

DOOR = JAR



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Door Is A Jar
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Cover Image “Little Free Library in Snow”
by Susan Solomon

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Reasonable Doubt

Connie Johnson

Poetry

What do I remember when I remember you?
 Probably all the ways in which I failed you:
 Whispered testimony in a windowless room
 With a locked door.

Can I get a witness?

No photographs, just memories
 Just a face at the bottom of a shot glass

Am I as you remembered?

Fingers grasp and count promises
 Dredging up recollections with
 No place to put them.

And even though I stand on trial
 For God knows how many old crimes
 Bail me out, baby
 I'll pay you back.

*(Soulful mystery & mojo
 The inexplicableness
 Of what you remember
 vs what I said)*

Memory plays tricks on us all, but
 I like how you never judged me
 And I may never be this
 Innocent again.

the most
Marisca Pichette
Poetry

I want to count the angles of your face.

 Your body isn't steaming in the sun,
There's no handy, alluring sweat.

 I don't remember a shining light
that let me know you were the one.

I remember soft skin, but imperfect.
We all have them—imperfections.
They're not half as bad
as we're led to believe.

I fell in love with your imperfections.

 I fell in love with the crinkles around your eyes,
the depressions of your frowns
 the little bumps and scars across your cheeks
the stray hairs between your shoulder blades.

I fell in love with all the things
 you love least
about yourself.

Kiddie Pool

Gabriel Lukas Quinn

Poetry

His fingers
Dangle
Drape
Drag
Deep damp dunes
Across the water

He loves to
Disturb
Deride
Debase
Dire duties
Until they die

As raindrops fall
As ripples cease
As water dries
He deigns to watch

Loopdiloop

Drew Pissarra

Poem

When the various strings don't come together,
after one's been strung along too damned long,
one can find oneself at the end of one's tether,

and eager to cut ties, to retreat to the nether
regions of one's mind. But what if one's wrong?
When the various strings don't come together

might signal a transit point or a change in weather,
not the end of one's rope, not the final gong.
One can find oneself at the end of one's tether

whenever one struggles to figure out whether
one's coming undone or one's stayed overlong.
When the various strings don't come together,

one gets knocked for a loop or down with a feather
the impact of disappointment's that strong.
One can find oneself at the end of one's tether

and do what? I dunno. Crack open one's leather-
bound volume of classical verse by Mao Zedong.
When the various strings don't come together,
one can find oneself at the end of one's tether.

Dream Job
Julia F. Green
Fiction

At your performance review, when your boss asks you to describe your dream job, you look at the green dot at the top of your screen and beam like a beauty queen to cover the panic inside. You take a deep breath and say, *gosh what a great question* because the main thing you have learned in five years of being an administrative associate is how to buy yourself time. You now have thirty seconds to come up with an answer that isn't *Anything but this steaming pile of garbage*.

The whole thing was a big misunderstanding. On your first day, she told you that her husband had died suddenly of cancer. You assumed tragedy had taught her the same lesson it had taught you: that life is far shorter than anybody realizes, that only an idiot gorges on work rather than joy. But she doesn't believe that, not at all.

Work, it turns out, is her center. Her kids are grown, and her dog is old, and she emails you when she wakes up at 4:58 a.m. and before bed at 8:45 p.m. and every twenty or thirty minutes in between, her name incessantly appearing like a mosquito you just can't kill.

Her shoulders are tense, her eyebrows expectant. She leans in, her jaw set with predatory hunger. Sharp fear pulses in your gut as you imagine her leaping through the screen and sinking her teeth into your shoulder. You shake this insanity from your head, remind yourself that feeding this beast simply means giving her a satisfying answer. You take a deep breath and open with an easy platitude, an uncontroversial softball to warm the virtual room. *It's so meaningful to work in a department doing such important research*. She nods expectantly.

You whip out buzzwords: it is rewarding, purposeful, satisfying to file visa applications for international scholars. She seems to believe you, which is ludicrous and a fucking relief.

You knew a few months in that you would never confide in her, never reveal that you knew about suffering too, that your dad was once lively and energetic until he started feeling tired, which brought on tests and follow ups, pill bottles and long faces, a slow careening down a high mountain until the final crash, the longest face. You inherited his twenty-year-old Chevy and an even shakier genotype that meant you too would start feeling tired soon, start careening down your own mountain. Exactly how or when it is hard to say, but you know for sure you will always need that little plastic card in your wallet that says you're covered by the university's plan. The out of pocket maximum is steep as hell, but you could do it, and if you stay 20 years, you can have it for half-price when you retire. No matter that you'll probably be dead by then.

You keep going, spitting out words she likes in no particular order, as if you are a malfunctioning vending machine: *growth mindset, contributing to the mission, lasting impact, innovation, strategic, long-term vision*. Then you freeze your face a few times, make halting sounds, and turn off your camera. *Internet unstable*, you type in the chat box, and lie on the floor.

One day, there could be nationalized health insurance, provided free and clear by the government. Maybe you'll fall in love and marry somebody who is independently wealthy and can afford all the insurance and medical care in the world. The lottery is also an implausible option. In the unlikely event that you manage to cash in, on that day you will retract the answer you are about to give. You will hand in your resignation and never type *Kind regards* again.

But that day is not today. Today you get back in your chair, turn your camera back on and look it right in the eye as you say, “This is it. This is my dream job.”

Her eyebrows unfurrow, her shoulders slacken, breath seeps out of her. She swallows, her hunger sated.

Soon, though, her belly will growl again. Soon she will ask what your goals for next year are.

The answer in your mind will be *Don't die*, but instead you'll say *that's a great question*. She'll wait, breath caught again in her throat, until you say words she wants to hear. Until then, you remind yourself how lucky you are to have made it this far.

Holly
Christian Ward
Poetry

hasn't quite perfected teleportation,
often appearing on church roofs,
in police cells, and random beds with no
recollection of how she got there. Once

she woke inside a Tyneside magistrate's
bedroom wall, who told colleagues
that it flexed during the night and breathed
deep and horse-like. She tells shrinks

that she learnt how to blink out of space
after witnessing a group of boys skin
a live rabbit. Caged in an upside down
trolley slowly submerging in the canal,

everything went white and she found herself
tossed in a patch of nettles. The back of
her father's hand. Lorries. Endlessly walking
towards one unmarked village after the other.

Dizzy with streetlights, she blinked out of
the vista and worked the rope at a cheesy
Sunderland club—'Chez Blue'—before
settling back down at a supermarket checkout.

Her boyfriend says he sees a disembodied leg
floating in the bedroom late at night. Almost
like she's swallowed herself to find out
where she really began.

A New Language

Rachel Mallalieu

Poetry

The beach is not kind
to a woman. The sea gulls are trash
talkers and shriek a litany of complaints.
They scream words like *whittle, thigh*

gap, supple and *smooth*. They shit
cellulite onto your salt blown hair.
Imagine this, I was daily withering
away the summer my liver refused

to filter my blood. I couldn't eat and my skin
erupted with florid blooms. But I dropped
to wedding weight and all my friends
said they were jealous.

It's the last time I remember
being pleased with my legs.
The beach is easy for men.
The gulls stay silent and look away

from their protruding ribs and crooked
spines. My sons stride
upon the sand with colossal legs
and claim their birthrights

of sky and sea.
In the forest, my daughter and I
listen to the blue bird's truth
and watch the white-tailed deer.

We forage among the moss
and mushrooms and find a new language
to build our bones. I place one word
into her mouth for her to savor:

Enough.

Small Gods
Rachel Mallalieu
Poetry

Squirrels murdered
our tomatoes last July.
Sungolds and Cherokee Purples lay
in heaps of pulpy evidence.

They continued their chaos—
scattering blueberries and disfiguring
cucumbers with ruinous claws.
Years ago, Luke, my son of soil

and sky, yearned to escape
to the woods and live with the birds.
This January, he gathers eggshells
and orange rinds to nourish

the compost pile.
He fills the bird feeder with cracked
corn and stands with binoculars,
searching for an indigo bunting.

Instead, squirrels attack
the feeder and bully
chickadees who forage
for discarded kernels.

My son imagines violent
ends and buys a trap.
Before long, he captures
a squirrel inside the wire cage.

Luke grabs his pellet gun, a small god
intent on exacting justice;
the squirrel cowers
as he approaches.

From the window, I watch
him lower the gun.
We drive miles to find a park
carpeted with acorns.

The squirrel scampers away.
A small blue bird sings
overhead and flits
from branch to branch.

parted by moons

Linda M. Crate

Poetry

i see her in pink sunsets,
white roses,
in vampire books
and in anime,
i see her in the rocky horror
picture show and repo! the genetic opera
and star trek;

i hear her in vnv nation
and kate bush,
sometimes even in my dreams;

in another world perhaps it could've been
her and i—

and in this world she doesn't see me as a
sister,
and she doesn't have someone else
to hold her;

in this world we are wives and we are
happy braiding flowers into each other's hair—

for her there would always be
roses, of course,
but i could never choose one favorite
so one day it would be sunflowers,
another day lilies, a different day it might
be a group of hibiscuses or tulips;

however in thick and thin we would always
see the same moon
instead of being parted by them.

a lot more enchanting

Linda M. Crate

Poetry

i have always wanted to be free,
grow like a wild rose right over
the garden gate;
not have to worry or care about any rules—

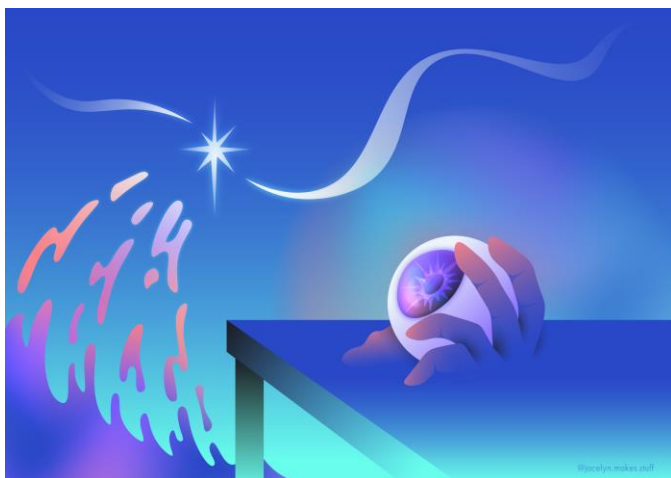
fly like the crow,
singing my loud song not
caring if my voice isn't the
prettiest or the most
appreciated of all those who
craft lyrics;

swim like the mermaid and touch depths
mortals could only ever dream of—

wanted to race through the forest with
a bunch of animal companions by
my side barefoot with my hair wild and feral
as me,
like i daydream every time my mother drives
past a forest and i sit in the passenger seat;

fantasy always freed me to the harsh realities
of the world, and all i've wanted is to find
a way to slip into my favorite book so the movie
reel of my life could be a lot more enchanting.

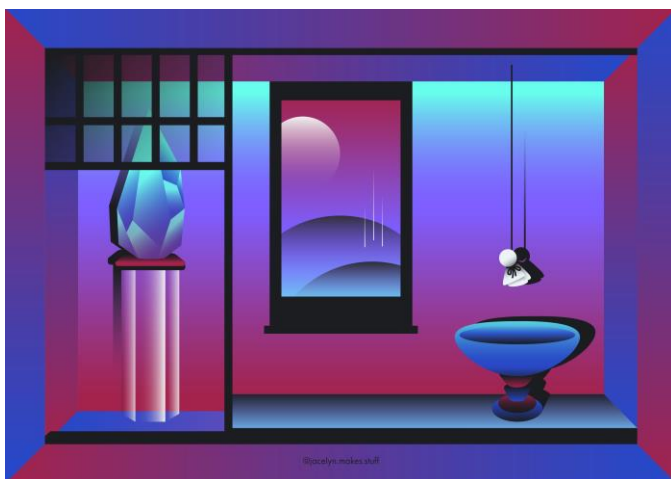
The Decay 1
Jacelyn Yap
Art



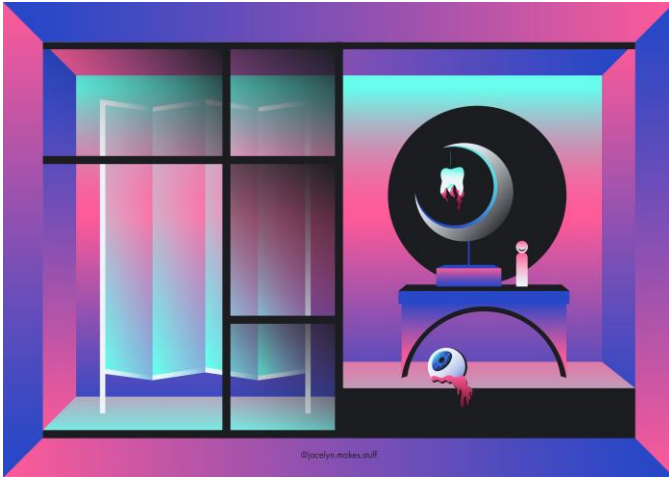
The Decay 2
Jacelyn Yap
Art



The Display 1
Jacelyn Yap
Art



The Display 2
Jacelyn Yap
Art



Eye of the Beholder

Kirsten Reneau

Nonfiction

When I was very young, I spent hours touching the cold glass of the mirror. Hand to hand, I studied the empty space in between. Later, I would draw myself in my journal, trying to pen out the shape of my body, the roundness of my thighs, the crook of my nose. I ate the paper when I was done. As a teen, I got a digital camera, the kind from Wal-Mart that had a screen to view the photo after you took it. I posed and posed and posed in a hundred different ways, my body meant to be studied and scrutinized. I deleted every photo after. When I was on acid, I went back to the mirror, pressed hand to hand. I wanted to eat the glass, touch the photo, delete the body. To see this life in this body is anything real to the touch.

