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DOOR = JAR

Door Is A Jar

Issue 33

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Cover Image “Self-made 3”
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Last Conversation
Allison Walters Luther
Poetry

Words

Dripping

(Love)
(Lies)
(Blame)
(Hate)

Like

Poison

(You)
(Her)
(Me)
(Us)

From

Your

(Lips)
(Eyes)
(Heart)
(Mask)

While

I

(Cry)
(Break)
(Leave)
(Live)

Jouska

Allison Walters Luther

Poetry

It's easier to talk to you
Now that you're gone from me
In the car
In the shower
In my head
Over and over
Sometimes different
Mostly the same
Screaming into the past
Whispering into my memories
I still talk to the image of you
I have created
Because I know it's the only way
I will ever hear you say
"I'm sorry."

Most Painful Thing Ever Said

Allison Walters Luther

Poetry

You said
“I don’t miss you as much as I thought I would”
A dagger in my already wounded heart
Because I knew it was true
And I had thought if I missed you enough
I could save us
And I was
Wrong

a star is born
Annette Petrusso
Poetry

i'm tired tonight and spread
across the solar system // my legs

rest on the moon my head lies
on Earth my arms reach to Venus

and Mars // i am displaced and dis-
proportioned— the Stretch Armstrong

of the 22nd century // cells every—
where as my physical humanity

disintegrates into essential parts
in search of future reconstellations

memorial

Annette Petrusso

Poetry

Put sunflower seeds in your pockets
so when you're buried
without ceremony or casket,

I can dance in the flowers
on your grave
on warm summer nights.

When the Moon Hits

AJ O'Reilly

Nonfiction

for JH

You know how sometimes you look up at the moon, and you think gosh, it must be a full moon tonight, look at how big and round that is, I mean it's totally round, right? It's gotta be full. If it's not full I can't even tell what part is missing, and it would be obvious right, wouldn't there be some corner that's just clearly filed down a little from the rest of the roundness, and I'd be able to point to it and say THAT'S the missing piece, right? Because when something's missing you can tell what it is. Yeah, no, it's a full moon tonight. It has to be a full moon. I've seen many moons and if this weren't full I would recognize it. I know what I'm looking for. I'm sure it's full. Yes. What a nice moon!

And then the next night, when it really is a full moon, how you simply inhale and say—wow. It's a full moon.

It's like that, but with love.

Note on Body Modification

AJ O'Reilly

Nonfiction

“You have to take control of your body somehow,” my college boyfriend said, on why one should get piercings and tattoos. He was the one with the Chi-Rho inked on his right shoulder blade. The Chi-Rho is a symbol from ancient Christianity and it was confusing; he was a religion major but as far as I know, never a Christian. By the time we’d broken up, he’d switched scholarly allegiances to ancient Judaism, making the tattoo very funny to me in retrospect. It suited him. He had cheated on Jesus and he’d cheated on me.

I was older than him, and smarter than him, and he was short and hot and the tattoo was hot and I wanted him to hit me and he did. He was so goddamn good at it. He could do this thing where he’d push me to the floor and then catch me before impact. It was the safest feeling. How can your body feel so safe with such a liar? The Chi-Rho buckled and stretched as he worked his shoulder to smack me with a belt. My arms and back were bruised and beautiful all through senior year. I walked proudly from class to class and felt absolutely strong and right.

It felt good. I trusted that. It was simple, though the relationship was not. Emotion-pain came later but the body-pain was good. It was pain I knew I wanted; the marks were marks I chose.

You have to let your body take control somehow.

Winter Solstice

Jamie L. Carney

Art



Serendipity
Jamie L. Carney
Art



Heartsick
Jamie L. Carney
Art



What I Remember of Nineteen

Marie Scarles

Poetry

Is a gospel of healing and ruin, running
 at daybreak and nightfall,
 icicles filming my lashes & wind-
 chapped lips cracking.

So little in me stirred—

 I'd snap back the tab of Narragansett
 pour the whole can over the ledge
 of the party's dark back porch,
 shivering in fishnets and a bomber.

 Twenty-two was still to come,
 the birthday when my friends
 baked me a cake, glued a paper crown.

Still to come, the end of love—

 its flesh scooped from my gut,
 his body at dawn one time and then
 no more. That winter,
 tree limbs & power lines snapped
 under the weight of a blizzard,
 & the furnace died with it.

 Our fingers numbed. Our hardwood floors
 stuck with vomit and rum from
 the night before. In the back of a cab
 at daybreak, my friend leaned in gently.

 We kissed as I unlatched the door.

What I meant to learn, I didn't.

 No one told me youth
 would be so hard.

 Gospel of sex as relief,
 the beauty of being
 three double-shots deep
 on a Monday evening, of linking

hands with whoever is there,
humming all the way
to their bed, the ecstasy of being
someone new,
thrumming and dangerous,
rib cage to pelvis,
unable to resist & so dangerous
I almost miss it.

East Village
 Marie Scarles
 Poetry

Broad avenues, clean lanes, litterless
 runways for cabs & delivery bikes. I charge
 forward against the wind, against the summons
 of the past, sloshing over these
 crosswalks like an incandescent ghost.

 Soon, I will dip into the neon booth
 of a Chinese restaurant, split dim-sum & garlicky
 eggplant with a friend who will tell me
 stories of the Sundarbans—the six seasons,
 rainy, summer, early fall and late, winter &
 the budding lush of spring—& how the fish
 have been corralled into one place,
 cyclones battering the mangrove forests to
 destroy the patterned structure of a family's
 livelihood & days.

 Crimson streetlights glow against
 strangers' sidewalk faces, each body
 thickly wrapped in coats and woolen scarves.
 Wraithlike, at twenty, I biked these corridors as if
 parachuting into my true life,
 flared my smile at anyone I'd meet.

 One summer, I transcribed voices
 into text, listening to the tales of men
 who'd lived through New York City's
 viral decades, grace and grief peppering
 stories of the friends and lovers
 lost to it. After work, I'd ride my bike
 long enough my thighs burned &
 jeans chafed. I'd blush on a terrace
 with cheap white wine and fig-
 mouth dripping to devour

one young man,
then turn to the next like a plague.
Possibilities cluttered
my view of the future. The orderly, daily—
how impossible these would become—
But not yet. I disrobed joy
like slipping into a lake
under a crescent moon, ecstatic
at its cool, mineral touch.

New Moon in Scorpio

Marie Scarles

Poetry

The sun is slinking away, sky
summoned into dark blue
velvet. In this fade, my mother's
photograph, framed, begins to dim.
November is the month of shadows
in this city,
the afternoons a dark curtain
I step behind to walk
under dry canopies. It's the
new moon in Scorpio,
season of the depths.
I wish to slip into the silence
which is littered always
with the call of sirens
the calamities of others always near.
My mother's photograph is silent.
She hasn't seen me in 12 years.
Inside the well lit homes,
parents are feeding their children
an early meal, calling for wives,
husbands to come to the table.

The moonless night gifts me
my melancholy, offers it back as song.
My first night here was
seven long years prior, each one
an opal with a dead scorpion
at its center. I wish to collect
the misery of each year like a marble, then
bury them in a cigar box under
the mother of all ginkgos,
holding court over the urban lake
its half-sun fans
shimmering like a thousand thousand
blazing days to come.

Hound

Sharon Denmark

Poetry

The hound appeared on the side of the road
like a dirty phantom sent into the woods
on a winter hunt. Ribs curved like little
crescent moons, it knows run and chase
but not the way home. It's okay, I'm nothing
but a dumb animal, too, easily
duped. On New Year's Day I bled, and was glad
for it, relieved for its youthful brilliance.
It wasn't a sacrifice but maybe
it should have been. Years ago, I heard her
say into the receiver, "My daughter
would never do that, never." But yes,
your daughter, yes.

Millions of

Jey Ley

Poetry

“Millions of dots waiting to crawl onto your eyes.”

—Hong Sangsoo, *The New Yorker* Interview,
May 15, 2022

Millions of dots can crawl onto my eyes
I don't care if I lose my vision
As long as the dots sticking to my eyes
Are your dots

Millions of words can crawl onto my ears
I don't care if I lose my hearing
As long as the words sticking to my ears
Are your words

Millions of sweets can crawl onto my tongue
I don't care if I lose my taste
As long as the sweets sticking to my tongue
Are your sweets

Millions of aromas can crawl onto my nose
I don't care if I lose my smell
As long as the aromas sticking to my nose
Are your aromas

Millions of taps can crawl onto my skin
I don't care if I lose my feeling
As long as the taps sticking to my skin
Are your taps

I don't care if I lose all my senses
As long as the only thing I sense
Is you

Difficult Epoch

Amanda K Horn

Fiction

Somewhere in the vast, grassy expanse of the Mongolian-Manchurian Steppe, I quit. I give up. I stop walking, throw down my pack, my wooden atlatl, my spear, and sit down. I am done.

My tribe doesn't notice at first. We had been walking; we were always walking, had always been walking, sometimes forgot what it was like not to walk. They carry on for a few more yards before one of the children, Kevin, notices I've stopped. He shouts at the others, waves to them, then turns back to me. "Hey, you okay?" he calls.

"No," I say. "I'm done."

Of course, none of us actually know the name of these endless rolling plains. "Mongolia" is a concept that won't exist for another 8,000 years. Kevin's name isn't really Kevin either; "Kevin" won't be recorded as a name for another 11,000 years, and when it is, it will be a long, long way from here. And this language I'm speaking, it doesn't exist yet either. There is no name for the language I speak. There is no way of telling you Kevin's true name, or mine, or anyone's.

"He says he's done!" Kevin shouts to the others. They've stopped now, I can see. They're looking back and forth. Brian – whose name is not Brian – says something to his adult daughter Pamela – whose name is not Pamela. I don't know what he says to her, I can't hear it, but she jogs back to me. Pamela is the only woman who is not pregnant or lugging around an infant. She crosses her arms when she gets to where I'm sitting – a gesture that, thousands of years from now, will denote exasperation.

“What do you mean you’re done?” she says. She’s annoyed; she’s sick of having to do all the grunt work just because she doesn’t have an infant strapped to her back. She’s annoyed at me for creating more work for her.

“I’m sick of walking.”

She looks around. Above us, a dome of pale sky. Beneath us, long grass waves goodbye in the gentle breeze. It’s quiet here, out on the plains of a place that will one day be called Mongolia. “What on earth are you talking about?” she says, a phrase that no one will use until the 20th century.

I sigh. I don’t know how to explain. I’m hungry, tired, covered in flea bites. I have parasites. My feet hurt. My back hurts. I probably have arthritis in my knees and feet – I’m no spring chicken, as they don’t yet say. I don’t know when my birthday is – or what a birthday is – or how many days are in a year – or what a year is – or how many of them I’d even seen – but if I did know all those things, I’d know I was in my mid-thirties. Not as old as Brian-not-Brian, who fed me bits of charred deer meat when I was little, or wizened old Pat-not-Pat, who is stooped and wrinkly and in charge, but certainly older than all the others.

“This is a difficult epoch,” I tell Pamela. “It’s a difficult time to be a human. The scenery, it all looks the same. It has for a thousand miles.”

“I don’t know what a mile is,” she says, “but we’ve walked more than a thousand of them, and you’ve been fine. Why now? We can’t just leave you here.”

I look down at my knees, two knobs behind which the grassland spreads. One day our descendants will tame the packs of wild horses that graze here, climb on their backs and let them do the dirty work. Not today though. Not tomorrow either, or the day after that.

