
DOOR = JAR



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DOOR = JAR

Door Is A Jar
Issue 31

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Cover Image “To be Loved is to be Known”
by Julia Fennell

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Besides, the Cashew Soup is Cooling

Jesse DeLong

Poetry

Loneliness is a hot pepper
deseeded or a clover blossom smushed
to my shoe's sole.

Meanwhile the moths come
to dinner every night,
eating the shirts in my drawer.

Summersalts

Joe Bisicchia

Poetry

Sometimes it's just this,
a swirled haze
from Superman's cape.
Sometimes, it feels that fast.
Tucked in, with a tight spin.
World rolls right through it,
this passing space. And
summer zips, zips, zips,
zips on by.
But so goes time.
See, summer comes again,
again, again, again,
again.
And in the blur,
the ice cream is sweet
year round.

composition
Karen Baumgart
Poetry

a new song is coursing
through flesh and arteries,
insistent heartbeats
deep against bone.

the score leaps
from the page
in a riotous tumble of inky tendrils.
unruly, they slip through fingers
and pool at my feet –
a beautiful mess of
notes and time signatures
and hope.

divining a melody
in these molten fragments
is like herding cats, or small children.

all I can do is scoop up
imperfect handfuls of music,
and blow upon them gently until
they sing.

words of sugar

Karen Baumgart

Poetry

we speak our story
in the language of spun sugar,
words floating
like stars through
fine pink gossamer.

do you remember before?
how we would laugh
and awkwardly say
don't make this weird,
instead of *I love you.*

and the beginning?
each intake of breath
tangled in fairy-lights,
as the fabric of time
shimmered and stood still.

and the now?
hearts wrenched open
and damp with desire.
every part of you tastes of
sugar and constellations.

Sitting
Karen Baumgart
Poetry

I sit with my discomfort,
marking time in breaths and beats
as she shifts and curls elegantly inward.
There is seeming wickedness
in this cut-glass crystalline embrace.

Before, I ran
as children flee from shadowed monsters,
as though my bones would bend and crack
under the press of her terrible weight.

There is an art of mending broken pottery
by filling fissures with molten gold—
artful, because the fractures remain
a testament to fragility and imperfection,
insistently whispering, '*beautiful, beautiful*'.

I sit, and lean in slightly.
We mark time together, breaths and beats.
My soft parts cloak her unyielding form,
which is without dark intention
and simply seeks to take my breath away,
demanding an expectant pause before each
new and precious moment.

The Photographer
Erin Ratigan
Poetry

My little nephew
was being photographer

with our camera
snapping shots every which way,

no rhyme or reason,
almost frantic in his ways.

I felt myself grow
anxious, trying for control —

“No, hold it this way,
it’s going to be blurry.”

Then I remembered
there is plenty of time for

reason to arise.
For now, why should we not play?

Strange Little Things

Erin Ratigan

Poetry

Strange little things
Will not let you escape them
no matter your tries —

13th birthday cards
That I've tried to throw away
but that clung to me,

books from the 30s
that were falling from their spines
(their souls too heavy),

endless craft supplies
that beg to be turned into
a rich new legacy,

pictures of the clouds
that I'll never see again
(long since-blown away).

Going to Confession

Erin Ratigan

Poetry

If you listen closely
(and are very lucky)
you might hear
the songs of the trees;
how they mutter
and reach for one another
like long-parted lovers.
Or the communion
of the fungi
who map the forest floor.

This cathedral teems with life
as no other can,
yet so few of us are willing
to offer our tithes.
Here, I give confession

before the crows
in their cassocks
who grant absolution
by moving on to another tree,
another challenge,
another conflict greater than me.
And I remember
how small I am and
feel better for it.

synapse
Megan Busbice
Poetry

wondering where it
went wrong, where
the grey haze spilled
in, where all the light
bled out. I see this life
translated, glossless,
papery, every iteration
past its expiration date.
inquiring into the origin
of discontent: see also:
boredom: refer to: taedium
vitae. I want to pierce through
the glaze, the glare of it
all. I want to feel the
everythingness of it, wildfire
consciousness, the clarity
stinging down to my
fingertips. but as of yet
there remains a pallor,
drag, drone. ennui pillowing
every edge. I tumble
through the daylight, numb
and warm, wondering at the
wash-out, the tepid joy,
the echoing in my own ears.

At Whose Door?
Michael Thériault
Fiction

Paco knows my hair. Quick math, my head's been in his hands hundred twenty times in the thirty-odd years I've walked to his shop on Mission. I've stayed away lately, because, but I haven't gone to nobody else in the neighborhood or nowhere. I've just let my hair get a little long.

But this morning my wife reminded me—her family's big, there's always something—funeral and baptism this weekend and she don't want me scruffy. Getting cleaned up for things like that, that's how you'd usually put life and death and a barbershop together. So here I am walking to Paco's, and I'll go to her family's things.

Not that I'm looking forward to them. Last time, barbecue at her brother's, her kid sister's husband's kid brothers were there, David and Daniel, trying hard to be, Don't even look at me. Like, We own these Frisco streets. I wasn't having it. Don't matter two teardrops tatted under Daniel's eye, and some say for him one's for Soledad, one's for Quentin. It's been my City longer. They'd had drinks. I'd had drinks. Things were said can't be unsaid.

But baptism, funeral, I expect they'll behave. I've promised my wife I will. Any trouble, somewhere else.

I feel for Paco. I'd be amazed he opened again, but I know he needs the work. Not many days off, this neighborhood. Papa works, Mama, too, lots of kids work soon as they're old enough, Grandma's out nights popping lids on recycling bins loading a shopping cart to push down to Bayshore. Like us, what Paco knows is work. Closed shop door don't put even rice and beans on the table.

And Paco must guess this was a one-off.

They do come sometimes in waves. Like the year, cross from our house, broad daylight, things were said and, well, can't never be unsaid; kid maybe seventeen had the back of his head shot off. Same year, block back of where I'm walking now, young dad—sweet wife, I guess she was his wife, Jesus her smile when I smiled at their baby—he got called out from their in-law apartment round midnight and they put a few rounds into him, ended him.

What's this, GMC rolling slow next to me? I thought those tinted windows were illegal here. Move along, whoever you are.

Same year, same year, kid fifteen, paper said, and that it was a sword, had his head near removed right about where I'm walking now, not a block from my door, and sun's up cops are ringing our bell and asking if we'd seen or heard anything, which at two, sound asleep, we hadn't.

But most years, nothing like this. So odds are, no wave. I mean, you can't really say no, but everything in life, you play the odds. Walk to Paco's, play the odds. Paco unlocks his door for business, he tests his luck.

Here's the old Chinese gals doing Tai Chi by the playground. Twelve, no, thirteen; speaking of luck. Movements like slow dance, all the women same movement same time. Little boombox playing music; that must keep them together. Times I've watched them fifteen, twenty minutes. Seen them do a one-legged thing. The balance! Jesus a thing to admire. Half must be past seventy, and me not sixty, and no way I balance on one foot that long and make those moves. If only.

But I imagine the reaction I'd get, trying to join them. And I've never seen a group of guys big like me, crusty at the fringes, doing it I could join.

Plus, a philosophy goes with it, I think. Movement like prayer, balance in life. I'm not all on board with balance. Times you have to be over the top, doing what I do. I get a taper in my drywall crew isn't getting as many feet as he should—or she, but no woman's been a problem—he hears it from me straight up, nothing tender, and farther he's short, less tender I am. If this don't light a fire under him in a couple days, I get him his money, and I tell him why before I send him down the road. Three or four I recall, they really haven't liked this, maybe hated me like Daniel and David. They've had things to say. I haven't been dainty back. More things that can't be unsaid.

Last one had some pretty specific things he said should happen to me.

Live a life, get shit done, you piss someone off.

What did the guy in Paco's chair do? Any different from me?

Here's Mission; left to Paco's. And here's the GMC, slow again. What gives?

I picture it. Door opens—Paco's shop has just the one—guy steps in, pulls the piece, and then in the white barber cape of the man in the chair there's like a red flower, getting bigger, with a dark heart. Paco, he's got nowhere to go. Death comes through the door, and it's Death and Paco with nothing between except a chair and someone becoming a corpse.

Every time the door opens still, he must wonder, Are you Death again?

Ha, what thoughts! Here's the day turning nice, fog already burnt off, no wind yet, sky blue out maybe way past the Farallones, blue speeding toward Japan. Here, flock of pigeons speeding, too, turning, going nowhere, like spinning for joy. Fine day to live.

Just as fine, maybe, for the alternative.

It's a balance. Here, up on one foot, like the old
Chinese gals, left one, and spread arms slow, slow right
kick...

Nope, can't. Started to tip.

Toward what? One-off, or wave? Do my haters chill,
or think, He's easy to find, and this has chewed my gut
enough?

Fine day for the one, fine for the other.

Roll along, GMC. Enough of you.

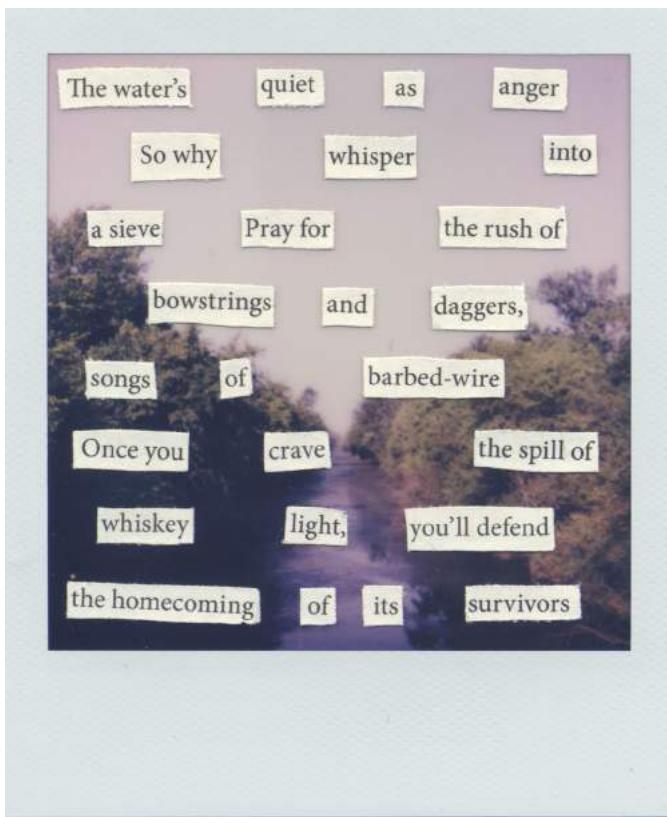
Here I am, tugging at Paco's door.

But, oh, Paco, what am I? And at whose door?