GAUGIN

J.C. Mari

Poetry

Since there's no bars in the area
most days during lunch
i go to the thrift store
two doors down from work.

today i found
a small book about GAUGIN.

Two Tahitian Women
takes up most of the cover:

Leafing through the pages I find
a small postcard with
two birds on the cover,
a copy of
a Japanese painting, and

the words say

"Monday was
one the
pleasantest days
i can remember. I was lucky because
i was
with two of my favorite people.
Thank you for
giving me a
delightful memory".

I put it back, let
the book cradle it again.

It still radiates
like a caress still radiates
for a while
after the touch is gone.

The Japanese birds flutter.

I'm sorry that
it came to me this way.

At the End of My Shower

Shyla Ann Shehan

Poetry

I turn the heat up.
My skin pinks as I crouch down
& pluck a wad of hair
from the drain cover,
toss it at the wall.

Then stare, transfixed
as it spiders down the tile.
This is my life.

Something Knocking

Shyla Ann Shehan

Poetry

soaking wet / hair clings
to my face and neck
I clench a towel around my body
water drips down my back / I pause
and think about a door

it has no shape or color / no knob
of brass or polished nickel / not rustic
or splintered / not smooth
like glass / nor hot to the touch / I pause
and don't remember why I am
standing there

light beams from a window
I can't see / I bask
in the brilliance
of forgetting / my mind
creates space
for something else

it's more important than the answer
to any question I've ever asked

it's a poem / knocking
and I...
I open the door

The Motions of the Dipping Birds

Sara Lynne Puotinen

Poetry

Because I can no longer see
her face, when my daughter talks I watch

her small hands rise and fall,
sweep the air, flutter.

I marvel at the soft feathers her fingers make
as they soar then circle then settle

on the perch of her hips waiting
to return to the sky for another story.

the door of winter opening, a cento

Sara Lynne Puotinen

Poetry

for Linda Pastan

I watch the clouds
struggling to pull themselves
all the way up while

a vague moon
loose in the sky
flickers like a match.

Outside my window
the snow has forgotten
how to stop. It will swallow us

whole. Soon there will be nothing
left but silence
and raw astonishment.

The Birds Have Come Back, a cento

Sara Lynne Puotinen

Poetry

for Linda Pastan

They are coming
for you.

They are not fooled
by the silence

as they swoop
and gather

on the flat, tuneless landscape
to celebrate sound.

Soon melodic lines
rise like smoke

up through
the blue clouds

hovering near the treetops —
the reprieve of birdsong,

the flip side of sadness.
Remember

it is the ordinary that comes
to save you.

Filling Space

Vincent J. Barraco

Nonfiction

At home, I talk to myself constantly, like the humming of fan blades cutting air. Sometimes, I use the pronoun “we” when I talk to myself, to make me feel less alone. If I’m scared, sick, or in pain, I lean down and talk into my own ear. I put a reassuring hand on my own back, ignoring the echoes.

We’ve got this. We’ll get through this. It will be okay.

I walk barefoot on hardwood floors in an apartment that is too large for just me. I’ve been paying this much in rent for a hope I have not yet been able to realize or euthanize. Always a question of which one I can’t afford more: the cost of keeping it alive or the cost of letting it die. Eventually, I’ll have no choice but to decide.

How did it end up this way? We had dreams of filling this place with someone else, didn’t we? Beg, borrow, and steal – we were going to do anything to make this happen. We were going to put an end to this loneliness. Look at what we’ve done instead. Look at what we’ve failed to do.

I am an only child, which is likely why I talk to myself so much. I’ve been told I don’t *seem* like an only child, which means I don’t seem childish, entitled, or spoiled; but I’m probably all of those things. I think to myself

that, if for any reason I don't seem like an only child, it is instead because I am lonely.

*Adults who are only children
aren't supposed to be lonely,
we're supposed to have adjusted
to solitude by now. We're
supposed to enjoy our alone
time, our me-time; be self-
soothing introverts by nature.
Few can sway to our weird beat
and we're supposed to be
contented in that weirdness, that
isolation.*

I change outfits five to twelve times before leaving my home, even for the smallest errands that should be mindless. I never walk out the front door without agonizing in front of a mirror. I slather products into my hair, trying to pat it down in some places and fluff it up in others. I feel nauseous when it doesn't. Often, it ends in tears. Often, I'm late or fail to show up at all. When I need to be, I am not "we" or "me" but someone else entirely.

*You've changed so many times.
Come on, you're going to wear
this. Don't be stupid, you'll look
just fine. Better than fine. Yes,
it's appropriate. Yes, it's cute.
Stop. Baby, you look great. Trust
what I pick for you.*

And I do. I go out and I stand in the grocery store, about to choose between brands A and B when I'm suddenly

doused in ice cold loneliness. Frozen in imagined stares of disgust. I am alone all of the time and everyone in the store knows. They know I cook for one, I wake up to no one, I sit in suffocate in my own chatter. They know there's something about me that repels. If I get further from myself, I can fill the empty role.

*I want you to come home now.
I'll get the groceries later, you
just come home. I want to see
you right now. I want to hold you
and I don't want to wait a second
longer. Put down what you've
got in your hands and walk out
of the store. Don't look at
anyone. Why should any eyes be
on you that aren't mine? They
don't matter.*

When I was a child, I cried often while my parents were going through in vitro fertilization because I didn't want a sibling. They tried to convince me that a sibling would be a lifelong friend for me even after they were dead and gone, but I was too short-sighted to care. I planned to spend my entire life drinking in singular, focused attention from my parents. I stopped speaking to them in protest, and didn't even tell them goodbye when they flew to Mexico.

The lengths my parents were going to for another child introduced me to the idea that I alone wasn't enough. It made me realize that I didn't want anyone else around to be compared to; I wanted to remain the only option. If I was the only option, I was the only one who could receive affection. If I was the only option, I didn't have to be scared of being not enough.

*How much attention is enough?
 How much love is enough? Why
 does it feel like a bottomless pit?
 We were cut open somehow,
 sliced through – a leak that has
 never been stopped up. Is this a
 normal hunger response from
 being so isolated, or is it
 gluttony? What will it take to
 stay full?*

I wake in the morning and I'm holding myself. My shirt is pulled clear up to my throat, my skin covered in goosebumps. I drift in and out of sleep, seeing shadows above my bed, my lips ghosting gibberish: good mornings, mangled *I-love-yous*, failed starts of assurances and coaxing. I know that when I fully wake, I will recognize my own voice again. So I will myself to hallucinate, to stay unconscious, to drink in plausible deniability. I hold the twilight as long as I can, sleeping until I feel hungover.

When I finally wake up, I am alone.

*I didn't want to leave before you
 woke up, but I had to go to work.
 I'm sorry. I know I'm always at
 work. I would understand if you
 stopped waiting for me to come
 home. Sometimes you must think
 it would hurt less to stop waiting.
 I don't blame you. I don't blame
 you.*

When the in vitro failed, my dark little heart celebrated. I started speaking to my parents again. I returned to my

quiet bedroom and talked to my posters. This was surely better. I could make them talk back to me.

Splitting Atoms

Andre F. Peltier

Poetry

The tough chores in the house
default to me.
The things that simply
no one else can do.
I split the family atoms;
I design the household rockets.
When we needed to explore
black holes,
it was me who calculated the speed,
determined the event horizon,
analyzed the angle of approach.
When, on that winter Saturday morning
after cartoons and pancakes,
my son asked, "Pop, can we have
a particle accelerator
in the basement?"
I had to knock down the walls,
install the electron ring,
build the super-conducting coil
with blood and sweat.
Folks from São Paulo and Menlo Park,
Tsukuba, Hamburg, and Cape Town
showed up to study my blueprints.
The Higgs boson was discovered
behind bins of Christmas ornaments
weeks before that team from Geneva
even dreamed of it.

My wife balances the books,
schedules the appointments,
taxis the kids to school

and soccer practice,
but it's me who replaces
toilet paper rolls
and refills those tricky
ice trays.

Spread

Victoria Nordlund

Poetry

I Past: Queen of Cups reversed

Her cloak blends seamlessly into the sea.
She holds a gold cup adorned with angels.
Unlike other cups in the suit, this cup
is closed. This queen's throne is right on the edge
of the ocean. Don't be fooled by the cloud
free sky, the effortless ripple-kissed waves.
Notice the rocks, the shells under her feet.

II Present: Queen of Pentacles Reversed

Stone-throned with dress as heavy as an X-
ray vest. She is cloaked now in a mantle
of Mother Earth. Fabric hangs—crown to ground.
Rabbits and roses, apples and cherubs
frame her, smother her, as she cradles her
coin. There is a little too much caring here.
Also: Remember she is upside down—

III Future: Knight of Wands

[I hate the future card because I think
I'm always going to get the Ten of Swords.
But here I am:] Sitting on a rearing horse—
This knight's fully armored and red-plumed fierce.
Decked out in a salamandered gold robe,
holding a sprouting wand on barren ground—
Knight of not waiting, of ready for war.

EMILY AS THREE WHITE CHAIRS

Darren C. Demaree

Poetry

I took both dogs for a walk.
I remembered for the first time in years
that I used to smoke Camel Wide Lights

& one of them, if I had a spare hand,
might be perfect at the end of a summer
where no room was safe

& so we spent the mess the best we could
outside, within sight of each other,
but not close enough to touch anyone

we weren't willing to die with.
I took both dogs for a walk
& I wondered why every time I see

the word *twigs* my mind misreads it
as *figs*. If I still smoked my breath
would reek of such thoughts. Emily

would know I was lost in the small
syllables again. She would bring out
the three white chairs we used to keep

in the attic for me to sit on one at a time.
She would swing on the porch
& smile at her silly husband, desperate

for nothing but the time she rolled
over her knuckles. I took both dogs
for a walk. When I got home

there was only the porch swing
& a crisp breeze teasing my beard
& Emily, with a blanket for all of it.

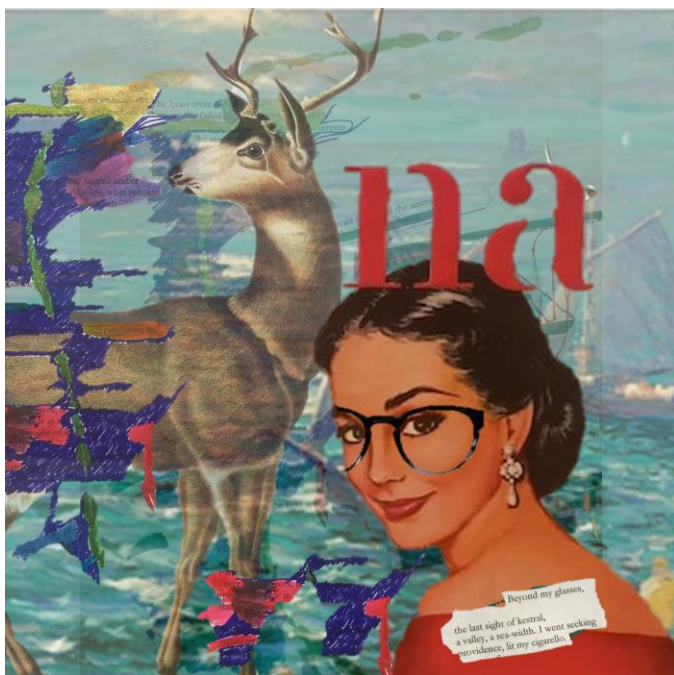
Kindness, My Victory
Maureen Alsop
Art



Suppliant on Earth
Maureen Alsop
Art



Cigarillo
Maureen Alsop
Art



Suck It Up Dance
Maureen Alsop
Art



Dark Roast
Bailey Swinford
Fiction

At work, there's a box of neon coffee straws: pink, orange, yellow, and green. My favorite is the green one. I know it's trivial, but whenever I happen to draw out a green straw, I smile just a little, encouraged by the secret knowledge that I'm in store for a *green straw* type of day. Sometimes I roll the plastic straw between my thumb and index finger while the dark roast brews, mesmerized by the pliant glint of chartreuse in rapid motion, the bright color swiveling back and forth, juxtaposed against the pallid peach of my skin, the florescent lights of the office kitchen shining ubiquitously from above.