“Can’t we be done with this? Can’t we invent agricultural practices and pivot to a sedentary lifestyle, instead of all this walking? Can’t we invent houses already, and soap, and hot water, and electricity and television and internet? Can’t we have mattresses made of artificial foam, wrapped in cotton-blend sheets, with pillows that need to be changed every eighteen to twenty-four months for sanitary reasons? Microwave pizzas, canned soda, sugar-free chewing gum? And how about ibuprofen? Advil? I could really use some.”

“What’s ibuprofen?” Pam asks.

I look down at my atlatl, lying in the grass. It looks strangely elegant against the green. My pack, reindeer leather wrapped with cords, lies beside it. When the cool wind blows, it tastes absolutely fresh, not a trace of diesel, of car exhaust, of cigarette smoke. There is no noise whatsoever – no distant roar of planes overhead, no traffic quietly humming, no electricity coursing through buildings. At night, the sky is perfectly clear, nothing but stars, uncluttered by blinking satellites. There is no such thing as microplastics and at the poles, our ice caps remain healthy, intact, and completely predictable. The world is wild. Our future stretches before us like the grassy Mongolian plains.

I sigh deeply, from the very bottom of my very human heart. “Okay,” I say. “Okay, you’re right. Forget microwave pizzas. I’m coming.”

Pamela helps me to my feet. I rejoin the others, and we keep walking, arthritis and fleas and all. No number exists to count the miles we walk, and the landscape never changes.

Agelaius phoeniceus

Ervin Brown

Art



Corvus brachyrhynchos

Ervin Brown

Art



a real nail-biter

nat raum

Poetry

crooked teeth pierce
thumbnails, rip them
from swelling finger
tips, & even when i
stop biting, i cannot
stand any trace of
white-tipped free edge
scratching my skin.
call it habit or call it
instinct, i suppose,
for the day i find
myself as a unicorn,
pointer and middle
fingers, how shall
we say, *occupied* by
the feminine side
of the *why* behind
this threesome?
one thing is for
certain: after this, i
am absolutely certain.

tomboy
nat raum
Poetry

the word comes to me through
playground gossip, uncontextualized.
i don't remember who we are
talking about but i know it's a girl
because of the way i suddenly feel
euphoria at the thought of another
word for *girl*. a girl that's not all girl.
girl with boy traits. i don't like sports
& none of my friends are boys
but suddenly i am obsessed with becoming
this tomboy of which we speak. i grow
up and learn why: i am not all girl. i am more
than girl tinged with boy, but we'll get there.
i needed to be a girl who was allowed to be
themselves, who could break the boundaries
that strictured their body. at eight, this looks
like insistence on being a tomboy. at ten,
changing my name, the way i dress. maybe
once a week, someone says i'm not
ladylike—i don't get how i'm supposed to
know these things so innately as they do.
i don't even have a lust for lilly pulitzer
or the ability to paint my nails without
scratching at their seams, anxious & full
of the woe of unbelonging. i will
write myself a pattern of acts of gender
defiance, which will go unnoticed until i am
broken by yet another man. so it goes.
what matters is i will see the stack of evidence
eventually, come home to myself. i will
bring boy into my girl, girl into my boy,

eventually toss both aside in favor
of neither—more fitting. now i stand,
twenty years older than the playground,
steeped in the sweet of this nothing.
tumblr knew. my shopping bags knew.
my insatiable urge to be not-just-girl knew.
& yet it took almost this long to see
the signs. it took a scroll on twitter, a message
of *i don't know who needs to hear this but*
cis people don't constantly wish they were another
gender. that was it. i had been daydreaming
for so long of anything other than girl.

Growing Up
Alex Gurtis
Poetry

Growing up playing war—
cul-de-sac children
surrounded me in a fallen oak tree.

Above a gutter, I learned
white shirts are vulnerable
to a barrage of plastic BBs. Last night,
when you broke your silence,

my words arrived
a thousand bullets
against skin. Forgive me.

I never draw blood
—but your bruises linger.

Wedding Photos

Alex Gurtis

Poetry

My biological father
is missing. He is always missing.
Standing in for half my genetic makeup,
absence is a dying grandmother.
The memory of a father lives in wilting cheekbones.

Hugging my paternal grandmother
on my wedding day, my wife and I snap
a photo. It is the same photo I will reference
five months later in a honeymoon car ride
through the badlands of the American Southwest
after learning my grandma slipped into a coma.

Composition contextualizes a relationship
between the mountains and the beach.
The afternoon of our wedding, my wife and I
stand beneath sand dunes and I think
about how they mediate a storm,
and how much land the ocean can swallow
like a gulp of champagne. Later that afternoon,
my grandmother stands at the edge,
shaded by a sea grape tree,
in what will become a framed family photo.

Her face and my father's
face, my face, triangulate a woman
and a pair of wedding rings.

Designer Water

Peter Mladinic

Poetry

I bring a bottle to the register. The name
on the nametag red with white letters
is Darnell.

Has he ever been to the ocean in winter,
the surf angry?
Darnell angry about white collar crime,

domestic violence, poverty, famine,
earthquakes? Has he stood
in hushed solemnity and seen a trickle

on an infant's brow at a font,
or with the faithful
on a bank of the river, waded,

gone under, come up reborn?
Aside from this Plentywood Quik Stop
has he worked elsewhere,

a door factory maybe, and stood
at the faucet
where no hot water would come out?

Has he ever bicycled to a lake
pumped a handle and cupped the cool
water? He hands me change for a five.

One Sunday playing tennis, I fell
and scraped my right hand;
that night, baptized above a pulpit,

a half hour later at a door
I held out my left for others to shake.
Darnell waits on the next customer.

Wish

Kelly Anne

Poetry

When I was a girl, I beheld a falling star cascading across peach-plum skies. I held its gaze as the quiet flare plunged into the woodlands, leaving a trail of stardust suspended in twilight. I hopped on my bicycle and peddled feverishly, reaching the forest by dusk. I spent night's hours searching for the starlet—my kid fingers digging tirelessly into earth's toothless mouth. I sang the drunken cricket's songs while fat mosquitos drank my blood. At last, I reached the concrete star, solidified upon its descent from the atmosphere. I counted all five points before smashing it to bits—heaving the celestial nova against mahogany timber. The rock burst open donning jagged edges of shimmering crystals abound, casting flecks of moonlight in my hair like a kitschy disco ball: "I am a heavenly goddess!" Douglas firs and me danced until I placed the fragments in my satchel and carried them to you. "Now you can make a wish wherever you choose," I thought. Back then, I wanted you to have all that you desired. ~~I still do.~~ I kept an opalescent slice, affixed to a strand of beaten gold—a token of your amusement. I needn't wish for anything.

Available As Is
Sharon Goldberg
Nonfiction

I've had four facelifts, the last at 72; I'm not a fan of aging naturally. Or of dying at all. I work out religiously despite escalating arthritis in my left shoulder and both knees. I'm Jewish and was raised in a kosher home but felt more thrilled than guilty the first time I ate pepperoni pizza. I have no children or pets and only one plant, a pothos, a gift I didn't want. My Mom kept a pothos on the living room coffee table, so I feel sentimentally compelled to keep mine alive. Three years ago, I broke my leg while skiing—a tibial plateau fracture. In the emergency room, I wobbly-voice-asked the doctor, "Will I be able to ski again?" (P.S. I also broke my arm on a ski slope.) I've never had sex in the back seat of a car, but I did have sex in the dressing room of a lingerie store at Ghirardelli Square with my then-boyfriend, a born-again Christian. I don't eat desserts that jiggle. As a child, I prayed to God for forgiveness when I bumped, scratched, or knocked over inanimate objects, afraid I'd hurt them. I don't believe in God now unless I'm desperate. In New Zealand I went caving and crawled through a muddy tunnel on my belly like a reptile. I won't do that again, but I *would* go back to Costa Rica and rappel down waterfalls. Woo hoo! I'm terrified of death and wish I believed in heaven or reincarnation or a universal energy that will subsume my essence for eternity. I have frequent nightmares and sometimes whimper and yell until I wake myself up or am shaken gently. I have sleep apnea but use a CPAP machine, so I no longer snore and am less likely to suffer a heart attack. When I was in Junior High, my Dad and I drove to Cleveland to watch the Indians play baseball. I lost interest after I ate my peanuts. I'd rather

remove spiders from my home and drop them outside than kill them, but if it's late at night, I flush them down the toilet. In a scrapbook, I've kept a strawberry rolling paper from the first time I smoked pot, at a Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity party, after watching "Fantasia." I had an affair with my college psychophysiology instructor. We rode his Honda 350 to a field and had sex. I got poison ivy. I hope there *is* an afterlife. I'd love to reunite with my parents. Or come back as a lion or monkey. I think it would be fun to wag or swish or swat flies with my long, lithesome tail.

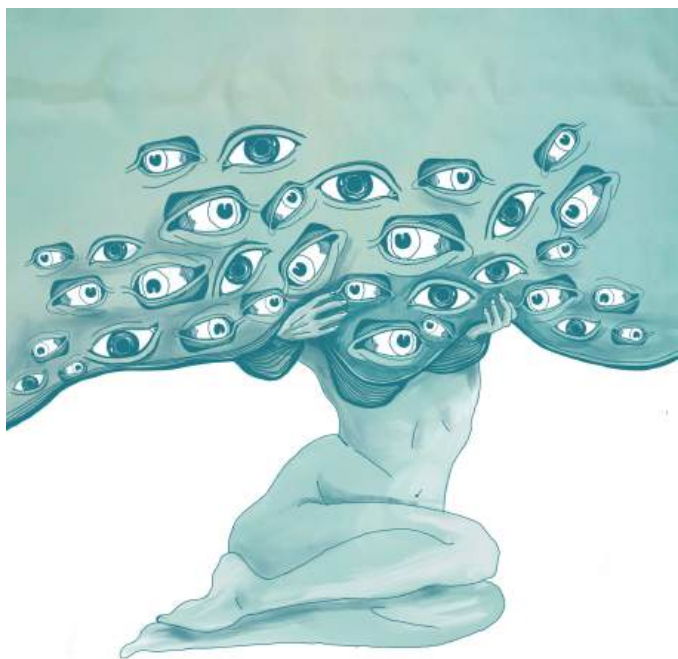
Shore
Vinaya Ann Thomas
Art



What Remained
Vinaya Ann Thomas
Art



This Human Warehouse
Vinaya Ann Thomas
Art



Wrong Shoes
Jenica Amalita
Poetry

Imagine
you are a child
And your world has come undone
like a shoelace.
Just as you are about
to bend down and tie it together,
and set your world back to normal,
you are yanked off your feet
and dangle about in the air,
while someone is yelling at you
for having the wrong shoes on.

Incoherence. Disaster. Love.
Captivated. Devoured. Abandoned.
Vagabond.
Aren't all dreams built out of ashes?
The remains of the day we want to lose
But we hold them back
In clandestine corners of the night.
Vagabond.
Aren't all dreamers created out of dust?
We blow around each other,
Carried apart by the winds of destiny
Just as we learnt to cling to each other.

Sunrise at Corolla Beach

Ken Hines

Poetry

In the breaking waves
he sees his long life,
the curling crests
his hands—
gangly, ashen,
straining for what
they can never reach,
sliding back into the deep.

Some Days I Feel Like the Sun

Gerald Friedman

Poetry

wants to air fry me,
like the rain
to visit me again
with pestilence and want,
want, want
to be tired of wanting
the leak fixed, the refrigerator
full of leftovers,
to be like
I don't give shit,
I mean a shit,
it will be fine without my wanting
and take the trouble
from your forehead
without having to feel
where to think should be
or seen from the top
of an Indian rope trick
the maze you want mapped
like the Sun.

