where he squeezed his mind through, then  
pulled himself after. Think drumhead, sea sheen, skin  
of the world plucked, thumped and flexed.

And there on a spit flecked with glint he found pale  
cobble and pink granite, banded and conglomerate boulders,  
and among these — one fist-sized stone white as his grandfather's  
hair, smooth as if rubbed three months with the skin of a shark.  
Also another, the size of a knuckle, brown as caribou hide  
and set with nascent eye and ear, brow and beak.

Now the muscled land bulges upward from the uterine  
fiord: forms of hamstring, kneecap, forehead, and blunt beak.  
This is the Raven budding from a mountain — snow, moon,  
and dawn all winking in his eye. The names for great stones  
are literal: Fingernail Cliff, Talon Rock, Sleeping Lady Ridge.  
Metaphors, we say, have bones. Bones that fault and heal.  
What is more alive than soil, this skin. Or forest, this pelage?





**Tempting Zeus**

**Watercolor**

**LaWanda Walters**

**Christine Grimes**  
**CONSUMING THE BODY**

It's a typical Sunday morning mass and against the lovely backdrop of the organ, I steel myself for the sea of germs surging in my direction. All of my small town Texas parishioners shuffle forward in half steps, their lines like zombies ready to infect me with the oozing bacteria of their children. Billy or Sally has *the croup, the crud, the sniffles* and the ones that keep even the family at a distance like *strep, pox, or measles*. Yet, so often I can't tell you, they blame it on their faith and drag these dripping bombs of viral contagion to church with them to pray for their health and to celebrate the word of God. Don't they understand they could bring a plague down on us all?

But it is only twice a week I suffer through communion. And, only a total of thirty minutes every seven days, twenty-six hours total – little more than one day a year – that these lines bring the parishioners into my personal space. Yes, I must sometimes visit sick bedsides, hospitals or nursing homes, but those places are constantly cleaned, and I avoid contact with surfaces and others. Eighty percent of all infectious diseases are passed through touch. After each visit, I can scrub, scour away the germs and purify my skin. Cleanliness is sacred. My hands are held up to God for all to see when I deliver communion. I slyly sanitize the Book of Gospels and the Missal after each service and always keep a small packet of wipes in my robes, but during the ceremony I must cope by washing my fingertips in a bowl of lukewarm water and then eat my own host before serving all the others. I don't know how they stand to have me touch the thing they will put in their mouths, but then again few have any decent standards of hygiene.

When I got to this parish a year ago, they actually shared the same chalice of wine, with only a cursory wipe between drinkers, and expected me to drink after the hundred some parishioners at the end. A church tradition, guarded as closely as a rule from the Pope, dictated the priest partake of the leftover blood of Christ, preserving the holy sanctity of the ceremony and perhaps an outdated custom that also assured the parish we weren't recycling the wine. I held up the ciborium, feigned a sip as well as I could, and then slipped the rest to the altar boy at the end of the service. At first he thought I might be planning something unmentionable, seeing that nowadays most parents warn their children to report any mysterious behavior, particularly by priests, but he drank anyway and then sighed audibly when we packed up and left. That was our little secret, and it worked until last fall when, through the mixed blessing of swine flu, I finally convinced old Father Mayhock, the acting senior priest of the church, that the wine chalice was simply too big of a risk and that it should be used only by the priest serving the mass. When he saw the chance to justify drinking the whole cup himself, he tilted it back, a small drip sliding down his chin, and he was converted.

I have become good at numbers through my position. I can tell almost immediately from the faces in the pews when the line begins to form who will stand for communion and who will wait for the next confession. Today, it's football season and I plan on facing around forty-six. I silently count down as I place each host daintily into another palm, ensuring that a thin seal of air remains between flesh. I'm around number twenty-one when I see elderly Mrs. Stein, the church receptionist who always address me as Father Malley, a few heads back. She's been around almost as long as Father Mayhock, and she was sitting outside his office this morning when I received my latest

dressing down.

Father Mayhock had stood in the doorway, his bushy, white eyebrows pinched perpetually in a questioning scorn, and motioned for me to enter. He waited for me to pass the threshold, then left the door open behind me. When I tried to sit in the chair on the left of the room, he chided me to sit closer, pointing to the couch next to his desk. It was a strategic move on his part for several reasons. First, his chair is set much higher so he can always talk down to people from a position of power. Second, the sofa is squishy and sucks everyone down into it. It is impossible to maintain any posture of respectability when sitting there. As an added insult to me, I know that couch is never cleaned and likely hasn't been since it was purchased a decade ago. I acquiesced, but as he cleared his throat, I could sense the germs attaching to my clothes. I tried not to let any skin touch the fabric.

Father Mayhock spoke in his loud congregation voice rather than in a soft, conversational or even confidential voice that one would expect in a church office.

"Tracy Aldair referred to you as Father Tom this morning when she came for confession." He paused.

I remained silent, trying to focus on his words instead of the soiled sofa.

"You know how I feel about the informality of first names."

"Yes sir, I do," I replied. This wasn't the first time he had told me about it. Ever since I made the mistake in my first sermon of introducing myself as Father Tom, it had stuck and no amount of church bulletins or last name references from Father Mayhock had been able to undo the damage I had supposedly inflicted on his congregation at our

Infant Jesus Holy Catholic Church.

“I worry about the inappropriate nature of your approach to our congregation, Father Malley,” he continued. “With age comes wisdom, yet, your immature choices are affecting our parish. I know that you appear to be at home here, but we must be certain it’s a good fit for all involved and that it will be for the best of my congregation for us to continue forward.”

“I’m sorry?” This was new. Father Mayhock had referenced tradition and the history of his congregation many times. My most recent evaluative talk with him had ended with advice for me to try harder to understand the way things had been done rather than to try to so hard to offer alternatives. He believed if I understood the reason for some of his old-fashioned approaches, I would embrace them. But he had never threatened my position before.

“I’m glad we had this talk,” he said with a sense of finality. Mrs. Stein shuffled some papers before knocking and delivering mail to his desk. On her way out, she glanced at me with her lips pressed together.

“Thank you sir,” I replied, scooting forward, keeping my cuffs on my palms, and off the dirty couch. “I am happy here. You have made it clear to me, and I understand, that embracing this congregation’s tradition is important and necessary for all our success.”

The man was seventy-three years old. This could be my congregation if I could just avoid trouble and wait him out.

And now, only hours later, Mrs. Stein is in my line, patiently waiting for her turn at

communion just behind Eddie Granger. Eddie Granger reaches out with blunt fingers too thick for a teen, then changes his mind and draws back just as I say, “Receive the body of Christ,” and move to place the host into his palm.

He is about sixteen, pimples dotting his forehead and chin, wiry red hair curling out at odd angles. Maybe it is a prank or guilt, a sin that flits through his mind which he hasn’t yet confessed—probably masturbation—since that is what he is always telling me in the confessional as I order him to get a hobby and say the Rosary and Act of Contrition. At any rate, his hands jerk as I release the communion wafer and it strikes the end of his clumsy, shifting fingertips and tumbles down, bouncing once off the white rubber surrounding his ratty yellow Nike high-tops, and skitters across the thick turquoise carpet below, landing a few feet away.

There’s a gasp from Mrs. Stein waiting behind Eddie, and I wait for Eddie’s mother, Linda, to reproach him, maybe even box his ears, but she has gone before him and is already back at her pew, kneeling. Eddie stumbles backward to get the host, stepping on Mrs. Stein’s sensible black shoes, and causes her to cry out over the communal hymn, *When we Eat This Bread*.

The holy white oval is stark against the plush fibers of the carpet, and I notice that it has fallen where the parishioners turn and begin the trek back to their seats. An iridescent moth wing lies a few inches away from the host and the circle is cradled in the impression of a work boot, half inside one of the zigzag etchings and before the heel. I shudder as I think of all the places that boot has been – a work site filled with concrete and filth, a grungy, dog-shit-laden back yard, perhaps even out hunting and tracking through deer blood or entrails. Everywhere that boot has been is now tainting the body

of Christ. I draw a sharp intake of breath and reach to retrieve the wafer, not yet thinking of what I will do with it once I have it. Eddie steps to the side and bends forward, moving for the host as well, and I jerk my body back, narrowly missing clunking his head with my own.

As I jolt away from Eddie, Mrs. Stein hisses my name. When I glance up, her eyes are wide and trained at my waist where I have forgotten I still hold the communion bowl, which is now tilted precariously to the left. The thin wafers have slid across one another like sand and are piled at the edge in a beautiful cream stack, waiting to fall to the ground one after another like a ream of paper spilling open. I stiffen my wrist and straighten, recovering the bowl and myself, and stand for a moment looking over the church.

In the other aisle, Deacon Doucet, a Eucharistic minister, is serving communion to Mr. Hadley, placing the wafer on his tongue, which I always try to avoid in any way I can. Most parishioners have their hands cupped, and if I move quickly, I can press the host down into their palms before their lips part. But Mr. Hadley stands back with his arms at his sides and leans forward with his open mouth, his tongue covered in a whitish film as though smears of toothpaste have congealed and grown mossy in his mouth. I know in that moment, hot breath funnels out, carrying waves of potential bacteria and viruses, assaulting my skin as I struggle not to inhale and to time my speech to their closed lips. I have been in the confessional. I have heard and can guess where these dirty mouths have been. But had I been able to place the wafer onto Eddie Granger's tongue, the body of God would not have fallen to the ground in disgrace and would not be cupped in the stubby flesh of Eddie Granger's hand stretched in my direction.

He holds it out to me. "I can't take it," he says.

"The Body of Christ," I repeat, waiting for him to eat it.

He shakes his head at me. "I need to confess first," he whispers.

I know Mrs. Stein is watching me. Tradition dictates that he must be absolved of his sins in order to partake in communion. It also dictates that someone must still eat the body of Christ that Eddie is holding in his hand. I can't give it to anyone else. Either he's going to have to eat it, or I am.

I lean in close to his pimply face, too close to his greasy hair. "I absolve you," I whisper in hopes he will take the host. What could he have to confess? Cheating on an exam? Watching pornography? I don't care if he's a sinner. A more progressive church wouldn't even trifle with confessions of menial sins today.

"You haven't heard my sins," he says in disbelief, his voice much too loud.

My line is backed up now and, while only those at front have witnessed the desecration which has occurred, the others are now straining their necks to see the commotion. Deacon Doucet is almost through his line, and I nod to him to take over mine when he is through. Mrs. Stein steps back and turns to guide the line to trail in Deacon Doucet's direction, motioning with one hand in front of her and another patting the shoulder of the young lady behind her. I know she is watching me, waiting for me to eat it. I think of walking out, but what would I do? My skills and education are not easily transferable. Perhaps I could transcribe legal documents from home, contribute freelance articles to newspapers on hygiene or file for unemployment. Why couldn't I serve God in some other way? Something less mysterious, less trying.