I never told you about this private ritual of mine. I've always kept the quiet joy of green straw days just for me. It's not that I don't think you would have understood (on the contrary, I'm sure you might have, or at least would have tried), but because you knew virtually everything about me. For years, I parceled every nuance of myself out to you, divulging over and over again the innermost kernels of my existence, the nectar-soft core of my being. For years, belly up, an overripe melon slowly fermenting under the omnipresent furnace of the sun. Every thought, every word, every memory became a kaleidoscopic motley of you and me together, tangled, fused, a dappled prism of limbs and breath and codependence. But, oh, the colors! Brilliant shades draping over one another, folding into each other, intensely hued, as sharp and quick and imminent as a fall from a tenth story window. Colors I couldn't see with anyone else, so blinding I forgot there were parts of me that didn't have to belong to you.

It's been five months now, but I still have the key to your place. On pink straw days, while I wait for the dark roast to brew, I sometimes trace the curve of the key with my fingernail, following its peaks, its every hollow. I remember the mornings we made coffee together, you shirtless, me braless, the whole day ahead of us. On orange straw days, I sometimes curl the key into my fist, squeezing—hard—while moments of magic and wonder ebb and flow in haunted cadence before my eyes. It comes in waves, the nostalgia, and I watch as our young hearts fade into the flood, disappearing beneath the surface. I hold my breath and kick, trying not to drown as the swell carries you farther away from me, carries me farther away from you. I reel, plunge, turn away from the helplessness in your eyes as I wash into a future that doesn't embrace you, trying desperately to keep my own head above the water.

On yellow straw days, I think about mailing the key back to you—a final goodbye—but by the time the dark roast is finished brewing, I always decide this would be an unduly cruel thing to do, and so I keep it. For so long, I idolized you, prioritized you without reserve or caution or limit, and on yellow straw days, I don't have the luxury of turning away from the fear in your eyes, the unspoken plea shadowed in the tremor of your voice.

"I...can't do this anymore," I say, my own tongue unwieldy, metallic and salt-leaden.

"What?"

"It's not your fault," I stumble, choke—my teeth balloon in my mouth, my gums are coated in sawdust—"It's not you," I say, I sputter, "it's not you, it's me." It sounds asinine as I say it aloud, but I let the edict linger. It hangs like mist in the air, as true and tangible as the dewy condensation that clings to infinite blades of grass in the early morning.

“I can’t feel my hands.” You stare, your gaze boring into me. Your pupils are concentrated grains of sand, so molten-hot they could erupt into glass—but instead, tears.

And with those words, after those words, all was shorn away. I became wildness, the marrow in my bones charged by a fire-white pain, my lungs lithe and buoyant, raw in the boned cage of my chest, my throat, my body scorched by a thousand invisible pinpricks—regret, shame, grief, loss—but above all, emboldened by freedom. Quickly, then, the worst was over, and I stood opaque in my new separateness, wobbly, unmoored, the gap between us widened by vertigo, by my fledgling sense of confidence.

On yellow straw days, I almost falter. But on green straw days, while I wait in the bureaucratic sterility of the starchy office kitchen for the dark roast to brew, I realize I am whole. Without even a passing thought of you, my chakras frisk, light and elegant, baptized by a mirror glaze of autonomy, elevated atop the tangled breakers of the Mediterranean. I imagine these waves not as waves of nostalgia, but waves blushed by the wandering scent of patchouli, and with a sweep of my arm, I dredge them farther up from the clandestine sea—a yearning upswing, ascent, levitation. I rise, arc, and I become whitewater collapsing in on itself, surging, swelling, rolling—a climb charred by the weight of essence and fortitude, the crux of mettle and the vision of a jade-bright identity.

Somewhere in the world, red poppies and field thistles bloom, knotting together in windswept valleys during cloudless afternoons. And somewhere else in the world, narwhals are nearly lost at sea, adrift in the Arctic waters surrounding Greenland, Canada, and Russia, seen

only when they want to be, piebald giants lulling just
beyond sight.

On green straw days, life is so much more.

Life has always been so much more.

Things My Mother Gave Me

Megan Xandra

Poetry

My first lip gloss. A bottle of Love's Baby
Soft. *Dear America* books. Pink bedding
on the couch, a pot lined with a Pick
'n Save bag to puke in. Chronic migraines, blinds
on the picture window shut. *Wee Sing Bible*
Songs cassettes, then, at 15, my first secular
CD. *I think you're old enough now*. Repeat road
Trips for surgeries and follow-ups. (I just didn't
grow right, but she didn't give me that.)
The ability to cook. Homeschool textbooks. Closed
doors. Trips to the grocery store.

*You don't need
friends—you'll be an adult way longer.*
The Tylenol she still doesn't know I piled
in my lap and almost swallowed at 15. Purity
ring at 16, a contract to sign. Six years later, a scar
on my bicep when I tried to leave home (and
a week later, I did). Texts with misspelled slurs
when she learned
about my girlfriend. Claims that my lifestyle hurt
her health. A ticket to see an orchestra with
the family
that Christmas (but I wouldn't go). *I did so much
for you. I deserve so much better.* A cup, shattered
on my bedroom floor.

Liu's Grandmother

Leslie Dianne

Poetry

Liu's grandmother is
making the noodles
in the Chinatown shop
right in front of the
smoky glass window
the bamboo steamers
stacked and ready
in a corner
the silver counter
gleaming, the Chinese
calligraphy scrolls
ornate and fading
Liu's grandmother is
kneading a fat wad of dough
punching its center
and pulling it into
ribbons of centuries
she stretches out decades
separates them into years
shapes each one into a rope
of promise and memory
she eases them into
a huge boiling pot
and when they are done
she seasons them with
prayers and good luck

holy ground

C.W. Bryan

Poetry

The parking lot melts into the street,
The congregation walks down
holy steps.
Consecrated earth cries like watercolor,
the dandelions slake
their thirst.

I pray for rain and my mouth
is filled with snow.

planting flowers

C.W. Bryan

Poetry

My girlfriend just turned 29.
She works a job

that she hates.
“I haven’t done a thing

with my life.”
I know that’s not true.

Just the other day
I saw her smash a dandelion

with a stick, filling
the air with snow.

Girls

Heather Myers

Poetry

We were soon-to-be middle school girls, carrying nothing but a backpack and two water bottles. We went deep into the woods until a cabin, a swing set, and a promise: that we wouldn't let the other die. The day was foggy. We were not afraid. In this place, we were the story and the magic. We didn't know yet how men could hurt. This was before the world was big. We were girls from a small place. This was after my brother died. After the school bus boy said I was trailer trash. We needed no map, only the other. We imagined the cabin family died and the woods was ours. That we could hide there forever—become witches. I loved her. I didn't have a sister and envied her breasts. After endlessness, the daylight broke under dusk. This was before we grew up and apart. Before appearances mattered so much. Before dark, we rode our bikes to the ice cream truck. One deer crossed, then many—does with fawn. They were so close we might've touched them. I decided the deer were mine. I like to imagine they chose me too.

Taking Inventory After Loss

Heather Myers

Poetry

Kneecap scars Seafoam
 Gray stones embedded
 like an old wives' tale
 within my bones—
 and I wished for a horse
 and wanted a sister—
 (happy to be only me)
 Salvage yearning, those scraps, and scrapes
 Our beginnings folded neatly in a box:
 A torn photo
 mother taped together
 Moth-eaten baby shoes locks of hair
 Lace stocking Pink garter

Slowly,

I burn.

Thought does that.

I resist—

“You’re a ticking time bomb,”

someone thoughtless said.

Winter Anniversary

Kevin Grauke

Poetry

I hear it the same as I did back then,
as if in a dream: the low, slow
scrape of a plow clearing snow.

The storm, exhausted from her day
of swirling, had pulled the train of her dress
through the sleeping city and fled

on the wind, leaving scattered bouquets
of peonies for the lone, late-night attendant
to collect in his rusted truck's curved basket

while we lay safe and warm
beneath blankets heavy with night.
In the morning, my wife will raise the blinds,

letting in another year's bright light
to shine on a reborn world as level and smooth
as that cake we once cut together.
Through it, a path has been cleared for us.

Blameless
Kevin Grauke
Poetry

We are not the reason for the melting,
the burning, the boiling, the dying. Our cars
and factories are not the cause of our demise on
the horizon. No, God is the one to blame,
though he made sure to make it seem,
at least to some of us, as if, in fact, we were.
Maybe he merely wanted to see if we
could ever take responsibility
for even one solitary thing.
For good and for ever, however, He knows
now that we cannot. We are the most
obstinate of his children. We were warned
to stop playing, and yet, here lies a vase
in fragments at our feet. But we
broke nothing. We swear.

The Dao of Mother, Daughter, Fish

Erin Swanson

Nonfiction

My mother made haddock, breaded in Ritz crackers and a little Parmesan. Baked in the oven. Overcooked and dry. Fish on Friday. Like a good Catholic. Except we hardly ever went to church. Maybe on Easter. The Christmas Eve after she left my father we went to Midnight Mass and it was a nightmare. My sister told my brother he was going to burn in Hell. My brother told my sister to *fuck off* just as the choir had stopped singing. No one expected that kind of quiet. My mother, who was in the choir, turned a shade of white that is almost translucent. I could see the green of her veins from ten uncomfortable pews back.

I think my mother hoped that the Midnight Mass would bring our family back together, though I can't understand why she would think that. Maybe she thought my father would see some kind of a light. Which seems terribly misguided when you are married to a devil.

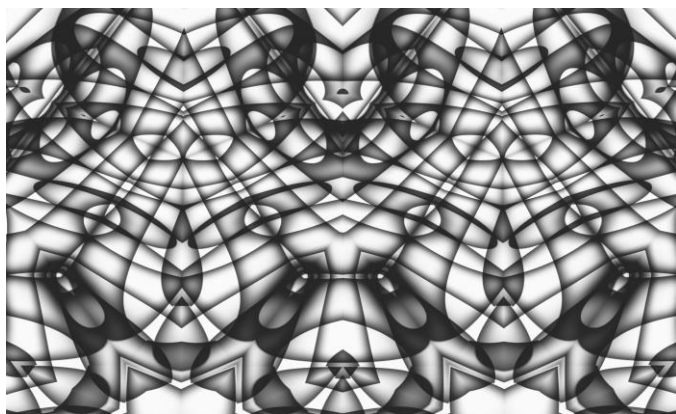
Years later she said that no one wants to believe that they are married to a pedophile. She says, "I tried to make the marriage work. But you were my competition." Sometimes I think she is the one who will burn in Hell.

I do miss haddock on Fridays. It's a type of fish you can only really get in Maine. I don't go there much anymore. And when I do, I eat lobster. No one else will make the haddock like my mother did.