Ambient

Gerald Friedman

Poetry

Hold a conch to your ear, you hear the sea.
Hold a glass, you hear wind on the sand.
Cup your hand, and soft—with both hands, stronger—
the wind that blew your parents to each other,
then apart. And if one hand is yours
and one your lover's, you hear the sweat eroding
gullies down the gravel road with a fence
along one side. Post after post after post
hold galvanized wires, some with bindweed blooms
in a wet summer.

Soft
Josiah Nelson
Poetry

When you are near
my thoughts
grow soft
around the edges
as when day melts
into night
and the pinks
and yellows
are so gentle
with each other
their borders fall
away and the two
swim together
not quite one
but so close

Layers of Flavor

Huina Zheng

Fiction

I've always shied away from greasy fare. The chicken soup I stewed has a layer of fat: like a heavy oil paint smeared over an amber backdrop, the oil droplets glistening like tiny suns afloat in a cosmic broth. This layer of fat, though perhaps the essence of the chicken, deters me from inhaling its intense aroma. That's a casualty of deviating from the recipe—underestimating the fattiness of the hen and overestimating my ingredient-picking prowess. I also snagged pig trotters for a soybean-trotter soup from the morning market. When I picked them, they felt smooth and elastic, bouncing back when pressed. They had no bad smell, indicating good quality—a shopping wisdom inherited from my mother's years of market forays. Ming marvels at the insights I gain from choosing ingredients.

I guess I shouldn't fault the hen. I, too, sport a belly fat layer, akin to a tire's embrace. Ming says it feels like a soft, abundant cushion and finds comfort in it when he holds me. I need to skim the soup's fat with a sturdy ladle, I tell him, and he hands me promptly. I'll add red dates and goji berries to counteract the soup's greasiness and enhance its taste. Ming says I get irritated if the soup has a gamey taste, although I don't think I'd lose control, I just aim for deliciousness. Add ginger and pepper, he suggests, leaning on his empirical nature.

Soup stewing is, in fact, a flexible art. Sometimes short on ingredients, I'll throw whatever's in the fridge—ribs, corn, carrots—into the pot, disregarding exact measurements. As they simmer together, their flavors meld into a rich, harmonious blend. When strictly following a recipe, I'll weigh each ingredient,

meticulously manage the heat and timing, adhering to culinary finesse. This approach yields a more nuanced soup, each ingredient's taste standing out, achieving the desired aroma and texture. I can't taste the difference, Ming says, his northern roots untouched by Guangdong's soup culture, his palate untrained in soup subtleties. He equates stewed with boiled soups. Boiled soup is not soup, I emphasize to him. Boiled soups lack stewed soups' richness and layered flavors.

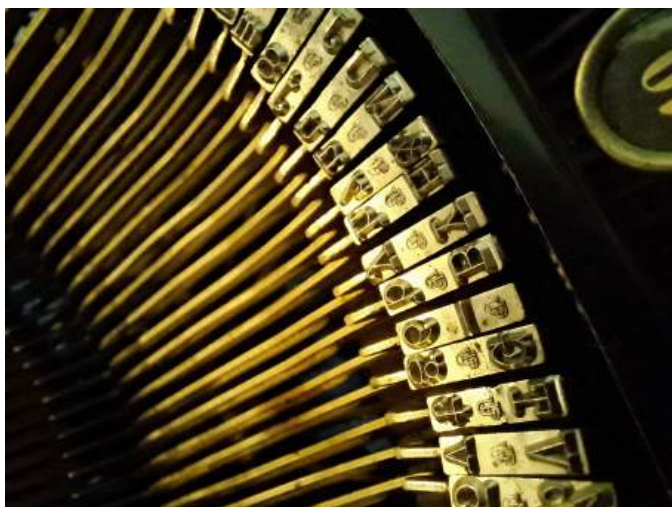
My market attire is pragmatic: comfortable sneakers, an old linen T-shirt, hair in a low ponytail—easy and unbothered, ideal for picking fresh ingredients without fretting over stains (like the time rib blood splattered on my white T-shirt, leaving indelible marks). I only dress this casually when going to the market, as Ming always says I look too casual, lacking my usual polish—meaning I look more like an ordinary housewife than a career woman. I understand. I also like dressing up, but considering the hot soup often splashes out of the pot, and the kitchen filling with steam like a sauna, I prefer practicality and comfort. I'm sure Ming would value my dedication to crafting healthy family meals, anyway.

I wonder if I should challenge myself to make pigeon and cordyceps flower soup. This dish demands meticulous attention—plucking, cleaning, heat control. A slight mistake can affect the quality of the soup. I decide to fetch the ingredients tomorrow when I'll make the soup. I favor fresh ingredients of the day, as food loses its freshness in the fridge; whereas Ming thinks going to the market every day is troublesome, preferring to buy enough for a week. I tell him that it's not fresh that way, but he says it's okay. I can help you shop, to share your burden, he'll tell me. I appreciate his kindness. I stride past the pigeon stall without stopping, decision made.

After soup-making, I slip into a crimson silk dress, adorned with intricately embroidered cloud patterns in gold and emerald, and apply orange lipstick. When Ming comes home from work, he wraps his arms around my waist. The living room is filled with the rich aroma of lotus root and corn soup with bone marrow. I'm so hungry I could chew on your belly and relish your taste, he jokes. I feel my face flush with heat and, laughing, ask him, don't you know? He strokes my belly, pondering, then chuckles. Oh, yes, your flavor—so savory!

Ladling soup from the pot, I admire the clear, bone-infused broth, spotting vibrant corn kernels and lotus root pieces, the marrow tender and inviting. I take a sip. The sweet flavor of corn blossoms in my mouth, mingling with the subtle taste of lotus root, a symphony on my palate. Ming indulges too. He picks up a large bone, and I watch him suck the marrow from within with intense satisfaction, emitting loud, rhythmic slurps that overshadow the buzz of passing vehicles outside the window. Similar to how he holds my waist and nuzzles my belly. Love this soup, he says. It's rich, just like you.

Underwood Letters
Tinamarie Cox
Art



Hanging On
Tinamarie Cox
Art



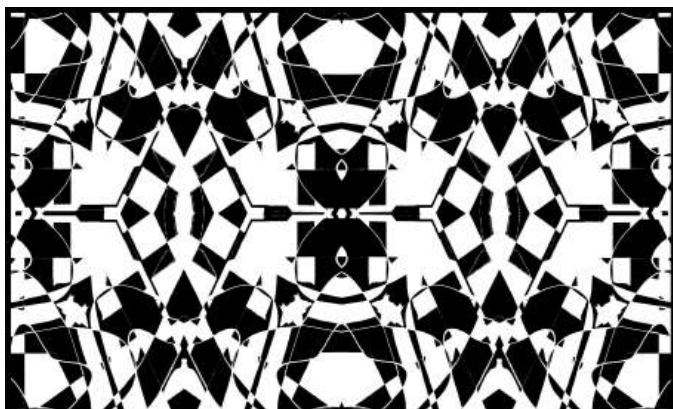
Shades and Shadows
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



The Queen Bee

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



The Man in the Moon Falls in Love

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



Photographic Memory

Adrienne Unger

Fiction

They were holding hands. Not like lovers with fingers loomed together, bold and blatant. Their grasp was delicate. Absent-minded and familiar. The touch of a bonded pair. The wife looked past her husband's face before the shutter clicked. Possibly, she felt the gaze of the husband's camera trapping her in the upper corner of the frame, but both their faces, frozen in the amber of the day, said nothing. The action had been in the middle of the shot, all their children, from both families, mugging for the photographer. Their oldest was barely ten back then, followed by the twins, and their sister still in diapers, and the rough and tumble siblings from next door. There was so much goofy light, so much joy that day. It was so easy to miss, except when it wasn't. The moment, when her husband angled his lens, toward her, Sam, and their tangled brood, to snag a candid photo of a perfect day. When she was still his sweetheart, Sam was still his best friend, the kids were happy, and they all were content. The sound of the door slamming behind his wife was still hanging in the foyer. The thud of her trunk closing, the pop of her wheels rolling over their pebbled driveway replayed in his ears when her husband turned to that hung photo in hopes of anchoring himself to a flat reality when the world he knew made sense. But the light was different. Before, her husband only glanced at that picture. Sometimes he was compelled to tap the corner of the silver frame like a blessing. But tonight, after looking it over and over, and over again, it became clear to him, the confirmation he was looking for rested in those holding hands. Now he knew, it was always there.

Two of the Only Honest Dimes

Ryan McCarty

Poetry

Hiking to the bus stop. Under
a no parking sign, a Porsche.

With one ear to the ground, his bag
of empties stashed close by, a man,

one arm stretched deep into the shadow
of the car, straining. A clink of glass.

Two empty bottles, rolled under there.
He can almost reach. A promise

America never fails to keep: to paint
its own portrait, every day. My brother,

I called a tow truck. Stand here with me.
When they pull this thing away, you won't

have to bend one knee to earn those bottles.
We decide then and there to become

snow men, covered over one whole season,
waiting to thaw. Holding hands

like two children checking till it's safe to cross
over to the sunny side of the road.

Family Matters

Ryan McCarty

Poetry

If you want to understand why
my brother suspects I'm a fool,
here it is: for every leaf knocked
clear off one of the many plants
struggling along my window sills,
I'm waiting with a little jar on hand,
ready to float the stem, just on
the odd chance this is a type built
to fight against the end, to turn
damage into shoots of offspring.
I'll watch that water all week long
for golden hairs reflecting the cold
winter sun, new roots reaching for nothing,
sucking it all up, demanding to live.

Unnamed Woman

Jordan Hanson

Poetry

After Rembrandt, "A Woman bathing in a Stream"

Her legs, her arms
Could be my own
Eternalized, this
Study in loveliness.

Heavy garment tossed
Behind her
She stands steady
In the water,
White shift shrugged
From soft shoulders.
Dark hair twists against
Her pale neck.

She lifts her dress
Above the cool water
Smiling at its touch.
A blossom of light,
Unfurling,
Ample.

Critics speculate
About her:
The intimate strokes,
Contrasting fabrics,
The artist's known
Models and partners.

Whoever she was,
Rembrandt loved her

Enough to capture
A moment so casual,
So full of
Bliss.

Body Heat
Jordan Hanson
Poetry

The fire popped low in the pit,
Not yet hot enough to roast hot dogs
Or to warm those around it:
New friends but
Mostly strangers,
Lounging in folding chairs
Or on the stone steps
Leading to the fire,
Their faces flickering
In and out of shadow.

You were there, and you
Were mostly a stranger,
But not completely.
There was room next to you
On the stair,
And I was cold
So I sat.

And you were so warm,
And we sat shoulder to shoulder
While I listened to you
Talk to another almost stranger,
As I admired
The sparks
Of the growing fire
Rising to glow
Among the stars.

The Thaw
Jordan Hanson
Poetry

We thank the flying downy feathers,
Chilly dandelion seeds
For a foot of perfect April snow.
Bundled in layers we spring
Into the newly frozen world,
Putting off our homework another day.

You and I trailed behind the others
And your eyes were blue, blue
And your cheeks were red, red
And your laugh colored everything around us.

Later I gave you my Bigfoot socks
To replace the ones you had soaked through,
And you held my hands over my heart,
Melting its icy glaze
To water the carnations you brought me.

Coyote
C.W. Bryan
Fiction

It is incredibly easy to drive a hundred miles an hour. It takes three things. There should be no car in front of you. There should be an unbelievable number of trees to your right. So thick that when you look out the passenger window it looks black. Lastly, there should be a girl named Chloe that you are driving toward. It is incredibly easy to drive a hundred miles an hour and so I did it. It felt like sitting. It felt like nothing at all.