My sister died when I was twelve and she was six. It was when Trisha was in the



hospital on her last round of chemo, I was called to God. A priest visited her bedside and spoke of the realities and sufferings of life and the hope for peace in the afterlife. While everyone else was talking about how Trisha was going to get better, he spoke honestly of our family's suffering. When he shook my hand, I felt a charge of electricity that sealed my fate. It was as if he had marked and held my soul.

When I stood steadfast in my decision from twelve to twenty, my parents told me to be a Jesuit priest and travel the world instead of a Dominican priest staying within one region of the country but sometimes shifting from parish to parish. They didn't understand my call to God, but thought if I was certain of my path that at least it was worthwhile to complete service in third world countries in order to earn a cushy scholarly position at the end of my life. But that was only if I survived the typhoid, malaria, diphtheria, dysentery, dengue, Hepatitis A, B and C, meningitis, yellow fever, and cholera. No. I understood life incurred suffering, but I had to survive in order to serve. As a Dominican, I might have to work some struggling areas, move from place to place a few times, but I could still earn my place at a nice, small, clean parish. I had thought this might be it. I was turning forty-five this year, but Father Mayhock still had this place under his thumb, refusing to retire even in his seventies. Almost every move I made to make this church more progressive was rejected. But if I could make it through this, I wouldn't have to move again, couldn't possibly get transferred back to the large, overflowing parishes of Houston or Dallas or to the touchy-feeling congregations of San Antonio, where all the old Mexican grandmothers wanted to hug and kiss me. This small country congregation suited me fine. But to save myself from those other ills, I would have to eat this tainted host.

Eddie holds it out to me with a tight grin that makes the pimples on his cheek whiten with tension. Sweat beads under my chasuble and the Roman collar presses against my adam's apple. I press my fingers against Eddie's, curling his fingertips around the host, praying with all my might that he will surrender and eat it. I summon all my authority as priest, straighten my shoulders, and silently order him to eat it. He shakes his head at me. I cannot believe the audacity of teens today. I pluck it from his palm with two fingers in this bizarre reverse communion, this act of contrition from God, as Eddie smirks and whispers, "Ten second rule?"

"That doesn't exist," I hiss to him, the breath whistling through my lips.

First of all, much more than ten seconds have elapsed. Second, even a fool knows that within the first moment of touch, anything can begin crawling with bacteria or e coli. If this were a more progressive church, perhaps I could set the host aside, hide it somehow and then find a church rite to desanctify it or even bury it in the ground with a holy ritual, but any deviation from tradition and Father Mayhock will push me out of the parish.

Like the silence within the dark confessionals before someone replies, it is the moment my truth will be revealed. I lift my hand before I can question my actions any further, and I place the host in the back of my mouth, forcing my lips to close. I crack the host with my tongue and work my jaw to call up saliva as the flat, papery grain crumbles on my palate. I wish I could chew, but Mrs. Stein is watching me, and I know that if I fail this test, she will tell Father Mayhock, that the word will spread before the congregation has reached their cars and this will be a rumor I cannot escape, a failure before the flock and an irrecoverable faux pas in chewing the body of Christ.

The host sticks to the roof of my mouth, wedges against my flesh, and I begin to work it toward the back of my throat when my tongue passes a small hair. My tongue thickens in my mouth, and the host seems to grow, clogging my mouth as I start to gag. I lock my lips together as bile gathers at the bottom of my throat and I mentally block it from my mouth. I try to bar it from my mind as well. *A hair! Has it come from a dog? A rat? No!*

I screw my face together with concentration, my fist flailing to my lips. I cup my fingers to my lips, try to make it look as though I am locked in prayer, but it must be clear from the dry heave of my torso that I am losing this battle, that I will be the priest who threw up God on the altar.

Will the Pope excommunicate me? Will I have to get a job as an office clerk in a government office, living out of a mother-in-law studio apartment over someone's garage, doomed to hourly touch papers passed to me by the public? Will they reserve for me my own circle of Dante's hell? I know I deserve to suffer in this life, but my dedication to service, the sacrifice of a family, the loss of my sister, all of these tribulations should reflect a life that has been offered up to God. This test is too much.

Oddly enough, these thoughts distract me from the follicle clinging to the roof of my mouth. I spin my back to the many faces now watching me intently and try to breathe. Then I rub the tip of my thumb against the wet mash in my mouth to dislodge the rest of the wafer and the hair back past my uvula and dash for the wine before I gag again, before I spill the body of Christ amongst bile and mouthwash, carpet fibers and feces.

In front of me is the altar and as I reach for the chalice, I raise my eyes up to the

crucifix. The sculpture is well defined; each spike protrudes, every gash is evident. For a moment, the crucifix becomes flesh and bone before my eyes. Sweat drips next to blood under the crown of thorns and Jesus' eyes shift to me. My belly contracts and hollows. The church fades from my peripheral vision. His body hangs with dead weight, tendons pulling from bone. His head lolls from side to side as he peers at me. The skin on his cheeks is chapped and cracked from the sun, his lips are split and bloody, but his eyes are at peace. I struggle to keep my balance and raise the cup, begging forgiveness for my weakness, tears streaming from my face.

The metal is cool against my lip as I taste the flavor of tin pushing the host down and away. The wine drips out of my mouth and onto my green chasuble and stole. I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand, knowing that for this one moment I have glimpsed the despair at the questioning heart of Job, of Abraham, of Jesus, and that I too have passed.

**Karen Carissimo**  
**BLACKOUT**

Gravity a chokehold released by the blood of red wine pulsing  
in my body made weightless as silk scarves, a power greater than  
thought or conscience armors me against the inevitability of accident.

A god worthy of worship grips my hands to the steering wheel  
guides me into town past pauses of yellow dashes on pavement,  
fresh tar between them easing me into other lanes, crisscrossing  
squares of road and careening by street signs buried in overgrown trees.  
The moon's a strobe light fixed on my car moving over a swell  
of freeway as I glide the curved under-arc of a woman's breast,

white headlights linked to the red eyes of car bumpers ahead, veering  
toward the next exit where I tell a liquor store clerk I've loved  
him for more than a year. He offers a bottle of Patron, and I imagine

our mouths clamped down on lime slices after three tequila shots  
singeing our throats, my kiss tonguing salt off his lips. Too soon,  
stars burn down, their cold end dawn's tin light pinning my eyes shut

to the night's fast getaway. I fall into flashbacks of dreams, blue  
skies racing above my bed, a clock face stopped on a day-long hour  
fractured into vast minutes I sleep through, another faithless day.

**Bryce Milligan**  
**FOUR-STROKE**

If ever you spent much quality time on the hurricane deck of a trusted motorcycle then had to give it up—trading it in, say, for a station wagon to haul around your rock band or maybe pay a tuition bill or buy an engagement ring—then you’ll recognize the symptoms of the syndrome: involuntary if slight twists of the wrist, muscle memory that leans into a curve, the tendency to roll down the car window with the A/C on, prompting your wife/kids/partner to ask if something is wrong—every time you pass a rider in your family minivan or SUV or silent little electric leaf blowing down the highway, and it dawns on you that you never really fell out of love with that old Honda 305 or the chopped metal-flake green Triumph 650 or even the mini-bike you built with your dad, with its angle-iron frame (that’s how you learned to weld), its wheelbarrow tires, bicycle handlebars, and the 3.5 horsepower Briggs & Stratton four-stroke former lawn mower engine that your father insisted you must rebuild before he would even entertain the idea of letting you spend your allowance on a real centrifugal clutch, and so you spent weeks figuring out how to take it apart, washing each part in gasoline, and naming the parts—ah, the naming of parts—there seemed to be hundreds but it was only a few dozen you laid out neatly on a sheet of cardboard on the garage floor: piston and rings and rod, camshaft and timing chain, valves and lifters, ball bearing races, carburetor needles and springs and floats and ports, and the beautiful gleaming crankshaft—and what was of importance to most third grade minds was simply blown away by the burning desire to know the name and function of every single part and to use the seemingly ancient tools to bore the cylinder by hand, grind the valves by hand, clean each carburetor orifice by hand, and replace every part correctly in relationship to the others so that like your father cleaning his rifle beneath a jeep on the beach at Iwo Jima you could do it from memory in the dark, and your father watched, advised and consoled you when it did not start the first time or the second time or the fifteenth time you took it apart and put it back together as third grade became fifth grade until finally the magic of mechanics worked and the engine

roared and you danced a private jig in the twilight of the garage to the rhythm the engine pattered, bolted to its vibrating wooden base, as you sang “I’ve just seen a face, I can’t forget the time or place” and you were startled to find that you were just as in love with that 3.5 horsepower, four stroke Briggs & Stratton engine as you ever were with the girl with the Picasso pony tail who sat in the desk in front of you the day Kennedy died and with whom no one could even compare until you met the love of your life a decade later—that kind of obsessive love, the kind that led you to copy out by hand the Encyclopaedia Britannica article on trigonometry and damn near memorize the thing while barely understanding it just like you’d memorized the engine parts on the garage floor or her pony tail on that cold November morning without a clue as to what drove you to begin writing poetry that very day—and when that kind of love was rewarded not only with the gift of a shiny new centrifugal clutch but the consequent gift of actual speed, as if you’d been gifted with the Wright Brothers’ wings—speed, solitary, wind-making, hair-whipping, jacket-flapping speed—speed that would grow with one machine after another while the bonds with your father would dissolve in the face of a war, so unlike his, that you could not agree to fight, speed that would carry you across deserts and mountains to the Haight, from Woody Guthrie to T.S. Eliot and back again, from the trinity of sex, drugs and guitars to that of blood, birth and this quietude that only ripples now when the highway wind lashes eye and ear and arm as you watch some young man and his twenty-something old lady twist the throttle that churns the four-stroke dream between his legs, accelerating, pulling away, leaving you with mere echoes of desire.

**M. Trammell**  
**London, the Journal of a Broken Hip**

I.

Once in hospital Ward Q, you're shown  
the view by your favorite nurse from Burundi,  
where they make the finest hearts

in all of Africa. She speaks French. At night  
when The Shard near the Thames is lit with legs  
of light, the glass needle looks just like  
The Eiffel Tower. Your leg's new metal

will form a tower gate to keep  
out the nightmare grill of one speeding  
taxi that clips just enough of you  
to break your hip.

II.

A femur broken from the hip is free  
to be a knife. Leg breaks and leaves at top  
shards, sharp edges  
with which to kill. Ah, this broken bone  
for the assassin behind the steering wheel.

A femur broken from the hip is free  
to be a sword—to run the bloody bastard through—  
until they bolt it back with plates and screws.

In this ward the thunder sounds like plates  
breaking. For a heartbeat, a shard of lightning cracked  
the BT Tower in two.

