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# DOOR = JAR



SUMMER 2024

ISSUE 31

Printed in the USA by Intellicor Communications  
3575 Hempland Road, Lancaster, PA 17601

DOOR = JAR

Door Is A Jar

Issue 31

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## **Editors**

Maxwell Bauman  
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Corrine Nulton  
Poetry and Drama Editor

Dominique Isaac Grate  
Fiction and Nonfiction Editor

Annaliese Ballowe  
Intern

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.

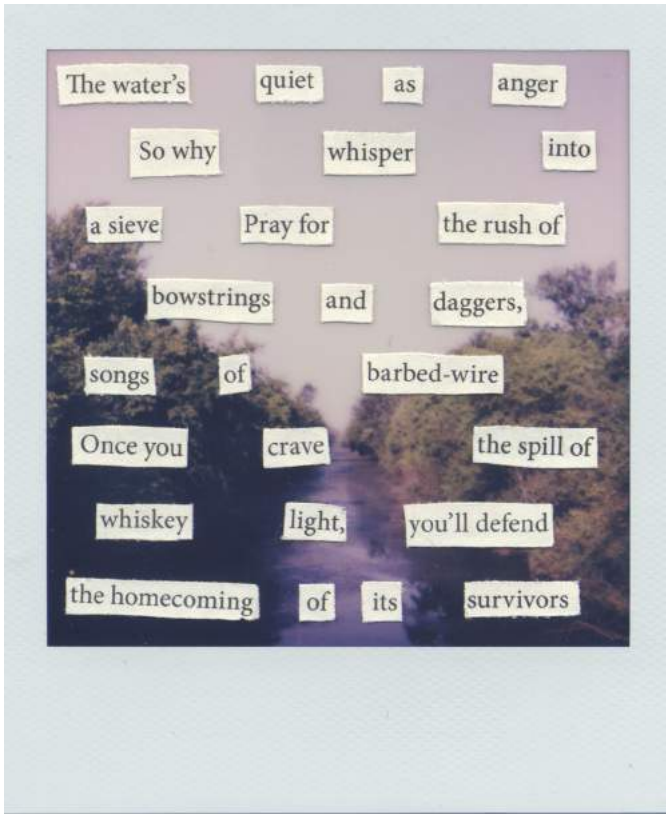
Here I am, tugging at Paco's door.