When I was a child and we would be driving for a very long time on the highway I would look out the window often. It was fun to look out the window on the highway. The grass somehow stays the same shade of green even when you cross state lines. Mundanity is good because it can be broken up. For example, there is a lot of the same green grass along the side of the highway, but fewer white crosses. Seeing one is exciting even though it means people died there. It means that people died there and believed in God. Or their families believed in God. Either way, the crosses were usually very white.

It was more public than a graveyard. I do not have a lot of thoughts about Death. Sometimes he just finds you and grabs you by the throat until you can't breathe. His grip only relaxes if you begin to think about him. Death is a man. Death is vain, too, inserting himself everywhere. Like Chloe inserting herself in my thoughts on a monotonous six-hour drive. Only Death is cold, and Chloe is warm. She is socks put on right out of the dryer. Tossed with a lavender dryer sheet.

There is power in a thought. I thought about Death and He arrived. I didn't mean to think about Him just as I did not mean to hit the coyote in the left lane on I-20. It

just happened and once you start you cannot stop. I flew into its side at one hundred miles an hour and it died with a sharp yap. He was going zero miles an hour. I gave him everything I had, at least. It is much harder to stop going a hundred miles an hour than it is to start. Somehow, I did not panic. I did not slam the brakes but gently eased them to the floor, like lowering a heavy piece of furniture. The hood of the car was crunched from the weight of his small body. One car flew past. Everything looks faster when you're standing still. The car looked like a white rope before it shrunk down to a speck on the horizon. The sound of it shocked my ear drums as I got out of the car onto the left shoulder. I was frozen with fear and I understood then that the coyote was very brave.

When there is nothing for your body to do your brain will make it up. There was nothing left for the coyote's body. The lower half of it rested in the grass meadow of the median. The other half hung across the deep yellow line of paint, tongue lolling onto the asphalt. His brain, with all its internal organs decimated, said, "Open your eyes! Open them! It's the last time we ever will." So he did. There was no blood that I could see. There was no blood the coyote could see either.

The back half of the coyote looked like a still life painting. It did not belong in the same world as cars or highways. I grabbed the haunches and was struck with the sensation of desecration. I pulled anyway. It was one of the few things my brain could think of. The tall grass lapped at the bright brown fur. The grass was yellow with autumn and I could not tell where his body ended and the grass began. I pulled until his chin rested fully in the small meadow. His body was warm still. I sat crossed legged in the grass beside him and did the only thing I could do. Call Chloe.

I thought to name the Coyote. So I did. Coyote's eyes were wide open. They were so brown they were black. The thin film on them held light within each eyeball. The clouds moved in miniature across them. I couldn't see fear in them. Maybe he never saw me coming. That would be best I think. The phone stopped ringing and Chloe answered. She didn't say anything.

"Hello."

"What happened."

"I am here on the side of the road with Coyote," I said. I held the phone close to my ear. The cars were so loud. My left hand was in his fur. "My hand is in his fur. There isn't any blood."

"Is Coyote a coyote?" she asked. Her voice was honey. I put the phone on speaker in case there was anything left inside his head to hear it.

"He was."

"That's semantics."

"That's life."

"That's death."

"I miss you." I had not realized I was crying. My eyes were wet and the clouds in Coyote's eyes began to look like mushrooms. And suddenly I knew he was dead. I hadn't known it before. Not really. I couldn't build him a small white cross, even if I wanted to. I took a deep and desperate breath. I had been underwater until this moment. "I didn't mean to do it."

"I know you didn't."

"There's nothing to be done."

"Are his eyes open?"

"They are."

"Close them," she said. So I did. It was the only thing to do. "Now come home." The phone disconnected, and I walked back to the car. From the rearview mirror, Coyote was sleeping. The clouds above moved slowly behind his eyelids. I pulled onto the

highway and looked back one more time. I could not tell where his body ended, and the waving grass began.

Nightingale
Karen Grosman
Art



Crow
Karen Grosman
Art



Owl drawing
Karen Grosman
Art



Nightjar drawing
Karen Grosman
Art



The Farmer's Almanac for Poets

Arvilla Fee

Poetry

The winter forecast for poets
across the North and Midwest
calls for lower-than-normal
metaphorical precipitation
with similes dipping into
below-freezing temperatures.
Poets are expected to carry
imaginative umbrellas and seek
shelter in cafés filled with warm
adjectives and meaty verbs.
Within these settings, poets
can hope to recover inspiration
in the curled steam of a hot chai latte,
the magpie chattering of storied patrons,
the dancing flames in a log-filled hearth,
and thus ride out the tepid season
of naked trees and brackish imagery.

The Houses I Built

Arvilla Fee

Poetry

Young and naïve,
what did I know of red flags?
I said *I do* and built a house of straw.
It was warm enough, safe enough—
until you blew it down.

I stared at the straw around my feet,
stunned but determined to try harder.
Next, I built a house of sticks—
spoke in shorter sentences,
learned to walk on eggshells;
you wrecked that house too.

The sticks left bruises no one wanted
to talk about—I'd made my bed.
Shouldn't I have to lie in it?

But I stood again, straighter this time,
my feet planted shoulder-width apart.
I grabbed mortar and bricks,
stacked them one row at a time,
a citadel in the making.

Oh, how red your face became when you
 huffed and puffed;
I thought your cheeks would explode!
But you couldn't budge the bricks,
not even an inch.

You're welcome to try the chimney,
but I've made a fire as hot as hell.

festival
Coral Inéz
Poetry

Flowing water still half-snow,
the dissolution of a season. Unlit

lanterns and the music of glass wind
bells. Lightning. The pouring

of moonflowers, papery raindrops
mourning what will stay behind.

The winter sun serenading what he loved
so gently. His final breath a gift, sunspecks

falling over every floating lantern.
I am here, in that space between the candle
and the light.

Tears of Tulip

Coral Inéz

Poetry

I forgot my shoes
but I am not cold,
there is a tinge
of renewal already

in this February air.
Near the honey stalls,
a hummingbird, fragile
and elusive. I returned

with a basket of apricots
and a bundle of tulips,
purple tulips, velvety,
elegant, and on sale.

I placed these tulips
on my vintage vase
and they wept two,
then three petals,

they knew here
is where they would die.
I stirred a boiling pot
of apricots and sugar,

if I wanted to, could I
dip my hand inside?
Every morning, toast
and apricot preserves,

I kept the tulips company;

asked them for a lesson
on how do you let go.
On Tuesday, the last petal fell

and somewhere in the desert,
a sunflower has been born.

nocturne
Coral Inéz
Poetry

I can't sleep, the lull from the cars outside
is too unnerving, the rhythm unnaturally steady.

I breathe in the mix of smog and summer air,
a metallic tinge foreign and intoxicating. Tonight,

there is an old ultraviolet wound radiating deep
within my heart, a cosmic longing for something

beautiful and cataclysmic, like that geomagnetic
storm that gives birth to the aurora, where I will

look oblivion in the face, breathe out, and surrender.

At the Dentist

Sona Verdi

Fiction

“Count back from five,” the surgeon says. It is 9:05 AM on Monday at Dr. Rodriguez’s dental office. Plastic tubes tremble in and around my mouth, stretching my lips open, leaving every glistening tooth on display. I am belly-up and spread open. Invasion is imminent. The doctor’s order is one with an expiration, I realize, as reality begins to fray at the edges. I swallow noisily and start.

Five

I hear my deformed mouth form the word and it sounds primal, barbaric, and at first I am embarrassed by having been the source of such a sound but there is nothing in the surgeon’s eyes, not amusement, not compassion, not even recognition, and I wonder if he sees me at all or just sees my teeth, but not as *my* teeth but an assembly of bone suspended in wet, pink flesh and at first I feel violated but I remember it is a fair exchange of mutual reductionism because to me he is just blue hands and weary eyes, he exists only in these sanitized spaces with diagrams of tooth decay on the walls, just as the receptionist was all clicking nails and glossy lips and the children on the subway were a gallery of runny noses and stained shirts.

Four

There is lead in my veins and I feel it take hold, wrap my mind in something clean and scentless and heavy and it happens slowly enough to observe but too quickly to do anything about and so I lay still, thinking of how this is a little like meditating, thinking of how I have never actually watched anything happen, have not ever

seen the exact moment of the sun setting or memories fading or my grandfather dying because I always look away, always get distracted, always there for the before or after but never the in-between, and come to think of it I have never seen my hair grow or my scar heal and maybe I don't believe it is possible at all to witness anything, ever, maybe the intermediate state of becoming is imperceptible to the human eye, and that is why one moment there is golden sunlight and warmth and an old man's laughter gurgling like a water heater and the next it is dark, it is lonely, it is quiet.

Three

I think of death, but not the way it feels to everyone else, not grief or loss or absence, I think of death the way it feels to the deceased, the way it has never been documented because there is no such thing as post-mortem interviews but I can feel it if I close my eyes and listen to the quiet, feel it as precisely as I feel life but in a way that is indescribable by the human language—a language created to build roads and cities and optimized for utility—and so I use metaphors and approximations, like death is that light-headed sigh at the end of a roller coaster, death is a good night's sleep, and suddenly I'm overwhelmed by the urge to tell this to the surgeon, want it so much that my eyes flash and my fingertips flutter and the surgeon says something to the nurse and I wonder if he's afraid of it, of becoming dead, of un-becoming.

Two

Two and I feel nothing as sheathed hands dip into my mouth, not even a caress, and maybe that is worse than pain, maybe I don't want to be sedated, I want to be alive, I want to remain alive even when it is

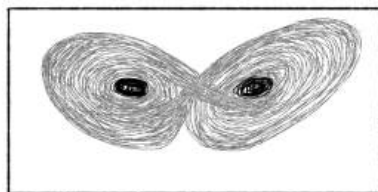
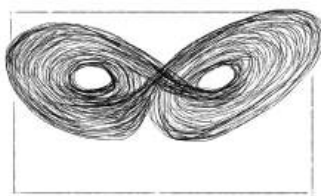
inconvenient, but it is too late now and there are probing fingers in my mouth and pitiless eyes watching my departure and I plead with those eyes to let me stay, let me feel pain like a fever and taste blood like liquid copper, plead with those hands, ask them to peel off the gloves and give me something like care without the silicone barrier, unsanitary and negligent, a touch that lingers long enough for the warmth to last, and if not care then I will settle for pain, and my tears will feel something like relief, something like redemption.

One

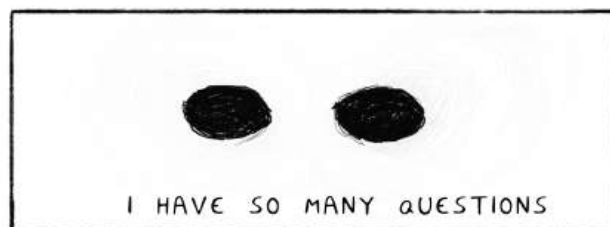
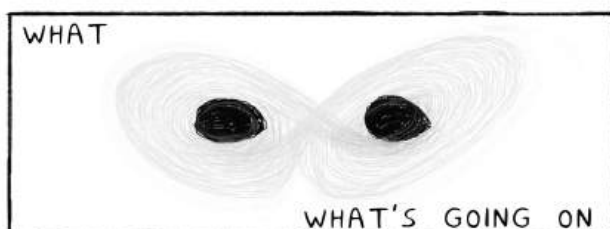
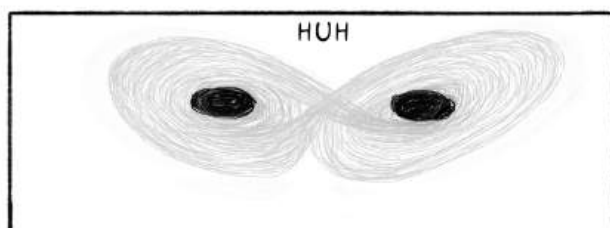
One is implied by the silence as I vacate the operating table, the world sinking and my body with it, or maybe the world remains still, and it is I who ascend, letting the end overtake me, then waiting for the end to pass.