III.

Your leg bone sheered in two, stripped from flesh  
and now roots upon the Thames and grows taller  
than London's new glass tower  
called the Shard. The cranes once fixed upon

the silver needle now abandon it and work to mend  
your cracks. Their long necks swing side to side  
to add bricks to your bone's broken bits.



All of London wants to rebuild you, drop by drop.

IV.

Your blood, you're pretty sure, dots  
the ward room's floor. Inside  
that dot of blood your old leg swims  
through a soft memory of itself

to kick the distance across your own  
red sea. That poor and forgotten  
leg kicking its way from shore  
to shore. Oh, how it wriggles

like an unguided minnow. Like a guided  
missile it homes in on your old life  
with leg and kids and wife intact. You plot  
to fold yourself into that dot to swim

beside the days of good-legged-ness.  
But someone mops it up  
with the unconscious slide of a shoe.  
The sea gone. Your leg gone too.

V.

At tea time overlooking Trafalgar Square  
you dream the screws and plates that hold you tight  
help you slide up Nelson's Column  
to gain vantage point to the Thames.

The blokes selling used books on the banks  
salute you because the dynamic screw  
holds your hip together better  
than these old paperbacks' bindings would.

On crutches, you wade in the river now  
to find a watch you lost in 2001  
when you were young and unbroken  
and the twists of tea-colored water

offered glimpses of red-orange sky and cloud.  
Here at sunset beyond London Bridge  
the air seemed as ready to run  
as a slim pair of lungs. When you'd slipped

your leg vanished into darkness.

**Simon Perchik**  
**PATHWAYS: 5 POEMS**

You put up the roof  
creaking under each arm  
as if this tree knows when  
and climbs till its leaves  
no longer heat the Earth

—you set aside rooms  
for the roots that opened  
into hillsides turning away  
and with the last nail  
you build hallways  
the way river water  
still carries off the smell  
from leaves falling on wet roads  
already along the branches :wave  
after wave with no one in your arms

—you save a place for the door  
to grasp this shaky house  
and there will be children  
all next Spring climbing out  
and fruit that has the heaviness  
from rolling on the ground.

\*

The wiring inside this bulb  
wants only to stay dry  
and along the night after night  
the sun covers with water  
that darkness brings from the sea  
gathered around it as sleep  
and falling to the ground

though the dead have always  
held up their arms  
and with their last breath  
winding down the way rain

breaks apart on the bedrock

they stack over your heart  
filling it stone by stone  
used to the sudden weight  
spreading out on the floor

—without looking down  
you are towed across a darkness  
still moist, that has no name  
except its common cries and Esther.

\*

All that's left on the wall  
is the sea —this wooden frame  
year after year crushing its shadow

and against some reef as if a rock  
once broken apart will lower the dead  
barefoot, step by step to make the path

the sun uses for its descent into daylight  
into the bowl, chair, stale bread  
now shoreless, sent to the bottom

the way each still-life  
is painted with that hungry brush  
only a wall can take to its mouth

and crumble from emptiness  
—you clasp what was a sail  
whose only heart has shut down

adrift between your arms  
smelling from the beautiful dress  
almost touching the floor.

\*

As if the sun lets its darkness  
take hold and night after night  
your hand begin that vague ripple

from there to here –your arm becomes  
some ancient wave and you can't stop  
or slow the unraveling

or along each step by step  
the stillness all light attracts  
once it stands at the door

–you have no choice! it's hello  
or be left, breathing in  
just to stretch out and keep moving

–you can't be born  
without these stars in motion  
–you can't die either

though each evening brings you  
another mourner, one alongside the other  
nomads along the road where once

a dark sea covered the sky  
set it adrift, first as a warm breeze  
then the hillsides slowly over your heart.

\*

Once this bedroom door is closed the rug  
deals in flowers, its dark scent  
reaching up where your eyes  
expect sunlight and miles away the heady whiff  
from a firefly –already she's naked

the woman you just this minute  
inhaled, a deep breath  
who can't see, has to feel along the grass  
though the dead still stake a claim

and never leave –the room is locked  
with the fragrance stones come for  
–it's a little room  
a place you keep for yourself  
so the door can become the distance  
that fastens her arms to yours

and you wait for the pathways

to fall inside your throat  
as the cry for footsteps  
filled with kisses and fingernails

and the rug torn apart for rags  
smells from loneliness  
from the mouth you will gently place  
over her heart and time to time.

**William Doreski**

**ONE CUP SMASHED AND SWEEPED INTO A CORNER**

The coffee shop I've patronized  
for many years in dreams has closed.  
It stood behind the bus depot  
near a row of storefronts bristling  
with rare books, estate jewelry,  
and ornate tropical produce  
oozing primal colors. Finding  
the shop closed I peer through the windows.

Bare linoleum with holes where stools  
had been bolted to the floor.  
Every appliance gone. One cup  
smashed and swept into a corner.  
I need that cup of coffee  
to keep me dreaming long enough  
to discover you flaunting  
a flimsy lake-blue summer dress  
that stays crisp in the cruelest heat.

You never appear until I've drunk  
that coffee and turned the cup  
upside-down in its saucer. In life  
no coffee shop bothers with saucers  
anymore. Paper cups, usually,  
and bagels tough as spare tires.  
Maybe because it was old-fashioned  
the dream shop was never busy,  
so I'm not surprised it has failed.

As I moon through the dream-streets,  
browsing windows of Roman coins,  
fake Ming Dynasty pottery,  
and ties imported from England,  
I wonder how or where I'll see you  
again, your summer dress rebuking  
the shabbier parts of my lust.

I sit on a brownstone stoop and pop  
the eyes from my head and polish them  
with my big red bandanna.  
I want to see clearly in case  
you appear on some brisk horizon  
where the city folds into the sky.

Maybe since my breath no longer reeks  
of powerful Italian coffee  
you'll let me kiss your hands and feet  
as people do every Sunday  
in the name of a nameless faith  
in dream cities like this one,  
embarrassing themselves with glee.

**William Doreski**  
**FOUR BEARS IN THE YARD**

Four bears in the yard today:  
mama, two cubs, a yearling.  
Their flowing bulk embodies  
the undercurrent of wilderness  
that years ago I had hoped  
would ennoble me if I climbed  
more mountains than years I had lived.

Entering Terra Paradise,  
however, didn't reshape me  
by straightening a spine bent  
over books, revising religion  
based on the math of astronomy,  
unwrinkling a thin slice of hide  
shed in a gasp of passion.

Civilized by rolling pennies  
into paper tubes and spending them  
on tiny manufactured objects  
tied me to an economy  
warped to fit a bell curve. The weight  
of urban afternoons partly  
dismembered by gin and tonic  
resulted in grim assignations  
in brownstones that had known better  
before being split into flats.

The bears on principle devour  
bird seed, suet, and certain blossoms  
I had hoped would offer shades  
of blue I'd never seen before.  
I should chase them away, but their brawn  
seems pitiful in the tempered glare  
of June, and their swaybacked gait,  
like mine, carries them only  
so far before hemlocks embrace them  
with a daytime dark I envy.



## **Maj Ragain**

### **THESE BLUES**

He was sitting on the sidewalk slumped against the front wall of the Kent CVS. Late sixties, cut off jeans, ragged tie dye tee shirt, broken down, unlaced boots, white beard, fighting the heat with a tall Arizona iced tea, nesting in a clump of plastic bags. Sun and wind tanned, off the road, off the river, off the map. My wife Lu and I pulled into a parking space near him. She ran in while I waited in the car. I saw him ask something of a college student passing by. The young man mouthed a casual *no* and quickened his step.

When Lu came back, I handed her a creased five dollar bill. She offered it to him. A mumbled *thanks*. *Someone stole his belongings*, she said. He sat, head down, reading the concrete. I gave her twenty bucks. When he took it from her fingers, he stared at it and began to weep. Twenty five dollars would not change his lot nor bring back what had been lost. I offered him my open palm. He held up his palm, that ancient gesture, no weapon, no fear, a friend. He then struggled to his feet, leaning on a handmade wooden cane and walked to the car. He seemed intent on bringing me a message, something more than thanks. What he said, at the open car window, sounded like, to my garbled hearing, *These Blues, 13, 1 & 2*.

I am a man who spends his waking hours scouring for signs, starlight chatter, mosaics of broken conversations, every outward sign pointing inward, a volunteer transcendentalist. My morning prayer is *may the messenger come, this day*. And I am a hard scramble gambler, a horse player, addicted beyond recall, bedeviled by bad luck, wrong choices and busted trifectas. When he spoke, I heard what the believing heart always hungers for, the voice crying out of the present wilderness, prescience, redemption, offering what I took to be the name of a winning horse, *These Blues*, along with the exacta 1/2 in the 13<sup>th</sup> race. Believe with me here. This didn't look like the messenger I expected. CVS is not an off track betting parlor. But, this had to be the guy, finally. My curses had been answered *What? These Blues?* I asked. I wanted to get it right. If I had the name of the horse and the race, I could find the track anywhere in America. *No, No*, he said, scowling, *Hebrews: 13, 1 & 2*. This time I got it. From the Bible. Chapter and verse. It never was about horses.

Back home, I opened mom's old Bible to *Hebrews: Chapter 13, 1 & 2*.

*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

*To have entertained angels unawares.* Over the years, I have been conned, hustled, bamboozled, robbed, stole from, duped, worked, bilked, shook down, slicked and tripped up. This didn't feel like that; it is through our feelings that we come to know the world. The old stories tell us of how the gods and the emissaries disguise themselves to

test our faith, our imagination, to remove the bandages from our eyes. CVS ...Celestial Visitation Summertime. CVS.... Christ's Vagrant Son...wandering across the Milky Way. The Chinese have named it the River of Heaven. Angels drift through here. Not those androgynous, winged, robed, hovering attendants, but more like us. Some get tired of swimming against the current in that muddy river.

*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.*

So I am bound to him, bound as he is bound. This time I am the guy in the car, with the money. This could all change in a heart beat. Will change.

The Sufis call this old angel, this cloud man who sits on concrete, *Khidir*, a teacher, a presence, an enduring spirit, who travels thorough time, embodying himself in whatever form is appropriate for the lesson at hand. A vagrant who has suffered loss.

Look hard at the world for what it has to teach us. Remember that there are other worlds inside this one.

When a pickpocket looks at a holy man, all he sees is his pockets.