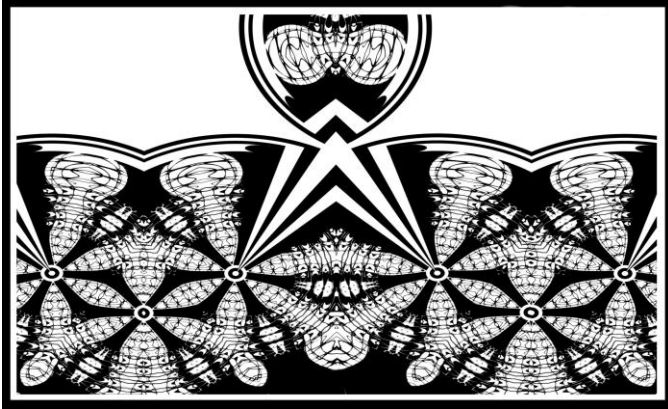
Conflicter

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



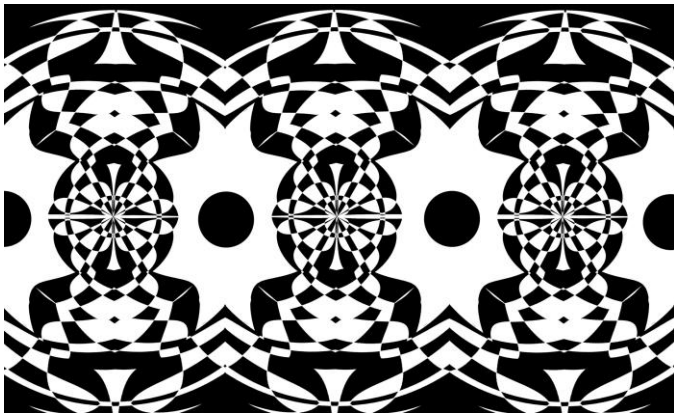
Intrusive
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



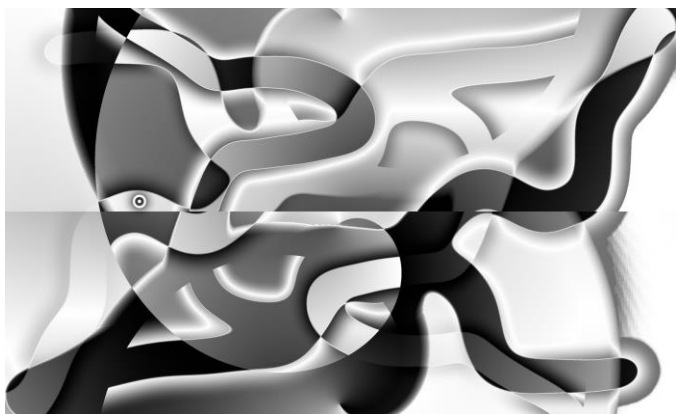
Somewhat Anxious 2
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



The Peephole of Reality
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



The Puzzle of Identity
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



The Purpose of Trees

James Lilliefors

Poetry

During the storm,
you lost the shape of what you were,
forced to bend and bow, this way and that,
in winds as harsh and unforgiving
as human rage.

Why did you just stand there,
in the face of such indignity?
I think I know the answer now.
You stood there because
that's what you do. Unlike us,
whose tendency is to flee.
You, who stood stoically for decades
alone, must have known this storm too
would soon pass. That its aftermath
would be so bewitchingly calm
that it might be seen as a kind of denial.

You stand now as living witnesses,
with wounds that defy epiphany,
the streets covered with your
broken branches, your smashed fruit.
You, who knew the storm
better than we did, stand to teach us:
how the will to survive
can obliterate the will to destroy.

These are a few of the things
I might have told my childhood
friend, many years ago, when he asked me,
“What is the purpose of trees?”

“To give us fruit. And paper.
To provide shade,” I told him instead.
But after the storm, think there are better answers.
In the divine mirror, we see briefly
who we are, then turn away and forget.
This, too, is the purpose of trees: to show us
what we don’t remember we know,
what we might never come to again on our own.
You stand there because you are substance
and we are still mostly shadow.

Survivors

James Lilliefors

Poetry

It might've been the hottest day
of summer, maybe the hottest
there ever was. A day when
the hornets and wasps
hid in shadows, fat and fuzzy,
sucking nectar into their crops.
And the Earth itself seemed
to crave something unattainable.

We set fire to that day
and watched it burn,
clearing the ground
of all that felt trivial or tired,
and drove on, through
the liminal landscape,
like fugitive arsonists,
leaving childhood forever.

So why does that day still return,
long after those around it burned?

I remember the glass heat, vinyl
sticking to backs of bare legs,
the faint whiff of gasoline from your fingers,
the fruit-gum taste on your tongue,
the tinny sound of hope carrying
across the cornfields—a Motown song
that played on every radio in America
that summer, blooming extravagantly
for a few weeks, then gone.

It was a disposable day, a culture of
convenience. Bottles, dresses, diapers,
dreams; loyalties, friendships:
all could be replaced, in a way
that almost felt like freedom.

So why does that day still return,
long after those around it burned?
And what should we—knowing now
that our lives are largely fire—do
about the survivors?

Happy Marriage Cake

Buffy Shutt

Poetry

Ready in:

40 ~~mins~~ years

Ingredients: 9

Serves: ~~8-10-12~~ 0

Nutrition information: Unavailable

Ingredients

- 1 cup quick ~~oatmeal~~ mouth
- 1 cup all-purpose ~~flour~~ forgetfulness
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ~~brown sugar~~ diet pills
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white ~~sugar~~ outs or black-outs
- 1 teaspoon ~~baking~~ fizzy soda (kept cold)
- 1 cup unsalted ~~butter~~ female body (at room temperature)
- 1 egg (more if necessary)
- 1 teaspoon ~~vanilla~~ painful extract
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup rhubarb jam

Directions

- Preheat ~~oven~~ body to 400°. Butter or grease a 9-inch cake or pie pan.
- In a mixing bowl, combine mouth, forgetfulness, diet pills, white-outs, black-outs, ~~oatmeal, flour, brown and white sugar, and baking soda~~. Cut in the ~~butter~~ body (as you would for pie crust); with a pastry blender or with ~~your-his~~ hands, rub the ~~butter~~ body into the dry ingredients until well blended.
- Beat in one egg and ~~vanilla~~ painfully extract later.

- Press 2/3 of the ~~cake~~ body dough into the bottom of the pan. Spread the rhubarb jam evenly over the ~~layer~~ all body parts, then crumble remaining dough over top of ~~cake~~-body.
- Bake for 20-25 ~~minutes~~, years or until crust is golden brown.
- Cool in pan on wire rack.
- Slice and serve.

Renaissance
Erin Ratigan
Poetry

Many works of art
require restoration.

Her beauty remains, but struggles,
for her lighting was wrong.
It caused her colors
to fade over the years.

With care, a master helps her—
applies cleaning solution
and reveals layers,
still vivid.

She gets new varnish,
and the healthy shine makes her glow.
Finally, she smiles
refinished.

All who see her are in wonder
at what she knew all along.
They do not realize time and wear
inspire revival.

I Don't Even Know Who You Are

Zach Murphy

Fiction

When I booted up my computer and opened the web browser, the last thing I expected to see was a Facebook friend request from my estranged father. It's been 13 years since I rubbed my eyes and witnessed him dash out of my life, his silhouette sneaking across the streetlights and into the backseat of a yellow taxi. It's wild how such a blur of a moment can be so vivid in my memory.

Honestly, what is he trying to accomplish here? A friend request. That's rich. Is he attempting to make nice? Does he actually think that would work? I'm not holding a door open for half-hearted apologies and pitiful rivers of regrets. Or does he even have regrets?

Does he ever think about me? Well, I guess he had to be curious enough to search for me in the first place. So, maybe he does think about me. Does he want something from me? Is he checking in on me? Wondering what state I'm in? How my life has transpired? Is he trying to see which college I got accepted into but can't afford?

What if I click 'Accept'? Could this turn into one of those rare, happy stories with a Hallmark ending? We'll be out to lunch, eating a burger, laughing as ketchup drips onto our t-shirts at the same time, maybe even catch up while catching a baseball game.

Probably not. Let's do some investigating.

His profile is private. Because of course it is. It doesn't even show his location. But, wait. Maybe I could accept

the friend request, take a quick look around at his page, and then unfriend him. No, because he'll still get the notification. Do I even want to know what he has going on? Did he flee the country? Could I run into him on the street one day? Do I have any half-siblings roaming around in the world?

Goddamnit, I look like him. As much as I'd like to deny any speck of a resemblance, I see it. The intense eyebrows, the shape of the nose, even the patchy way our mustaches grow.

My sweaty palm sits atop the computer mouse and the cursor hovers over the area, waiting for a command. I'm shaking. I look at the smiley frog pencil holder on the desk, as if it has some wisdom to offer up. You can't click halfway. You either click or you don't. I know this isn't a nuclear situation, but I'm afraid of the fallout.

My mom walks into the room and glances at the computer screen.

"Who is that?" she asks.

I click 'Decline' and exit out of the window.

"Just a spambot," I say.

I Found Your Photograph

D. A. Hosek

Poetry

I found your photograph
tucked between the pages of
a long-neglected book. You smiled
at the camera all those years
ago and I didn't recognize you.
My memory of your face has
been redrawn over and
over by all the faces
I've tried to substitute
for yours.

Wayfinding

S.D. Dillon

Poetry

Seabirds fly in a V
& map the stars—your canoe
beats against moon & dark—
plants & flotsam rock
the hull, matching lights each to
waves patterned in debris.

Arctic Tern

S.D. Dillon

Poetry

Its flight is one long turn—
Antarctic & back—
low to water to duck for fish—
& up without breaking
pattern.

Everything is off.

S.D. Dillon

Poetry

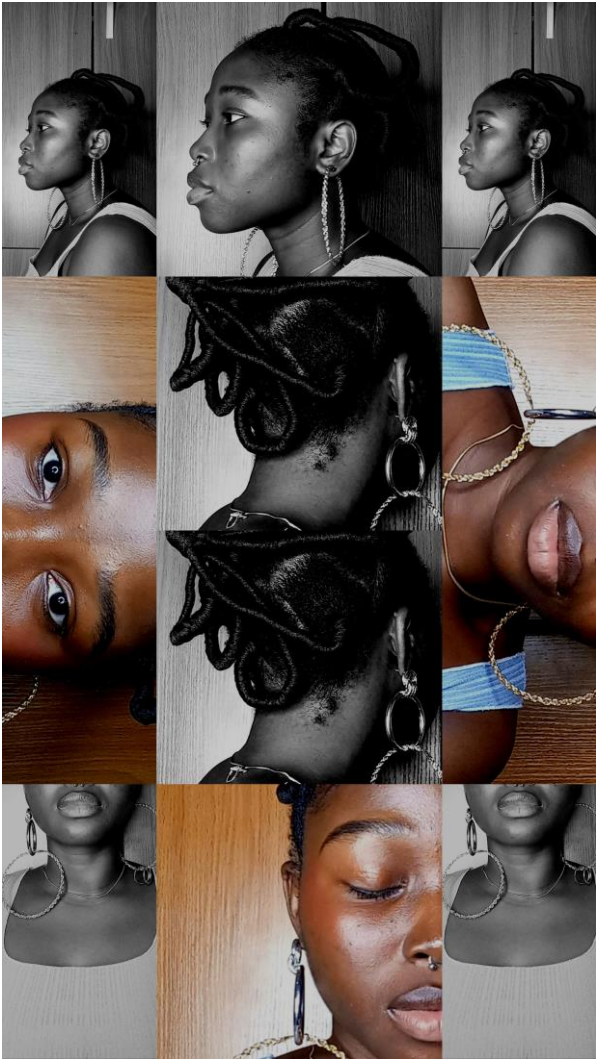
Stormclouds fire in lavender & red—
ducks fly in a W

& after the wind, it's rainstorm, rainstorm—

the black-crowned night-heron has
red eyes:

they look like yours.

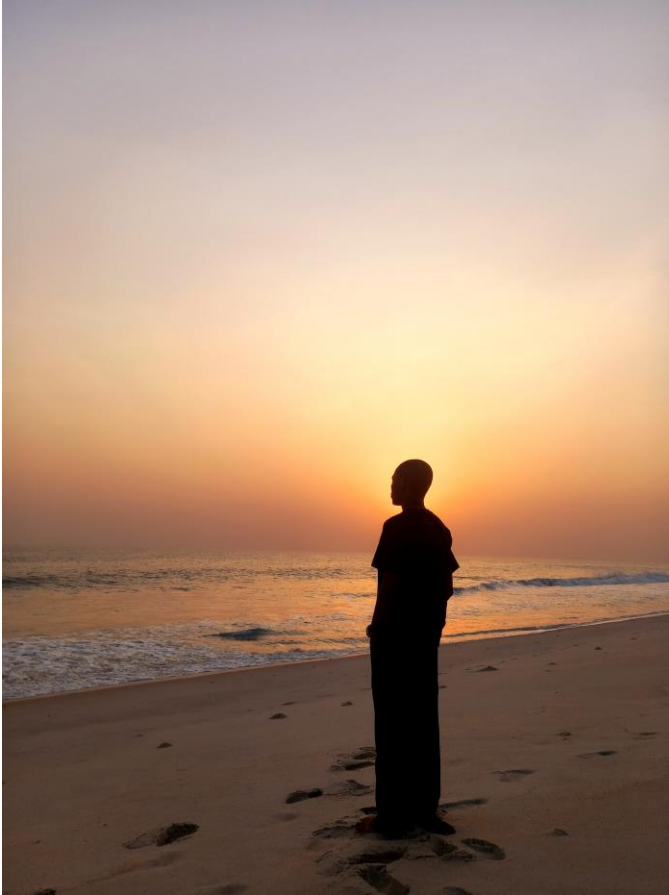
Reclaiming Sanity
Oluwafemi Adesina
Art



Resistance
Oluwafemi Adesina
Art



Revelation
Oluwafemi Adesina
Art



December—Pomegranates

Ellie M. Windsor

Nonfiction

For one week out of the year I keep half a pomegranate in my fridge. Not the same half, or the same pomegranate, but a rotation of chunks on one juice-stained plate in the middle shelf. During these days, usually in November or January, I forget that other foods exist. I live by this fruit and eat by this plate, which I wash (rinse, really) between finishing off the last seeds of one pomegranate and digging my thumbnail or knife-tip into the crown of the next.