Self-made 1
Dimitira Rizou
Art

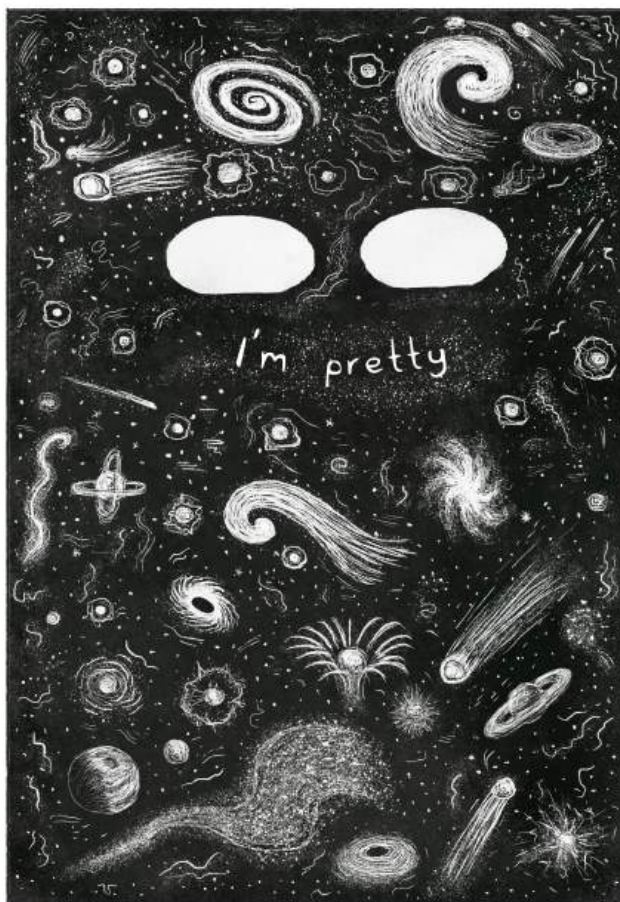
SELF-MADE by Dimi



Self-made 2
Dimitra Rizou
Art



Self-made 4
Dimitra Rizou
Art



**Years Later, There Will be a Class-Action Lawsuit
Regarding Radiation Exposure**

Molly Harris
Fiction

The Moon reaches up to the Sun. Frankie sees it in its full glory from its base, how the silver rocks glitter in the light, burning her eyes. She looks down to the harsh blacktop of the parking lot.

“Two laps, one up, one down.”

Frankie and the rest of the rest of the sophomore class at Francis Howell Central groan. The steps to the Moon are wide—steps and a half, made of a soft gravel that easily comes loose. Most kids have tripped on them once or twice before, Frankie included. She’d stumbled to the bottom, covered in the white gravel powder and blood from her scraped knees and elbows. When she looks down to her white PE shirt now, she can still see the faint blood stains her mother couldn’t scrub off. Frankie pulls at them.

“What are you waiting for? Start running!”

Frankie pulls her hair into a ponytail, the thin, mouse-brown strands pull her face taut, skin stretching up towards the band. She has a scar that reaches from her temple down to the bottom of her chin, from an accident when she was little, but she never thought to hide it. She doesn’t hide her bruises, either, how they litter her long legs. She doesn’t remember how she got them after nights of drinking, but she wears them with a sense of pride.

Frankie looks at the ground beneath her, and she starts her ascent to the top.

The Sun beats down on Frankie and her classmates. Her gym shorts cling to her legs, shining white in the light from sweat, bruises shining like pools of gasoline. Her Keds, grass-stained and dusty, slip on the gravel,

and Frankie grabs the rail for support. She looks out across the surface of the rocks—a variety of sizes but all white. A small brown sign issued by the US Government says to stay off them, to stay on the path. Frankie spits and continues up.

At the top, Frankie hardly catches a breath. Her baby hairs stick to her forehead, and she loops her ponytail into a small, unkempt bun. The moon-powder covers her clothes, weaves itself into her hair, buries itself under her fingernails. Looking around, her class looks like ghosts. Heavy breathing, tired specters casted in white plaster.

Frankie sits down.

She feels the powder between her fingers. She lies back on her arms, stares at the sky. The blue is painful and bright; translucent floaters drift in and out of her periphery.

The Moon was new to her hometown. The now-highest point in St. Charles County, it towers seventy-five feet high. Underneath it was twelve thousand cubic tons of nuclear waste. Frankie hadn't known what a Superfund site was until her mother told her she was going to go work on one when Frankie and her sister were younger. Her mother spoke of uranium, thorium, and radium. At eight, Frankie didn't understand much of it, and at fifteen, Frankie still doesn't know, if she's being honest. She smoked weed on top of the Moon, drank her first beer on the Moon. Every Friday is "Moon Day" for PE. The stairs are good for you, rigorous, will really get those legs moving.

Frankie hears the whistle from down below and sees the speck of her PE teacher. She's a dawdler, always has been. She knows she has to come down.

Covered in white powder, she starts her climb back down to Earth. The students look like an army of ghosts, descending down to the living below.

Time Through Car Windows

Diana L. Day

Poetry

I am nostalgic for the
moment I'm living now.

Years from now
I will remember the
late summer days that
slipped through my
fingers like the breeze
through car windows.

I will yearn for the way
sunlight fell through the
trees as we drove past, for
the light that turned golden
as the earth turned toward fall.

We will be older tonight,
our days growing shorter
as the present speeds
into the past, and
I will miss each day
before it's gone.

Courting Sorrow

Diana L. Day

Poetry

Some of us can't help it.
We run red lights, drink
too much, and ignore
safety warnings.

Accidents are what
happens to others, until
they happen to us. And
then they are a fluke.

Speed limits cannot slow us
on our road trip to disaster.

A child runs out in front
of us and, slamming on the
brakes, we slide into the
light pole that kills our
careless passenger.

We must know all along
we're courting sorrow.

It seems unavoidable
when some of us can't
help it and the rest of
us can't help them.

All You Can Eat

Arlene DeMaris

Poetry

My mother loved the giant
Chinese buffet, the tiny
pools of food
I would create on a plate
for her to say were too much
then finish and ask for more.

It was the only place
she was happy with me,
sitting in a booth under
a long horizontal scroll
brush painted
with a procession of figures
marching against a mountain
unfurling on the wall.

Once I asked the waitress
what the people and writing
were about. She smiled
into my mother's face
spotted with plum sauce,
and stacking our plates
laughed, answered,
Death.

Everyone on the scroll is walking
to a funeral, she told us.
They are singing,
they are crying, then
they will eat.

Breath

Arlene DeMaris

Poetry

When I hear the professional diver's record
of 24 minutes, 37 seconds, I add it to my worry
about breath: what keeps it going now that I know
how it stops, have seen it stop, put my hand
on my mother's cooling forehead. She gave me
that big push at the beginning, running as fast
as she could until the next time I looked over
my shoulder, she was a yellow flowered
dress in the distance. Where did I hear that breath
is the river at the bottom of a canyon, hawks
circling in the updrafts, carrying purses of wind?
Only so many breaths are allotted in life, so slow
them down. The diver knew. He was afraid, he prayed,
he felt the fine needle of pitch pierce his ears,
thought of his children waiting on the dock,
playing their own breath-holding game.
Paused underwater, he saved hundreds of
inhalations and tacked them on to the end.
I breathe easier when I mold into my husband's
bare back in bed, press against the heat of each
rise and fall, listen to the steady tune and sigh
of his dream. I am my mother's lungs now.
What's left of her red hair and anxious face
collects one breath then another, the way
my husband yawning makes me yawn. My body
needs more air and takes it.

Happiness Club

Arlene DeMaris

Poetry

Tommy was hit
crossing Route 22, the worst
place for a man with a cheerful
face and bum leg to be
at night, on foot, returning
from the Happiness Club.
He was my sister Evelyn's
only love, brought her coffee
once, pulled his chair up
next to her on meeting night
in the church basement and erased
the marks of other men
who wanted to push their hard
luck against the skin
of a slow, shy girl.
Hearing the bad news, she leaned
to one side and stayed that way
for days until she said *let's go*,
and we walked, crushing
the first buds
and pods of spring,
to the street near the brook
where new frogs were leaping,
their chances of making it across
nothing
without our hands.

Listen to Many
Elzbieta Zdunek
Art



The Rule of Three

Elzbieta Zdunek

Art



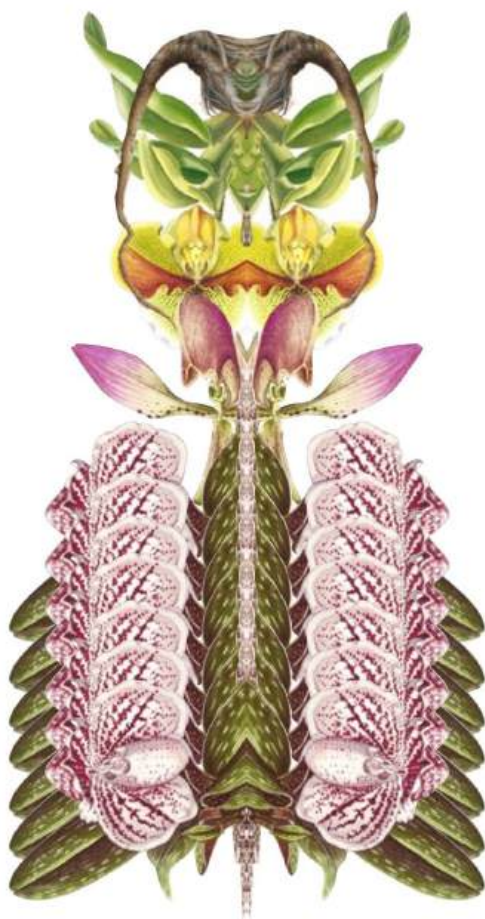
The Promise of Delight

Bill Wolak

Art



The Promise of Lipstick
Bill Wolak
Art



With the Sparks Like Honey in Your Eyes

Bill Wolak

Art



cutting teeth

Rachael Inciarte

Poetry

if ever I need space I can yawn
open the wide chasm of my throat and look
to see how my mouth is riddled with holes

teeth rotten to the root and enamel
worn thin from bitten off bitterness
nerves that throb like red lights

you can blame sugar lust
or the mallow of my bone refusing to set—
a brittle crust over soft pulp

I've been forever feeling like I'm cutting teeth
gnawing at what I can reach
punch of tooth on tongue, taste of blood on gum

at eight my adult teeth were forming fangs
so it was the file for me the flavor
of drills and odor of burning bone

which didn't stop me from snapping
a bite of girl on the bus but they said
mouths can be brutal in other ways

and as my own children's gums raked flesh
bruises bloomed even before the blade
while nursing them I gaped

it was easy to see down the hatch
come loose inside the maw
of their never-ending need

the dentist points out weak spots in their teeth
formed years ago while the growing bone
spun like candy floss in the jaw

I let her paint sealants on
for strength and scrape clean
the surface, adjust their bites

more than most I know mouths
are a multitool and how we yearn
to sink our teeth in