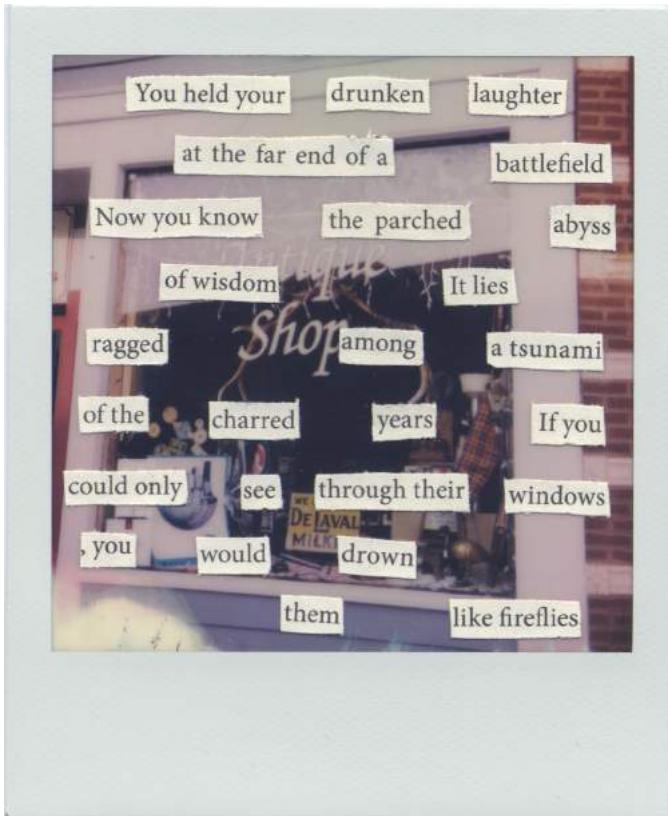
Haze
Dane Hamann
Art



Whiskey
Dane Hamann
Art



Windows
Dane Hamann
Art



Housebreaking [I am what you make me]

Fiona Mossman

Poetry

Approach me as you would a wild animal.
Make yourself small, move slowly,
think quiet thoughts, deliberate actions.
Signal intent, signal safety
with your whole body.
Crouch. Contort. Go gently.
Make an offering. Be careful with your eyes.

Approach me as you would a wild animal,
or I'll rip your throat out.

Love
Linda Conroy
Poetry

I watch my sister rake the straw, sweep
soil away and smooth the stable floor,
her stance a picture of proficiency.
She fills the pail at the spigot, stretches,
sets it in the stall. Her skinny arms
belie the muscle-contours work reveals.
Tan overalls hang on her frame hiding
a supple form, but it's those agile hands
that show me who she is. Scrubbed clean
her fingers demonstrate such liveliness,
such care, and when she leans to brush his
mane, to reach and stroke his velvet nose
she whispers to her horse, *hello sweet one*.
I see new laugh lines on her solemn face.

Cradle
Linda Conroy
Poetry

We climbed into our bunks
last night, the vessel rocking
safely on the sea
and saw horizon's view
of layers of land
like sleeping bodies
curved for comfort
as our rest began.

This morning, light
at four, the craft ploughs
smoothly over brine
island mounds of evergreens
of rock formations
anchoring a still calm scene
horizon's line
a soothing hand.

A Fading Melody

Linda Conroy

Poetry

Faint strands of music reach me in the yard
as I stretch to pin wet sheets on the line.

The rising melody is nothing like
the jazz sounds from a neighbor's house.

It tells of sedate dancing in the square,
of grandmother and elder uncles,

aunts smoothing their auburn hair
as they move to music on the radio,

of old folk playing plaintive tunes
on fiddles in an Irish pub, and suddenly

I'm lively, seeing far-off oceans' salt
and mist, waves splashing on the rocks,

soaking these sheets that I will gather
and hold close, breath in the memories.

Secret Underground

Linda Conroy

Poetry

Beneath the snowy mantle lies a host of sleepers, creepers, seeds tucked inside their hardened coats, roots holding still to feel the warmth of every stone, bulbs dormant. Imagine all that's happening inside those rounded winter homes.

A kind of hibernation, but, unlike a bear, a bulb goes through fine machinations spreading layers, building xylem, phloem for its sturdy stem, designing patterns for its leafy spread, mixing new hues and shades of color for each bud.

Clawing
Steve Denehan
Poetry

Winter coffee
warms my palms
near the end
of a long day

it is hard
not to think
about the way
things used to be

hard not to think
about the way
things are
now

I stand
move
from photograph
to photograph

looking at them
properly
for the first time
in a long time

I walk
to the back door
step out
onto the veranda

the sun is going down
but not without a fight
its last rays stretching back
and clawing at the night

Unpicked
Steve Denehan
Poetry

The blood is dull
running down
the back of my hand

it was brighter
then, when
there was more fire in us

then, when the sky
was not
so far away

when we lifted rocks
to see
the insects scurry

when worms
wetly tickled their way
across our palms

when the sun rose and fell
for us, and us
alone

when we crossed fearlessly
the worlds
within ourselves

when we counted every blackberry
while leaving them
unpicked

Why Life Is Totally Crazy But Manages Also To Be**Beautiful**

Billie Hinton

Nonfiction

Because my 88-year old mother falls and breaks her femur but not her hip. Because femurs heal more easily than hips. Because she comes out of surgery and thinks there are movable pieces on the ceiling that she must move in certain ways to stay alive. Because she doesn't know who we are and thinks people on the TV screen the nurses have turned on are in the hospital room. Because I google *why is my elderly mom suddenly unhinged after femur surgery* and learn that Tramadol makes older people hallucinate. Because we have to insist that they stop the Tramadol. Because we don't think she'll ever walk again. Because on the second day she gets off the bed, takes hold of the walker, and makes it all the way down the hall. Because on the third day she moves to rehab and meets her 99-year old German roommate and Elsa uses her call button when my mom can't find hers and gets out of bed by herself, no walker, to go to the bathroom. Because she is militant and wants to go home, and she and Elsa tell the mean nurse she might be better suited to different work. Because my mom gives up suddenly and says she doesn't want to be alive. Because she starts PT and walks all the way to the gym with the walker she hates, stuns the PT person with her strength, and comes back to the room saying she'll do whatever it takes to get to go home. Because a nurse decides she has deep vein thrombosis and can no longer do PT. Because a new doctor we call in says no, she does not, and yes, she can. Because when she comes home she's happy and giddy, like how I imagine her at age 16: bright and sassy, showing off for us, her adult

children, as we try to set the rules on what she's allowed to do and not do. Because she tells us she can do whatever she wants. Because her OT tells me she needs more stimulation, so I buy extra-large Bananagram tiles and we spell out words together on the kitchen table, slipping in a few bad words to make her laugh. Because we look out the window, and she gets upset because she can't remember the name of the brown furry things with bushy tails chasing each other around her bluebird box. Because I spell out squirrel with the tiles and she smiles as big as the sun and I write this word down on her notepad, so she can look at it any time and remember what they're called. Because she wants to go through old boxes of photos and can't remember all the names. Because I can't remember some of the names either. Because I realize there is so much we have lost. Because I didn't ask her all the questions years ago. Because my young adult children aren't asking me all the questions now. Because she's upset and embarrassed that she hasn't written back to her relative and friend Norma for over a year. Because I bring a beautiful butterfly card and say let's write to Norma right now. Because my mom's memory is fading, and she wants to tell Norma everything but can't fish the words through the language center of her brain. Because she rambles nonsense so fast I can't keep up. Because when I tell her to slow down she says this: *Just tell her I love her, and I hope she stills loves me.* Because that's all any of us really needs to say.

After the rain I
Natalie MacDonald
Art



After the rain II
Natalie MacDonald
Art



After the rain III
Natalie MacDonald
Art



After the rain IV
Natalie MacDonald
Art



American Beauty
Scott Waters
Poetry

In my hometown,
locals with bad teeth
and flabby tattooed arms
fill their carts with frozen food at Kroger,

a corner of dark red bricks
is all that's left of the old Chrysler plant,

weeds grow from crumbled asphalt
on elementary school playgrounds,

and seventy-year-old monkey bars
offer flecks of peeled paint
to the humid July breeze.

But there's a hipster coffee shop
in the old Courier-Times building,

a craft brewery opening soon next door,
music and dancing
on fourth Friday evenings
at the new Arts Park
on Broad Street—

and guaranteed
some Hoosier entrepreneur
is figuring out
how to make New Castle
the Rose City again,

her soft pink hands
coaxing an American Beauty
out of black backyard soil
beneath a rusted clothesline pole,

the first petals opening blood red
beneath a hazy white Indiana sky.

Renovation

Scott Waters

Poetry

The window
where the closet
used to be

is like my mind
where the wall
used to be.

Minding My Own

Scott Waters

Poetry

I'm enjoying
the sunlight shining
on the pomegranates
drooped over the neighbor's fence,

when I make the mistake
of looking at the New York Times
right there on my wheedling phone—
scientists have concluded

the Earth will become
uninhabitable for mammals
in only 250 million years,
not the billions of years

we had been promised.
My eyes gradually refocus
on those deep red orbs
swelling with magenta seeds,

and I can almost taste them,
popping tart and sweet,
while the cobalt sky
goes on and on

forever.

Horse Loose on Main Street

Russell Rowland

Poetry

It made news: there is even a photograph and video.
We rather welcome any novelty

if it spares us dire outcomes—
and this ended well, though the runaway seemed not
to realize the significance of our town's
one stoplight.

A young stallion is back in the Babylonian captivity
of its corral. Traffic flows again.

Far be it from me

to bring forward a riderless horse of the Apocalypse,
omen of endings. No,

this story should be boring neighborhood children
for generations. Garrulous old man

at the drugstore counter: "I remember when..."

Socks in Pairs
Russell Rowland
Poetry

Pacing the kitchen tiles shoeless
made a heel feel chilly. Sure enough,
threadbare threads had parted:

a hole in one brown sock
of a gentleman's conservative wardrobe.

I wastebasketed it, but stored
its survivor in the drawer
with the other brown ones—thus

when one of another pair shows holiness,
I can match two remnants,

have a pair again, just one pair less.

A parable of loss and love,
in this gentleman's conservative estimate.

On the Death of a Moth

Stephanie Frazee

Poetry

A small beige moth
the unassuming kind
whose offspring
can decimate a closet's worth of sweaters
landed on a book of poetry
and I smashed its wings to dust

This is one of the many reasons
I'll never be a real poet
I'll just continue
painstakingly fitting words
together in ways I like
but almost no one else does

Or, maybe,
all poets secretly kill moths
on poetry collections
with their bare hands
at least I didn't do it for pleasure
I did it for the sweaters

I did think of the fragility of wings
the superiority of wings
how sometimes sweaters look better
with a few well-earned holes
and I wrote a poem
I hope you like it

Once You Had So Much of Me
Carrie Esposito
Fiction

We ruined it with a kiss. If all things are possible, we made it impossible. Though for a while after, I wondered at different angles, different answers to your questions intended (or not) to confuse and manipulate me. If only, though to what end I was never sure, I could've broken through that, found a clean line to your shifting center.

Instead, I answered them as they came at me, as if they were being asked out of concern, curiosity. Later, I crafted better answers. Answers that would impress you with my invincibility.

Sometimes, even now, an answer will float in front of me, and I'll grasp it in my palm and put it in my pocket, which will get emptied later. I don't need them anymore, haven't in a long time. I have a boyfriend now, a guy who likes concerts and sunsets and me, who wouldn't pull back from our one and only kiss and say, *so what, are you going to want me to, like, take you to museums now or something?*

Before the kiss, it was like this:

College freshman contemporary literature seminar, your full lips, glasses, brown eyes, knowing smile. Walking out of class arguing about DeLillo, turning to coffee, turning to your dorm room, turning to a walk out on the bridge by the river. We would do this sort of thing for hours, but never anything more. Conversations about books meandered into ones about our love lives for the next four years—analyzing text messages, the faces our various partners made when they came. Even sometimes we'd end up sleeping in each other's beds, close but not touching, whispering until dawn and falling asleep with each other's voices in our ears.