I don't like to use a knife to open my pomegranates. If the tip extends any further than the skin, which it does even when the skin is thick and the hand light, punctured arils deflate from a bursting red to mushy mauve, their juice leaking out the cut. But it takes a kind of strength I only sometimes have to open one by hand, thumbnails long enough to puncture pith and not brittled by polish or polish-remover, palm muscles shaped but not wearied from guitar- or piano- playing, and a fruit willing to split along its seams. When I don't have that strength, I have aching nail beds, a perfect red globe, and, ultimately, another utensil laid in the piled row beside the sink.

A dura mater of thin white film separates the pomegranate's seeds. Peeling it back feels like removing marble muslin from a statue's face, like revealing a nest of eggs beneath their mother's careful cover, like committing a delicate violence. The field of arils beneath shouldn't be disturbed, but I do, choosing one on the edge and pressing its head to detach the seed.

Seeds don't fill up a stomach. They're not for my mouth so much as my hands. I pull the plate out of the fridge to poke and prod and pinch, to outsource my brain's anxious fiddling to my fingers. I sit hungry for

hours while putting seeds in my mouth in sequence. I do so while talking, while sitting in front of a laptop screen, while busying hands that I would rather be typing or writing or eating for real.

The first year I ever had a pomegranate preoccupation, it was the beginning of a December that was joyless like only January should be. I picked up one of the fruits in the produce section, enticed by a special or just by its seasonality. I felt its heft in my palm, nearly tossed it in the cart, and then placed it there. At home, with the Lacroix atop the fridge and the tortilla chips in the pantry and the sage and snap peas in the crisper drawer, I didn't want to eat anything but that one pomegranate.

Not only did a pomegranate not require cooking, it involved as many bites as a meal. By believing it was one, I wouldn't have to find something else to eat. And it offered the illusion of activity, too, a tactile something-to-do that required little mental input. As I pried one pomegranate seed after another from its tethers, I felt my brain go blank like I barely remembered it could.

I ate four in six days. The ratio equaled about an hour of dedicated seed-picking every day. Those four pomegranates were, in memory, most of my diet for the week. I remember constant eating and constant hunger. I remember beratement (why can't I cook something else, eat something else, do anything else?) and I remember abject joy. I remember every seed as a jewel and every bit of juice as a panacea. I remember wishing I could empty my mind for more than a moment, until it, too, was left only hollow, divoted pith.

In season, out of season, and in again—I forget that certain kinds of produce exist until their time comes the next year. When the days are darkest, when the bright

oranges and yellows of gourds have dulled and those of citrus haven't yet arrived, slotted plastic grocery bins populate with red—with rippled burgundy heads of radicchio, with purple-tipped parsnips, and with the garnet globes of pomegranates. I can never deny their ruby promises of distraction from the dark. I buy one, or two, and I come back in as many days for more. I take the rest I need for as long as the pomegranates can provide it. Then I wash their plate from its juice and stains, and I wait for another winter.

Salamander Funk

Mary Paulson

Poetry

I gave my left arm to a child
who already has two. That gives
him three. I regret the loss
of my five well-manicured nails.

Now you know how it feels, says
the salamander without a tail
wriggling uncomfortably
in the brush.

I miss my pretty hand, I say.
I miss my pretty head, says the chicken.
My colors are too bright
to last, moans the butterfly.

But nature commands
we will come back, grow back,
be restored. My son carries
my comb with pride, cries the cock.

People call me stump.
Somewhere there's a kid with FREAK
tattooed across his locker and his mother
making the sign of the cross.

Me & Me

Mary Paulson

Poetry

Me and me go to the market,
buy milk, cigarettes, hand soap.
Me and me stay home,
watch Project Runway,
Law & Order
repeats, E! TV.
She says (and I agree),
we have nothing to complain about
except each other.

Before the world wakes up, I miss my mother.

Kelsey Ann Kerr

Poetry

Before the world wakes up, I miss my mother.
There's only the clank of my spoon in coffee,
no cartoons on TV. No one asking me
to zip up her dress, her shirt, find her shoes.

There's only the clank of my spoon in coffee.
There's no one to comment on the sunrise with,
no cartoons on TV. No one asking me
about the Shakespeare studied in school today.

There's no one to comment on the sunrise with,
as she drives me to school in her car.
About the Shakespeare studied in school today:
The death would ultimately surround me.

As she drives me to school in her car,
she adjusts her wig, then turns to speak.
The death would ultimately surround me.

She adjusts her wig, then turns to speak.

Before the world wakes up, I miss my mother,
zipping up her dress, her shirt, finding her shoes.

Botany Litany
Kelsey Ann Kerr
Poetry

What was it like to give birth to me?
Hands covered in dirt, she tells me it was like laying
daffodils along a gravel road, right after ripping
them from ground, hollowed out. She tells me
that her jaw cracked from clenching as
my father threw me into the air, a cupcake cosmos
falling with its inverted umbrella from the ceiling.
My curls spilled from my scalp, a bloody spider lily,
reaching for hard-earned aspirations. Each time
I tumbled I found my way up through the pages
of botany books, cooing as they turned in her hands.
Some of this my mother told me when I was younger,
just like she taught me to observe flowers
of a Japanese cherry, or to parse apart
a fern's leaves from mint's, just like she tried
to teach me how to count the leaves of poison ivy,
to watch for the warning of its sheen.

Things You're Not Supposed To Brag About

Travis Flatt

Fiction

The way I fought that night was feral. "Tooth and nail." I really did bite and claw. There might have been three of them. Four, by some accounts. They backed my brother into the corner, so he couldn't help, but by God, I didn't need help. I was Hercules, the Rock, and Bruce Lee all rolled together into a lump like Play-Doh, reshaped into this lithe, night-beast cheetah/bear-hybrid god man, tossing EMTs around my apartment. Big guys, too, and me, just one-sixty and six-two, barely middleweight sized, but skinny. They thought I was on drugs: that's the reason they gave for attacking. And I was half blind, too. I remember being blind, but maybe it was "blind panic." These aren't just expressions. I snapped awake in my apartment full of big men grabbing and tackling me. A nightmare. Only I could actually fight back, no soupy, slow-motion dream punching. My first seizure and I fought like hell. They finally dragged me out, rocketing the fight down Chapman Highway to the hospital. You found a trail of blood leading back from the ER lobby to my hospital room. I'd kept the war alive. Whose blood it was is impossible to say. I broke a finger, chipped a tooth, was bruised that Play-Doh brown from getting crushed all together. From knees and elbows and fists. Brown and green and blue from head to toe. Try to admit you weren't impressed with how I fought, Dad.

martyr
Stella Wong
Poetry

the foodie road trip movie is released
thanksgiving weekend.

slickepott, a spatula, is a bowl
licker. you freeze

the madeleines I made with three
forms of coconut—

milk, oil, toasted flakes—
and thaw them

to eat. love is cast ironed
ikea meatballs

you bought with a coupon
and charred purple

and yellow carrots. I chew your arms
until they're mustard

which is good with dill, on fish.
so simple. a pleasure.

sketchy
Stella Wong
Poetry

in one stanza, you adopt a russian blue
gray from the shelter with jewel eyes

that your brother and his husband
name beyoncé. you espouse a second tabby

that your sister who looks like your mother's sister
names semlan, the cream puff

with a cardamom filling. still
we watch fresh yeast for hours

with swedish instructions and no captions.
you rescue a third maine coon or forest

cat and your engineer thor
names it lavender laroux

jules verne. you fish for
the sour beers, the pale ales, the rotund

orange-green champagne, room
for all the little ones I can't have.

the little bellies. I draw you
a fictional draft.

Daddy's Baby Girl

Jaime Lilley

Poetry

In the cafe
I saw a little girl
in her father's arms,
absolutely limp
limbs hanging heavy,
hair unkempt,
face slack, mouth agape,
eyes unfocused,
her abstract gaze
turned inwards,
as if listening
to some singular
corporeal mystery
coming from
deep inside
her warm animal,
alive only to that,
as if she had
abandoned herself
in his arms.
I thought about
what it was like
to be small,
to be carried
unguarded,
dreaming and lost
to internal sensation,
held in its throes
by stronger arms.

Moonrise from 32,000ft

Eben E. B. Bein

Poetry

a rushing shell,
you in it. across the aisle, ovals of
sky pink fire. but you're on the blue side,
forehead pressed to the pane. leave, return,
pass over. any verb with respect to
home. it's okay not to know. the earth distant with
imperfections, snow caught in its crevices. it's okay
to be desolate because the moon. the gold disc of it,
leaving indigo, returning to purple. from a height
you can see it hit the lens level, ripple,
planktonic hatchling testing an invisible shell,
then breaking through—a moon jelly
undulating out of the benthos,
making for space,
like even the bleakest rock can live,
can leave.

The Wrong Coast

Eben E. B. Bein

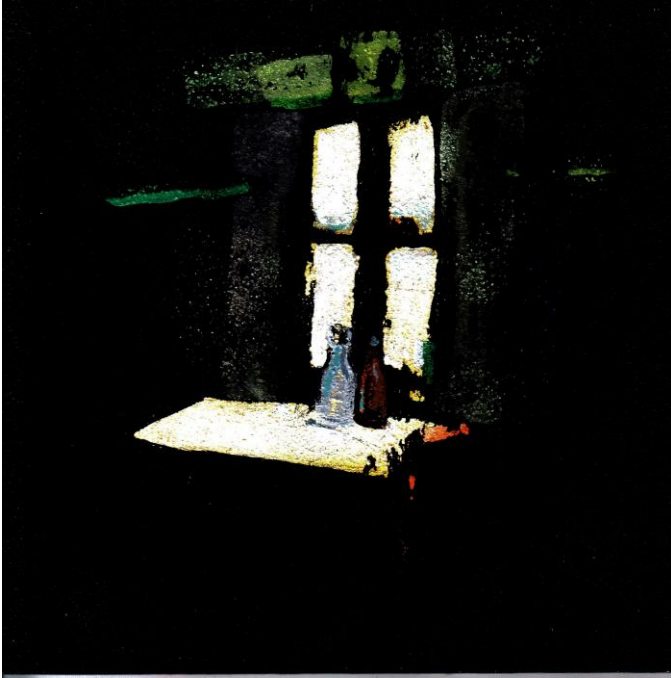
Poetry

The water is right there
yet the hills are brown,
rounded, ravines green,
smoothed, the tree tops
all the same height
as though topiary—
something something surface area?

I do not trust. I climb. The dead
branches as strong as the living,
everything roughly scaled,
leaving imprints. Cones
cluster like off-kilter birds.

I wish you were here
in the hanging field,
up where beard moss tassels
bend in the wind, vultures
circle, ravens drag the rasp.
Out there, currents
scribble something on the bay.