As I backed out of the lot and took a last look, I told Lu, *I wish I'd given him everything I have.*

That was last Sunday. Every day I have looked for him. No sign. Whatever I've learned, whatever happened between us, will have to be enough. *Hebrews: Chapter 13, verses 1 & 2.*

## **Maj Ragain**

### **PROSE POEM: AKRON AEROS/LETTER TO TED**

John Reeves and I drove over to the Akron Aeros game last night. It went to the bottom of the 15<sup>th</sup>, just short of midnight, when the Aeros' first baseman Jesus Aguilar bounced one through a drawn in infield. Big Jubilation, that jump and pile on thing the players must have learned from television games. By then, there were about as many on the field and dugouts as in the stands. the moment we came for , the one to keep alive up under your ribs, was the pitch just before the winning hit. A foul ball. We were down the third base side of home plate. I told John, *its comin back to you*. Then, the ball bounced off the concrete below us, twenty feet or so straight back, a smaller bounce, another on the step. It rolled right up to John's feet. I have known him thirty years. It was a look I've never seen before. Thinly veiled glee, maybe or maybe it is that idea Ivan Illych writes about, how , at a point of grace to which few come, you hear, a voice not your own, saying, *You are accepted*. Accepted by and in the universe. Everywhere is suddenly home. You can finally forget about love in all its Halloween disguises. You are accepted. *After 50 years of baseball games, this is my first ball*, says John. Turning it over and around, thumbing the stitches. If it isn't yours, you can't have it. If it is yours, you can't avoid it.

This was the catastrophe John was born for, catastrophe in the Greek sense, the whole beautiful, living mess. When the lights do go out for John, when Thanatos attends, may he remember how that foul ball found him unerringly that late May night in Akron, who it completed what had begun so long ago.

I have since been listening for that voice since maybe my early teens when I first began to awaken to my little life and the greater, continuous life of which it is briefly, a part. I remember one November evening I rolled to the side of the house, the cottage on the Illinois lake where I was raised. I must have been in my teens. There was a sharp, chilling north wind on the lake. The leaves ere down, The light was dying. I sat there, closed my eyes and felt the cold find me up under my jacket. I burst into tears. One big sob. Then maybe ten minutes of breath catching wasping. My wet face cooled in the wind. Finally, I quieted. Later, Thomas Merton would tell me that was a moment of Kenosis, self emptying, something he sought all his life. That was sixty years ago, my moment. Maybe I was hearing, for the first time, the beat of the broken heart of the world. Maybe it was an inkling of what James Joyce understood: that unless you come to see life as fundamentally tragic, you have not begun to live.

My life, as I know it, began in the fertile emptiness following that dam break of tears. I believe I have accepted much. Now I await the other voice, not mine, to say, *You are accepted*. That grace which no one can earn. The grace which find us of its own accord. The moment when the foul ball rolls up to my feet and its called fair.

## **Maj Ragain**

### **Prose Poem: CABIN IN OLNEY/LETTER TO TED**

It is a fine summer day here at the lake house in Olney, north breeze, crackling blue skies, one of those days where you are glad to be in it, no tombstones in the head or muck in the blood. My son Sean and the neighbor Bradley are tearing off the old siding on the cottage and replacing it with plywood. We have owned this place since 1952. Each layer peeled away reveals the mark of my father's hand. He was a carpenter by trade. Dad salvaged left over materials from job sites and used them on our little house. In these boards we are finding today, covered by siding and tar paper for fifty years, the salvaged nails Dad drove are neatly spaced, each head perfectly flat. I can still hear Dad's hammer, three strikes, then done, always three. If he bent a nail, I never saw it. He passed on in 1990. I hear his grandson nailing the new wood on the other side of the house, his strong arm, three beats to the bar. Presence. I believe that when people go away, it is as if they step around the corner of a house, as if into another dimension, very close to us. We just can't see them. As you read this, you are aware of my presence though you can't see me.

The heat has returned, big, stupefying, hot brimstone breath from the plains. 108 degrees here a few days ago, still above 100 degrees each day, another week of it promised. The lake is freckled with islands of floating moss you can damn near walk across. It is as warm as spit. No swimming or fishing. Local word is the entire corn crop has been cooked, no rain in months here in the five counties that comprise southeastern Illinois. The soybeans will soon be a total loss also. This is farm country, the ancient cycle, seeds in the ground, the annual gamble against the gods we now name El Nino, La Ninya, who rule the ocean currents and the sky. The roll of the dice came up snake eyes this year.

Most days I open all the notebooks, poems, and scatter them around me, here on the front porch where I set up camp, just as I do on the floor in the living room. I've never had an office at home, never wanted one. I choose to wash my dirty clothes midstream, the feel of everything flowing around me, tugging at me. Decades ago, a sentence stuck with me, *Use the days you have left to deepen your life*. So I have quietly become a digger, working to widen and bring more depth to this life, this ongoing imagining. I am not sure how this works, but I am aware of it when I'm doing it. So, when you tell me, *Be alert. And be kind*, I recognize the truth of that, how it serves, and I try to move that thought to the forefront, to be guided by it. Otherwise, I just wander from thing to thing, caught by shine and jingle. We tell each other our stories, and at the core of every story is something nameless and beyond the reach of language. The awareness that it is there, though hidden, is enough for me to live on. It has to be enough.

Soon, the humming heat will find me here on the porch. The shade of the Oaks will retreat. I may sleep away this afternoon. The cicada have begun their late summer songs in the woods across the road. I long to learn their language and forget my own.

**C.D. Mitchell**

**FOUR CORNERS NIGHT**

My wife and I rest here upon a mattress on the floor.  
It is stuffed with the slivers of stars. She keeps one eye open  
as she nestles her body. We gasp for a breeze.  
Neither one of my eyes can close as the night  
train rumbles the silver railroad, extinct Route 66, the filmy sheet of noise  
we cover ourselves with under the roof of all our relations.

The house muffles not a single sound.  
The universe beats down on us.  
Grandmother reclines, sprouting wires, hears  
Outsider her numb hospital window  
A wind scared willow, unable to weep.  
Relatives gathered around her bed are silent as clusters of flowers.  
They stare at us as we touch her, smooth her hair.  
They cast their gazes to the floor.  
They sit there beginning to forget her.

To belong here we learn  
to relinquish sight and sound,  
abandon relationship to the soul,  
be footprints dissolved by raw elements,  
become what's left behind.

**B.J. Buckley**  
**AS THE CROW FLIES**

Someone saw some one  
of us shot arrow-straight across  
the blue, and over-generalized, mistaken  
in the notion of that Greek philosopher's  
ideal and unobstructed firmament. It's true  
terrain as walked bipedally (as we  
sometimes prefer) is distance  
different than flight, a reckoning of dust  
and rock and tree, and underfoot, the earth,  
its tilting planetary shift. But flight  
is reckoned, too, by lift and weight,  
the airy air as oared by wing a current  
like to water, thermaled, roughened, tempest  
tossed and galed, with sudden holes  
where bodies, wind-sheared, drop  
as if into a grave whose walls, invisible,  
are no less deadly.

Someone looked up into sky,  
sweating and weary, at a bird who seemed  
to move by magic, quickened, and as quick  
as lightning, sans obstacle to object  
of desire. Oh, heart, that always wants  
the shortest distance, when what's there  
is ever some abyss – of love, or lack,  
or grief, some *hunger*  
so insatiable that a bird on a way  
made straight seems wish made flesh and still  
unjustly unattainable – unless by mind and map,  
compassed lines ignoring every wild sweet soul's  
immutable topography. Truth – that Ur-Crow  
had some famished hawk on its ass, or a tailwind  
of such force that pure surrender, only, meant  
survival – never mind wherever it was  
it meant or hoped or wished or wanted  
to be going.

**Frank Scozzari**  
**THE HAPPY MULE**

Their mistake was obvious, Jagger knew. They had pushed too hard and too far for a mountaintop that was unreachable. They had committed the most deadly of mountaineering sins, feeling invincible in the face of nature's fury. And now, like a thousand climbers before them, they were going to pay the price.

"If we can follow our tracks back down to the ridge," he said, "we can make it back down to *Trail Crest*."

Rick, who sat opposite on the wooden bench, nodded his head, but his blank stare told that he knew different. In the minutes before reaching the summit hut the snow had been coming at them sideways. Still now they could hear it piling up outside.

"Why leave at all?" he asked. "I mean... maybe our chances are better staying? We stay warm, we stay alive, and we wait for the storm to blow over."

"And if the storm doesn't blow over?" Jagger said. "...if it goes on for a week or two?"

"Or three days for that matter," Rick replied.

There was silence again, except for the sound of the wind howling outside. Jagger looked up and listened. He could hear the wind whispering through the ceiling cracks, like the sirens that had called them to the summit.

How was it that two experienced climbers could have gotten themselves into such a mess? he thought. It was the Sierras. That's how. The storms always come from the West, from the Pacific, deceptively, unexpectedly, from where you can't see them until they're on

you. And then you're caught in it, and there's nothing you can do about it but try to fight your way through it, and try to survive. He recalled the news about the search and rescue climber found frozen to death just one week before, barely eighty feet from his tent. Dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, he had gone out for an autumn climb and could not make his way back in a white-out. He had not even a simple wind parka with him in the event of a snow flurry.

How could he not make eighty feet? Jagger had asked himself. It's easy when you can't see the hand in front of your face, he now knew.

They too, had climbed out of the *Portals* the day before in eighty-degree heat wearing nothing but T-shirts and shorts. By mid-afternoon, the heat rising from the high desert floor formed huge thunderclouds along the eastern slopes. It was typical of late October, so they thought nothing of it, but by the time they reached the timberline it was completely overcast. The following morning they found themselves staring up at large droplets of rain and ice coming down against the nylon of their tent. Despite this, they pulled themselves from their warm down bags and headed for the summit.

"With each passing day the snow will be that much higher," Rick now said.

"And we will be that much weaker," Jagger added.

"And our toes will be that much more frozen."

"And we'll have no trail to follow."

"We go?" Rick asked.

Jagger nodded his head.

The heavy steel door swung open with the full force of the wind behind it. They



stepped out into the whiteness and looked southwest, into the direction from which they had come, and they could see that their tracks, which had been knee-deep in the snow just moments before, were already gone, buried in the snow.

“This way,” Jagger shouted, stepping forward

He disappeared into the white haze and Rick followed at his heels, leaning low into the wind to keep from blowing over.

They cut diagonally through the snow, down across the large buttress which formed the backbone of the mountain. There were trail markers at first, dark rock pilings that peeked above the snow. But soon the markers were gone, covered by the heavy snowfall, and they made their way by memory and intuition. About a quarter mile down, the backbone steepened. Ahead they could see a cliff, strewn with talus rock and granite boulders.

“Is this it?” Rick asked. He shouted loudly so he could be heard over the sound of the storm.

Jagger wiped the snow from his goggles and looked west. It was difficult to see anything beyond a few feet, but from what he could make out, some dark blotches of talus rock steeply below them, he believed it to be the place where the trail switched back to the west.

“Yes,” he shouted back. “I think it is!”