Sometimes, we'd take a trip out under the moonlight to the beach in your beat-up Volkswagen, if I needed to cry about some boy who'd broken my heart, even while we both knew the only boy who could really break my heart was you.

You stayed in the city where we went to college, and I moved to Manhattan with friends, mostly because everyone in my life thought it would be better if I didn't live anywhere near you. They thought our friendship strange and unhealthy. They knew I loved you, or at least some imagined version of you, some you I wished you could be.

In New York, there were bars and parties and dating apps and co-workers turned something else, so many faces and names and futures. You were my one constant. We sent each other pictures and memes and funny messages from any place where we happened to be, even on dates or lying in bed, naked, the stuff of someone else's body drying on our skin.

A year in, you visited one weekend. It was Halloween, and we dressed up as that couple from Blue Velvet. Everyone at the party in a loft in Williamsburg assumed we were together, the way we laughed, finished each other's drinks and sentences.

But then, as the hours shifted past midnight, I lost track of you until you appeared, whispering in my ear, asking for a key because you were going home with Little Bo Peep. Across the room, a blonde in a shimmering pink costume wiggled her fingers at me, almost proudly. Delicate fingers, always your type, those guileless women, who would never actually know you.

As I slipped a key into your back pocket, I whispered against your ear to *have fun*. After you left, I wondered if you were waiting for me to kiss your neck,

give you permission to come home with me instead, though you must've known you already had it.

Two years in, you moved to Brooklyn for a job, or at least that's what you said. Suddenly we were together, two, three, five times a week. Movies on my couch, take-out, bars, the gym.

You had so much of me that the only thing I held onto was that I wouldn't make the first move.

Then one night, maybe because I'd been on a date that weekend with a man you called the prince for his classic good looks and polished mannerisms, or maybe because I was wearing a new clingy red dress, one I knew you'd like, you paid for my drinks at our favorite dive bar, decorated to look like someone's basement. You inched your barstool closer, and I could hear the switch, you talking to me like you talked to the delicate women. I wanted to remind you that I was not them, but I had been waiting for so long. Below the beer, I smelled what was coming on your breath.

It didn't happen in the bar. We went out into the predawn rain. I danced in the downpour, feeling luscious and powerful, drenched and ready. You laughed and took my hand, pulling me under an awning, spinning me around so my back was against the building. An ambulance whirled by, the siren my heartbeat. The kiss tumbled and pulsed, lingered and made even the raindrops against the pavement silent.

You stumbled backwards, and that's when your questions started. The swell in my lips, the alcohol, the rain, all of it made me let you affirm your sense of yourself as wrong for me, as someone who would hurt me. As if to prove it, you said something mean, the way you did with every woman except me. I knew I could beg for your reassurance, mold myself into someone bleeding and in need, until you took me home, made

love to me before abandoning me and everything we had let pass between us.

Or I could walk, without looking back, toward the gold shimmering wetly from a building in the distance, until I was close enough to see it was just a reflection on the dark windows which could only capture, not originate, light.

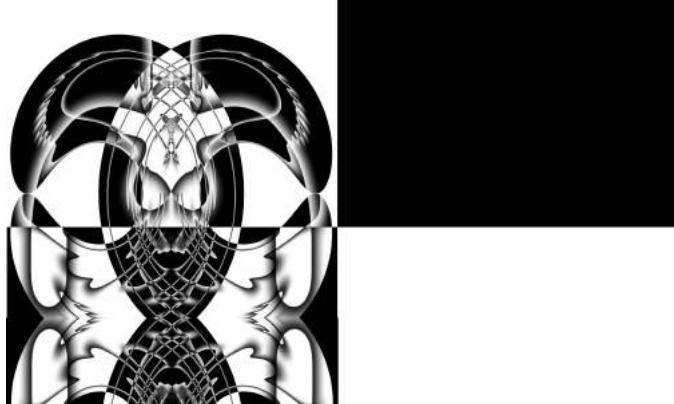
Let the Good Times Roll 2a
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



Facing Emptiness

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



Blind Date
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



Stormy Neighbors
Bruce Southers
Drama

Dramatis Personae

BROWN HUTCHINS: Man in his mid 30s, and is the next door neighbor to SABRINA BRUCE.

SABRINA BRUCE: Woman in her early 30s, and she lives in the suburbs with her dog, BILLIE HOLIDOG. She is the is the next door neighbor to BROWN HUTCHINS and just moved in.

Place

The setting is the backyard of two homes, in the suburbs of a midwestern US city.

Time

Present

At Rise: It's late afternoon and a tornado is heading to the area. One of the homeowners, Brown Hutchins is near the fence separating his yard from at of his neighbor, Sabrina Bruce. Sabrina's dog, Billie Holidog, is barking loudly. Brown is standing next to a prop fence, representing him being on his property.

BROWN

That dog is so annoying. Does it ever stop barking?
(Turns to the dog next door and yells loudly.)

DO YOU EVER STOP BARKING?! You are non-stop!

(Turns to the side of the stage, where
SABRINA is standing barely on stage.)

Hey! You! New next door neighbor lady! Can't you get
your mutt to be quiet?

SABRINA

(Turns to the side and calls sweetly for her
dog to come to her.)

Billie! Calm down girl! We don't need any mean man
yelling at you. Nooo we don't. You stay there Billie and
I will be there soon!

(SABRINA then fully enters the stage. She
walks over to where BROWN is and turns
to speak to him, curtly. SABRINA speaks
as if annoyed.)

First off, my name is not "You," or "Next door neighbor
lady." It's Sabrina. And more importantly, please don't
yell at Billie. She's a dog, purebred dog I might add, and
guess what dogs do?

(BROWN begins to respond, but SABRINA
interrupts him.)

They bark! And they are protective, so the meaner a
neighbor is, the more they bark. Capisce?

BROWN

(BROWN raises his hands in both
understanding and exasperation.)

Loud and clear. You know, I've always thought that
dogs take on the personality of the owners. You know,
sweet dog means a sweet owner. Annoying and irritating
dog, well you get the rest. Wouldn't you agree?

SABRINA

(Sarcastically.)

Hmmm, not so sure about that.

(Thunder claps loudly.)

SABRINA

Wow, did you hear that?

BROWN

Yes, of course, I'm standing right here.

SABRINA

Are you rude ALL the time? Jesus!

BROWN

(Smiles and closes his eyes for a moment while he puts his hands on the back of his head, and slightly leans back.)

I try.

SABRINA

(Rolling her eyes.)

Good Lord! You are so arrogant!

(Calling to Billie.)

Billie! Come here girl! Listen here, Miss Billie Holidog!
You get here right now!

(Billie ignores her owner, as BROWN laughs hysterically when he hears SABRINA say her dogs name.)

BROWN

Really? That's your dog's name? Billie Hot Dog?

(Laughing even harder now, while SABRINA looks irritably at BROWN, and speaks to him slowly and condescendingly, enunciating each syllable clearly and slowly.)

SABRINA

Hol-i-dog. Billie Holidog. You know, like Billie Holiday, the famous jazz singer?

BROWN

Billie Holiday? Not a jazz fan. I'm more of a country music fan.

SABRINA

Hmmm. I should have known. And you are?

BROWN

A bit insulted, but—

SABRINA

(Rolling her eyes as she interrupts
BROWN.)

I meant your name.

BROWN

I crack myself up sometimes. My name is Brown.

SABRINA

Speaking of ridiculous names.

BROWN

(Waving his arms again in exasperation.)
Hey! I was just referring to your dog, not YOUR name!
So anyway, who's this Billie Holiday fella?

SABRINA

(Rolling her eyes again.)

Well, SHE, was a famous jazz singer, and produced great music in the 1940s and 50s. You've never heard of her, or her beautiful songs? Strange Fruit? Solitude? Stormy Weather?

BROWN

Sorry, nope. But Stormy Weather sounds fitting, given the storm coming.

SABRINA

(Singing a line from the Billie Holiday song “Stormy Weather.”)

DON’T KNOW WHY THERE’S NO SUN UP IN THE SKY. STORMY WEATHER.

SABRINA’s face lights up as she finishes the line from the song. BROWN gives a surprise face as she sings, slowly and with feeling.

That’s one of my favorites!

BROWN

Interesting song. Again, very appropriate given the circumstances. And your voice ain’t half bad either.

SABRINA

(Slightly confused, not knowing if this was meant as a compliment, insult or both.)

Thanks, I think. She died at the age of 44, which is sad, but her music lives on forever though. I have always been a huge fan, so just HAD to name my Billie after her. And I don’t appreciate you laughing so hard by the way.

BROWN

(Laughing again.)

It was funny!

(Thunder rolls in the distance again.)

SABRINA

(Looking off into the distance at the coming storm. A tornado siren sounds.)

Enough of this, do you see that storm? Those sirens mean it's a tornado. I'm going to take shelter in my basement. You should too!

BROWN

(Looking in the same direction of
SABRINA.)

It does looks bad and yeah, it's coming our way soon. My basement got flooded with the rain this past weekend, sooooo. But I'll figure something out.

SABRINA

(Wincing as she does not want to ask
BROWN to join her but feels like she needs
to.)

Ugh, I do not like you, but you can join me in my basement. Just no comments about Billie, got it?

BROWN

Well, I do not like you much either, but that storm does look bad. And sure, no comments about Billie Hot Dog.

(SABRINA scoffs.)

You said no comments about her while we were in the basement!

SABRINA

(Shaking her head in dismay.)

Come on, hop over, it's starting to rain now too, and I have to grab Billie. Billie! I am coming girl!

SABRINA runs off stage, while BROWN hops over the fence and follows SABRINA. Lights fade, portable fence is removed. Lights resume but more dimly lit as if in a basement. BROWN and SABRINA are sitting down several feet apart and

SABRINA is holding BILLIE. They are both looking ahead and not at each other.

SABRINA

Ahh, we made it. But, I can't believe we're in the same room together while a tornado is coming.

BROWN

(Grimacing as he continues looking ahead.)
Yeah, well, don't get too comfortable. I'm not thrilled about this either.

SABRINA

(Sighing and turning to BROWN.)
Just keep your distance, okay?

BROWN

(BROWN turns to SABRINA and nods in agreement.)

Trust me, I plan to.

(BROWN and SABRINA are silent for few seconds, looking away from each other. Thunder rolls.)

SABRINA

(Turning back to BROWN.)
You know, my grandmother used to tell me stories about storms like this when I was a kid. She said they're nature's way of reminding us how small we are.

BROWN

(Softening in his response and he faces Sabrina.)

My dad used to take me fishing during thunderstorms.
Said it was the only time the fish really bit.

SABRINA

Fishing in the rain? That sounds like a dad thing to do.

BROWN

(Smiling)

Yeah, well, he had his moments.

SABRINA

Had? Is your dad still living?

BROWN

(Suddenly bristles at the question.)

I don't want to talk about him anymore.

SABRINA

Oh, ok sorry. I didn't mean any—

BROWN

I said I don't want to talk about him anymore!

SABRINA's stung by BROWN's aggressive response. Awkward silence ensues for few seconds. SABRINA looks down and pets Billie and turns midway through to look at BROWN.

SABRINA

I have always been afraid of tornadoes though. They are so scary! I used to watch The Wizard of Oz as a kid and the tornado scenes always frightened me. That and the flying monkeys. They were freaky!

BROWN

Ok, one thing we can finally agree on, those monkeys
WERE freaky!