Boathouse
Susan Solomon
Art



Little Free Library in Snow

Susan Solomon

Art



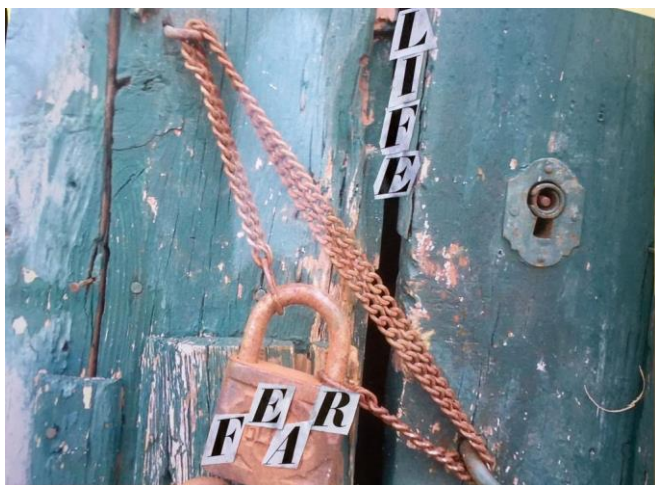
Change Path
Dario Roberto Dioli
Art



LIFEFEAR

Dario Roberto Dioli

Art



Apsis
Francis Walsh
Poetry

I would never write a poem
about falling in love

because I could never be sure
if I had fallen in love or written a poem.

I have the same superstition
writing poems about sardines:

oil-slicked lips
the ocean receding in my belly

at sunset, the moon rises
and gropes for fullness.

Moon is a word of love,
the same with orbital.

How else do you chart celestial bodies?

Limbs
Angela Arnold
Poetry

Winter sun has blackened,
high skies stunted.

The gales of some November
have left hands, fingers, shrunk

conductors of coarse cries
but still reaching, always, touching.

Here your plump little arms already
draw in the spring air, gather

faint twigs of shadow,
like nature's go at tattooing.

Warm, even if bravely cold,
your flesh-not-wood limbs encircle

the bole: huge, silent, finger pointer;
dumbstruck one

who mimes loving back, 3Ds his agreement
to hug—and there's the lot of us

reaching up to the sky
together.

Keepers

Angela Arnold

Poetry

Gently, I turn the key, open
your chest:
some ribs here, the rest
over there (hugging
the sternum).
Why are your hands still
curled into fists?
There are many more
keys, you know, enough
to unlock the secrets
of the whole city,
the country—keys
are a species
in itself, don't you know,
yes, they breed.
Freedom fighters,
all of them. Let go!
Open up! Unclench
your hands, take
one of mine—let's
both climb inside.

Spellwork for Mental Health

Maggie Wolff

Poetry

Sadness spellcaster, say dirty words unspoken by the spirits you summoned: *mental illness*. Call on the ghost-close grip of mother and grandmother, ancestral voices raised to vibrate your circle through diagnosis language, a song of syllables heavy and unholy. Light white and black candles: white for protection, black for the bullet grandmother swallowed, white for hope, black for a pit your mother still haunts.

Smoke the room with incense of any kind. Line the circle with pills—Effexor to quiet the whispered inheritance to end it all but stage it like an accident. Trazadone to silence the brain into sleep. Klonopin to muffle leftover noise. Remind yourself this too is holy—the small spells throat-cast daily to keep you tethered to your life.

Invoke the spirits as remembrance and reminder. Circle-call these women to your side, let them whip and whisper, yelp and yell history hysterics until your brain respects chemistry and genetics. Grandmother spirit comes when called, enters as a breeze through your hair, a hand on your shoulder, her rosary beads pressing your flesh. Her voice garbles an underwater speaking: *take the medicine, ignore the gun/razor/gas pedal and concrete barrier, use the available help that could have saved my life*.

In her lectured incantation, a coven-hidden language breaks the veil: *I'm sorry I hurt your mother, hexed generations with this dark unmagic*.

The mother spirit is harder to summon. It resists the pull of your call. It knows you are half-holding back. Summoning the living requires sacrificial offering, a deeper power your energies can't afford most days. Mother lingers outside the summoning, a possession held at arm's length as the candles flick and flame and fight to stay lit. Her hands refuse to reach for you, but her voice snap-fires an electric hum you translate by daughter instinct: *it wasn't always my fault, I stopped drinking for you, I fought off suicide whispers for you, I broke for you*. You remember the help she refused, her threat to kill herself if you forced her into a hospital, her refusal for medication and doctors—black magic and silent suffering her chosen refuge.

The circle breaks, pills wind scatter, mother spirit grabs your wrists, skin slashed by sharp nails, and your blood spills the spell undone. The room is suddenly empty, spirits retreat. You don't close the circle, say a blessing, sign the cross. An echo language plays in your ear, and you swallow your antidepressant one more time.

how two things are connected

Hamdy Elgammal

Fiction

Before I had a son I was a son and on my first day of school in America I was nervous and so my father taught me how to build a bridge. He used matchsticks, blue at the tips, balanced carefully on the circular dining table he'd thrifted a few weeks before. He said, in Arabic: this is how two things are connected. It was soothing watching him put one matchstick against another, his fingertips rugged and slightly shaky, exhaling slowly so as to not disturb the delicate build.

My father and I lived on our own in a house by green hills where thick fog climbed up, down and around, surrounding us like a hug. For my eighth birthday, he bought me a Lego set that came in two pink buckets and we built more bridges; from my bedroom to the living room, from the bathroom to the kitchen. He often stepped on rogue pieces though if he was upset or angry, he didn't show it. And soon, our house was connected by an intricate network of plastic bright red and acid green and baby blue. My father died that fall.

After the funeral I went back and built a bridge between my father's headstone and our screen door. I sat on our porch, put my fingers against my lips, felt my breath warm my palms. I whispered to the hills and the fog, "This is how two things are connected," though I understood that my father—his ears under grass and mud and cheap wood, eight thousand miles away from the country he called home—did not hear. That was when my uncle took me to live with him in Gilroy. And after I graduated high school, I moved across houses that were never home, rooms and studios I can scarcely remember; sanitized, white, unfamiliar.

I took a job with the State building bridges that cut through gulfs and streams and redwoods that kissed clouds and concrete. Then I figured I'd build bridges no one had built before. Digging in the many pink folds of my brain I built bridges between memories that lived on opposite ends of time, between the parts of me that shrieked when I was born to the parts of me that will sigh when I will die. I fashioned a bloodied bridge between my heart and my vocal cords and sat, in Californian dusk, listening to my ventricles shout in a language I'd long lost to America.

When my son was born I started building the only bridge that mattered, the bridge to where I came from—where my father came from, his father before him—the place outside America, the place I knew was home. I mixed water and cement, erected columns of steel, laid bricks against grasslands and hillsides and ocean floors. But soon I got older and weaker and more distractible, so I turned to my son for help. I told him—he was old enough to know we were always only ever in, never of, America—I told him that I was going to die someday, and it would be up to him to complete this final bridge. From here, I said, to home wherever you run into it over there. Collect the tatters on the other side and then patch your soul from the pieces. He laughed at me, amazed as he always was at my naivete. I don't know what is here and what is there, he said. There's nothing for me here, nothing for me there. All I know is the bridge.

And that was that.

END

Only Dizzy When You Stop

Mazzy Sleep

Poetry

Poetry is a thing for the crowds,
For the sea, for the small houses
Uprooted from the side of the road
In some unknown countryside:
Poetry rides on waves, on the seats
Of motorbikes, on clouds, maybe;
For chance is a piano
The likeliness of hitting the right key
Depends on the piece, on the player—
Having a skill set is not about talent, it's about arsenal;
The voice that becomes background noise
Shares the same face as the pair of eyes
That watches all

can't believe this

Mazzy Sleep

Poetry

First it was a story
then you stripped it down
till it was just a thread
that you could follow,
not a destination but a path.

You said to me you
were a creator,
I said you were a
destroyer; we were
thinking of the same thing
in different ways, from different
angles.

We haven't spoken in
a very long time,
and I haven't tried (and I probably
wouldn't be successful anyway)
to throw a stone into a river
since you left.

There's something inside of me
trying to find meaning in
these words, something so far
it's close, something so small
it's huge.

You aren't here to read this poem,
you never are, but I'm starting to think
it's less of a fact and
more of an opinion, a choice, a variable.

More of a trial than a finale,
hope instead of misery, but
aren't those two things the same?

Castaway
Mazzy Sleep
Poetry

Slipping out of the sunlight,
Trapped in peeled rooms;
Dry, stale wallpaper, broken tables
And people quieted
By the first silence at making:
These rooms, stairwells,
Flaked vacancies
Were always like this.

Joined by the inevitable walls
Of this laboratory:
The snake running through
Each chamber, mousetraps
Set; furniture
Untouched, dust collected,
This game of walls, floors, ceilings.

My belongings scattered
Across the floor,
Picking the bones from my food
(Leftovers
Always)
For I have been in this place
For as long as I remember.

We find no sleep;
I cannot recall the dream
That is
Before life:
This is
Final, I never tumbled

From any other place,
I'm homesick for the
Home that never was

The Sun
Mazzy Sleep
Poetry

The sunlight on my face, so quiet...
Through the shutters, beyond summer riots...
Onto this dark room to bring soft laziness,
This darkness before warmth...
I was in that cold,
Until the Sun sought my emptiness
To fill and brighten, forth!

My eyes had no shine before her arrival,
Now they are morning stars,
Waxen candles burning, bright gold bars.
The Sun's convivial endlessness,
The immortality seen between
The glow of each bright beam,
That reached for my soul
To retrieve my emptiness
And place a secret bliss to grow.

I denied, I denied...
I rolled out of the Sun...
I denied, oh, I denied,
I could not take her bursting kind.

We Dance Around the Scream

Mazzy Sleep

Poetry

We dance around the scream,
With smiles as we parade.
The wind blows cold with the fading sound,
And the laughing goes away.

Where is the turn in the path?
Everything seems the same...
No curtsey or cry, no twirl or laugh,
Never wild, always tame

The wind won't stop,
Won't stop,
Won't stop.
The wind won't stop,
Won't stop,
Won't stop.
The wind won't stop,
Won't stop,
Won't stop...

The sky grows black,
And the sun falls astray.
The stars begin to emerge
And the sunshine goes away.
The dusk passed quickly with a furious silence.
The night creeps in, faint as the violence
"Hello, tomorrow," Midnight says.
The world laughs until it ends,
It ends,
It ends...

BREATHE FIRE

Sarah Marie Page

Fiction

Your grandmother sits in the pale light of the nursery, wraps her arms around her swollen belly and cradles it. In her arms, she holds your mother, the size of an eggplant, but she also holds you. At twenty weeks, your mother has a fully developed reproductive system, six million eggs and the three of you are a nesting doll—your grandmother around your mother around you.

The year is 1969 and, in a few months, your mother will be born, red and wrinkled, seven pounds, eight ounces, twenty inches long. She'll scream so loud the doctors will say they heard it in Tuscaloosa, which is fine. Your mother will be born with lungs.

The nurses will hand her to your grandmother, dark eyed and pink-cheeked, and ask if she has a name. She doesn't yet, but your grandmother will go home and name her Chicago. After the band, not the city. She'll make sure everyone knows that.

Your mother won't know her father—your grandfather—but she'll ask. She'll ask and ask until your grandmother makes up a story about some peach farmer from Georgia with the same dark hair and wide-set eyes and later, your grandmother will wonder if she made a mistake leaving that line on the birth certificate blank.

She didn't.

For a while, it will be the two of them—your grandmother and your mother—suitcases packed, running like a pair of vagabonds and your grandmother will scrape by as a secretary, a cashier, a clerk. Your grandmother will spend a summer waitressing at that diner on the corner of Main and University where she'll meet a man name Harold and have her heart broken again.

But your mother won't remember any of that.

Instead, she'll remember spinning.

On the playground. At park. In the bedroom of their one-bedroom apartment, wearing nothing but a summer dress and socks. The air conditioner will blow, fluttering the strips of fabric and overhead the fan will turn.

Whurr.

Whurr.

Whurr.

There will be the car accident, the Cutlass with the broken fender. There will be fights, screams, the smell of sex on your mom sneaking in through the window.

Your mom will be high. Your grandma won't know.

Your mother will scream *I hate you I hate you I hate you* and your grandmother will wrap her arms around herself and sob.

There will be the trip to Hurricane, the sirens.

The lights blinking—

Red. Blue. Red. Blue.

Your grandmother will wonder if she's repeating the cycle all over again.

There will be sleepy Sundays and snow cones, dancing in the rain. There will be the chocolate lab named Fudge, except he won't be the old dog you remember. He'll be young, and your grandma will put a bow on him and stick him under the Christmas tree and your mom say she's way too old for this, but that night, she'll sneak into the bathtub and sleep with him.

There will be the trip to college, the twenty-five-hour drive from Little Rock to LA. Your mom will turn on Milli Vanilli and Madonna and your grandma will clutch white-knuckled at the steering wheel and as your mother sings *Dress You Up*. Your grandma will complain about music these days and your mom will say she wishes she was named after Led Zeppelin or the lead singer of The Kinks. Who likes Chicago anyway?