Mother admits to murder

Rachael Inciarte

Poetry

in her dreams
her hands are weapons
she is not afraid
to bleed out
the enemy
is amorphous
until it tears
she rends
flesh from bone
it is brutal
and she is unnerved
by the getaway
viscera spilling
into clean daylight
if not unharmed
then untouched

TRASH TIME

Claire Scott

Poetry

lined up side by side like steadfast soldiers
minus the second amendment
grey/ green/ maroon
recycling/ compost/ landfill

every house with cans on the curb
a like-minded community, tucked together
in the twilight of Thursday nights
before a week of accusing neighbors

of stealing your Amazon packages
or allowing their dogs to dig up your Dahlias
checking out how to buy a handgun
like a Glock19 with grip texture and slide stop

awakened Friday mornings at five
grinding/ grating/ crashing/ crushing
put pillows over your head/impossible to sleep
groggily flick the switch on the Cuisinart
coffee pot

but breathing gratitude for the rows
of empty cans in the morning's meager light
gray/green/maroon
for the comfort of routine
and the chance for a fresh start

HEART SURGERY

Claire Scott

Poetry

He, his future written by the sound waves
of an echocardiogram, the dye in
an angiogram, a thoracic surgeon
up all night with a fevered child
her hands shaking with caffeine
a nurse who mixed up medications
after downing a fistful of Valium
to calm tattered nerves
the monitor that wasn't beeping
when his pulse dropped below forty
maintenance skipped this year
to avoid a bleeding bottom line
he, lying in an ICU bed
balanced on the edge of brimstone
may the butterfly not flap its wings
and cause a hurricane in Albania
or a bed to fall into an abyss
let him return to his room on the sixth floor
with a functioning monitor and an alert nurse
let his generous heart heal

Awakening in the Night

Jason Innocent

Poetry

In the wreckage of my shattered dreams,
Where hope once bloomed, now silence screams.
Amidst the ruins, a whispering light,
Guides me from the depths of endless night.

From broken pieces, a phoenix arises,
Embracing scars, a soul reprises.
Through the ashes, a new fire burns,
In pain and beauty, my spirit learns.

Kindergarten
Robert Beveridge
Poetry

How this flight to Nirvana
ended up in Latvia instead
I don't know. Perhaps I
read the signs wrong
when I tried to read them
in a language I was sure
I knew. However, I am here
and so must make the best
of what the former Eastern Bloc
can offer me; maybe customs
officers can tell me more, and this new
language I can learn from scratch.

Things I've Lost

Rachel Lutwick-Deaner

Nonfiction

Things I've lost:

My grandmother's diamond earring, down the sink

Within a week of getting them, keys to my new
office

Mitten, after mitten, after mitten

Shopping lists, in the middle of the grocery store,
causing me to abandon cart

My temper

Receipts for things that needed and then couldn't be
returned

My tooth fairy money, stashed in the bowels of a
stuffed bear, and then forgotten

My child

It comes back to me in the most surprising ways. The day will be bright and clear, like it was then. The street will be empty, and I cast a glance down the long sidewalk, no one coming. I'll wonder, for a moment, where my now grown girl might be at this moment in time. And I'm immediately back in 2010, when my mother hosted a party for all of our relatives to meet the new baby, when a well-meaning relative took my six-year-old daughter for a walk without telling me, when I couldn't find her.

I raced around the house looking in every corner, behind every door, and she was gone, nowhere, and my husband was too distracted to tell me that the well-meaning relative had taken our child for that well-meaning walk, and then I was outside on the front lawn calling her name, my voice desperate and already sick with grief. I screamed her name with the force of every mother who had ever lost a child for-a-minute-for-a-

lifetime, and I screamed it again, and again, as if the vibrations of my vocal cords could compel whatever stranger had snatched her off the street to return her to me. I screamed her name in a way that sent everyone at the house running outside to me, but I was alone at that moment, every blade of grass a sharpened knife cutting my feet and ankles, punishing me for losing my child, the worst kind of mother laid bare in front of everyone.

And days go by, hours, minutes, seconds later she is returned to me, by that well-meaning relative whose eyes I will not meet, to whom I will not speak. My child does not know the pain and fury I feel, and she will not know, because it was I who lost her, I who should have shut the gate. And suddenly I am not the mother on the news asking for the return of her child, not the mother in the article online who is sick with grief, the mother who is whispered about at the school, at the library, you know, the one whose daughter was...lost. Instead I am the mother who must surely be suffering some kind of psychosis, who lost her mind, as her child was just out of her sight for a moment, and why didn't she confer with her spouse, because that well-meaning relative, yes, she's so well meaning, did ask if she could take her, take her for a walk.

Things I've lost:

My voice, time after time, as I'm a screamer when provoked

Friends, over time, over distance

Documents, to the clutter of my Google Drive

My nerve, in meetings where I should have spoken up

My mind. Definitely, my mind.

Descend
Katie Highbanks
Art



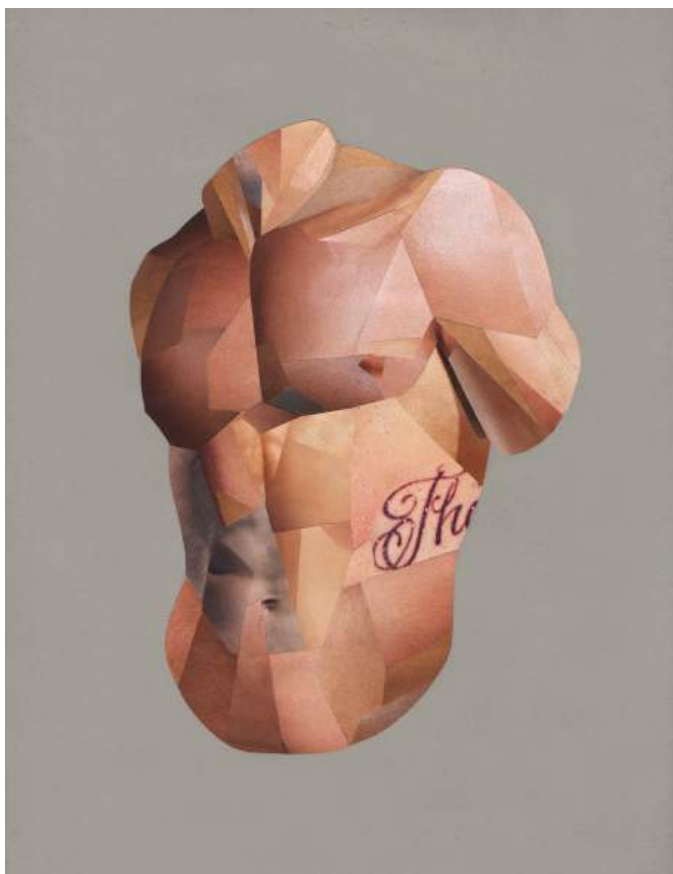
Dandelion Black and White
Katie Hughbanks
Art



Underwater Petals
Katie Highbanks
Art



Torso
Isabella Ronchetti
Art



Eye III
Isabella Ronchetti
Art



Hand III
Isabella Ronchetti
Art



&
David Colodney
Poetry

You remind me of an ampersand,
 bent & twisted, like a palm tree
in a hurricane & roots pliantly
 planted in earth. Some days you
don't notice which way is up:
 some nights, down.
Tell me, my friend – what's in your head?
 September's wind, as hard
as sapphire, blowing through your veins
 or conjunctions taking the place
of blood like contradictions as you tilt
 from day to day your own way?
Somedays you're more g-clef
 an ampersand with rhythm & style
but balancing the same to the untrained eye.
 You know rain dissipates when
the sun returns & you know April is a bright
 month when you welcome
new life: Spring births & rebirths & fresh
 dollops of air, seedlings & saplings,
greening & breathing. I blow seeds of hope
 from my cupped hands
into your landscape of grammar & song
 & pray they don't fly past you.

the break-up society

David Colodney

Poetry

you & me (temporary)
 pulpy sun rises stark.
 dressed in last night's
 sweat & guilt

we stare into faces
 we don't know
 with names
 we won't remember.

will sunlight
 breathe forgiving colors
 or will the circling
 ceiling fans spit

out our fates
 like prophets?
 our barista:
 jeans faded as a lamppost

ignores us
 whispers *Spanglish*
 into an iPhone
 dances behind the counter.

you & me (temporary)
 Splenda & milk windmills
 steam parts.
 we chat staccato

like foreign tongues

until I get the check
kiss your cheek goodbye
pray

we don't see each other
out in the neon bars
tonight prancing
the ritual dance

of some carnal
break-up society.

Grilled Cheese

Doug Hoekstra

Poetry

Last night I dreamt I went out to eat with my Dad
Something we never did in life,
Though we would have lunch together,
In the suburban ranch house I called home
I'd sit at the kitchen table, white formica
My mom off at the hairdresser or
Taking a long walk around the block,
Exactly as I do these days

He'd make his special grilled cheese sandwiches
A touch of mayo and onion, lightly toasted,
They always tasted perfect, made with love.
I don't know where we went in my dream
The restaurant or the town or the food
Or even what we said to each other
But when I woke up, I was refreshed
And no longer hungry

Coin Laundry

Doug Hoekstra

Poetry

24-hour coin laundry across the street from a Deco bank
Holding fast against the cranes,
Sipping dark coffee, a man and his wife and two
children
Walk through the front door of the café, ringing bells

Holding phones, a warm breeze blowing from the Gulf
Bending tress lightly in its wake,
Scattered through concrete forests, sidewalks
Parking lots, swaying to and fro, in motion

Wearing a baseball cap, golf shirt and shorts,
A sailor without a sea
Doomscrolling as his wife orders for them all,
Smoothing her one-piece dress lightly, with grace

Silver bracelet and hoop earrings, put together well
If only for the time to spend
On a quiet afternoon in a little hipster café
They used to frequent when they were young
In the days before the days

Sawgrass
Doug Hoekstra
Poetry

Sawgrass and myrtle
The sandy path
The shallow pool
The seabirds on the water
Walking like disciples
With the sun and spirit
And the ghost I cannot see

Wedding Cake

Brooksie C. Fontaine

Fiction

My marriage ended on my wedding day, when my husband screamed at my five-year-old niece.

I wish I'd done it sooner, before we flushed \$40,000 down the toilet. It's not like he hadn't given me opportunities-it's just that I could always excuse them to myself.

I knew he was a mean drunk. Once he reached a certain blood alcohol concentration, he started imitating my voice in a mocking tone (he was just joking). He got aggressive during sex, and pouted like a child when I pushed him off (at least he took no for an answer). He shouted at me for things I'd done to "embarrass" him to our friends, inane things I'd said about his habits, his tidiness, his snoring (he was just sensitive).

Once, when I told him he was too drunk to drive, he drove off without me and I walked the two miles back to our house with my high heels in my hand, too embarrassed to ask anyone at the party for a ride (he said he was sorry).

Before the wedding, his brother asked if there'd be an open bar, and he scoffed, "Yeah, there's no way I'm getting through *that* day sober." He didn't know I could hear him. (It was normal for men to joke about their wives like that.)

My niece proved to be the red line. Her name's Claire, but she was at that phase where she introduced herself to people by different names (today she was "Abigail." Last time I saw her, she'd been "Shampoo"). She wore pipe cleaner fairy wings with her flower girl dress. She danced and ran back and forth while we adults talked and laughed.

I was talking to my sister, barely processing as Claire pranced over to the cake, which she seemed to admire. I'd thought maybe we could have a pink cake, or a red one, just to shake things up a bit. My husband wanted white, traditional. We compromised: white with red frosting roses.