SABRINA

Yeah, at least one thing.

SABRINA looks down at Billie as BROWN
looks ahead again.

SABRINA

See, she is a good girl. She was only barking because
she was warning us of the storm coming.

BROWN

It was still very annoying to hear her bark. However, I
did tell you that I was not to make any negative
comments about her. If I had any pets, I would get
chickens. They literally would make me breakfast every
day!

SABRINA

Chickens? I am not sure you can have chickens in our
neighborhood.

BROWN

Probably not, but one day, I would like to have a small
farm, you know, a piece of land of my own that is not in
a suburb.

SABRINA

I have always wanted to live in the city, but am here in
the burbs for now. I would love to have one of those
swanky condos overlooking downtown. The views are
amazing! So vibrant and people everywhere! Dare to
dream, right?

BROWN

Sounds like a nightmare to me.

SABRINA

(Getting exasperated and looks at BROWN).

Do you ever stop?! I mean, I just shared my dream and you called it a nightmare? God!

(BROWN looks to SABRINA and gives a look as if he feels guilty for saying what he did, but does not apologize.)

BROWN

I did not mean anything by that. Just that your dream is not necessarily my dream. But I think that is what makes the world go 'round, you know?

SABRINA

You mean that people have different interests but can still be friends?

BROWN

Well, I suppose so.

SABRINA

Think you would ever live in the city?

BROWN

I'm not sure, too many people.

(The tornado sirens sound again, and loud storm noises become louder. They both stop and look around, nervously.)

SABRINA

Did I tell you that tornadoes are scary?

BROWN

(Turning as if looking outside.)

You did, and they are. I have never liked tornadoes either, yet it's funny how the idea of a tornado versus a storm is different. So I used to live in Virginia, and was living in a rental on the bottom floor of a house. No air conditioning and it got really hot in summer. It was one of those places where part of the house was really a basement, so to stay cool I would actually keep the windows shut. Anyway, one day a storm came through, so I opened the windows and doors to cool off. The storm was so intense and I was loving it! Later I drove to see some friends, and wow, there was debris all over the place and I found out from my friends that it was a tornado! Next day another storm came through, not a tornado, but I was still scared shitless!

SABRINA

Oh, so you are a partial human after all?

BROWN

Really? Of course I have feelings.

SABRINA

Then why are you so mean sometimes?

(Loud noises outside as if wind and tornado are coming overhead. Both have their eyes wide in fear.)

SABRINA

(Fearfully)

I swear if you are the last person I am with before I die, I just don't know!

BROWN

(Looking scared and speaking in a very
fearful and raised voice.)

I am not sure why I am so mean sometimes, but I
promise if we survive th—

BROWN is cut off mid-sentence as a huge
noise moves above them as the tornado is
directly overhead. Lights flash on and off.
They both hug each other quickly and
tightly. This lasts about 10 seconds and the
noise slowly fades. The lights stop going on
and off and remain on. BROWN and
SABRINA come out of their embrace
slowly and are looking at each other. One of
BROWN's hands is on SABRINA's
shoulder, and the other hand is on Billie. He
looks down and realizes he is comforting
them both. Brown looks back up to
SABRINA.

SABRINA

(Speaking softly with emotion, looking into
his eyes.)

You were saying?

BROWN

Do you think they will let me keep chickens in a condo?
(Lights fade)

END

Humble Brag

Peter Lilly

Poetry

I am a black hole,
a great mass of Nothing,
a bright darkness
shining in contrast to the sun.

I am a little magnitude,
a peaceful migrane,
a participatory absence
bidding you come and be elsewhere.

I am a vague imperative,
an enunciated mumble,
a positive test
diagnosing something terminal.

I am soft rock,
an abstract object,
a post-contemporary statement
aimed at the dead.

Bewildered

Peter Lilly

Poetry

Be wilder
for the storm will break,
the humidity will burst in rainfall
and cool the pebbled path.
Find the un-smoothed stones,
the untrodden ways,
walk where life
resists your linear progress
with briars and berries
bracken and contours,
find the thick forest
dense with mushroom spores
and echoing croaks,
breathe the ancient mist
of the Boreal forest,
the green crown of this globe,
taste the untilled thriving darkness
and forget.

Collisions

Peter Lilly

Poetry

The wooden tools of
long gone labour are
framed as decorations
in the nostalgia of breathing work.

Pebbles become sand
become glass become weathered
into vibrant pebbles.
The precision of decision meets
swirling currents and jagged impact
smoothing edges.

Coming and going
the collision of people and buildings
leave impact marks
of memories and aging.

This and Thats

Hiram Larew

Poetry

The truth is
I don't want you to understand me
Or figure me out
Or even believe me
And I really hope you don't try to
Feel like I do
Or wonder about me
Or second guess me

There's no need to
Because I was never made to be here
I'm between this and that's

And you
You have both of your feet on the ground
And you have all of you fully
And enough

If I'm beating around the bush
Then let me say it this way
That's simple
Friends and lovers are fine enough
But whistling is so so much better.

When There's Too Much

Samantha Terrell

Poetry

I want to get lost, but
There's not enough time to
Fall down in leaves,
Stay long enough for
Creepy things to find me.
So, I'm a thief—

A repeat offender—
Stealing bits of memories
Strung up beside holiday
Decorations I neglected to
Take down, along with
Thoughts I need to convey,

Worded ever so truthfully for
A soon-to-be-email. And,
I'm also a liar, pretending
Presence with a foot
Partway out the door
Whilst leaning,

Leaning, leaning in with
A mental notepad in hand
But no pen,
Never knowing if I'll get
Back to the place where I
Can be lost, or where I began.

Solstice
Samantha Terrell
Poetry

When we close
The blinds at bedtime,
But the room's still
Full of light
My sleep is
Restless, broken,
Cloudy dreams
Urge fight or flight.

As time contracts,
Shortens; then lengthens
And expands,
Life becomes enlarged, reduced
To the snap of a rubber-band.

From Whence Inspiration Comes

Samantha Terrell

Poetry

Northwest windswept wishes
Blow through barren notebooks,
Blank pages, empty dreams
Until the cold and desolate that
Foretold only doom,
Is met with fresh sentiments
On an updraft from
Some summer far away.

Shadowboxing

Jack B. Bedell

Nonfiction

We hung an old mirror in the garage the other day so my son could practice shadowboxing without sounding like a herd of bulls stomping upstairs. He'd watched some videos of George Foreman working with a mirror and wanted to give it a go.

Whenever he'd set the timer for three minutes and start throwing, my son would do his best to imitate Big George. Sharp jabs, long hooks and uppercuts.

No head movement, though. Just punch and watch.

I held my tongue from behind the backdoor glass as long as I could, but after a couple of rounds, the old man's voice welled up in me, and I had to butt in.

Stepping in front of the mirror, I explained to my son how Foreman might not be the right model to follow for working the glass. Only a big man like George can watch his punches. Unless his opponent's somebody like Ron Lyle, there's no need for him to fear the counter. Anyone else's hands but his own are just aggravation.

What Foreman saw in the mirror was a target, so he'd stare it down, set his feet, and throw.

The rest of us need to see the enemy in the mirror. An opponent who throws back. You've got to throw and bob. Slide your feet. Whatever it takes to give and not take.

I did my best to show him what I meant with a few shots. Even as slow and broken as I am, I'm pretty sure my son could see getting out of your own way was the whole point.

The Bird Box

Andy Perrin

Poetry

a cold gray winter ride
to a perfect little house
in the stark meadow

textured brushing tan
grasses—skeletons of plants
and twisted vines

harmony on the breeze
a winter meadow's hymn
built of white cedar's heart

grayed weathered boards
a sturdy floor with four walls
a slightly angled roof

which nicely sheds snowmelt
a perfect front door cut in
just the right spot

it sits elevated smartly
above the meadow spread
in intentional splendor

and oh how lovely those
long sunset views must be

but no one's home today

In a Moment

Andy Perrin

Poetry

In a dark harbor's winter
still life the two walked.

Frost fog wafted above
the icy mirrored pinpricks

as her heart's cashmere
hand reached invitingly—

the wanderer's well worked
woolen hand caught hers,

and their dreams interlaced—
a conjoined web of elation.

The origin memory captured
by the stamp of their eyes.

Their passing glinted gaze
fractional and elemental

as his attention drew to a
ship's bell—hers to a swan.

They laid the cornerstone
in the day's inferno dawn

as their breath lingered—
still frozen in a moment.

One Memory

Andy Perrin

Poetry

I have one memory
I wish I could erase

I'd like to be able to
open the file on my
mind's screen and push
the delete button once

and for all—but that
is not how it works

It's more likely that
I'll be sitting on a

bench by the harbor
someday and while

the memory will still
be clear enough—I'll

notice the pain has
blurred and eased

and melted into the
reflection of sailboats

dockside on a slightly
wind ruffled cool day

Spring's Morning

Andy Perrin

Poetry

A breeze washed over us,
cleansed us of winter's ache
and carried spring's rising.

In the warmth, subtle—new,
carried by the wren's wings,
a scent perfumed by life

and bright bursting blooms,
bathed all those fortunate
enough to pass by the

unfurling of nature's
lush emerald crescendo
lingering in a moment.

We stood in sunshine's peace
as dancing dappled shadows
lengthened and then slowly

vanished until they too were
resurrected in another quiet
gift of—spring's morning.

The Crossing
Andy Perrin
Art



At Home in the Meadow
Andy Perrin
Art



Winter Meadow Spread
Andy Perrin
Art



Winter in the Great Swamp
Andy Perrin
Art



Hundred Acre Woods

Taya Sanderson Kesslau

Poetry

Most mornings
find me
within

the wooded realm
that is
my neighbor.

That big-hearted
creature
with its
many-lunged
sighs.

Some piece
of earth crossed
by mystical lines.

I approach its
hallowed halls
reverently.

Glad to be
a visitor,
I come and go
as I please.

Passing Through
Taya Sanderson Kesslau
Poetry

Walking sometimes
in the morning
very slowly
is the old man
with the old face.
Skin drawn tightly over
his sharp, stark features.
The echo of a smile.
Eyes that look deep and see.

A skeletal wanderer for now.
On the paths for now
though not much longer
until he departs
to join the cirlclings
of the tall thin trees
who know the secrets
of all the forest
comings and goings.

Threadbare
Vignette-Noelle Lammott
Poetry

“A muse is a life-long affair”
was the last poetic thing you ever said to me.
I laughed when you said it.
But you really believed you spoke from the depths.

Silly boy;
Perhaps you forgot that without memory,
every muse is a motherless child.

We can never live the same life twice,
But a good or tragic death is easily mimicked.

I have been to the edge of the world.
Nothing lasts a lifetime.

Nostos
Vignette-Noelle Lammott
Poetry

It's weird to be strangers again.
Yesterday we moved the stars
to invoke the Muses.

Today
Calliope's vessel sits empty,
barren of words—
impoverished of devotion.

No-one escapes death.

And love
is only life-longing.

When I see you again
you will know me by my blind eye.
White and reflective only
of the stars.

This Road is a Home
Vignette-Noelle Lammott
Poetry

My body is a map—
highways of scars
stretched across the vast space I call my soul.
There are roads
that lead nowhere;
dead ends
I claimed for myself
just to prove
I could create my own detours.

