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DOOR = JAR

Door Is A Jar

Issue 36

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Given Back to the Spiders

Eric Carlson

Poetry

Soon we'll leave for the summer
and the spiders will come home.
After we've vacuumed, dusted,
bleached, mopped, wiped, secured,
locked, taken our stuff with us,
they'll crawl back in between
the floorboards, through the
abscesses in the walls,
down from their hiding places
in the cedar shingle siding
and take over the rooms.
the house will return to the normal,
spider-run order that exists all year.
They'll spin webs in the corners
without us there to sweep them
away with our brooms,
and catch the last wayward insects
that overstayed their welcome.
They'll dance delicately
across the linoleum kitchen floor
without fear of getting squashed,
free to find the last remaining
crumbs we missed in the cabinets,
free to move wherever they want
after months of hiding from us.
How long will it take for them
to clean the antiseptic smell
of humanity from the house,
to settle into the space
They call their own?

They Said I Couldn't Love Her

Emily Molinari

Poetry

daydreams
of sun-kissed skin &
muscular thighs
straddling a pink paddleboard

stiff denim shorts, discarded
somewhere on the beach
next to dollar-store flip-flops.

hot sand sticks to smooth legs &

she

is a laughing mouth,
a face turned away,
freckled dots of caramel
baking in the summer heat &

her fingers
release the paddle,

reach

for mine.

The Bee
Emily Molinari
Poetry

I have a clear memory
of you sitting
on the tailgate
of a blue pickup truck

laughing

at a bee
who found itself
at the bottom
of your wineglass.

It tried to swim,
but sugar & tannins
weighed it down,
clung
to gossamer wings.

It did not occur to you
to pour the wine onto the grass
before it drowned.

Love is toasting with good wine

Peter Lilly

Poetry

You are the rouse in the speech
the note that lingers
as the ghost of flavor.

You are the wash of life
with the next mouthful,
the tannins that stick to the tongue,
the glass half empty
before the toast is raised.

Corked

Peter Lilly

Poetry

A gift-wrapped longing fills and fills the growing.
You awaken to maturity as you turn to vinegar,
good for cooking into something else.
What you use to keep it all in will change you
before the prescribed delay, and you'll be ready
to ruin any occasion worth the opening.
Yet, you'll have the tang to add the depth
to a meeting of savored flavors, something
that sustains in the give and take,
the push and pull, and to recognize
the beauty of ensemble out-shimmers
the glory of monologue. The lone star
takes our interest, the canopy takes our breath.
Oh, to truly feel this, before death.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Claire Scott

Poetry

Floating laughter, fizzy champagne,
 funny stories of him or her or them
ricochet around the room. The band
 plays *What a Wonderful World*,
while the pie-eyed priest boogies,
 crucifix swinging.

A slideshow in the background:
 a gap-toothed child, a grinning student,
a wedding in Barbados, beaming kids
 and grandkids gathered
around a glowing cake.

Only after, wine-stained table cloths
 removed, sticky floors mopped,
folding chairs stacked in the closet
 by people paid minimum wage.
Only when we return to our motel room
 ablaze with parking lot lights,
the sound of an ice machine
 clunking ice for yet another gin,
and a bed slamming against
 the paper-thin walls.
Only after. Do we weep.

THE DOCTOR'S RED CALL

Claire Scott

Poetry

Did you see me slashed in two
like an axe-severed log

sudden and brutal
split into *before* and *after*

a chasm between them
uncrossed, uncrossable

standing on the spit of *after*
watching the *before* float away

fading into morning fog
where memories are dressed in dust

and moths spin in a purple haze
who am I in this strange light

come back come back
I cry to the empty sea

my face wet with winter tears
will I still be the same

despite growing thin and bald
despite draining fatigue

limping days, leery nights
will you see me?

Thunk
Robin Brooks
Nonfiction

February. A Tuesday. An icy sheen. A sled.

“Watch me, Mommy.”

Down the nearest slope. Only a short way. Then, momentum. What a terrible word.

My four-year-old flies. Clearing the hill, over the driveway and down, down, down. Gaining speed.

“Jump off!” Screaming. Never such a scream in the air. “Roll off!” Shouting her name, but the wind steals it away. Beside me, Husband as I’ve never heard him.

Older brother mute behind us.