Claire plucked one of the roses off with her fingertips, delicate as if she were picking a real flower.

I didn't even process it, didn't even pause in my sentence, till my husband shouted, "HEY! Would you mind getting your FUCKING fingers out of the cake?"

The noise was sucked out of the room.

Even then, the excuse machine started churning: *he's already had a few drinks, he didn't mean it, he'll apologize, he already looks sorry.*

And he did. I knew he hadn't meant to snap at her like that—in front of everyone. Most people here had never seen him act like that before, and I couldn't bring myself to look at their shocked faces.

I could barely look at his expression, the way his gaze fell, sheepish and chastened as a little boy.

I couldn't make myself look away from Claire. Her cheeks suddenly raw with embarrassment, her eyes welling up, like dewdrops in the red rose of her face. The frosting flower was still cupped in her fingertips.

Suddenly, I saw myself in ten years, my face slightly puffed with the wine I needed to tolerate him, washing dishes and pretending not to hear while he screamed at my kids. Or worse.

Because whose behavior really *improves* after marriage?

"You're being an asshole," I told him. It's not like I hadn't said it to him before—I wasn't a total pushover—but I hadn't expected to need to say it in front of other

people. I thought I was safe here, that his fear of public humiliation would protect me.

"I'm sorry, Cindy," he offered, chin down and eyes gazing up bashfully, like an embarrassed dog.

"You should apologize to *her*," I said, gesturing to Claire.

He hesitated, mouth opening and closing, like he wanted to argue. He hated being told what to do. But we were in front of people, so he muttered, "Sorry," without looking at her.

I inhaled through my nose, hot with anger that blazed out any excuses I could have made for him.

I started towards him, and he staggered out of my way, as if he didn't have almost a foot and a hundred pounds on me. I marched right past him, and up to the cake, up to where Claire was still standing.

I regarded its pristine surface, its delicately sculpted roses, the little man and woman on top. I plunged my fingers into its buttery frosting, the sponginess underneath. I shoved the handfuls into my mouth, deliberately messy, smearing white and red frosting over my cheeks and nose.

There was awkward laughter from the guests.

I looked down at Claire—her face had split with a half-moon smile, delighted at seeing an adult behave so piggishly. I nodded for her to join me.

She hesitated.

"Go head," I said, lips smeared thickly, "you can."

And she did, popping her frosting rose into her mouth and smiling as she chewed, plunging her little hands into the lowest cake tier for more.

I made eye-contact with my husband. His face was melon red, embarrassment and rage darkening his eyes, already blaming me for all of this.

I maintained eye-contact while I grabbed the top tier straight off the cake, knocking the bride and groom

figure to the ground, holding it in my hands like a submarine sandwich.

He turned and stormed away, like he always did when he needed time to cool off. He thought he'd have a wife to come back to.

He wouldn't.

I looked down at the cake of my life—mine to devour, any way I wanted to.

And I ate.

Review of Patrick Nathan's *The Future Was Color: A Novel*

Deborah Copperud
Book Review

The Future Was Color: A Novel by Patrick Nathan

Counterpoint Press: June 4, 2024

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224 pages

USD \$26.00

Monsters lurk, fires burn, and anxieties churn in Patrick Nathan's *The Future Was Color: A Novel*. The historical novel opens in Los Angeles in 1956 when George Curtis, a 28-year-old Hollywood screenwriter, cruises a movie theater box office during a showing of a hit thriller he wrote, titled "Death from Above," about uranium-enhanced giant spiders. The ticket taker is a young man named Jack, whom George takes home and nicknames Jacques. The two begin a steamy affair, which must be kept a secret because George fears being blacklisted by his movie studio employer.

Another Jack, George's mediocre screenwriter officemate, is also the object of George's desire. But, more than sex, George yearns for a home and a family, perhaps because of the emotional damage he suffered when he arrived in New York from Hungary just twelve years earlier, alone at sixteen, ahead of his parents who promised to join him but, presumably, died in Auschwitz. This yearning makes George vulnerable when he brings Jacques to a soiree organized by Madeline Miller, a past-her-prime actress and beard to her successful actor husband Walt. Post-party, Madeline invites George to stay in their guest room for a week, making a writer's retreat of their home in Malibu, "this strange shantytown of millionaires."

George participates in Madeline's proposed domestic tableau, but instead of working on the radioactive arachnid sequel his studio has ordered, George begins to write a secret essay. Instead of providing a writing conducive environment, Madeline loops in Jacques and Jack and orchestrates outings for the found and incestuous family of five: Walt and Madeline the parents, Jack and George the sons, and Jacques the debased pet. Madeline, acting as perverse matriarch, doles out Dexedrine and drinks while the makeshift nuclear family sails to Catalina Island and behaves badly at a costume party. As the writer's retreat week unfolds, news about the Hungarian Revolution buzzes in the background at a frequency only George can hear, while he silently endures the casual antisemitism of his social acquaintances. Then, the "amorphous commune" takes a road trip to Las Vegas for a Dionysian escapade that plays out like a National Lampoon's Los Alamos vacation, minus the dad jokes.

Before the book's climax, a middle section knuckles back to New York City and George's origin story, which begins in 1944. He used to be György Kertész, a lonely adolescent immigrant, fledgling photographer, then auto-didactic writer, who palled around with other Bohemians at a grimy Waldorf Cafeteria on 6th Avenue and West 8th Street. After a legal crisis, György becomes George and moves to the golden state. Here, too, Nathan parallels the personal with the political:

"In György's new country, they built more cruisers and submarines, more airplanes, more guns, more bombs. They printed and filmed more propaganda and called it news, or worse—morale. Nobody knew it then, but somewhere in New Mexico the universe was being monkeyed with and what came out of it would irreparably

humiliate the human desire for meaning, for purpose.”

I haven’t even mentioned the narrator! He peeks out slyly and so infrequently at first, that one almost forgets he’s there. If *The Future Was Color* were a straightforward third-person narrative about a screenwriter with Westian disease, it would be a good book. I’d spend time praising Nathan’s elegiac descriptions of cigarette smoke, imagined monsters, and the nutritional makeup of semen. I’d compliment the passages about George’s hidden and mixed-up identities: “He was the transdimensional being whose two realities could never quite intersect, smuggling the moist, soapy life from one universe into another.” I’d compare how Nathan delivers devastating plot turns with stripped down sentences evocative of the great twentieth century modernists. And I’d register just one complaint about the overwrought symbolism of a monstera plant.

But Nathan’s narrator adds an authorial prescience and delightful ruminations on art and work, life and death, and finding beauty and domesticity amid a society on the verge of ruin. And so I must praise the narrative conceit that breaks the fourth wall, links George’s mid-century calamities with present day anxieties, and spools out the characters’ futures, *Six Feet Under* finale-style. To say that the narrative choice adds gravity to George’s story risks making the *The Future Was Color* sound cloying. The novel doesn’t moralize so much as connect George’s fears of fascism and nuclear weapons with present day fears of fascism and the twenty-first century’s major “Death from Above” threat—a carbon-poisoned atmosphere—asking, which is worse, the slow burn of greenhouse gas immolation or the flash of nuclear annihilation? And does it matter?

Contributor Bios

Jenica Amalita

Jenica Amalita has grown up taking in the cityscape of Bangalore and its many complexities. A paradox of sensibilities and an ocean current of emotion, Jenica is always trying to understand how abstractions make their way into everyday living. She loves reading, writing, and occasionally binge-watching sitcoms.

Kelly Anne

Kelly Anne is a Millennial health care provider residing in Florida. This collection of poetry honors her journey and its intersections of womanhood, grief, ableism and curiosity while navigating the colorful and asymmetric tapestry of life. Instagram: Kelly_Anne_Poetry

Robert Beveridge

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry on unceded Mingo land (Akron, OH). He published his first poem in a non-vanity/non-school publication in November 1988, and it's been all downhill since. Recent/upcoming appearances in sein und werden, Siren's Call, and Bindweed, among others.

Ervin Brown

Ervin Brown is originally from New York. His prose and poetry have appeared in Willows Wept Review, The Closed Eye Open, Beyond Words Literary Magazine, and Wild Roof Journal, among others. He has an MFA in Writing from the University of New Hampshire.

C.W. Bryan

C.W. Bryan is a student at Georgia State University. He lives in Atlanta, GA where he writes poetry, nonfiction and short fiction. He is currently writing his weekly series, Poetry is Plagiarism, with Sam Kilkenny at poetryispretentious.com. His debut chapbook Celine was published with Bottlecap Press in 2023.

Jamie L. Carney

Wabi-sabi. It's something I live by. Painter, poet, photographer.

David Colodney

David Colodney realized at an early age that he had no athletic ability whatsoever, so he turned his attention to writing about sports instead of attempting to play them, covering everything from major league baseball to high school flag football for The Miami Herald and The Tampa Tribune. The sports stories turned to fiction then to poetry. And he kept writing.

Deborah Copperud

Deborah Copperud has been a reference librarian, stay-at-home parent, school volunteer, preschool choir accompanist, Democratic party activist, rock band cellist, and freelance writer. She co-hosts two podcasts: It's My Screen Time Too covers children's media, and Spock Talk analyzes her obsession with the 20th century parenting influencer Dr. Benjamin Spock.

Tinamarie Cox

Tinamarie Cox lives in Arizona with her husband, two children, and a one-eyed cat. Her written and visual work has appeared in numerous publications under various genres. She also has two poetry collections, Self-Destruction in Small Doses (Bottlecap Press, 2023), and

Through A Sea Laced With Midnight Hues (Nymeria Publishing, forthcoming 2024). You can find more of her work at tinamariethinkstoomuch.weebly.com.

Diana L. Day

Diana L. Day has written poems all her life, but became an advertising copywriter to make a living. She now lives in the Appalachian Mountains near Neel Gap on the Appalachian Trail. She enjoys hanging out with other poets and fiction writers and likes to go hiking in the mountains.

Arlene DeMaris

I am a freelance writer specializing in health and wellness. I live near a small lake in central Connecticut with my husband and elderly cat.

Sharon Denmark

Sharon Denmark is an artist and writer from the southern part of Virginia. Over the years she has sold history, flowers, and recliners in order to fund her need to paint and write.

Arvilla Fee

Arvilla Fee teaches English Composition for Clark State College and is the managing editor for the San Antonio Review. She has published poetry, photography, and short stories in numerous presses, including Contemporary Haibun Online, Calliope, North of Oxford, Right Hand Pointing, Rat's Ass Review, Mudlark, and many others. Her poetry books, *The Human Side* and *This is Life*, are available on Amazon. For Arvilla, writing produces the greatest joy when it connects us to each other.

Brooksie C. Fontaine

Brooksie C. Fontaine spent her childhood drawing dragons and unicorns, which is coincidentally her occupation as an adult. She is overly dependent on caffeine, long walks, and audiobooks, and spends a lot of time outdoors with her obnoxious German Shepherds. Her three much-younger siblings are at the center of her universe.

Gerald Friedman

In appearance, Gerald Friedman has been compared to a Dirac delta function. When deadheading in his tiny plot, he may be distracted by a migrating vireo. You can read more of his work at

<https://jerryfriedman.wixsite.com/my-site-2>

Sharon Goldberg

Sharon Goldberg is a Seattle writer whose work has appeared in The Gettysburg Review, New Letters, The Louisville Review, Cold Mountain Review, River Teeth, Green Mountains Review, The Jellyfish Review, Gargoyle, Best Small Fictions, and elsewhere. Sharon won second place in the On the Premises 2012 Humor Contest and Fiction Attic Press's 2013 Flash in the Attic Contest. She is an avid but cautious skier and enthusiastic world traveler.