Bi-something
Jordan M. Griffin
Fiction

My mother clicks her pen like she can't hear the way it screams. We've talked about her decision because I asked, because I wanted to know why taxes matter more to her than letting people be people. I am not yet tall enough to see over the counter, but I know her choice will say something I don't want to understand. Her paper reads *California Proposition 8: Eliminates Right of Same-sex Couples to Marry; Initiative Constitutional Amendment.*

Before I can stop myself, my lips move, and the words that tumble out are ones I promised I would whisper only to my pillow: *What if I married a woman? Would you still be against it then?*

She looks at me for a long time, at my face that is so much her and so much my father and yet my own. Her teeth work at her bottom lip. I know she's thinking about asking, voicing it between us, but neither of us can take that. She turns back to the paper and inks a large X next to the word NO.

In the sixth grade, my best friend is a girl with eyes the color of pine needles. She and I sit in my room, talking about the questions we don't have answers for. Which classes we will take, which friends will matter in five years, what our future boyfriends will look like.

What if we never get boyfriends?

We could always date each other.

Her hand finds my shoulder and her smile says *tag*, and she stands like she's going to run out of my room. My hands catch her waist as I throw her onto the down sea of my blankets. Her ribs are ladder rungs under my fingers, and I press into them the way I know makes her laugh.

On Monday, she won't talk to me. The first time she opens her mouth, it's to lean to the person next to her on the PE numbers and mutter the word *lesbian*, her eyes fixed on me two rows behind her. Her voice spills like oil into the student body. The slick of it sticks to my skin. It gums my teeth and traps my voice when the other girls ask if it's true.

I'm gay on my Mom's side. Straight on my Dad's. I am half, split, bifurcated.

Bi-something.

In college, the boys don't like me unless they have girlfriends. Then, I'm interesting. Then, I'm worth the effort of leaning across a table, taking a long drink from a watered-down margarita, and smiling at the body sitting beside me. *Dude, you are so lucky.*

The reply is a chuckle and an arm slung over the back of my chair. *Not really. She says she's not into that. Maybe with enough drinks I can talk her into it, though.*

The girls don't like me either. A week before midterms, my lab partner scowls as she hands back my biology notes. The phone number I wrote at the top has been whited out with the correction pen she keeps beside her calculator.

You've been with men. I can't even imagine it, she says. All you bi girls cheat, anyway.

On long nights, when I would stare up at the pinprick stars, a man named Roy G. Biv would come to my window. Sometimes we said nothing. Sometimes we spoke of colors that could not keep their promises.

We lost touch when I moved out of that bedroom, and it's been a long time now since we've spoken. Every now and then, I wonder if he still remembers my name.

Death, Rebirth, and a Landline Telephone

Julia Fennell

Art



I Never Was Any Good at Counting Sheep

Julia Fennell

Art



To be Loved is to be Known
Julia Fennell
Art



Vigil for the Girl with the Stuffed Bunny

Julia Fennell

Art



WILDING
Claire Scott
Poetry

I would be wild
like a coyote, a cougar, a condor
sipping ayahuasca tea
in Peru's thin mountain air
visions of crimson seahorses flying
through orchids and passion flowers
a symbol of transformation

I would be wild
walking for weeks on Camino de Santiago
with a backpack and timeworn boots
wanting to reset my life, move away from
sugar and Netflix
moving closer to enlightenment
with every spirited step

I would be wild
like a lynx, a lion, a leopard
heli-skiing in Alaska
running with the bulls in Spain
swimming next to great white sharks
but the wildest I get seems to be
a butterscotch sundae
while watching *Breaking Bad*
in worn slippers and sloppy sweats
curled up like a comma, content
on my living room couch

SUMMER SHEETS

Claire Scott
Poetry

Running through rows of crisp white sheets
wafting like Halloween ghosts

from the clothes line at our summer cottage
on Cape Cod

bare feet and sea-salt skin
just up from the beach

building castles with muddy sand
draping them with shells and seaweed

watching waves wash them away
lost in an eyeblink of life

fingers tracing each smooth sheet
the sweet smell of Felso soap

the sun grazing my face
toes sinking into sweet grass

finger painting dark lines
on the white background

running, running like a gazelle
until my mother's screams

crack the silence
like a gunshot

OKCUPID
Claire Scott
Poetry

Sitting
across the table from Mr. OkCupid
who must have walked through
a circus mirror on his way
to Sarber's Grill here in Berkeley, California.
Gained thirty pounds, aged ten years,
lost four inches and most of his hair.

He doesn't
drink. But I do and do and do.
He rambles on about traffic patterns,
cleaning products, insurance policies
and the habits of his ten calico cats.
I slump in my seat,
picking at my wilted spinach salad.

The clock shows no mercy.
Stuck at six.

I order
another bottle of Sauvignon Blanc.
He talks about tidying closets, sorting socks,
alphabetizing his underwear.
He is looking a bit blurry
rough edges smoothed over
actually not too bad.

I can see us cleaning closets together
while cuddling ten flea-infested cats.

Fortune Machine I

Kailey Tedesco

Poetry

**YOUR FORTUNE**

Life reels stretch gum chew. Lock up your dream before it un-fuzzes. Look to the gutted antler. Lake constellations mark your mind's roadkill. What have you done with what you stole in the cicada silence of a no vacancy? Basket your ideas now—tuck them without the comfort of a blanket or pillow. One day the time will come for you to act on the dust siring all the window sills. The sun shines, but today it is not yours.

PLAY AGAIN

Lucky Numbers: 10, 17, 36, 41, 89, 92

Fortune Machine II

Kailey Tedesco

Poetry

**YOUR FORTUNE**

Far away castles ache your brainwaves.
This new-world migraine lurches
spidery & anger. Greed on toile-
plates & you won't be made big. You came
to the door of a question & locked
yourself out. What shy is left
at the bottom of lipstick tube?
There are no words left for you to speak,
so it is best to gesture instead. Apology
mis en scene—layout your fruit harvest
according to size, pumpkin
last. No, flowers are inappropriate
& smell like the bottom of a
silk-casket. Bring your own belongings.
Leave the rest.

PLAY AGAIN

Lucky Numbers: 8, 14, 27, 42, 67, 81

Leap Second
KateLynn Hibbard
Poetry

Every 500 days the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service in Frankfurt stops the atomic clocks for a second to put the two systems of time measurement back in sync.

So what if we all got to add our own second
at the end of a kiss, or before
the car hits that patch of ice
and slides into oncoming traffic?
Horses' hooves fly up all four at once
in less time. The heart can be stopped
and started back up with no harm done.
A girl could slide into second base
or touch home in a game of hide and seek.
A man could catch the cup
about to fall off the table, answer
the phone on the fifth ring, blow out
the rest of his birthday candles.

What does it mean to be on time
if we can just add more of it
every 500 days? Your Hail Mary pass beats
the shot clock, you catch the bus before
it pulls away from the curb, remember the answer
to Question 24 and fill in the circle
with no stray lines, the mouse escapes
the cat, your frittata never bursts into flame
beneath the broiler, the deposit hits the bank
before the check bounces, you feel
inexplicably older.

Coat of Knives
Kyle Brandon Lee
Poetry

I love you to
death
is all but inevitable

Embracing you is
wrapping my arms around
a coat of knives

I come away with
subtle cuts
from your cloak of broken glass

I smile and bleed
not knowing
when to walk away

Vacancy
Kyle Brandon Lee
Poetry

The blinking of the 12:00
on the microwave reminds
me of roadside motels
Vacancy
No vacancy
What is more empty?
The rooms?
The time?

Vignettes of Him

Burcu Seyben

Nonfiction

It wasn't his looks. No. Not the cowboy boots or the cowboy hat, the long blonde hair, or the blue eyes. The curled, thin, simpering moustache. Nosy, thin voice always ready to crack a cute but smirky joke. No, none of that. It was mostly the fact that they were so out of context. They didn't fit into this plaza cafeteria where everyone dressed pristine clean and pristine chic and looked extremely Turkish. With pride as their tags. The new salad bar at the center. People mingled and showed off what they ate to each other. He stood aloof. Eating a classical Turkish toast with cheese and pepperoni to contrast the vegans and strengthen his defiant image. He was trying to be the most authentic brand. Only out of his coolness or with pure coincidence he sat by me, the newbie. FOP from the US.

*

A boat ride in a city that had two sides. Two cities in it. Which kept looking at each other from the two shores. With the bull running in between. The legendary strait alluring for fools who were lovers. Lovers who were fooling. Had lived in this city. Had never used that boat before. The bigger ones, perhaps. Feeling nostalgic. The boat cradled my homesickness that he sated with homemade *sarma* and a champagne in a picnic basket. To be popped looking at The Maiden's Tower. Tower of Leandros, he'd correct. Had never looked at it from this side. A wooden tower protected by a stone wall with a bulwark still there. Under the water. A Byzantine defense against the Ottomans. He first told the history, and then the legends. The two famous ones about the

princess bitten by a snake and Leander losing his light and getting devoured by the current. The evening was well-staged for the estranged returnee who was ready to be enchanted by an oriental hallmark. An epiphany.

*

The Istiklal Street. It wasn't on the Asian side of the city. It was on the European side. Another touristic attraction. Not for me. The street was my teens. It was where I had seen my first theatre production. Had fallen asleep on a restaurant table where my parents had dinner with their friends after a performance. Had gotten drunk in the same restaurant ten years later. With my dad. The night before the national university entrance exam. Had watched the best independent movies. Kieślowski's *Three Colors*, which taught me the sound and vision of melancholy. Had devoured *The Name of The Rose* the day it was released in an Italian sounding café and swayed to *The Doors* next door. My kingdom for a cowboy. He wouldn't find anything to surprise me here. He did. He found a place. It was a night club in once a historical location. A hammam, a restaurant, a small church, or all but at different times. Bunch of his plaza people dancing first to electronic music and later to the most popular and banal Turkish pop. The club or the people didn't belong there. Neither did I. Now.

*

Crying hysterically. Calling again and again. Leaving countless messages to his phone. When had I become so possessed? I'd wanted to be a bait. I'd wanted to add to his chill. Working in a cubicle seen from all floors of the plaza, I'd sensed his eyes on me from day one. I'd stood

out as this new entity that needed to be discovered. Like a new entry that they would add to the salad bar. I'd wanted to lose. But not this way. Not by having to listen to a gossip about his proposal to a co-worker a few cubicles away. I was trying to wipe off the image of the plaza's glassy hygiene on the cream-colored sofa now sucking up the red wine stains. To wake up from a short, nice dream that had turned into a heart eating plant. Tear him from my meat. Find a token of sincerity under a thick layer of artifICE. Be able to stop calling him.

*

I was standing and waiting for a shuttle each morning to get to work. Had to get up too early to even get to that shuttle. Not having eaten during that rush. He'd reroute to come to work with me. The breeze sweeping the Bosphorus algae filled my nostrils with disgust. The colognes of the co-workers diffusing the bus. Faints had become regulars. He'd catch me once, twice. Treating my allergic reaction to monotony, deadliness, incompatibility, and low pay with a band-aid. It'd come off. My brain and stomach were competing against each other in their race toward nausea. I should have been the one. Who'd had enough.

*

One last image of him. Standing outside a place where he must have been working. He used to get these side jobs. It is a cobblestoned alley. It is evening. I am in a car with two others. One of them steps out. The one who steps out gets into a heated discussion with a woman. I am watching, he is watching, he doesn't see me watching him watching. I catch myself thinking. It could have been us. I am almost glad that it isn't. I am glad

that it is over. We are over. But I'm not liking our indifference. His, specifically. Suddenly, I want to get out. Get in between. Stop the two from arguing. Be visible. Include him in the scene. A hand on my hand. Stopping me from intervening. I stop. I know it won't last.