How could I let this happen? Distracted by a second miscarriage, not thinking of the collaboration of ice and hill. Not thinking of dangers in our own front yard. Only focused on whether to try again. Greedy.

And still she flies. Faster, faster. The trees pull her closer. I can’t get to her. I can’t save her. I can’t do the only thing that matters. I can only yell, but she isn’t coming off that sled.

Only four years old. My heart, my soul. Careening to trees too spindly to matter. They can’t really hurt her, can they?

The previous Friday, a snow day. No school.

“What should I do with them? The mall?” Husband asked for suggestions to manage four and six.

“Yeah, they’ll like that. The pet store. Dollarama. Get donuts at Tim Hortons.” Going out the door to work. No snow day for me. “Oh, and they need sledding helmets. If you see them.”

Forty dollars each. Ridiculous. He couldn’t reach me at work to ask if he should get them. What would I have said?

And now, watching her cascade towards rigid, stubborn objects that won't get out of the way, no matter how much I beg. Why do trees grow at the bottom of the hill? Why don't they mind their own business farther on? Why didn't we cut them all down?

Still on the sled. Still gaining speed. Roll off! Why won't she roll off? The hill seems miles long. Our pleas stop just before the trees reach out and snatch her, her tiny body ricochets, wrapping around their grotesque trunks.

The impact coasts up the hill to mock our futility.
Thunk.

I watch my daughter die. I will never forget. This moment will replay all my life. A before and after. What could have been if only I hadn't been so careless.

Plodding down the hill, the icy layer that whisked her to her death mocks us as we sink to our knees with each step. Moving faster than snow allows, I trip and fall headfirst into the crust.

Stupid, stupid feet.

How did this happen? Too focused on myself. On the future. A baby that won't be born. An estimated due date that will be just another day. A tie breaker. One boy, one girl, and what would be the third? Now, my daughter will no longer exist because I didn't focus on the babies I already have.

Crunching of snow as we break through. Icy bits fall into my socks, burning. Bile boils at the back of my throat. No space yet for tears.

Thunk.

Faster. Go faster. My baby is all alone in the woods.

Her brain will be bleeding, seeping crimson into the snow. I know this. When we get to her, she'll be motionless, never to open her eyes again, never to wrap her arms around me, never to fall asleep holding my

hand. Encircled by red soaked snow and evil trees. An offering of my incompetence to the forest.

It takes a million years to get to her. It will take a million more for me to breathe again. What will I do without her? There will be no future.

Thunk.

A thought. A flash. I won't be able to kill myself because I have another child.

Impossible. The future will be impossible. Why did I say they could go sledding? One unborn child's death will lead to the death of my daughter. Why couldn't I be satisfied with what I had?

We fall to our knees beside her. She is still and her eyes shut. Is she—? Please don't be dead. I'm so sorry, my darling. For not watching you. For not keeping you safe. For being such a horrible mother. I'll regret this day forever.

Her chest rises. Oh god.

I take her in my arms. I shouldn't. Something about head injuries.

The helmet comes off.

Oh, blessed snow day with its trip to the mall.

"Forty dollars? You're kidding me. You could have waited and found cheaper ones."

But Husband thinks differently. "Might as well buy them now instead of wasting time looking for cheaper ones. It's a safety thing. And how much is our time worth?"

How much is time worth? Four years. That's all I've had with her. Four years. Forty dollars. Ten dollars per year.

Eyes open and she screams. The most wonderful sound in the universe.

"Why am I here?"

Don't move someone with a head injury. Unless... Paramedics can't get down here. We take turns carrying

her up the hill, call 911, shouting what to tell them. It will take at least twenty minutes to reach us on our house on a hill in the country.

We lay her on the sofa. Remove her boots and undo her coat but leave everything else. She is talking. Incredible because I watched her die. Over and over again, she hits the trees.

Thunk.

What if she has internal bleeding and starts to have a seizure? She is moving her legs and arms. She is talking normally. She is still her.

Paramedics arrive. Cut off her snowpants. Check her over. A tiny neck brace now keeps her safe. I go with her in the ambulance. Professionals taking care of her now. The helmet comes with us. Pink, Minnie-Mouse. Ears sticking out next to a tree-sized dent.

At the hospital, she is lowered on the stretcher.