He pulled the scarf back across his face, tucked the end of it down the neck of his collar, and turned east, heading down along a steep white slope below an incline of huge granite rocks. Within minutes he knew they had made the right choice as he could see a trail marker ahead perched on the top of a huge granite boulder. He turned back and

waited for Rick, who was now stumbling through the snow.

“Are you okay?” Jagger yelled out.

“It’s the altitude,” Rick shouted back, inhaling the cold, thin air greedily into his lungs. “Keep going! Don’t stop!”

Jagger obliged, slogging on through the thigh-deep snow. The descent was steeper now and more difficult, nearly impossible to find sure footing between the snow and a smooth granite ledge which rose above them.

Further down, they saw the dark outline of granite pillars. It was the *Keeler Needles*, Jagger knew, rising into the clouds – the saw-toothed ridge that marked the crest of the continental divide, beyond which was *Owens Valley* and the warmth of desert sun. It was a heartening sight. The ridge itself, a narrow rocky staircase, would provide a navigational respite, and from there it was a direct, angular descent to Trail Crest.

He waited for Rick to emerge from the haze. He looked slow and disheveled with icicles hanging from his face.

“Are you okay?” Jagger asked again.

Rick nodded.

“It’s the ridge,” Jagger shouted cheerfully. He motioned with his hand down to the south. “We can be at base camp in a couple hours. We go fast?”

Rick nodded again.

Together they headed down the ridge, quickly, negotiating the granite pathway between ice and snowdrifts, blasted by winds on both sides. There were huge granite spires that provided protection from the wind. Each time they stepped behind one the wind would die down, but each time they stepped back out they were met by a blustery stream of cold

air. From one rock shelter to the next, they fought their way downward, trying to gain as much ground as they could as quickly as they could in fear that if they did not, they would be blown off the ridge or frozen in the snow.

Running would make it better, Jagger thought. If they ran, maybe their feet would thaw out? It amazed him that he could walk at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they hit the earth.

They crossed an ice bridge, beyond which the ridge narrowed even more. The roar of the wind made it nearly impossible to communicate. Each time Jagger looked back, he had to wait longer for Rick's dark figure to emerge from the clouds. But when he would emerge, like a ghost from a white abyss, his hand would be waving forward and he would shout, "Go! Go! Don't stop!"

But the intervals of time between seeing Rick and not seeing him grew longer. Each time Jagger waited, the ghostly apparition would reappear more slowly, its hand waving forward with less enthusiasm. The urgency to move and go quickly weighed upon Jagger, and despite Rick's lagging, Jagger did not want to stop. A mountain is not something you conquer, he thought, it is something you survive. And to survive you must be as unyielding as the mountain itself.

Again he found himself standing there, waiting for Rick for what seemed to be an eternity. And as he stood there, he could feel his legs stiffening up.

"Come on, Rick!" he yelled into the whiteness. He felt himself shivering all over. "Rick!"

Once again the ghostly apparition emerged from the clouds, stumbling, its hand no longer waving forward.

Now the whiteness seemed eternal, and before the dark blurry image emerged again, Jagger felt himself losing his sensibility. Each time he lifted his head to look forward, colored spots shot through the sky. When he looked back he felt the blood throbbing through his head. He could not recall when he had last seen Rick, nor could he wait for him. All that was mortal within him told him that he must go, and go quickly. Yet he stopped once more and gazed back into the milky haze.

*He's a tough guy, he thought. He'll make it fine.*

Down through the wraithlike swirls of snow and ice, he rushed. He could feel the mobility of his legs restricting further. It was happening, he knew, his joints were freezing. Above all, he knew he must overcome the overwhelming desire to cease and rest. He recalled the many mountaineering stories of men fighting for their lives, as they fought now, who had stopped to rest only to find themselves unable to move again, and it caused a great fear to well up inside him.

Continuing down, stumbling in a quick, mindless shuffle, his thoughts drifted. With every stride, his mind wandered further away, and it enabled him to escape the fear of his current predicament. He recalled a time in his distant past – a beautiful summer day in the Sierras. Early in July, when it was hot in the valley but Spring in the high country, and the meadows were all green and full of flowers, and the creeks were brimming with crystal clear water of melted snow. The trail ahead was gentle and inviting, winding its way up through the forest into a high valley. He felt the weight of his pack comfortable on his back, felt the buckwheat brushing against his leg, the warm sunrays which came against his cheeks, and the cool breeze from the snow of the mountain peaks which intermittently crossed his path. He could smell the odor of pine and the junipers, and the violets and woodrush which

had sprung up along the creek.

*It was the odor of nostalgia*, he thought, as the wind bit coldly at his nose now.

So many times as a child, he had gone to the mountains with his father, and they had walked through these beautiful meadows, crossed through patches of latent snow, watched the wind blow the treetops back and forth, and made a campfire along a creek. They had made beds of pine needles and laid a tarp upon them, and slept comfortably and peacefully in their bags. So many memorable experiences... It was why being in the Sierras for him had always been like being in the cradle of a mother's arms, or being warm next to a fire in a mountain cabin, next to an old friend cheerfully exchanging experiences of adventure and mountain triumphs. The rivers and streams of the Sierra, the annual snowfalls and spring melting were a rejuvenation of life, he knew, bringing back to the earth all that was taken in the dark winter. The experience of nature, and being in it, replenished his soul. Every foot he stepped into the wilderness was, for him, like stepping a foot into heaven. And of all the wildernesses he had ever walked in, the *High Sierra* was unmatched in its splendor and grandeur.

There was that time he had come across the dead mule in the grass. It was in a high meadow near *Piute Pass*, and he was alone at the time. He remembered seeing it there, suddenly, along the side of the trail with its rib bones exposed in the sunlight, protruding from its hide. It had been there since the summer before, likely frozen and covered in snow during the long winter, and now was beneath the warm sun again, continuing on its natural path of decay.

The hide had dried and had split open in places, exposing some of the skeleton beneath, but it was also intact in places. Its brown fur shone brightly where it remained. The

head had decomposed considerably, its eye-sockets were dark and hollow, and where the hide had pulled back from the teeth, it exposed them in a way that made it seem as if the mule was smiling.

And why not? Jagger recalled thinking. If one could choose a place for eternal rest, why not choose a place of absolute serenity? Here where nature rejuvenates itself every year?

Dying was something he knew little of, but living was something he rejoiced in and relished. He recalled the delight of taking the last few steps up a hilltop covered in wildflowers, feeling the tall, wind-blown grass brush against his legs and the pack-straps tight against his shoulders. He remembered diving into a crystal clear pool beneath a waterfall in a hot tropical paradise and feeling the coolness of the water all around him; he recalled the warm rush of air coming up from a Parisian subway tunnel as he descended on a cold night; and the time he walked through a bamboo forest with a woman he loved and how they had stopped and listened to the tall wooden shafts clicking overhead like wind chimes.

*To live is to dance like no one's watching,* he thought.

Now the wind blew cold against his face, biting deeply into his skin. The amount of time that had passed since he last saw Rick was uncertain, but seemed considerable. And in fact, the amount of time that had passed since they left the summit hut was unknown to him, as he had lost all concept of time. Though his legs were still moving methodically forward, the angle in which he could bend them had severely constricted. Each step seemed shorter. It was an effort just to extend them, reaching eagerly for a smaller piece of frozen ground each time. Yet if he stopped, he knew, even for a second, his legs would freeze. He was a gaunt old man, he thought, hunched over and hobbling; or a fish trying to walk on the

frozen earth with his fins.

And when he thought of it, he felt the fear coming back. It was nature that did the taking, and the greatest of all takers were the tall mountains.

He passed through another rock formation that blocked the wind, shutting it down like a switch on a fan, and there was a place at the base of the rock without snow that looked warm and lovely, like the lap of a beautiful woman in which to lay one's head. If only for a moment, he could stop and rest, he'd curl up behind a rock and get warm. But then he would never straighten his legs again, he knew.

Again he came out from behind the rocks and was slapped by the wind. He could no longer feel it biting his face. The throbbing in his head was gone now and there was only numbness. The grey sky was full of colorful sunspots. His body felt unevenly balanced. His equilibrium had lost its center. When he touched his nose, there was no sensation. Nor could he feel his legs, although they were still moving beneath him; they did so as if they were not attached to his body.

He came past another large west-facing rock, and in the moment he stepped behind it, he was again out of the wind. And like before, he saw a place at the base of the rock where no snow had reached, and it looked warm and inviting, like the arms of a lover. He thought of the happy mule. It would be so nice to lie in the tall grass of a high meadow, warm in the summer sun. *For all of eternity to be basking in sunlight!*

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He awoke in his right mind, curled in a ball on a rocky ledge. For some time he lay motionless, the genial sunshine pouring upon him and saturating his frozen body with its warmth. He looked up and saw the clouds breaking. He had vague memories of his flight

down the mountain. He recalled the wind and the snow, but for how long he had been beaten by it, for two days or two weeks, he did not know. In his mind he saw only the sunshine and the dead mule in the tall grass, smiling, happy and content.

And from the meadows below the timberline, where the sun was breaking through the clouds, came the odor of pine and junipers, and of the violets along the creeks. He could imagine the mule lying there in the grass, the warm sun on its flanks, the smells of the meadow sweetly breathing in through its nostrils.

And now he imagined himself there in the meadow, and he could smell the junipers himself as if the wind had caught their scent from the icy canyons below and brought it up to him.



**Brian Orth**  
**BARN SWALLOW**

He leaves his home tucked away in the rafters of an ancient barn  
and made of mud and lined with grass stems and feathers  
to feed in flight, just inches above the cultivated earth,  
on a swarm of large flies hovering a pile of field-dressed dove.  
He is graceful in picking them from the September air.  
And also, beautiful—his cobalt blue wings and tawny underside.  
Legend has it, his forked tail is the result of an angered deity  
whose hurling of a firebrand singed away his middle feathers  
as he stole fire from the gods so that humans could light the night.  
Full, he turns back to the ancient barn, the wind carrying him  
past the scarecrow at the edge of the cornfield, where a young boy  
with a heart beating too violently to separate the flight patterns  
of barn swallows and dove rises up among the fragile stalks,  
steadying his twenty gauge shotgun.

**Brian Orth**  
**DEPTH OF BLOOD**

It is spawning season here at Fall River,  
and like the slabs of crappie schooling around the dying  
  
minnows at the end of our lines, we wait—  
wait a stone's throw from shore inside the sheltered dock  
  
as the shadows of uncles and father and grandfather  
begin to sneak up on the cabin walls  
  
where they are caught  
moving among the worn fishing nets and cane poles.  
  
I study them—those black projections of the lantern's glow—  
and how it is only in their separate silhouettes  
  
that I can tell apart this generation of men,  
who after tall-tale fishing lore  
  
and droves of fuckin' Christ  
will pull from their five-gallon buckets

stringers lined with dinner

and then have the moment captured

by an old fisherman's wife pinching one eye shut

behind the lens of some hand-me-down camera,

proud of her blood.