EAGLE RIVER

Eli V. Rahm

Poetry

Because you need to begin where it's cold. Sun through ice. Moose fur under the swing set. Here is more animal than anything else. Landscape just another body. You're new—born wanting, and furious. Inside your belly, a thick east coast heat. You hold your hands over each fold as if to keep something molten from spilling out. You know this isn't going to end like you intended. Your hair, made from the tongues of dogs—the sound of their barking fills every strand. Home, to you, not a place—a hunting.

Hiking
Nicole Reese
Poetry

The crunch of feet on the gravel path,
simple rocks leading lost souls through the woods.
Soft plumes of breath from gratified exhalations,
like peaceful punctuation to this adoration,
periods or commas, certainly not exclamation points.

Maybe a question mark
as adoration becomes exploration,
but by hike's end,
a return to the gentle understanding
of a dash or ampersand—
from exploration to veneration and glory.

Ultrasound I

Nicole Reese

Poetry

The warm jelly on my exposed belly
primes me for the first look at new life.
How miraculous to have
a window into the womb.

The screen swivels in our direction
and the silence is thunderous,
the air is alive, thick and thrumming
like a warning before a summer storm.

Our laughter shatters the quiet,
first as giddy as kids on the playground,
but soon descending into frenzy,
a refrain for our months-long song.

We leave our appointment
stunned back into silence
with a souvenir photo
labeled Baby A and Baby B.

Living Room
Ashley Wagner
Poetry

The only holy book I know
is bound with thread woven
by a friend of mine. Their partner
stitched the spine. The pages are filled
with the gospel of city-dwellers:
women with PhDs and C-section scars,
men who let their stone masks slip,
those who were kicked out
at the age of eighteen for their speed metal
and their dark lipstick and their tendency
toward curiosity outweighing
the unending push toward hate.

We pass it around
as we would a relic or a burning
roll of herbs, feather-fingered
and reverent at such an earthly
creation. The living room is alive
with other such oddities, from a too-small
shirt Frankensteined into a jacket to a fern
named Stephen who survived seven moves
in six years and who's tucked happily—
if placidly—in his hand-painted pot
in the lap of a stranger. From a dead
granny's green couch, dragged in
from the kitchen to make room
for more guests to a quilt
meant to be a birthday gift
for a no-longer-newborn-nephew
who will, we all insist, hold it
each night in his sleep nonetheless.

We are new graduates, entry-level, fresh faces in unfair careers. We are freelancers stonewalled by pithy things like *the economy* or *our morals*. We are serving staff spritzed in *eau de oven grease trap*.

We know we are the violinists going down with the ship, but here is where we slam our hearts onto the table. Here is where the energy is.

Mud Cake
Ashley Wagner
Poetry

It's my birthday again. The first
one I legitimately
forgot about. Twenty-six turns
over like a rock in the woods.
It reveals about a million bugs
skittering
the way dropped jewels do.
In a triumph of legs,
assorted thoraxes
merge back into the dirt
before they can be named.

An Immersive Experience
Suzanne Grove
Fiction

Before the city, we slipped south, lost ourselves in a rush of soybean fields and old corncribs, unattended and crumbling.

For a while—nothing. Telephone poles running straight lines into a fruit punch sun, perfect and fat ahead of us. A tractor pulling a cultivator. Something chemical in the air for fifteen miles, then something clean on my tongue every time I opened my mouth.

We had driven six hours for my husband David's human resources conference. But first we planned to meet his former classmate from Northwestern.

We passed an Arby's and abandoned roller rink and the diner where we met the old friend. Jake. His wife had died. He'd been a public relations manager but now he was unemployed, living back home with his parents, who had a chicken or bred chickens or sold eggs. I do not remember. I did not ask further questions.

When we first met at a party, David told me he was the son of a newspaper magnate. Later, he told me it was a joke. *Everyone here is pretending to be someone they're not*, he'd said, chewing on a prosciutto crostini. *It's like a parlor game.*

We had dinner with Jake, who was handsome with thick eyelashes and clear eyes spread unevenly on his face. I ate a pot roast and drank too much beer so that I kept having to excuse myself to urinate.

Jake ordered a milkshake after dinner, and I watched him suck on the straw, tasting the cold cream of it in my own mouth.

Then he asked me a series of questions. Did I like people, generally speaking? Did I like the quiet? Did I like to feel far away?

“You have a welcoming face,” he told me. He clenched his jaw often. “A very pretty face.”

I told him the air smelled less polluted here than back home. I told him I liked the flatness of the land and all the quiet roads.

“Don’t fetishize it,” he said, using a paper napkin to pat at his lips.

We said goodbye, and the two men hugged. Jake hugged me too. When the tip of his nose touched my ear and held there, the fur of my body gave an unintended ovation.

As David and I buckled our seatbelts, I asked him to show me a photo of Jake’s ex-wife.

“She’s not his ex-wife,” he said. “They didn’t divorce.”

“Still—”

“She’s dead.”

#

I had a slow ache high in the gut, a sort of craving that came when the seasons changed—when I was hungry or tired or wanting the home of my childhood, wanting my mother and father, a warm house in fall. When you don’t quite feel real. When your head splits apart from your body.

I needed coffee. The ecstatic neon of a Dunkin’ Donuts sign rose above the skyline two miles up the road. The drive-thru was closed.

We went inside and met the manager, Paul. Or, I met Paul because David paid him no attention, so little attention it seemed purposeful. He met Paul the same way you meet the turnpike tool booth worker or the clerk at a motel. I recognized Paul immediately. He’d been a professional hockey player.

Last year, a paper in Chicago where he'd played ran a story about how Paul gambled and drank away all his money. People found the article tasteless and exploitative, the cheap entertainment of a tabloid. The paper failed to contact Paul, had not interviewed him. His voice was absent from the story.

I told Paul I recognized him. He smiled when I reached out my hand to shake his.

David watched us, huddled into himself, looking cold. But it was summer. Outside the greying horizon blistered through with pink. His phone rang, and he held it tight to his face. He wandered toward the door, made figure eights across the waxed floors. He kept looking out the windows while he talked, as if waiting for someone to pick him up.

Paul and I started chatting. When I mentioned about Jake, the soft lines of Paul's face spasmed. He knew Jake. Jake's parents had a house on Horn Road, six miles southwest. They were elderly. Jake had this business going on, a sort of roadside attraction for horror lovers.

“Like a haunted house?” I asked.

“No,” Paul said. “People go, and he tortures them.” These tourists stayed for one night, for one weekend, for one week. They signed a waiver. He let them loose on his parents’ hundreds of acres. He hunted them down.

“He used to work in PR,” I said, stupidly. I swallowed my coffee. “I’ve read about things like that. An immersive experience.”

“Psychological terror,” Paul said. “But there’s more to it than that.”

Paul combed our coffees and gave us free donuts, refusing to say any more.

David and I had a nice weekend. We had sex, got drunk. I ate beef carpaccio with a salted egg yolk and thought of Jake.

When we checked out of the hotel on Sunday, David said he was staying for the week.

A churning little grin—a slick anticipation—kept trying to break through his face. I watched him suppress it.

“Why?” I asked.

“I’m helping Jake with this little venture he’s got going. Just business assistance.”

“What kind of venture?”

“Nothing really.” He rubbed my shoulders, and I heard the softest giggle bubble up from his lips.

I opened my mouth to ask all the questions, but only allowed it to hang, my jaw like the hinge to a door that has appeared suddenly in your own home. Did you somehow not notice or forget it?

I thought, If marriage is a party, how long do its parlor games last?

“Don’t worry,” David said like a Beach Boy. All croon to subdue you. “I’ll fly. You go ahead and take the car back home.”

Roadkill
Donald Sellitti
Poetry

Trace the paths of car and creature
back in time as far as they can go,
then once more set them moving,
and one will always end as roadkill
on this still-warm blacktop in the dark.

Like two rivulets of rain upon a window
joining as a single stream,
their merger had been etched
into the surface of the pavement
behind them; inevitable, yet pivotal
for everything to follow.

The driver breathes in deeply,
seemingly unscathed;
mercifully unknowing
of the meeting that was
scheduled on the highway up ahead
by the death he left behind.

Unaware of yet another crossing of
his path with some other.
Unaware of yet another roadkill
nearing on the still-warm blacktop
in the dark.

Thin Skin
Kate Welsh
Poetry

Over the sink, I peel skin like a sunburn blister
then eat the yellow flesh. I had to do it quickly—

on the walk home from the market,
the peaches bruised against my hip bone,

sweet juice soaking their bag through, sopping
my skin. Their injury an insistence

to consume. I eat around the places made pulp,
find the tender bits, and wonder at how

we found each other. Our narrowed bodies distilled
to sinew and want: how my legs blotched

with mysterious purple and every night
your guts pummeled you awake. Still—

tangled in desire, there is so much hope.
It's August. You're away. I'm missing you

in the same way I'm wanting you, have wanted you.
In the kitchen, impatient, hands still viscid with juice,

I read the latest letter from you. *Here, only rain
and mud. No sunshine for days.* I want to tell you

about the peaches: how they're here waiting
for you, their skin flushing like dawn.

September
Kate Welsh
Poetry

You had only been out of town a few days,
but when I returned to the apartment
to pack up my things for good

it was stale as a tomb, everything coated
in a white layer of stillness.

All summer I had tried

to guard against the construction
grinding outside: put plastic
on the windows, taped around the doors,

placed cloths in strategic corners
to wipe down every surface. No use.
The dust was relentless, absurd

in its persistence. From the doorway,
I watched particles float dumbly
in the afternoon light, blur the life

I was leaving.

I could see only two things
that had changed: you had turned

the engagement photos face down,
and on the table, you had left me
a card in a bright red envelope.

When I picked it up, it left
an empty square behind.

Blues Tattoo
Kristy Snedden
Poetry

He comes with his son in a glass elevator.
She makes banana pancakes and coffee like old times.
For the past eleven years he is always alive
and oddly lavish with praise for her cooking.
So she thought it was a trick of the moon
when he arrived in a glass coffin
which is impossible because his ashes are lost
somewhere in Arizona. She admits she loved staring
at him and looked for a long time at his healed
body. Once he woke up and grinned at her,
his teeth intact. He comes and goes this way,
like the Autumn ferns outside her window
green and lush one day, feigning death
the next. He comes less often now,
but sometimes she sees him across the lake
at the helm of a runabout, flashing that grin
under the sprinkle of freckles across his nose.
No broken tooth. No blue tattoo.

Chittering
Kristy Snedden
Poetry

Caught outside in sheets of rain
I'm searching for the Elephant's Foot
with its base of toes clinging
to the earth, busy collecting water
to feed the lavender flowers
and store the milky sap in case
of snakebite. Some call it a weed
but its medicine is strong if your heart
breaks (cardiotonic) or your fever
soars (febrifuge). Also, a diuretic.

I found a patch by the deck
when I sat beneath the uncovered gutter
and let the spout pour water
over me like it was holy and this was
the closest I came to baptism
since childhood. Eyelashes heavy
with drops, I chittered blue notes
and the long-stalked lavender flowers
and small knobby root crown
drank everything that poured off me.