“That was so much fun!”

And now, I know everything is going to be okay.

Thunk.

Thunk.

Thunk.

CHANT
M.P. Pratheesh
Art



BREATHE
M.P. Pratheesh
Art



BEHOLD
M.P. Pratheesh
Art



WORDS FROM THE SEA

M.P. Pratheesh

Art



Irish Eyes
Ash Vela
Poetry

My Irish eyes turn grey when I'm upset.
Blue when I wet them with tears, and
Green when I am happy. Like jade.
I can try to keep you at bay,
Even though I can't hide my emotions.
I could write for years and
Only let you in an inch.
My poetry doesn't have to rhyme,
But sometimes I like it to.
Need a new obsession, and
I might want it to be you.
I could trade one bad addiction
For another.
Drinking makes me dizzy, and
I'm too old for cigarettes.
Come with me, and I might
Give you an inch.
We can see together
What color my eyes will be.
The color of a forest, or the sky
Above an angry sea.

stump winter
Shannon Cates
Poetry

the house was empty of it—
the last burning wood of winter
danced to ashes when
the blackberries bloomed the house hollow

that final hard freeze,
the trees blazed to life
and sang *take me*
the earth soaked with wanting

we dug the stumps from the garden
cold soil clinging to our hands
we pressed our palms to the
soft, sweet sting of frost
left our names in the snow

after this last little winter
we will fold our linen into stars
our wool to sheets of snow
close the drawer
close the attic
open the door
to all that's left

redbud winter
Shannon Cates
Poetry

I rise from bed, tender with new sprouts
heart-shaped leaves, happily impure and
blushing, giddy as morning frost
I dance to you, beneath dry hives and
over shattered robin sky

you pull me through the window
I glide between your furrowed bark
we press ourselves into cold soil

like mine, your roots are fickle,
shallow as the winter sky
you offer them to me, as mine
seek out your pulse
this summer our mouths
will be parched and drought-dry
but for now

I want the cold to kiss my palms
a touch that will make me bloom
everything burns pink, desperate as
our flesh, tingling cauliflory with rebellion
of sacred hearts

a gift for us, here,
in this panting forest
so we can burn a little
before the sun rises

Stone (Fruit) Heart

Shannon Cates

Poetry

a lament for spoiled peace

I saw a sign at the orchard market:
Please don't squeeze me 'til I'm yours.
 and I remembered
 my skin, sweet with fuzz
 that you kissed until I flushed
 red like traces of the sun's fingers on
 a peach's cheeks, a blushing heart

all I wanted was to be soft
 now I've got tender, disquiet places
 whose origins I can't trace,
 can't carve away
 to reveal dripping, restless flesh
 those dark hollows rot,
 sweating nectar, mushy and sour—

that is to say,
 there is a pit in my stomach and
 I still don't know who to blame
 for this uneasy body
 this trembling rind:
 the seed, the tree
 or the ground

People Hate People Like Us

Amy Newlove Schroeder

Poetry

Did you think that I wouldn't miss you? A woman in a white dress, standing at the edge of...what? At the edge of the Pacific. Somehow the ocean belongs to you. Ghosts of ghosts of ghosts of ghosts of ghosts. All gone. A woman in a white dress, saying *sorry sorry sorry*. Angel's trumpets, a flowering tree, white blossoms hanging upside down. A tantara, the blaze of sound interrupting the white silk of my sandy desuetude. And all that money. So much money, but it changed nothing, nothing at all, in the end. At the arboretum, E and I watched the peacocks, E saying *they're such stupid birds, you know*. And I thought, *no, I'm the stupid bird*. Grief is just like danger—it's everywhere, but you don't see it until it's too late. The boat moves smoothly through the still water, the trumpets blaze through the silence inside my head, the white flowers dangle down. Who cares if the birds are stupid as long as they're beautiful? People say money can't buy happiness, but we certainly tried. White dress, white flowers, white silence. All gone now, erased by the mathematics of grief. *Angel's trumpets*, my mother interrupts, saying *that's the name of the flower*. Brugmansia. People hate people like us. I think I hate people like us. The woman in the dress was my mother in a photograph, the boat belonged to my father, the flowers belonged to themselves. These are the kind of people we were. My mother and my father alive and dead, now just color on paper, but they're gone, bestilled inside the repetitions, the squadrons of their minds. I stand at the edge of the ocean, which is not really an ocean, but the mulled sea called grief, formless as saltwater and hard as stone.