Karen Grosman

Karen Grosman is a Canadian artist based in Toronto. Her practice concentrates on painting, ceramic sculptures, ceramic art installations and drawings. Her paintings and drawings concentrate on concepts of impermanence. Her work is represented by Box Heart Gallery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She holds a BFA

from OCAD University. Website: <https://karen-grosman.com/> Instagram: @grosmankaren

Alex Gurtis

Alex Gurtis is the author of the chapbook *When the Ocean Comes to Me* (Bottlecap Press, 2024). A Ruth Weiss Foundation Maverick Poet Award Finalist, Alex received his MFA from the University of Central Florida. His work as a poet and critic has appeared in or is forthcoming in anthologies and publications such as Autofocus, Barrelhouse, HAD, Rejection Letters, and Identity Theory among others. You can find him on Instagram @apbg_alex.

Jordan Hanson

Jordan Hanson (she/her) is an Iowa native and a graduate of Roanoke College with a Bachelor's in English and Creative Writing. She lives in Philadelphia with her partner and her cat Ravioli, and spends her time away from her day job trying to keep her houseplants alive and listening to Taylor Swift on repeat. Her work has been published in Unstamatic Magazine, orangepeel magazine, and Ghost Girls Zine, among others. You can find her on Instagram and Twitter @jordanehanson.

Molly Harris

Molly Harris lives in St. Louis, MO, with her husband and their three cats. She enjoys long hikes where she can forget herself, playing Pokémon for hours, and also, of course, writing. You can read more of her work at mollyjaneharris.com

Ken Hines

Ken Hines has been an ad agency creative director and a college English teacher, two jobs that require getting through to people who may not be listening. When he finally got around to writing poetry, his work appeared in literary magazines like Dunes Review, Burningwood Literary Journal, Hole in the Head Review, Rockvale Review, and Third Wednesday Journal. A recent Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee, he lives in monument-free Richmond, Virginia with his wife, Fran.

Doug Hoekstra

Doug Hoekstra is a Chicago-bred, Nashville-based writer and musician, educated at DePaul University in the Windy City (B.A.) and Belmont University in the Music City (M.Ed.), whose prose, poetry, and non-fiction have appeared in numerous print and online literary journals. His first set of stories, *Bothering the Coffee Drinkers* earned an Independent Publisher Award (IPPY) for Best Short Fiction (Bronze Medal). *Ten Seconds In-Between*, his latest collection of short stories, earned a Royal Dragonfly Award for Best Short Story Collection of 2021 and Next Generation Indie Book Award Finalist 2022. www.doughoekstra.net

Amanda K Horn

Amanda K Horn lives in New York with her cat, Ursula. She's a former massage therapist, a vegetarian, and a chronic daydreamer. Her passions include motorcycles and the possibility of time travel.

Katie Hughbanks

Katie Hughbanks is a writer, photographer, and teacher whose photography has been recognized internationally, including two honors from the London Photo Festival. Her photos appear in various publications, including in

Peatsmoke Journal, In Parentheses, L'Esprit Literary Review, New Feathers Anthology, Glassworks Magazine, Azahares, MAYDAY, Moonday Mag, and Black Fork Review. Her poetry chapbook, Blackbird Songs, was published by Prolific Press in 2019, and her short story collection (It's Time) will be released by Finishing Line Press in June 2024. She teaches English and Creative Writing in Louisville, Kentucky.

Rachael Inciarte

Rachael Inciarte is the author of the chapbook What Kind of Seed Made You, published by Finishing Line Press and 2022 Eric Hoffer Award Honorable Mention. Their work features in Poetry Northwest, Spillway, Salamander, and others.

Coral Inéz

Coral Inéz is a Mexican poet, her writing has been published by La Piccioletta Barca, Passengers Journal, Full House Literary, The Orchards Poetry Journal, and elsewhere. She lives in Southern California.

Jason Innocent

Jason Innocent is a poet based in Brooklyn. He graduated from Medgar Evers College and has contributed to various publications, including Sugarcane magazine, all about jazz, The Thinking Conservative, The Morning Call, Stereo, Stickman, Lyrics and Threads, WrongSpeak, The Blonde Therapy, Drunk Monkeys, Jerryjazzmusician, and abstract sports. He was also featured in the New York Times.

Jey Ley

Jey Ley is a visual artist and new writer based in Southwest Ohio. Jey is inspired by cultural exchanges, loves to travel abroad, and once visited the capital of Tibet to see the Potala Palace, one of the greatest wonders of the world. Visit @jeyley on Instagram.

Allison Walters Luther

Let's face it, Allison Walters Luther is a mess. She grew up in Southern Indiana and has since lived in England, Florida, Southern California, and Washington state. A writer and poet since the age of seven, she has Brain Dragons instead of Plot Bunnies and they frequently battle each other, leaving Allison a weeping, distracted blob. Her use of imagery has been called 'immersive' and she often leaves stories open-ended, dashing off into the sunset and cackling "No story is ever really over!" You can learn more about her at allisonwaltersluther.com or find her on Twitter and BlueSky as @AllisonLuther.

Rachel Lutwick-Deaner

Rachel Lutwick-Deaner enjoys a bookish life of reading on the couch, teaching college English, and writing essays and book reviews. She delights in writing that challenges and affirms her readers, and her ultimate goal is to make people laugh, even uncomfortably. She lives with her family and many bookshelves in Grand Rapids, MI.

Ryan McCarty

Ryan McCarty is a teacher and writer, living in Ypsilanti, MI. His poetry has appeared in Abandoned Mine, Blue Collar Review, Coal City Review, Trailer Park Quarterly, Minor 7th Magazine, and Rattle. He

contributes semi-regularly to Left Voice and to conversations at the back of the bus.

Peter Mladinic

Peter Mladinic's fifth book of poems, *Voices from the Past*, is available from Better Than Starbucks Publications. An animal rights advocate, he lives in Hobbs, New Mexico, United States.

Josiah Nelson

Josiah Nelson holds an MFA from the University of Saskatchewan, where he teaches creative writing. His work has appeared (or is forthcoming) in Contemporary Verse 2, Grain, Hunger Mountain, The Nashwaak Review, Palette Poetry, Queen's Quarterly, and The Rumpus, among others. He won third place in Fractured Lit's Monsters, Mystery, and Mayhem Prize, and has been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. He lives in Saskatoon, Canada.

AJ O'Reilly

AJ O'Reilly (they/them) is a nonbinary writer, performer, and walk-taker living in Portland Oregon. They hold a BA from Reed College and an MA from Northwestern University. No matter what time you are reading this, AJ is listening to the Mountain Goats.

Annette Petrusso

Annette Petrusso is a poet and writer/editor based in Austin, Texas. Her poetry is inspired by such things as art, music, popular culture, loss, and the energy of spaces. Her work has appeared in the *Pomona Valley Review*, *The Raw Art Review*, *Black Moon Magazine*, *Thimble Literary Review*, *Concision Poetry Journal*, and *Quibble*.

nat raum

nat raum is a genderless ghost seeking revenge. They are fueled by spite and nourished by Dr. Pepper.

Dimitra Rizou

Dimitra Rizou is a cartoonist, writer and designer. Her work has been published in Split Rock Review, Litro, daCunha Global, the Croydon Citizen, Parallaxi, among others, and shortlisted in Artificuim's Signo Novella Prize. She's also contributed illustrations for The Awfully Bad Guide to Monster Travel and The Time Traveller's Guide to Hoxton for London's Ministry of Stories. She can sometimes be found online on www.ahoyuniverse.com and on @ahoy_universe on Instagram.

Isabella Ronchetti

Isabella Ronchetti is an Italian-American visual artist, graphic designer and mountaineer. She holds a BA in graphic design from NABA (Milan, Italy) and is currently an MFA candidate at New York Academy of Art. Inspired by dreams, philosophy, and mythological archetypes, Isabella's practice explores the human psyche through an experimental figurative lens. Her work can be found in galleries, literary magazines, and on billboards around the US and abroad.

Marie Scarles

Marie Scarles is a writer and organizer from Mystic, CT, living and working in Brooklyn, NY. Her essays and poems have appeared in *The Believer*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *About Place Journal*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. By day, she works as the Communications Director at NY Renews, a statewide climate and

environmental justice coalition. She earned her MFA from Rutgers University.

Claire Scott

Claire Scott is a recently 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.

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.

Vinaya Ann Thomas

Vinaya Ann lived in Kerala, India before immigrating to the United States in 2012. She currently holds a bachelor's degree in psychological sciences with a minor in fine arts. After completing her master's, she is currently pursuing a doctorate in clinical psychology in the United States. Her clinical and research interests are in women's and racial health disparities, health equity, and trauma-informed care. In her artistic pursuits, she explores the intersection of human psychology in visual arts and poetry. She is currently working on her bilingual collection of poems and visuals on grief, titled 'A Manual for the Blues.'

Adrienne Unger

Adrienne Unger is a fallen poet, a verse refugee asylum seeker who made it over the wall and is living as a fiction writer in her working class, coastal Long Island, NY town. Sonnets have been sown but have not ripened. Until that harvest, she is farming other regions of her brain, yielding lyrical fictitious tales of all shapes and sizes.

Sona Verdi

Sona Verdi was born in the city of winds and lives in one that never sleeps. She is a mixed reality engineer who writes stories and develops 35mm film from her Upper West Side apartment. She is currently a Lillian Vernon Fellow at NYU, where she is earning her MFA. Her work has appeared in Maudlin House, Letters Journal, Tofu Ink Arts Press and others. You can find her at sonaverdi.com

Bill Wolak

Bill Wolak has just published his eighteenth book of poetry entitled *All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages have appeared as cover art for such magazines as *Phoebe*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Baldhip Magazine*, and *Barfly Poetry Magazine*.

Elzbieta "Ela" Zdunek

Elzbieta "Ela" Zdunek (she/her) is a surrealist collage artist specializing in digital, predominantly grayscale compositions. Initially a photographer, she aspires to make her works an immersive, confusing experience, by mimicking photographic textures and visual techniques. Her work explores themes of the subjectivity of perspective, shaped by relationships, traumas, and history, drawing inspiration from 1920s silent films and historical theatre. She has exhibited in Berlin, New

York, and London, and is a notable cover art designer in the Berlin music scene.

Huina Zheng

Huina Zheng, a Distinction M.A. in English Studies holder, works as a college essay coach. She's also an editor at Bewildering Stories. Her stories have been published in Baltimore Review, Variant Literature, Midway Journal, and others. Her work has received nominations twice for both the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. She resides in Guangzhou, China with her husband and daughter.

Door Is A Jar Staff Bios**Maxwell Bauman****OWNER/ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / ART DIRECTOR**

Maxwell studied Creative Writing at Wilkes University and earned his M.A. in Fiction and M.F.A in Publishing. He founded Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine in 2015. He is a contributor to Chicken Soup for the Soul, and wizard with Legos. Website: maxwellbauman.com

Corinne Alice Flynn**POETRY / DRAMA EDITOR**

Corinne Alice Flynn 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, majoring in African-American Studies with a minor in History. A 2013 inductee into the National Academy of Young Preachers, Rev. Grate studied at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, and he has pastored three congregations; Historic Trinity AME Church in Manning, SC, New Mt. Zion AME Church in Lexington, SC, and Calvary AME Church in Bates-burg-Leesville. In 2023, Rev. Grate transitioned to higher education, where he serves as the Assistant Vice President for Development at Jarvis Christian University in Hawkins, TX.

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