Beggar
Kristy Snedden
Poetry

Inside the frame of my body
I hunger for sacrament. Looking
for the hand of an angel to baptize
the parts of me too familiar
with sacrilege, I am anointed
with saffron. I am fed
the Eucharist
hidden in olive trees.
When I beg for symbols
of the sacred, send me
into the world
to play in tulips and costumes,
surround me with circus light.

Dominique, or When I had Nowhere to Be

Connor Watkins-Xu

Poetry

Seattle, WA

All that comes are tired towers and hazy roads,
forests mulled to a grand green and mountains
bright in brief. The light's not as distant as expected
but the singularity persists. Anything is mine,
if I alone can lug it up the stairs. Here they can't
get enough of nature, but I'm sick of it. I think
I lack the will to pass on. Stagnation is the shadow
over all the cities I've run off. I miss the friendships
that lasted all day, erupted from impulsive phone calls
that never sounded my alarm. I didn't mind driving.
My green car named Dominique didn't try to kill me
too often. Transmission more resilient, she took me
to Wood Avenue, the East Coast, always expired tags
and windows down to keep the sweat within reason.

Almost Divine

Emilio Gomez

Nonfiction

Some men are too large for caskets. They are skipping stones that never sink, chromatic rainbows that never end: testaments that humans are almost divine. When such monuments do crumble, cities weep. Strong men cascade. Almighty God is beckoned to raise the eternal among us until he is buried before us.

His name was Industrious, a Cuban farmer anointed to toil until the sun tattooed his whole body; a man of pride who raised broad shoulders and bloodied machetes stained by freshly cut cane stalk and bellowed before his brothers with humble superiority; a leader with courageous wisdom who witnessed atrocities and extirpated his family from his beloved homeland to a place where hope had not yet been asphyxiated.

His plane landed in 1955. Alone, the middle-aged man could not settle for American comforts. He rubbed his rough, calloused hands together and cultivated the concrete jungle until it produced four more plane tickets from Havana, Cuba, to New York City. The year was 1956. Home had arrived.

The trek ensued. Descending stairs. Boarding trains. Hiking streets. Wiping tables. Filling mugs. Washing dishes. Dumping trash. Mopping floors. Descending streets. Boarding trains. Hiking stairs. Filling tub. Wiping face. Washing teeth. Sleep. Shaving face. Kissing wife. Hugging kids. Boarding trains. Work.

Tirelessly, the man travailed with excellence, with industry. For nine years, he bore the burdens of an immigrant father in an indifferent city. He no longer prospered on his family's sugarcane fields. He brought home rice and beans and sometimes meat, but there was

always light and water and freedom. There was hope and a recurring dream of outgrowing cramped city apartments and owning personal property on democratic soil.

In 1964, he moved his family to Florida, where he built awnings and bank accounts until he could pay out promises. He became a slave and emerged a master of his own three-bedroom house where he fed golden corn kernels to roosters he raised in his backyard. There, in a white-paneled shack, his tools waited for him to return from his day job.

Emilio ameliorated. He tended a garden that fed his family; he dug a well and built a pump that quenched their thirst; he converted a portion of the house into a money-producing one-bedroom efficiency; he added hammocks and rocking benches and closets full of cards, Dominoes, and board games for guests and grandkids like me.

#

I met the man I am named after in 1985, when he had nearly seventy years of experience under his black belt with the Cuban flag on it. He outstretched his strong, drooping arms and raised me with watered blue eyes, calling all of his friends and neighbors and demanding that they come see his first and only grandson.

“I’m sad,” I confessed to my grandfather one early year, “because you’re not going to be alive when I get married or have children.”

“That’s nonsense,” he retorted in Spanish, and it was. On May 30th, 2009, three days after turning ninety-three, he dusted off his only suit – a plain, tan two-piece colored solely by the green leaves and yellow petals of a fresh boutonniere – grabbed my grandmother’s shaking

hands, and led her down the aisle as honorary guests at my wedding.

Strong as ever, he persisted in pruning his lawn and repairing his roof; he drove in the day and played Dominoes at night; he welcomed me into his home four days after the following Christmas, and I watched his ocean-blue eyes refill as I told him that my wife was expecting our first child.

He slept with a smile that night and the next, and when I saw him a few days later, he was still smiling, resting, peacefully.

***Other People's Crazy* and *Other People's Drama* by
Gregory Fletcher Book Reviews**

Thu Anh Nguyen

Book Review

Other People's Crazy by Gregory Fletcher

Overdue Books, 2019

209 pages

USD \$12.95

Other People's Drama by Gregory Fletcher

Overdue Books, 2023

229 pages

USD \$12.95

From the very first pages of Gregory Fletcher's books *Other People's Crazy* and the follow-up *Other People's Drama*, expect the unexpected. You wouldn't expect for the largest kid in school to get bullied by the smallest kid, or for a stray dog to drastically change everyone's life, or for a father figure to be found in a bronco-riding hairdresser, but all this and more happens as we first meet the main character Brandon, and his friends and family.

Brandon doesn't know how to handle his chaotic life, so it makes sense that he has imaginary conversations with his absent father. His grandmother is mean to him, and he doesn't understand many of the decisions his mother makes, like asking her friend Yoshi to teach Brandon how to shave, and be a stand-in father to him, and thanking Stuart, the boy who bullies him. Because there's so much about his life and mother that Brandon doesn't understand, he calls those parts "crazy," but really, what we and Brandon come to realize is that the unexplainable is often the most beautiful.

Life continues to surprise Brandon as he befriends a stray dog that he names Lefty. He becomes friends with a girl named Ahndrea, and that blossoms into his first romantic relationship. He follows his mother up onto the roof of his building, and learns to sit with his thoughts. It's the wise lessons he receives from his mother, and that the book offers us, that makes *Other People's Crazy* really heart-warming. One night, when Brandon is telling her his troubles, his mother responds, "I think my mother tried her best with me. I'm trying my best with you. And now you're trying your best with Lefty." From her, Brandon learns to just keep listening. He learns to let go when scary things like a sudden dog attack happen in front of him and his friends. He learns to have empathy for his bully after he finds out Stuart's dad also died.

What makes both of these books compelling is Fletcher's humor and propulsive plot. He makes it easy for us to care about everyone in this small town of Mesa Grande, Arizona. It's a joy to see Brandon go from being friendless to slowly making friends with Ahndrea, and even coming to better understand his tormentor Stuart. Even as Brandon's life changes in the second book, and he loses his girlfriend, and sees Stuart get busier with his own new girlfriend, he finds ways to help others and learn from his losses.

As Brandon settles into his Junior year of school in *Other People's Drama*, he's starring in the school play. His portrayal of Lennie in *Of Mice and Men* gives him insight into a character who is marginalized and abused for being different. Ahndrea is now officially his girlfriend, and Stuart is his best friend. His mom is

dating a police officer named Buck. It seems like everything is less chaotic than Sophomore year, but the changes come quickly, and they make Brandon wonder how much of life is what we envision, and how much of life is what we make of it.

Even though Brandon thought he was in the perfect relationship, he sees Ahndrea cheat on him, and they break up. He does not get along with Buck who says ignorant and racist comments about Buck's friends who have gone missing in Yemen. Another friend is stuck in Wuhan as the COVID pandemic rages on.

What makes this second offering of Fletcher's series so moving is that despite the challenges he faces, Brandon learns the value of helping others. He drives Stuart around, and helps his apartment manager untangle the complicated immigration issues with his family. Brandon learns about what it's like to be an immigrant in America, and to be afraid of ICE capturing you and your family.

Brandon has to mature because things don't stay simple and fun. Fletcher deftly navigates what it's like to be a young adult, with all its complications, joys, and sadness. There are no easy answers, and that complexity is what makes these books so readable. We see ourselves a little in Brandon, especially in the final pages when he looks at everything he's been through, and thinks, "I was seeing a bigger, broader picture of my life, and things felt richer than ever." Over the course of his two books, Fletcher shows us the broader picture of life through Brandon, and we feel richer for it.

Contributor Bios

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Karen Baumgart lives in Australia and adores beautiful quotes, pink things, cats, and chai tea. Karen used to be an English teacher, and is quite certain that writing is, indeed, the best therapy. You can find her on Instagram @miss.cake.girl

Jack B. Bedell

Jack B. Bedell is Professor of English and Coordinator of Creative Writing at Southeastern Louisiana University where he also edits Louisiana Literature and directs the Louisiana Literature Press. Jack's work has appeared in HAD, Heavy Feather, Pidgeonholes, The Shore, No Contact, Autofocus, WAS, and other journals. He's also had pieces included in Best Microfiction and Best Spiritual Literature. His latest collection is Against the Woods' Dark Trunks (Mercer University Press, 2022). He served as Louisiana Poet Laureate 2017-2019.

Joe Bisicchia

Joe Bisicchia loves collecting sea glass and counting stars. An Honorable Mention recipient for the Fernando Rielo XXXII World Prize for Mystical Poetry, he has written four published collections of poetry. He also has written over two hundred fifty individual works that have been published in over one hundred publications. To see more of his work, visit www.widewide.world.

Megan Busbice

Megan Busbice is a poet and fiction writer currently living in Chicago, Illinois. She enjoys finding the best bakeries in town, visiting art museums, watching women's soccer, and traveling to the mountains of North

Carolina whenever she can. Megan currently works in the public policy space and is passionate about social justice.

Linda Conroy

Linda Conroy is a retired social worker who enjoys observing and commenting on the ordinary behaviors that we see around us, and the connection between human nature and the natural world. Her work has appeared in many journals. She has self-published two poetry collections and keeps on writing.

Jesse DeLong

Jesse DeLong is a Montana native living in Louisiana, trying to get used to the unbearable heat and humidity. He likes to go camping or to festivals with his wife, Keosha, and his dog, Michael Scott, who is as dramatic and sensitive as the character on the show. He is the author of *The Amateur Scientist's Notebook*, published by Baobab Press.

Steve Denehan

Steve does not read a whole lot of poetry so finds it strange that, when he writes, it is poetry that comes. He and his wife, Eimear, live in Kildare, Ireland with their daughter Robin, who is a poem herself.

Carrie Esposito

Carrie Esposito was thrilled to be a 2023 Bread Loaf Fiction Scholar. Her stories have been published in *The Georgia Review*, *Literary Mama*, *Ruminate Magazine*, *The Forge Literary Magazine*, *Monkey Bicycle*, *The MacGuffin*, *King Ludd's Rag* by *Malarkey Books*, *Pif Magazine*, *Everyday Fiction*, *Mused*, the *Ms. Aligned* anthology, and in *SLAB Litmag* where her story won

first place in the William Boggs fiction contest. She has essays in Litro Magazine and The Times Union. She has poetry published in Tipton Poetry Journal, Nostalgia Press, and Porcupine Literary. Carrie is an Educational Consultant in the NYC schools. You can find her on Twitter(X)/Instagram @CarrieBESposito and on her website www.carrieesposito.com.

Julia Fennell

Julia Fennell (she/her) is an undergraduate student at the University of Chicago studying visual arts. She is interested in themes of intimacy, memory, love, and connection. You can find her on Instagram as @recoveringmathmajor

Stephanie Frazee

Stephanie Frazee's writing is forthcoming or has appeared in The Evergreen Review, Roi Fainéant Press, Bayou Magazine, ONE ART, Juked, SmokeLong Quarterly, and elsewhere. She currently lives in Seattle but recently decided to move back to the Midwest after 20 years. You can see more at www.stephaniefrazee.com.