***Al Maginnes***

## **THE DAY AFTER WOODSTOCK**

The morning after Woodstock and the players crowd their way  
into a New York studio because Miles is ready to lay down some tunes.  
They know it will be, like always, different. They don't know what  
they'll play.

Miles gives them a few beats, a shifting chord, tells them to take  
that wherever they like. The music stumbles, wails, falls to a sweet croon,  
then screams loud as Woodstocks's stacks as they players cut their way

through a song willing to be written note by note, to be born in the sway  
of its own making. A dozen players work to find some room,  
all of them cooking though no one's sure what they're playing.

Teo rolls tape to catch it all and even the wrong note is the right thing to say  
if someone can catch it and pull it into the jagged groove.  
It's the day after Woodstock and the players are learning their way

by dropped chords, by lines and edges into something wordless that wants a name,  
not jazz quite or rock or funk, but all of those mixed in a bitches' brew.  
They love what they aren't sure they're playing

and they know music, like the rest of the world, is waking to a new day.  
What mornings to come will bring, it's always too soon  
to say. It's the morning after Woodstock. These players are finding their way  
into music becoming history. They still aren't sure what they've played.

***Al Maginnes***  
**RECORDING WOODSTOCK**

Because it's too late to live through again,  
because it's easy, I hit "record," seal  
the whole movie on a memory chip. Later  
I'll watch Richie Havens sing "Handsome Johnny,"  
shake my head when Wavy Gravy, already  
toothless, not yet a Ben and Jerry's flavor, yells  
"We must be in heaven, man," a dream too simple  
not to betray. Hope had eroded into politics,  
and the drugs had changed by the 70's  
when I got there. To see the movie now  
is to hear the absent ones, not only  
the famous dead—Hendrix, Joplin—and the ones  
cut from the movie, Bert Sommer, Creedence, The Band,  
a group whose name I forgot whose saga became  
a TV movie, brief glory, the long unraveling.,  
but the ones who did not sing, caught for a moment  
laughing in front of the camera, staring like penitents  
through near-Biblical rain, eternal extras  
in their generation's movie, condemned to hear  
jokes about brown acid the rest of their days.  
"I was so hungry," said a friend who was there,  
her hunger a chord echoing through the mud-stained  
and faceless to echo through a country ready  
to consume this new geography, to devour  
the grassy hills, the moon-eyed idealism  
that had come to be fed. From there it would unravel  
as inevitably as history always does.  
Whispering knives, tear gas, bullets all waited

in the dark pockets behind that stage. And music was  
never enough to save us. When Jimi Hendrix wrenches

“The Star Spangled Banner” into artillery,  
strafing an almost-empty field, the ones I love

are those bearing trash bags, trying to clear the ground  
so the grass might have a chance to return

to a place that was not heaven but someplace  
deserving a better name than we have given it.

**Todd Balazic**  
**ARE WE THERE YET?**

This is it: the poem Aphrodite  
sold to Christ—for two stigmata and  
a pair of dice. Here they are: your eight  
or nine, no, your forty lines of blacked-out  
life—your sullen kids and drunken wife.  
Here we go: Orlando and the promised light.  
In the damp of the dew at the dawn of the day  
Stop! Into the ditch your hope is hurled—  
there's no divorce in Disney World. O heart,  
squint hard: the blurry catalogue of dream  
has blinded each subscriber, left your inky  
fingers fiddling with the map. Next stop:  
Vegas. A losing streak will stretch before it  
finally snaps. "Next shooter. The game is craps."

**Joseph Hutchison**  
**MELTDOWN**

Offshore from Fukushima the dolphins glow  
the color of my dreams—or, to be more precise,  
their background color: a green like screens  
used to transport actors from some barren studio  
into the heart of darkness, or to make clay effigies  
of aliens loom like redwoods, or to conjure up  
from papier-mâché a massive bleeding volcano.  
I watch my dreams as in a darkened theater.  
Eau d'Popcorn. Bored patrons bent to smartphones,  
texting just out of eyeshot. Teasers for TV shows  
geared to the video-game generation. I know:  
I'm bitter. But didn't I once have better dreams?  
Mytho-maniacal Jungian romps à la Fellini,  
truer than Truth? Well, no more. It's all  
reruns with numbing commercials, dumbed  
down revenge tales with machine-gunned hunks  
whose faces—when the ski-masks get peeled  
off like condoms—are always handsomer  
than mine. Somewhere, though, somewhere  
there's a glowing boy astride a glowing dolphin,  
two friends fleeing the meltdown over silver waves,  
under sunstruck billows of cloud, with mermaids  
singing each to each, at first—and then to me.



**Randall Watson**  
**SPANISH CAIRNS**

First one, alone in the grass,  
hidden like a quail's egg

to mark the place they dumped  
the body. Then two,

then three, then four, a clutch,  
a ring, a covey, a stack, a henge,

a pyramid of stone,  
body on body.

Perhaps that boy, handing out pamphlets.  
Perhaps that tailor, his fingers

streaked with chalk,  
who measured the general's inseam.

Soon a growing pile of stones  
at the edge of a wood

on the rise of a hill  
in the shadow of almonds.

A century of stones.

A circle of stones  
where the two hands meet.

A parenthetical.

The thin attorney who never married.  
The government clerk who stamped your passport.

**Randall Watson**  
**CLOUDS**

Without them, the sky is terrible,  
the day made pale and shallow,  
an unendurable wisdom.

But the clouds, they are like compassion.  
They break the light into blindness and feather,  
a gaze that softens in the open air.

Even passing, they provide, and make  
of the uncontainable waste  
a shape and contour.

What would we do with an unbroken thing,  
we who are like vases of shattered crystal?

What would we do  
without the moving shadow?

## BOOK REVIEWS

### ***THE LOVE THAT MOVES ME***

by Marilyn Kallet

Commonwealth Books, Black Widow Press

\$15.73 paper

a review by Miranda Brock

*The Love that Moves Me* came to me at a difficult point in my life, a birthday present from the ex-fiance. I had just turned 30. Enclosed with the book was a small card which read, "You will always be the love that moves me." Four days later, I accidentally left the book on a plane. But as Kallet says in "Freeing Francesca":

Honey, Hell's not  
always about you!

The book is divided into three parts: I Want You Here; The Dreaming World; Angel's Envy. We go on a non-linear jaunt with Kallet, mooning a bit in France, reflecting on things in Hawaii, making a pit stop in Indiana, and then ultimately home to East Tennessee. Dante, Rimbaud, Verlaine, and other once-dead greats are summoned to co-exist with Kallet as she dusts them off and assigns them roles as muses, sex objects, and co-conspirators. They are gaudy yet willing participants, allowing Kallet to succeed with having no center in this decadent mess of eccentrics.

The first set of poems deals mainly with the intense desires of the heart and those fine lines we often cross when "want" blurs with "need." In "Exclusive," Kallet holds the magnifying glass for us to examine the hyperbole and frantic reasoning that tends to accompany romantic love:

I loved no one but you.  
Well, almost no one.  
Forgive me,

I was practicing.  
Forgive the time  
before you were born,

the Sixties, when  
everyone loved everyone,  
and by "loved" I mean *shtupped*.

The poems serve as age old but ever unresolved case studies. There's sensuality, romanticizing the past, the art of making a lover jealous, and overindulging the senses.

If the love that moves us in the first section is mostly burning romantic love (and lust), then the second section (The Dreaming World) is all about pleasing the palate. In "At Red Cinder":

"The only man in the house

Is Mr. Coffee!" the director jokes.

The Dreaming World is reflective, and there is a strong feminine aspect ranging from goddesses and witches to Coco Chanel. In "Sirens," the speaker lactates at the sound of baby goats bawling for milk. "Detached" speaks of having a detachable vagina, a convenient means of getting oneself out of a bad situation:

Unlike ours, Kapo's twat was detachable.  
She could fling it like a Frisbee.

But back to the food. There's papaya strewn throughout the pages, as well as apples, bananas, and passion fruit icing. Blue potatoes, and pastries so good that even the cockroaches in the rental car had to have a bite.

The third and final segment of poems, Angel's Envy, puts us home at last in the American South. Now that we've overindulged on sex and food, we're settled in as Kallet gives a wink to a favorite bourbon and a nod to the forces of Heaven.

Home and endings aren't always easy, so perhaps that's why Kallet chooses to open this last section in Hell. We listen to Francesca bitch throughout "Inferno Girl," and Dante and Beatrice have it out in "D & B, Bickering." (Perhaps they had too much Angel's Envy?)

But Kallet's personal devil seems to be Officer Larry, one of Tennessee's Finest, and even the angels "cannot intercede with Officer Larry." In this poem, "The State Trooper Behind You is Not a Surrealist," we ponder otherworldly matters:

... and though you're transporting a bottle of  
Angel's Envy—unopened—only the angels grasp

what's moving and unmoving at once. Your sapphire car  
amuses them. Trooper Larry clocked you

going fast, but to the angels you're merely  
a slowpoke, though they are never unmoved by your plight.

Charles and Emma Darwin also pop in for a bit during a couple of poems, and Kallet manages to both cheekily and tenderly observe the God Particle in the poem by the same name, as well as somewhat romanticize it in "Like Moonlight."

The book finishes clean with "Angel's Envy." It is a song of thanksgiving for the safe journeys throughout this book of life and a reminder that it's the way we came that got us to where we need to be:

The last poem wrapped antique lace around an oak tree.  
Didn't care about rain and time, nonchalance one key to its

charm...

*The Love that Moves Me* is cheaper than therapy and way more effective. Kallet's work is cathartic, helping us to reframe the past—keeping the best parts of it and being richer for having endured, while granting us the grace to keep moving.

## **FLOODWATER**

by Connie Post

Glass Lyre Press

\$16 paper

Review by Lynne Knight

“All the rooms of the house / are flooding / but there is no water” begins the first, eponymous poem in Connie Post’s *Floodwater*, immediately establishing the disjunctions that will inform all the poems in this fiercely honest and compelling collection. But for all their honesty about our dark interiors, of “how hard it can be / to hide inside a body,” as we learn through the multiple ironies of “Structurally Sound,” these are not bleak and despairing poems. What shines through the dark of them is their humanity. Post’s humanity consists of many parts: compassion yielding to deep empathy, wit to keen insight. Her poems are often defiant in their claims—“You can lose body parts / crossing a city street” she begins in “Extremities”—and shocking in their revisions—“There are stars in our veins / ones that have flickered out / seen the end of all moons / fallen under the back side of the galaxy . . .” she tells us in “Constellations.” But the boldness and shock are never gratuitous. She wants us to see, and she knows how hard it is to see through the dark.