But they'll have a good time.

Twenty-seven years later and they'll still talk about the place they stopped for chili-cheese fries, the seedy diner on the side of the road. They both end up with raging diarrhea and you'll wonder if knowing the end of this story changes how they tell the beginning.

It does.

Your grandma will make the twenty-five hour drive back alone. She'll do her best not to cry, but when she passes the turn off for that seedy diner, she'll turn on *Dress You Up* and the tears will flow.

Your mom will nearly flunk out of college and there will be parties. Drugs. More sex. Twenty-seven years later and she won't want to talk about that. The memories will fall like change between the couch cushions and there will be things you know and things you don't. You know she dated Brad. You know they went to a Bad English concert. You don't know what happened next, but you know she tore the pages out of her journal and swallowed them.

And then there will be you.

You'll come out wrinkled and red, seven pounds, nine ounces, twenty-three inches long and you'll scream so loud the doctors will say they heard it in Denver.

The nurses will hand you to your mother and ask if you have a name. You don't yet, but that night your mother will go home and name you after Paris. After the heiress, not the city. She'll make sure you know that.

But none of this has happened, not yet.

Right now, your grandmother sits in the pale light of the nursery, her arms around her swollen belly, your mother and you tucked inside her like nesting dolls, and she wonders what type of mother she'll be.

Because your grandmother will give your mother her wounds; she'll also give her fire.

Breathe fire.

Review: *Everything the Darkness Eat* by Eric LaRocca

Alex Carrigan
Book Review

As we move further and further away from the era of H.P. Lovecraft, it becomes important to recognize how the Lovecraftian-monster and setting could translate in the 21st century. There have been plenty of reinterpretations and reimaginings of the work, but to truly understand the terror of the Lovecraftian is something that has become almost normalized the further we get from Lovecraft's lifetime. We know the deepest, darkest aspects of humanity as they were globalized during the mid-late 20th century, and we are constantly reminded of them every time we log into our social media accounts. Because of this, to truly improve upon the standards of the genre is to look at exactly how these tropes and themes have warped now that we've become more aware of the darkness in humanity.

Eric LaRocca's debut novel *Everything the Darkness Eats* (CLASH Books, 2023) strips away many of the trappings of the Lovecraftian tale but manages to keep the perpetual sense of dread and the cosmic escalation of evil in a way that is uncomfortably relevant to today. The novel alternates between a few characters in the small Connecticut town of Henley's Edge. The novel primarily focuses on three characters: Ghost Everling, a crippled widower continually plagued by a wraith that reminds him of the guilt he feels regarding the death of his wife; Nadeem Malik, a cop whose home and husband are continually threatened by small town bigotry; and Heart Crowley, a wealthy man whose home seems to offer up secrets and desires of cosmic proportions. How these three become intertwined reveals

many dark secrets of the town and plays into questions about who creates and perpetuates pain.

Ghost's storyline is the most reminiscent of the Lovecraft or Lovecraft-inspired tales. He's a man haunted by his past with very little to live for and mental and physical trauma keeping him from moving on. While he has some chances to improve himself with a meet cute with a single mom, it's when Mr. Crowley comes in to commiserate and offer Ghost the chance to redeem himself that his story becomes more gothic. With the promise of changing Ghost's life for the better if he partakes in a cosmic ritual, Ghost finds himself drawn into Crowley's sphere and begins to open himself up to intimacy and hope that comes from restrictive and cultish settings.

This tale is contrasted with the realistic horror of Malik's story. Malik is ostensibly supposed to be investigating the disappearances of people around Henley's Edge, making the reader think he'll be the detective figure of the mystery. Instead, he and his husband Brett are drawn into their own horror story when they begin to experience violence and threats at the hands of bigoted residents. Malik and his husband are seen as the Other in their community, being both an interracial couple and gay couple, and the closeminded residents seek to eliminate them due to an inability to understand them.

Because of this, Ghost and Malik become parallel characters. Both men are drawn into dangerous situations where a dark, Satanic-coded figure takes advantage of them with an increasing escalation of life-threatening danger. The way LaRocca swings between the fantastic and realistic horror of their stories is expertly done, as the writing makes it easy to identify and sympathize with both, and the clean, economical

writing makes it easy to digest the prose and want to continue on.

Everything the Darkness Eats is a reminder of the realized and unrealized horrors in the world. It draws the reader into the darkness with the promise of a single candlelight to keep them safe, but soon snuffs it out when it becomes clear that it will take more than a few candles to drive away the darkness. It's a reminder that we as humans may have done away with the need for cosmic entities to threaten existence, and that it will always come down to a human source to perpetuate the villainy of the world.

Contributor Bios

Oluwafemi Adesina

Oluwafemi Adesina is a lawyer who hails from Lagos, Nigeria. In a bid to escape the rigmarole of corporate culture that she has recently found herself rudely tossed in, she has taken to her pen again, and finds her light in the beauty of characters that her imagination has conjured, and in books with a happy ending. In her works she explores longing, sensuality, and home. For leisure, she likes to go to the beach, lose herself in the presence of her gods, and fantasize about her past, and her present. These days she is exploring happiness within her persistent anxiety and her penchant for chaos. She has her writing published in Brittle Paper.

Maureen Alsop

Maureen Alsop, PhD is the author of six collections of poetry, including a debut collection of visual poetry, *Tender to Empress*. Her visual poems have also appeared in *Telephone: A Game of Art Whispered Around the World*; *Entropy*; *Hyades Magazine*; *Filling Station*; *Jet Fuel Review*; *Periodicity*; *WCP Magazine*; *Sonic Boom* and in exhibitions at Louver Art Gallery's 50th Celebration of Amnesty International, and Umbrella Studio.

Angela Arnold

Angela Arnold lives in Wales, UK, and is also an artist and a creative gardener. Her poems have appeared in print magazines, anthologies and online, in the UK and elsewhere. Her collection *In|Between* looks at 'inner landscapes' and relationships (Stairwell Books, 2023). She enjoys her synesthesia and language/s and is currently learning Welsh. Twitter @AngelaArnold777

Vincent J. Barraco

Vincent J. Barraco is fueled by the examination of human extremes, trauma, and how it affects our sense of self. Despite usually writing about dark topics, he loves Moomins, iced coffee, waking up to sunshine, and fluffy poodles. This is the first time he has written creative nonfiction he is proud of, and he hopes it will find an audience that connects with it. @vincentjbarraco

Eben E. B. Bein

Eben E. B. Bein (he/they) is a biology-teacher-turned-climate-justice-educator at the nonprofit Our Climate. He was a 2022 Fellow for the Writing By Writers workshop and winner of the 2022 Writers Rising Up "Winter Variations" poetry contest. Their first chapbook "Character Flaws" is out with *Fauxmoir lit* and they've published with the likes of Fugue Literary, New Ohio Review, and Columbia Review. They are currently completing their first full collection "From the top of the sky" about parent-child estrangement, healing, and love. He lives on Pawtucket land (Cambridge, MA) with his husband and can be found online at ebenbein.com.

C.W. Bryan

C.W. Bryan is a student at Georgia State University. He lives with his clowder of cats (the best to ever do it) and girlfriend in Atlanta, GA. He is currently writing daily poetry prompts with a friend of his at poetryispretentious.com

Alex Carrigan

Alex Carrigan (he/him) is a Pushcart-nominated editor, poet, and critic from Alexandria, Virginia. He is the author of *Now Let's Get Brunch: A Collection of RuPaul's Drag Race Twitter Poetry* (Querencia Press, 2023) and *May All Our Pain Be Champagne: A Collection of Real Housewives Twitter Poetry* (Alien Buddha Press, 2022). He has had fiction, poetry, and literary reviews published in *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Lambda Literary Review*, *Barrelhouse*, *Sage Cigarettes* (Best of the Net Nominee, 2023), *Stories About Penises* (Guts Publishing, 2019), and more. For more information, visit carriganak.wordpress.com or on Twitter @carriganak.

Linda M. Crate

Linda M. Crate (she/her) is a Pennsylvanian writer whose poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has twelve published chapbooks the latest being: *Searching Stained Glass Windows For An Answer* (Alien Buddha Publishing, December 2022). She is also the author of the novella *Mates* (Alien Buddha Publishing, March 2022). Her debut book of photography *Songs of the Creek* (Alien Buddha Publishing, April 2023) was recently published.

Darren C. Demaree

Darren C. Demaree is the author of nineteen poetry collections, most recently “neverwell”, (Harbor Editions, June 2023). He is the recipient of a Greater Columbus Arts Council Grant, an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, the Louise Bogan Award from Trio House Press, and the Nancy Dew Taylor Award from Emrys Journal. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Best of

the Net Anthology and the Managing Editor of Ovenbird Poetry. He is currently living in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

Leslie Dianne

Leslie Dianne is a playwright, poet, novelist, screenwriter and performer whose work has been acclaimed internationally at the Harrogate Fringe Festival in Great Britain, The International Arts Festival in Tuscany, Italy, The Teatro Lirico in Milan, Italy and at La Mama, ETC in NYC. Her stage plays have been produced in NYC at The American Theater of Actors, The Raw Space, The Puerto Rican Traveling Theater and The Lamb's Theater, and at Theater Festivals in Texas and Indiana. She holds a BA in French Literature from CUNY and her poetry appears in The Wild Word, Sparks of Calliope, The Elevation Review, Quaranzine, The Dillydoun Review, Line Rider Press, Flashes and elsewhere. Her writing was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize and Best Of The Net.

S.D. Dillon

S.D. Dillon has an AB from Princeton and an MFA from Notre Dame, where he was Managing Editor of The Bend in 2004. His poetry has appeared most recently in Tar River Poetry, Tampa Review, Barstow & Grand, The RavensPerch, Lighthouse Weekly, Walloon Writers Review, Tipton Poetry Journal, California Quarterly, and Ghost City Review. He lives in Michigan.

Dario Roberto Dioli

Dario Roberto Dioli born in 1978 in Milan, where studied food technologies. He writes especially poetry . He also loves to challenge himself writing short stories and microfiction proses or hybrid. Furthermore is assembling analog collages and asemic writing. Last

books : an art poetry plaque with Marie Sugimoto published by Pulcinoelefante Editore (Osnago, Italy, 2023) and “Per le persone amate, per i maestri, per trovare cure al male” published by Amarganta (Rieti, Italy, 2023) Next publications : a dada collage on the new *Maintenant 17* , going to be published in July 2023 by Three Rooms Press. (NY, USA) Some asemic writing on word/for word 41 magazine, editor Jonathan Minton.

Ilana Drake

Ilana Drake is a rising junior at Vanderbilt University who loves to write poetry. She can often be found writing new poems in journals or her Notes app. When she is not working on a poem, she enjoys finding the best coffee shops, swimming, and attending literary events with friends.

Hamdy Elgammal

Hamdy Elgammal is an Egyptian writer currently based in Oakland, CA. His prose has been published in *Bourbon Penn*, *Origins Journal*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Cease, Cows and Five on the Fifth*. Find him on Twitter @hhelgammal.

Travis Flatt

Travis Flatt (he/him) is a teacher and actor living in outside Nashville, Tennessee. He holds a lit BA from UT Knoxville and a theater MFA from SCAD Savannah. In 2008, an adult onset epilepsy diagnosis pivoted his focus from regional to community theater. At home, he's got a wife and a son and a stepmother and a dog.

Kevin Grauke

Kevin Grauke has published work in such places as *The Threepenny Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Cimarron Review*, and *Ninth Letter*. He's the author of the short story collection *Shadows of Men* (Queen's Ferry), winner of the Steven Turner Award from the Texas Institute of Letters. He teaches at La Salle University in Philadelphia

Julia F. Green

Julia F. Green holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and teaches creative writing online and in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Her work has appeared in *Laurel Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Blue Ridge Outdoors*, and elsewhere.

D. A. Hosek

D. A. Hosek's poetry has appeared in *Rust Belt Magazine*, *Meniscus*, *California Quarterly*, *Invisible City*, *I-70 Review* and elsewhere. He earned his MFA from the University of Tampa. He lives and writes in Oak Park, IL and spends his days as an insignificant cog in the machinery of corporate America.

<http://dahosek.com>

Connie Johnson

Connie Johnson is a Los Angeles, CA-based writer who turns to poets like Lucille Clifton, Audre Lorde and Gwendolyn Brooks when she needs a little inspiration. The works that speak to her are the ones that are steeped in truth and heartfelt revelations. And she agrees with Clifton who said: "Poetry is a matter of life, not just a matter of language."