Emilio Gomez

Emilio Gomez is a second-generation Cuban born and raised in South Florida. Growing up in an environment surrounded by drugs, violence, ignorance, and isolation, Emilio turned to words at a young age in an attempt to understand himself and the world around him. In his writing, he tries to capture the emotional impressions that he and others often feel but struggle to articulate. Emilio currently lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, with his wife and two sons.

Jordan M. Griffin

Jordan has been a writer as long as she can remember. When she's not writing, she's dancing on silks, trying new teas, or wrangling her two disastrous dogs. You can find more about her, including her podcast on craft fiction, at <https://jordanmogriffin.com/>

Suzanne Grove

Suzanne Grove's writing is driven by Anne Lamott's observation that "there is ecstasy in paying attention." She believes *The Truth Is Out There*, and rewatching *The X-Files* has not only taught her a lot about writing, but also makes her happy. So does her Norwegian Elkhound, Bear.

Dane Hamann

Dane Hamann edits and indexes textbooks for a publisher in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. He is also the poet-in-residence for derailleur.net and the author of *A Thistle Stuck in the Throat of the Sun* (Kelsay Books, 2021) and *Parsing the Echoes* (Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2023).

KateLynn Hibbard

Things that bring me joy: growing up on a dairy farm near Green Bay, Wisconsin; teaching writing and women's history at Minneapolis College; singing with One Voice Mixed Chorus, the largest LGBTQ choral group in America; and living with many pets and my spouse Jan in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Billie Hinton

Billie Hinton (she/her) is a writer and psychotherapist whose short work has appeared most recently in *Citron Review*, *The Hopper* (Pushcart nomination this year),

Does It Have Pockets, and JMWW. She's been obsessed with protecting land and wildlife since kindergarten, when she proudly carried a Smokey The Bear lunchbox, and currently protects 180 acres in the NC mountains and the wildlife who live there. She makes her home in central NC on a small farm (certified wildlife habitat and butterfly highway) with her family, horses and donkeys, cats, Corgis, bees, many native plants, and a Golden Retriever who believes in love.

Taya Sanderson Kesslau

Taya Sanderson Kesslau is a breast cancer survivor who has filled a wide variety of roles throughout her life. From being a homeschool mother and CFO of a music business, to working at an animal shelter and practicing as a Reiki master. She recently self-published her first book of poetry called Seven Year Silence, a chronicle of divorce. She resides in Bellingham, Washington with her new husband and family where she enjoys writing every day.

Vignette-Noelle Lammott

Vignette-Noelle Lammott is a disciple of beauty, heavily inspired by the natural world and the early Transcendentalists. Poet, photographer and independent-scholar of Victorian literature, she lives a quiet life in southern New Jersey.

Hiram Larew

Founder of Poetry X Hunger: Bringing a World of Poets to the Anti-Hunger Cause, Hiram Larew has recently published poems in West Trade Review, Contemporary American Voices, The Iowa Review and The New Ulster. His most recent collection, Patchy Ways, was published in 2023 by CyberWit Press.

www.HiramLarewPoetry.com and www.PoetryXHunger.com

Kyle Brandon Lee

Kyle Brandon Lee is a Texas born writer of poetry, prose and plays. He's published at *El Portal, Fiction on the Web*, and *The Cabinet of Heed*. If someday they open an old and dusty tome made of pecan bark and armadillo hide, perhaps they'll find his work within. Hopefully, it will be plentiful. He can be found at his website www.hillsdreaming.com or on twitter and Instagram @HDTMountains.

Peter Lilly

Peter Lilly is a British Poet who grew up in Gloucester before spending eight years in London studying theology and working with the homeless. He now lives in the South of France with his wife and son, where he concentrates on writing, teaching English, and community building. His debut Collection 'An Array of Vapour' is forthcoming with TSL publications, and his second collection 'A Handful of Prayers' is currently available from with Wipf & Stock.

Natalie MacDonald

Natalie has been incarcerated in various visual effects post production facilities for over twenty years. Shackled to the film production meat grinder and forced to work 100 plus hour weeks. Determined to resist the pressure to reduce all "creatives" into compliant automatons, she withdrew more and more into her own little world. Global events then threw the entire world into a gigantic freaking maelstrom. She saw her chance and fled London. Away from the clutches of corporate cut-throats she's been re discovering joy in simple, slow living; Observing life from the kitchen window; the

seagulls dive bombing each other and the changing light on the distant mountains.

Fiona Mossman

Fiona Mossman is a librarian and writer from Scotland who spends her time staring at clouds, drinking too much coffee and wishing that she did not have to worry about things like clocks and schedules. You can find her by the sea, up a mountain or at home cuddling her cat, usually with a good book close by.

Thu Anh Nguyen

Thu Anh Nguyen is a writer and painter who grew up on a mango farm in Florida. She has strong opinions about fruit and unreliable narrators. Although she reads and reviews books professionally now, some of the best writing she has ever read was by her middle and high school writing students.

Andy Perrin

Andy Perrin is a cyclist/ writer/ photographer/ teacher from southern Rhode Island. His writing and photography has been published by a wide variety of print and digital journals and magazines. Andy was recently nominated for a Best of the Net 2024 award in the category of art for his photography, as well as being nominated for a 2024 Pushcart Prize for his poetry.

Eli V. Rahm

Eli V. Rahm (they/them) is a queer writer from Virginia. They love ramen, talking during movies, and their cat, Bagel Bergamot "The Bear" aka John Denver. You can find them tweeting about horror films and strange animals @dinodysphoria and and
<https://elisaurus.carrd.co/>

Erin Ratigan

Erin Ratigan is a freelance journalist and writer who dabbles in all forms of art from writing to painting, pottery and watercolor. Her professional writings are predominantly news features, while her poetry focuses on natural observations and musings on "the little moments in life." Her literary inspiration is Mary Oliver.

Nicole Reese

Nicole Reese is a wife, mom, and educator. Her work has most recently appeared in the Auroras & Blossoms Haiku Anthology. She hit the last name lotto with her husband, since Reese's peanut butter cups are her favorite candy.

Russell Rowland

Retirement gives Russell Rowland time for poetry, trail work for the Lakes Region (NH) Conservation Trust, and being a Grampy.

Claire Scott

Claire Scott is a retired psychotherapist who is enjoying having more time to write, take long walks and try to stay ahead of the weeds. She is excited to be spending more time with her five grandchildren who are scattered over the country. And, OMG, this granny just turned eighty.

Donald Sellitti

Donald Sellitti honed his writing skills as a scientist/educator at a Federal medical school in Bethesda, MD before turning to poetry following his retirement. Numerous publications in journals with titles such as Cancer Research and Oncology Letters have been followed by publications in journals with titles like

The Alchemy Spoon, Better than Starbucks, and Rat's Ass Review, which nominated him for a Pushcart Prize in 2022.

Burcu Seyben

Burcu Seyben is a theatre theorist, writer, actress, and author of *Struggle and Survival under Authoritarianism in Turkey: Theatre under Threat* (Lexington Books, 2020) and *Theatre and Multimedia* (Habitus, 2016). She specializes in contemporary European, American, and Turkish performances, and directors as well as theatre and politics. She loves writing short creative non-fiction in her new linguistic home.

Kristy Snedden

Kristy Snedden is a passionate trauma psychotherapist. When she began writing poetry in 2020, she realized she loves it because it is a way she can write about the human condition with tenderness. Her poetry has been published in various on-line and print journals and anthologies. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and she is a 2023 recipient of the Small Orange Press Emerging Woman Poet Prize. She enjoys hiking in the mountains near her home in Georgia and hanging out, listening to her husband and their dogs tell tall tales.

Bruce Southers

Bruce Southers is originally from the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, but now lives in the Ohio Valley and is a Project Manager for a large law firm. He spends his free time writing plays and non-fiction, as well as raising a small flock of chickens in his backyard.

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.

Kailey Tedesco

Kailey Tedesco (she/her) is the author of three full-length collections of poetry, including *Lizzie, Speak* (winner of White Stag Publishing's 2018 manuscript contest). She currently teaches courses on horror and Gothic literature at Moravian University. You can find her work featured in *Black Warrior Review*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *Passages North*, *Fairy Tale Review*, and more. For further information, please visit kaileytedesco.com.

Samantha Terrell

Samantha Terrell is a Pushcart-nominated poet and internationally published author of multiple collections, most recently *Dismantling Mountains* (Vellum Publishing UK). She writes from Upstate New York. Find her online at: www.SamanthaTerrell.com.

Michael Thériault

Michael Thériault put a college degree in his pocket and a blue collar on his neck to work as an Ironworker, then union organizer, then union representative. Retired from these careers, he writes with a busy street out a window by his right shoulder, and he often rides the buses and streetcars of San Francisco's Municipal Railway, and he

listens. Notions inevitably result; sometimes these become stories.

Ashley Wagner

Ashley Wagner is a writer from Maryland. Her debut chapbook is out now with Bottlecap Press. She is the poetry editor for the Baltimore-based magazine LIGEIA. You can find more of her work at ashleywagnerpoetry.com.

Scott Waters

My first attempts at writing poetry at age 22 were a miserable failure, resulting in a cockroach-infested Chicago apartment with a view of a brick wall, and the loss of my first job as a magazine journalist due to writing poems on company time. My more recent poetic posturing has met with more success—a heap of publishing credits and, to my family's relief, no loss of employment.

Connor Watkins-Xu

Connor Watkins-Xu holds an MFA from the University of Maryland and a BA from Baylor University. His poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *North American Review*, *Gargoyle*, and elsewhere. His manuscript has been named a semifinalist for the Berkshire Prize and The Brittingham and Felix Pollak Prizes in Poetry. Originally from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, he lives with his wife in Seattle. Find him @connorwatkinsxu on Instagram or at connorwatkinsxu.com.

Kate Welsh

Born and raised along the Mississippi River, Kate Welsh now lives in Brooklyn, NY. She holds a BA from Barnard College and an MFA from Warren Wilson

College, where she was the Rona Jaffe Graduate Fellow in 2021. She is a reader for ONLY POEMS and the co-founder/co-editor of The Swannanoa Review. Her work can be found at www.kate-welsh.com or on social media @khwelsh.

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

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.

Dominique Isaac Grate**FICTION / NONFICTION EDITOR**

Dominique Isaac Grate obtained his B.A. from the University of South Carolina, where he studied under the world-renowned Dr. Stephanie Mitchem, majoring in African-American Studies with a minor in History. In 2008, Pastor Grate received his call to serve in the ordained ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. A 2013 inductee into the National Academy of Young Preachers, Rev. Grate studied at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, where he was an Ed & Jean Christman Fellow, graduating in May 2015. Rev. Grate has pastored three congregations; Historic Trinity AME Church in Manning, SC, New Mt. Zion AME Church in Lexington, SC, and Calvary AME Church in Batesburg-Leesville. In 2023, Rev. Grate transitioned from full-time pulpit ministry to higher education, where he serves as the Assistant Vice President for Development at Jarvis Christian University in Hawkins, TX.

Annaliese Ballowe**INTERN**

Annaliese is a graduate from Oregon State University and currently lives in Northern California. Aside from spending time reading and writing, she's a big fan of wandering around San Francisco, surfing, and anything that has to do with Bob Dylan.

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.

For book reviews, please include the title, publisher, year published, and ISBN.

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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