As personal as these poems are, they become universal because of Post’s ability to take the ordinary things of our lives—a kitchen window, crumpled maps, a guitar, a house key, for a random sampling—and use them to apprehend the darkness we hide from others and often from ourselves. She moves through this shadow land of the self—her own self and the selves of others—casting light everywhere she looks. There’s an insistence in her voice that’s both a hypnotic and commanding. These poems are calls to action. Post reveals to us, in poem after poem, the ways we are bound in the floodwater of our common difficulties and sorrows. The beauty is that she goes on from there, teaching us how not to drown.

## **SKANDALON**

Poems by T.R. Hummer

LSU Press, 2014

74 pgs., paper

Review by Will Root

*SKANDALON* achieves its genius by generating marvels of artificial intelligence cherry-picked from cultural spare parts, excavated esoterica, deconstructed hopes and dreams, blood, sweat and fears, premature self-congratulations, and Instagrams of innumerable *follies de monde* in progress. It's some book.

For starters, Skandalon? Well may you ask. Michael Hutter's strange enchanting cover-- *Altergarten* or "old garden"-- is a tease and the key to both title and book. He depicts an eerie land of unlikeness, Eden as a silly putty swamp in which the dirty green air looks like pond water and the baobab branches swirl like misguided roots up through that murk so gelatinous that it seems to be holding everything upright in its solution. Eden as a neglected aquarium? At the open gateway stands a figure clad in toned-down flame colors, hip cocked, elbow out, a temptress not very interested in tempting, just casually available. Waiting. Perhaps for you. Above and beside her squats a lemur-like figure, comically ghoulish, very likely demonic, and less a threat than a reminder. This, to be sure, is not a rendering of *the* Eden but of *an* Eden. One aspect is especially unsettling-- in this Eden you cannot tell if you are inside looking out...or outside looking in. But your fate hangs in the balance. And already the trap, either way you choose, is baited.

A skandalon is not a trap but the trigger. It goes operational when loaded with the bait specifically of one's own vices: vanity, bias, presumption, self-deception, any habit unexamined or corruptive. Ultimately Hummer's poems are veiled narratives proceeding neither by sequence nor by cause and effect but rather by lamination. In each you find yourself being led but also being continuously distracted by layer after layer of what appear to be distractions and yet prove to be clues-- always clues and never the answer. These are poems not shaped by cookie-cutter patterns. They are, however, exotic confections, deliciously concocted from a wide range of sources—from Tibetan Buddhists and classical Greeks (who gave us the term) through the Dark Ages with its illuminating monks, the Enlightenment, Vaudeville with its monkeys, and Silicon Valley right up to you and me, here and now. The flavors cover a spectrum from jellyroll prophetic to mint green as the grave. A taste:

### TEXT

The blues pianist's bleeding hands trace calligraphy on the keys.

This too is art. And the rabbi's prayer on the killing floor.

Ritual slaughter is known as *shechita*. The knife is called a *chalef*.

In Samoan, *ta* means *to strike*, and hence *tattoo*,

And the attendant percussion of wooden implements.  
This too is music. And the double paradiddle  
Of ordnance is Afghanistan. Meanwhile, in the penal colony  
The harrow writes on a man until he is dead:  
*The tip of a large iron needle had gone through his forehead.*  
You hold a book serenely in your hand: it is a gift,  
It is *techne*, many human lives have been grotesquely crushed  
so that you may sit quietly with it in your chair  
While the cat purrs in the crook of your arm. Outside,  
moonlight lays down its pentatonic line.  
The bright chisel of language descends in your brain.  
This too is an instrument. This too is a tool.

If this poem sounds like Will Shortz giving clues to the answers rather than the answers, it's no wonder. Hummer, too, delights in crosshatched meanings, shameless puns, etymological love children, false leads, subliminal ambiguities, making riddles of cliches. During the oral tradition before papyrus and stylus, "to read" meant "to riddle." One's mind had to be fit as a fiddle. Still does, to read Hummer's texts. The playful tune is often the result of a mix between the air of refined discourse on one channel versus the low-down wop bam boom and bar eloquence on another, while the two intertwine. As here:

#### THE END OF RELIGION

Cursed are the galvanized, for rust  
is the ecstasy of entropy.  
Cursed are the bleak, for theirs  
Is the wreckage of vision.  
Two prophets walk into a bar: *What's*  
*it gonna be?* Two Buddhists  
Walk into the void: *One with everything.*

Once you gain your toehold in the multiverse of these poems you'll soon find yourself well served with amusements and intrigued by novelty of his irreverent conjunctions as you come to understand more and more of the narrative being fractured behind the veils. Each poem is a tossed salad of fresh intelligence. Chew. Chew some more. *This too is an instrument. This too is a tool.* Enjoy the crunch.

## **OPEN FIELD**

Poems from Group 18

Open Field Press,

2011, Paper, 116 pages, \$15.00

Review by Howard Faerstein

Much of the poetry displayed on daily poem websites, in reviews, and in college journals is fast forward content sprayed across the white space with a turkey baster. This approach worked for Jackson Pollack but it's rather pointless and miscellaneous as letters on a page. It's hard to say whether the authors feel inspired or if they believe inspiration and meaning are concepts as old-fashioned as beauty and therefore to be denigrated or ignored. Poetry without experience and observation reads like advertising, a way to sell soap or the self. Basing art on empty expression is like being buried in a shallow grave—once the vultures are done there's nothing left.

In *Open Field*, an anthology of 33 men and women who have been participants in Group 18, a poetry workshop that has met in Northampton, MA for over 25 years, you won't find smooth talk. You will discover in this impressive retrospective: engagement, meaning, (with all its attended ambiguity), and more often than not, voice, an essential quality lost in today's frenzied gluttony. Hovering above the collection is the spirit of both Jack Gilbert and Linda Gregg, founding members of the group, whose work, also included, is a touchstone for the writers and for a reader seeking acuity of craft and an ambitious and vigorous approach to the writing process. As stated in an introductory essay, "No one could deny Jack's profound influence on many of our members."

The diversity represented is stunning. Tone shifts from each poet's three page selection to the next while music, pacing, and substance are constants. Limited space prohibits mentioning all the poets. Some of the more well known are Joan Larkin, Timothy Liu, Doug Anderson and then there's a raft of accomplished authors like Rosalyn Driscoll, Margaret Lloyd, Carol Potter, Henry Lyman, Rich Michelson, and Annie Woodhull. (My apologies to those I haven't noted.)

This is the age of the streaming prevarication. One hopes to get the truth from friends and from poets we respect, a truth that uncovers, amplifies, informs, and instructs in the human. *Open Field* is an anthology that delivers on its promise.



## CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

**Doug Anderson's** first full-length book of poems, *The Moon Reflected Fire*, won the Kate Tufts Discovery Award, and his second book, *Blues for Unemployed Secret Police*, a grant from the Academy of American Poets. He has received grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Massachusetts Artists Foundation and other funding organizations. He has taught at Smith and Emerson Colleges, and in the MFA programs at Bennington College and Pacific University of Oregon. He was for many years a teaching affiliate of the Joiner Center for the Study of War and Its Social Consequences at UMASS Boston. His memoir, *Keep Your Head Down*, was published by W.W. Norton in 2009. He has just completed a new book of poems, *Horse Medicine*, and poems from that collection can be found in forthcoming, past and current editions of *Poetry*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Field*, *Cimarron Review*, and other publications. A writer and photographer, he lives in Palmer, Massachusetts, where he is director of development for Blue Star Equiculture, a horse rescue facility and organic farm. He is working on a novel about Ambrose Bierce.

**Todd Balazic**, whose degree is from UT-Austin, has had work appear in *Verse Daily* as well as such litmags as *Rattle*, *Cimarron Review*, *New Orleans Review*. He also writes movie reviews.

**Sheila Black** is the author of *House of Bone*, *Love/Iraq* (CW Press), and *Wen Kroy* (Dream Horse Press), and a co-editor of *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability* with Jennifer Bartlett and Michael Northen. A 2012 Witter Bynner Fellow, selected by Philip Levine, she lives in San Antonio, Texas where she directs Gemini Ink, a literary arts center.

**B.J. Buckley** is a Wyoming/Montana poet and writer who has worked in Arts-in-Schools/Communities programs throughout the west for over 35 years. Her poems have appeared widely in small print and online journals, and she has received a number of national prizes and awards for her work. Her poetry books include *Moonhorses and the Red Bull* (Prong Horn Press 2005); a letterpress chapbook, *Spaces Both Infinite and Eternal* (Limberlost Press 2013); and *Corvidae* (Lummox Press 2014).

**Karen Carissimo's** poems have appeared in *Cimarron Review*, *The American Literary Review*, *North American Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Verse Daily*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and other journals. Her first book of poems, *Dream City*, was published by Iris Press in 2012. Her fiction has appeared in *Green Mountains Review* and *Fourteen Hills*, and nonfiction in *The San Francisco Chronicle*. She is currently working on a new collection of poems and a novel.

**Emilio "Lio" Diaz** is half Mexican and half Native American. His Mexican roots lie in Durango, Mexico and his mother's side is from Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico. He's 21 years old and is a student at Fort Lewis College majoring in Communications. He's

been writing for as long as he can remember. Diaz's mother was his first teacher and is responsible for his love of the arts. In his writing, Diaz says, "I strive to express the constant entropy in my mind and I always strive to beautify everything I create- even my darkest creations possess some level of beauty." This is his first publication.

**William Doreski** lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire, and teaches at Keene State College. His most recent book of poetry is *The Suburbs of Atlantis* (2013). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in many journals.

**Christian Anton Gerard's** first book of poems is *Wilmot Here, Collect For Stella* (WordTech Communications, 2014). Gerard's received Pushcart Prize nominations, scholarships from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference and an Academy of American Poets Prize. His recent poems appear in *storySouth*, *Redivider*, *Pank*, *Post Road*, *Smartish Pace*, *B-O-D-Y*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. Gerard lives in Fort Smith, AR, with his wife and son where he's an Assistant Professor of English, Rhetoric, and Writing at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. He can be found on the web at [www.christianantongerard.com](http://www.christianantongerard.com)

**Christie Grimes** has had stories published in journals such as *Harpur Palate*, *2 Bridges Review* and *Passages North*. Her short fiction collection was a finalist in a Black Lawrence Press competition. She is the author of *Exit Waxahachie*, a novel, and is currently at work on an apocalyptic novel about family.

**Teri Hairston** is a poet and fiction writer. Her writing accomplishments include: 2005 winner of the Salem College Rondthaler Award in both Poetry and Fiction, 2005 winner of a John Woods Scholarship in writing to study abroad in Prague; the scholarship included a 30 day stay in Prague where she attended Charles University studying creative writing under the tutelage of Award winning Author Arnost Lustig, a Holocaust survivor. She won honorable mention in the 2005 Sue Sanial Elkind Poetry Contest and her poem, "The Product" is published in the 2005 spring edition of *Kalliope, A Journal of Women's Literature and Art*. Her first published poem, "The Perfect Cup" appears in *Niederengasse* an International e-zine which is translated in German, Italian, French and Spanish. Her poems "Illiterate" and "Buzzard Luck" are published in the 2006 volume of *Cutthroat; A Journal of the Arts*. In February 2013 her poem "A Love Song" was featured as the Poetry in Plain Sight Winston-Salem Poem.