Kelsey Ann Kerr

Kelsey Ann Kerr holds an M.F.A. in poetry from the University of Maryland, and is currently pursuing her J.D. at The George Washington University Law School. Kelsey has received scholarships from the Sewanee Writers' Conference and the Big River Writers' Conference. Her poetry also has been nominated for Best of the Net 2017 and 2018. Kelsey's work can be found in "Stirring: A Literary Collection," "New Delta Review," "Mezzo Cammin," "The Sewanee Review" and the "Atlanta Review," among others. She is revising and seeking publication for her first manuscript, "The Anatomy of Color," which was a semi-finalist in the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award competition in 2019.

Jaime Lilley

Jaime Lilley is a transplanted American who has lived in Prague, Czechia, for 17 years. She spends her time running a Cambridge ELT teacher training center, spending time with her family, falling deeply in love with her friends, and avoiding the savage claws of her cat. She also writes poems, and has done since childhood, though she seldom shares them. She usually just sits on them like a dragon that hoards poems.

James Lilliefors

James Lilliefors is a poet, journalist, and novelist, whose writing has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The Washington Post*, *Snake Nation Review*, *Intangible*, *Gnashing Teeth*, *The Baltimore Sun* and elsewhere. He has written several novels and is a former writing fellow at the University of Virginia.

Nelson Lowhim

writer artist veteran immigrant. For more go to

<https://society6.com/nelsonlowhim>

Rachel Mallalieu

Rachel Mallalieu is an emergency physician and mother of five. She is the author of *A History of Resurrection* (Alien Buddha Press 2022). Some of her recent poetry is featured in *Nelle*, *DIALOGIST*, *Chestnut Review* and *Rattle*. More of her work can be found at rachel-mallalieu.com.

J.C. Mari

J.C. lives in Florida. He writes poems.

Zach Murphy

Zach Murphy is a Hawaii-born writer with a background in cinema. His stories appear in *Reed Magazine*, *Still Point Arts Quarterly*, *The Coachella Review*, *Maudlin House*, *B O D Y*, *Litro Magazine*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, and *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine*. His chapbooks *Tiny Universes* (Selcouth Station Press, 2021) and *If We Keep Moving* (Ghost City Press, 2022) are available in paperback and ebook. He lives with his wonderful wife, Kelly, in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Heather Myers

Heather Myers is from Altoona, Pennsylvania, home of the world's oldest wooden roller coaster. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from West Virginia University. Currently, she is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at the University of North Texas. She loves her dog, named Odie, and tends to many plants. Her work can be found in *The Journal*, *Palette Poetry*, *Puerto Del Sol* and elsewhere.

Victoria Nordlund

Victoria Nordlund's poetry collection *Wine-Dark Sea* was published by Main Street Rag in 2020. She is a Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize Nominee, whose work has appeared in *PANK Magazine*, *Rust+Moth*, *Chestnut Review*, *trampset*, *Pidgeonholes*, and elsewhere. Visit her at VictoriaNordlund.com

Sarah Marie Page

Sarah Marie Page spends her days engaging in intense battles of wits, fueled by copious amounts of tea and the occasional dramatic slamming of a briefcase. AKA: She's a lawyer. When she's not doing lawyer things, she can be found sneaking off to make-believe worlds filled with romance, betrayal, and hot fae princes. Some of her more serious work has been featured in *Y Magazine*, *The Advocate*, *Hippocampus Magazine*, and the *Crow's Quill Magazine*. Her more humorous work is mostly on her website. You can find that here: sarahpagestories.com.

Mary Paulson

Mary Paulson's writing has appeared in multiple publications, most recently in *Sparks of Calliope*, *The Pomegranate London*, *Vita Brevis' ANTHOLOGY IV*, *Hare's Paw*, *VAINE Magazine* and *Cathexis Northwest Press*. Her debut chapbook, *Paint the Window Open* was published by Kelsay Publishing in 2021. She lives in Naples, Florida.

Andre F. Peltier

Andre F. Peltier (he/him) is a Pushcart and Best of the Net nominated poet and a Lecturer III at Eastern Michigan University where he teaches literature and writing. He lives in Ypsilanti, MI, with his wife and children. His poetry has recently appeared in various publications both online and in print. His debut poetry collection, *Poplandia*, is available from Alien Buddha. He has three collections forthcoming in 2023, *Trouble on the Escarpment* from Back Room Books, *Petoskey Stones* from Finishing Line Press, and *Ambassador Bridge: Poems* from Alien Buddha Press. In his free time, he obsesses over soccer and comic books. Twitter: @aandrefpeltier Website: www.andrefpeltier.com

Marisca Pichette

Marisca Pichette is a queer, Pushcart-nominated author based in Western Massachusetts, on Pocumtuck and Abenaki land. Her debut poetry collection, *Rivers in Your Skin, Sirens in Your Hair* is out now. Find her on Twitter @MariscaPichette or Instagram @marisca_write.

Drew Pissarra

A literary grantee of the Cafe Royal Cultural Foundation and Curious Elixirs: Curious Creators, Drew Pissarra is the author of "You're Pretty Gay" (2021), a collection of short stories; "Infinity Standing Up" (2019), a collection of queer love poetry; and "The Strange Case of Nick M." (2021), a radio play commissioned by Imago Theatre. His poetry has appeared everywhere from the Whitney Biennial 2022 to the "Food & Wine" website to "Analog" sci-fi magazine.

Sara Lynne Puotinen

Sara Lynne Puotinen was born in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and now lives in south Minneapolis near the Mississippi River Gorge where she enjoys conducting experiments in writing while moving, moving while writing, and doing both while losing her central vision. Almost always, these experiments involve water, stone, birds, and poetry.

Gabriel Lukas Quinn

Gabriel Lukas Quinn (he/him) is a 20-year-old gay writer and creative writing student from Portland, Oregon. Quinn writes short speculative fiction, psychological thrillers, and pensive poetry regarding mental health and living with discrimination. He is a true 'write or die' believer.

Erin Ratigan

Erin Ratigan is a freelance journalist and writer who dabbles in all forms of art from dance to pottery and watercolor. Her poetry reflects that wide array of interests by offering different readings depending on what takes the reader's fancy. She specializes in long-form narrative journalism in her freelance work.

Kirsten Reneau

Kirsten Reneau lives by a magnolia tree in New Orleans. She likes doing the daily crossword puzzle and was once Columbo for Halloween. Her other hobbies can be seen on www.kirstenreneau.com.

Shyla Ann Shehan

Shyla Ann Shehan is an analytical Virgo from Iowa. She received an MFA from the University of Nebraska where she was awarded an Academy of American Poets Prize. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Midwest Quarterly*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Decadent Review*, and elsewhere, and she was nominated for a Pushcart in 2022. Shyla is an editor for *The Good Life Review* and lives in Omaha with her partner, children, and four cats. Her full bio and an account of her published work are available at shylashehan.com.

Buffy Shutt

After a long career in film marketing, she writes poetry and short fiction full time. A two-time Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, her work appears in *Book of Matches*, *Wales Haiku*, *Dodging the Rain*, *Split Lip Magazine*, *Anthropocene*, *River Heron Review*, *Sonic Boom*. Her first poetry collection, *Recruit to Deny*, will be published in 2023.

Mazzy Sleep

Mazzy Sleep is an 11-year-old from Toronto, Canada. She has written over a thousand poems and short stories, as well as a novel and two feature screenplays. Her work has been published in *Blackbird*, *The Margins* (Asian American Writers' Workshop), *The Minnesota Review*, *Rattle*, *Barren Magazine*, *Geist*, *Maudlin House*, and elsewhere. Mazzy was commissioned by the Lunar Codex project to write a poem that will be launched to the moon. Her poem "Heart Medicine" has been named a "Notable Poem" in the *Best Canadian Poetry 2024* anthology. mazzysleep.com

Susan Solomon

Susan Solomon is a freelance paintress living in the beautiful Twin Cities area of Minneapolis/Saint Paul. She is the founding editor and cartoonist for Sleet Magazine, an online literary journal.

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz is the grandson of Irish and Russian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in Fish Food, Streetlight, Another Chicago Magazine, Door Is A Jar, The Phoenix, and The Harvard Advocate. Edward is also a published poet who has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize multiple times.

Erin Swanson

Erin Swanson is a writer and mother trying her very best in this crazy world. She loves animals of all kinds except snakes. But if she finds a snake she will give it a name. The most recently found snake was named Herman. She graduated from Skidmore College and received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence. She has been previously published in Variant Lit Magazine.

Bailey Swinford

On most days, Bailey can be found in Northern Kentucky or Cincinnati spending time with her family and her three dogs. Bailey enjoys practicing hot yoga, collecting ceramic art, and watching lilac blossoms gently sway in the breeze. Bailey has never outrun an avalanche or caught a hummingbird, but she once survived a skydiving incident where her primary parachute did not deploy.

Francis Walsh

Francis Walsh is a writer from Portland, Maine. They live in an apartment with one human, two rabbits, and 8+ houseplants. They work in a hospital as a phone operator, which sounds like a pun, but is no joke.

Christian Ward

Christian Ward is a UK-based writer currently recuperating from cancer treatment, having been diagnosed with stage 4b large t-cell lymphoma last year. Largely confined to a wheelchair, he is looking forward to rebuilding as much of his life as possible, including enjoying movies, video games and going outside to appreciate the simpler things in life.

Ellie M. Windsor

Ellie M. Windsor is a bookseller in Austin, Texas and a recent graduate of Columbia University. She lives with her cat, Loretta, and is currently sewing her first quilt.

Maggie Wolff

Maggie Wolff is a proudly queer poet, essayist, occasional fiction writer, and first-year Ph.D. candidate at Illinois State University. She recently won an AWP Intro Journals Award for her poetry, and her work has appeared in Hayden's Ferry Review, Juked, New Delta Review, and other publications.

Stella Wong

Stella Wong is the author of *Spooks*, winner of the Saturnalia Books Editors Prize, and *American Zero*, selected for the Two Sylvias Press Chapbook Prize by Danez Smith. A graduate of Harvard and the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Wong's poems have appeared in *POETRY*, *Colorado Review*, *Lana Turner*, *Bennington*

Review, Denver Quarterly, the LA Review of Books, and more.

Megan Xandra

Megan Xandra is an essayist and poet hailing from the Midwest. She is an MFA candidate in creative nonfiction at The Ohio State University. Besides writing, she enjoys exploring other modes of creative expression, including music and visual art. She currently lives in Columbus, Ohio.

Jacelyn Yap

Jacelyn (she/her) persevered through an engineering major and a short stint as a civil servant (in economic policy, what a shocker), only to abandon it all to focus on her art. Her artworks have appeared in adda, Sine Theta Magazine, and Olney Magazine. She can be found at <https://jacelyn.myportfolio.com/> and on Instagram at @jacelyn.makes.stuff

Door Is A Jar Staff Bios

Maxwell Bauman

OWNER/ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / ART DIRECTOR

Maxwell is an M.A./M.F.A. graduate from Wilkes University. He is a contributor to Chicken Soup for the Soul. He is wizard with Legos. He plays guitar and banjo. Maxwell has never had a strawberry. You can learn more about him on his website.

maxwellbauman.com

Jack Fabian

MANAGING EDITOR / FICTION / NONFICTION EDITOR

Jack Fabian is a queer writer of horror fiction and lives in Wiltshire, England with is partner. He has a Master's degree in Creative Writing. In his spare time, he can be found playing video games and reading things that make him scared to turn off the light.

Corinne Alice Nulton

POETRY / DRAMA EDITOR

Corinne Alice Nulton is the Writing Center Coordinator at the University of Scranton. Aside from being the Poetry and Drama Editor for Door Is A Jar, she's written for each of the Night Bazaar anthologies published by Northampton House Press. She had her play "14 Symptoms" produced at the Brick Theater's Game Play Festival back in 2014. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Composition and Applied Linguistics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Submission Guidelines

Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine is looking to publish well-crafted poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama, artwork, and book reviews.

Please read over our submission guidelines carefully.

Our publication steers away from academic writing and publishes short, conversational works that use familiar language. Each new issue features artists and writers and works that are accessible for all readers.

Submit all work in Times New Roman font size 11

We only accept new, unpublished work. If you have posted something to your website or social media, this counts as being published.

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Please provide your name as you would like published, email, mailing address, and a fun 3-sentence bio. (We're not as interested in how many degrees you have, or how widely you've been published. Instead, we want to hear about the real you. We want to know about the little things that spur you along.) Contributors can submit to multiple categories; however, only submit once to each category until you have received our decision about your piece.

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