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

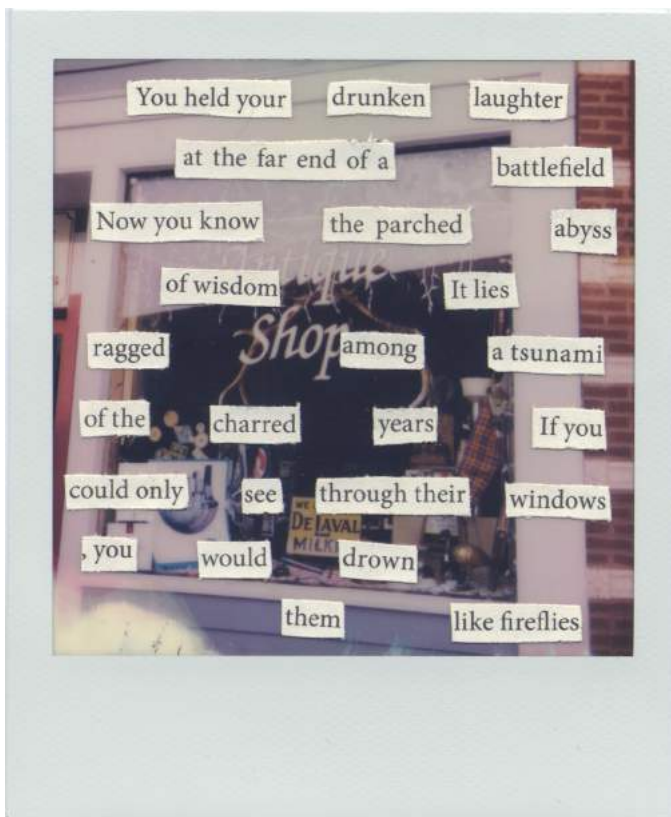
**Haze**  
Dane Hamann  
Art



**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.

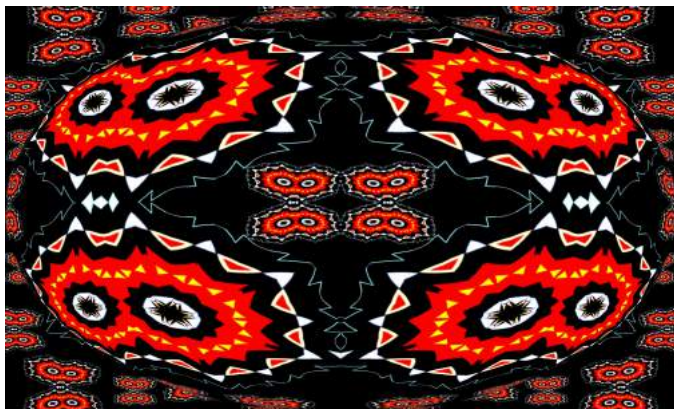
You stumbled backwards, and that's when your questions started. The swell in my lips, the alcohol, the rain, all of it made me let you affirm your sense of yourself as wrong for me, as someone who would hurt me. As if to prove it, you said something mean, the way you did with every woman except me. I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



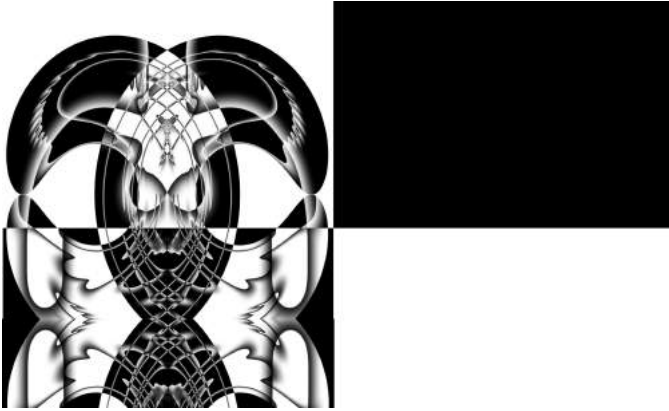
love to me before abandoning me and everything we had let pass between us.

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.

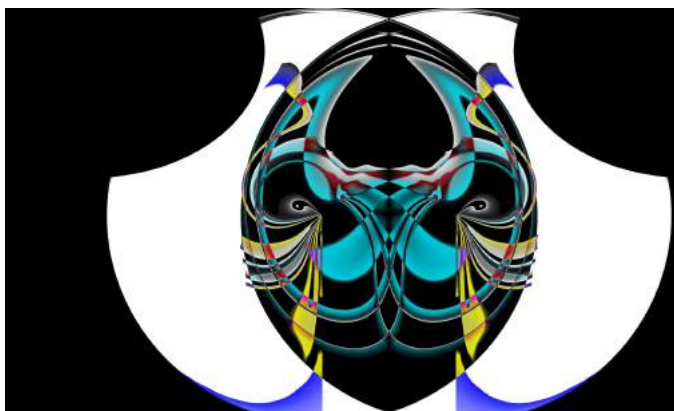
**Let the Good Times Roll 2a**  
Edward Michael Supranowicz  
Art



**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 irritatingly 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 look 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 migraine,  
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 That's**

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 Kessler  
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 Kessler  
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 circlings  
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.





## **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, smirking 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 exhales,  
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 toll 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 comped 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 burble 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 30<sup>th</sup>, 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

### Karen Baumgart

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](http://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](http://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](http://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://jordanmgriffin.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](http://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](http://www.HiramLarewPoetry.com) and [www.PoetryXHunger.com](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](https://www.instagram.com/connorwatkinsxu) on Instagram or at [connorwatkinsxu.com](http://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](http://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.

**Do not send in writing or art that was created using Artificial Intelligence. Submitting work generated by A.I. technology will be considered as plagiarism.**

You will receive an acceptance or rejection letter from our editorial staff within 6 months from the day of submission.

We accept simultaneous submissions; however, please notify us immediately if your work is accepted elsewhere. If accepted, please withdraw the piece from other publications.

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