**Joseph Hutchison** was named Poet Laureate of Colorado in September 2014. He is the author of 15 collections of poems, including *Marked Men*, *Thread of the Real*, *The Earth-Boat*, and *Bed of Coals* (winner of the Colorado Poetry Award). He has also co-edited the anthologies *Malala: Poems for Malala Yousafzai* and *A Song for Occupations: Poems about the American Way of Work*. He lives in the mountains southwest of Denver with his wife, yoga instructor Melody Madonna.

**Margaret Karmazin's** stories are published in literary and speculative fiction

magazines including Rosebud, Chrysalis Reader, North Atlantic Review, Mobius, Confrontation, Pennsylvania Review, Speculative Edge and Another Realm. Her stories in The MacGuffin, Eureka Literary Magazine and Licking River Review were nominated for Pushcart awards, and her story, "The Manly Thing," was nominated for the 2010 Million Writers Award. She has stories included in Still Going Strong, Ten Twisted Tales, Pieces of Eight (Autism Acceptance), Zero Gravity, Cover of Darkness, Daughters of Icarus, M-Brane Sci-Fi Quarterlies, and a YA novel, Replacing Fiona and children's book, Flick-Flick & Dreamer, published by [etreasurespublishing.com](http://etreasurespublishing.com)

**C. Ann Kodra** works as an independent editor in Knoxville, TN. Her poetry and short stories have appeared or are pending in journals and anthologies including *Blueline*, *Cavalier Literary Couture*, *Common Ground Review*, *MOTIF* (vol. 1 & 3), *New Millennium Writings*, *Now & Then*, *Prime Mincer*, *RHINO*, *Still: The Journal*, *Yemassee*, and others. She is a contributing editor for *New Millennium Writings* and past guest poetry editor for *The Medulla Review*. She has won prizes in several contests including the Libba Moore Gray Poetry Contest (2008, 2013) *Prime Mincer's* Poetry Contest (2011), and the Green River Writers Contest (2013).

**Leslie McGrath** is a poet and literary interviewer. Winner of the 2004 Pablo Neruda Prize for poetry, she is the author of *Opulent Hunger*, *Opulent Rage* (2009), a poetry collection, and two chapbooks, *Toward Anguish* (2007) and *By the Windpipe* (2014.) McGrath's most recent book is a satiric novella in verse, *Out From the Pleiades* (Jaded Ibis, 2014.) Her poems have recently appeared widely, most recently in *The Awl*, *Agni*, *Salamander*, and *The Common*. She teaches creative writing and literature at Central Connecticut State University and is series editor of *The Tenth Gate*, a poetry imprint of The Word Works press (Washington, DC.)

**C.D. Mitchell** has previously published short stories, poems and essays under the name--David Mitchell. He lives and writes from the western edge of Tucson, Arizona, and is the Director of Growing Poetry Productions

**Bryce Milligan** is an award-winning author of a dozen books in numerous genres, ranging from children's books to novels for young adults, and adult poetry and criticism. He has been the publisher/editor/designer for Wings Press in San Antonio, Texas, since 1995. *Bloomsbury Review* called him a "literary wizard." Critic Paul Christensen called him "one of the principal writers of the region and a force at the center of the literary art movements of Texas." Milligan is the recipient of the Texas Library Association's "Lone Star Book for Young Adults" award, the Gemini Ink "Award for Literary Excellence," and the St. Mary's University President's Peace Commission's "Art of Peace Award" for "work that enhances human understanding through the arts."

**Brian Orth** is a recent graduate of the MFA program at Wichita State University where he was the 2014 Poetry Fellow and assistant poetry editor for *Mikrokosmos* and *mojo*. He is currently working on publishing his book-length manuscript, *Scarecrow Country*. His work has been included or is forthcoming in *Bayou*, *The Aureorean*, and

*The Midwest Quarterly.*

**Simon Perchik** is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *Almost Rain*, published by River Otter Press (2013). For more information, free e-books and his essay titled “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities” please visit his website at [www.simonperchik.com](http://www.simonperchik.com)

**Maj Ragain** has taught at Kent State University in each of the past six decades. His books of poems include *A Hungry Ghost Surrenders His Tacklebox*, *Twist The Axe: A Horseplayer’s Story*, *Burley Dark One Sucker Fired*, *Fresh Oil Loose Gravel*, and *Olney Dreadnot Book*. He has hosted open poetry readings in Kent for thirty years, now monthly at Last Exit Books. Poetry is an ongoing conversation, yoking solitude and community.

Pushcart Prize nominee **Frank Scozzari** resides in Nipomo, a small town on the California central coast. His award-winning short stories have appeared in *War Literature & the Arts*, *The Emerson Review*, *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Eleven Eleven*, *Minetta Review*, and *Reed Magazine*, and have been featured in literary theater.

**Michael Trammell** is the editor-in-chief of the *Apalachee Review*. His work has appeared *New Letters*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Pleiades*, *G.W. Review*, *Sundog: The Southeast Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Gulf Stream Magazine*, *Lullwater Review*, *The Nebraska Review*, *Permafrost* and other journals. Recently, YellowJacket Press published his poetry collection *Our Keen Blue House*. He’s a Senior Lecturer at Florida State University. Summers he instructs writing, literature, and business courses for F.S.U.’s Valencia, Spain and London, England campuses.

**Al Maginnes** has published ten collections or chapbooks of poems, most recently *Music From Small Towns* (Jacar Press, 2014), winner of the annual Jacar Press contest and *Inventing Constellations* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2012). Recent or forthcoming poems will appear in *Lake Effect*, *Shenandoah*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and *Birmingham Poetry Review* among others. He lives in Raleigh, North Carolina and teaches at Wake Technical Community College

**LaWanda Walters** received an M.A. in Literature from California State University at Humboldt and an M.F.A. in Poetry from Indiana University, where she won the Academy of American Poets Prize. Her poems have appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *North American Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Shenandoah*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Sou’wester*. “Her Art” was chosen by Natasha Trethewey for *Best New Poets 2007*. Her poem “Marilyn Monroe” appears in *Obsession: Sestinas in the Twenty-First Century* (Dartmouth College Press, 2014). She has also written critical essays about art—her essay “Cole Carothers: Interiors/Exteriors,” a review of his show at the Miami University Art Museum, appeared in the arts magazine, *Dialogue* (January/February 1997). She studied painting with Robert Tharsing at The

University of Kentucky in Lexington.

A winner of the 2001 River Styx International Poetry Contest, runner-up for the Iowa Review Fiction Prize and Finalist in both the DIAGRAM Innovative Fiction Prize and the 2014 Paul Bowles Fiction Award, **Jesse Waters** is a recipient of a 2003 NC Artist's Grant to attend the Vermont Studio Center, and Currently Director of the Bowers Writers House at Elizabethtown College, Jesse's fiction, poetry and non-fiction work has been nominated for multiple Pushcart Prizes, and has appeared in such journals as *88: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Coal Hill Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Concrete Wolf*, *Iowa Review*, *Plainsongs*, *Magma*, *River Styx*, *Slide*, *Story Quarterly*, *Southeast Review*, *Sycamore Review* and others. His first book of poems, *Human Resources*, was released by Inkbrush Press in February of 2011.

**Randall Watson's** *The Sleep Accusations* received the Blue Lynx Poetry Award at Eastern Washington University, and is currently available from Carnegie Mellon University Press. His first book, *Las Delaciones del Sueno*, was published in a bi-lingual edition by the Universidad Veracruzana in Xalapa, Mexico. His novella, *Petals*, (as Ellis Reece) won the *Quarterly West* Novella Competition. He is also the editor of *The Weight of Addition* (Mutabilis Press), an anthology of Texas poetry.

**Lynn Watt** lives and makes art in Santa Fe, New Mexico with her husband, the novelist Donley Watt. To view more of her art, go to *Pinterest* or [www.lynnwatt.com](http://www.lynnwatt.com)

The poems included here were inspired by a 2011 trip to the Haida Gwaii Archipelago - formerly known as the Queen Charlotte Islands. In addition to exploring far lands, **Bill Yake's** interests include photography, natural history, evolution, running, folk guitar, and hiking. He has two full-length collections of poetry; *This Old Riddle: Cormorants and Rain* (2003) and *Unfurl, Kite, and Veer* (2010) both from Radiolarian Press, Astoria OR. Bill's poems have been featured on NPR and show up regularly in magazines and anthologies serving the environmental and literary communities – from *Wilderness Magazine* to *Anthropology and Humanism*, from *Open Spaces Quarterly* to *Fine Madness*, from *Rattle* to *ISLE*. He was once an environmental scientist.

"Chronology be damned. Say the most notorious Libertine of Restoration England places a phone call to the reigning mistress of Petrarchan address a century earlier. Say she's his long-suffering wife. Does she accept the charges? You'd better hope so; you'll miss a whole world of exorbitant fun if she does not. These poems are as gorgeous a romp as wit and irreverence and masterful craft can make. A jazz musician's timing, imagination hungry as the ocean and, behind the alter egos and their buffalings, a mind of tempered kindness and a heart far grown-up love. This is a ravishing debut." — Linda Gregerson

"Funny, absurd, rollicking, whimsically allusive and sophisticated, Wilmot Here, Collect for Stella is a requested version of Astrophil & Stella and in its literary and cultural mash-ups and marital misprisons is something like The Honeyymooners meets The Courtier." — Michael Collier

"Christian Anton Gerard's debut collection enacts the obsessive psychological scaffolding of Sidney's Astrophil & Stella—though not the sonnet sequence's form—in these dily post-confessional lyrics that dramatize the troubled love of the personae Wilmot and Stella. Gerard's self-reflexive "he said/she said" dialogic structure frames the bracing self-interrogations of Wilmot, haunted variously by his marital infidelity, paternal legacies, and vexing adolescence. Between Wilmot and Stella, and within Gerard's fraught and intimate poems, the 'Ghosts keep us moving.'" — Anna Journey



Christian Anton Gerard is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize and multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. His work has appeared in journals such as Orion, Past Road, Smartish Pace, Iron Horse Literary Review, and The Calliope, among others. Gerard lives with his wife, Lucy, and their son in Knoxville, where he is a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Tennessee.



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Christian Anton Gerard

Wilmot Here, Collect for Stella

Michael Collier

# WILMOT HERE, COLLECT FOR STELLA

(poems)

christian anton gerard