Escalator Trust

Jacqueline Jules

Poetry

I take my place
on the metal steps
descending
over two hundred feet
down to the metro tunnel.

It's rush hour
and a commuter
stands on every stair.

One cruel push
and a hundred people
could fall, head first.

Yet we stand,
as we must, backs turned,
trusting the person behind us.

The Waves
Darlene Bester
Poetry

The waves were like irregular
heartbeats—you feel some,

you don't feel others. I wait
with eyes closed—they were like

love, too. Some rush past your
locked kneecaps and some reach towards

your hips. And then, you feel
nothing. I promised you I'd only

get my feet wet, anchors
for my faulty resistance. Only

sink into the amber sand, home
to many unfolding fears. Only

decipher a blue-tinted window,
the calls of the ocean- steady

like rain. Only, see it escaping
from dreams, random brain pattern

spell out l.o.v.e. Occasionally,
I feel them wake me. lull me.

The rising waves
break me, drown me.

Soup

Darlene Bester

Poetry

It was a small piece of art. A fly drawn to scale,
in a hot bowl of soup. The steam that would

burn my tongue. The fly, that if it would enter
my mouth, I'd be too numb to feel.

Could I be too numb to feel the difference
between the art that moves like soup,

and what is on the tip of my tongue?
It was a small piece of art.

The waiting wouldn't spoil
it. Like conduction, the metal spoon

and I receive the heat transfer,
and my feelings rise. It was a small piece of art.

Finding my soul inside moving art,
I stirred the contents of the bowl-

the words, the memories blurred
the porcelain. The fly, I thought,

was trying to perch with
wingspan protruding. And, so was I.

Leaving my vacant mouth,
were three words that resonate-

Fly, feelings, fly.

Constellation

Jamey Temple

Nonfiction

Feel this, he says, guiding my hand to his hip as he pumps his leg up and down in the motion of stepping. That's the metal, he says, but I only feel hollowness, a valley between muscle or tissue, a place scooped out from the surgeon's scalpel. He lifts his shorts as if I'll be able to see through flesh to bone, but I only see the Big Dipper-shaped scar that begins in the lower back and ends mid-thigh. The outline is purple now, the tiny staple holes faded against a farmer-tanned sky. Unlike my husband, I don't keep searching for what is missing or newly there, but his body is not mine. Hours after surgery, I'd helped him up off the hospital bed, guided him to a toilet. His backside wasn't the body I knew: doubled in size and red-blotched, the edges a stippled star cluster. I'm sorry, he kept saying then, embarrassed as I wiped him, but I didn't look at his body as a thing to desire or pity. Focused on the mission in front of me, I worked around blood-filled surgical drains dragging the floor and taped gauze pads clouding his wounds. After, I took a picture to show him, and it was then that I looked at his body in curiosity—how those muscles once lean and tight from hundreds of cycling miles were no longer seen, how those shattered bones in his hip socket didn't pierce an artery and kill him. As he now leans against the door frame, swinging his legs left and right, a PT exercise to regain strength, I think about his Big Dipper. How one can focus on a part, but not see the whole: how the Big Dipper is the Greater Bear's tail and hindquarters of Ursa Major. How different cultures used Big Dipper as lore. What story will his tell: mourners following a coffin or a path leading to freedom?

Devine Judgement

J.Joy

Art



Connected Threads
J.Joy
Art



The Fallacy of Sol

J.Joy

Art





garment

Elizabeth Sackett

Poetry

after Leonard Cohen

Describe the mouth of light, the cracked vase.
I've always thought of you as a weary villain,
you and all those fabric-voiced girls.

I never find music clawing the air,
clawing the street, the miserable ashtray rapture,
the sacrilegious beauty in the profane.

I tell my mother about the Chelsea Hotel:
she wraps Janis Joplin in yearbook paper.
I blow the years like incense.

My therapist once told me I lacked
sexual maturity. She wrote it in epistolary
letters on my fingertip and I swallowed them

spitefully. You know the way. I'm growing younger
with the Holy Ghost. I'm found wrapped around
that bird in the morning,

no lovers in sight but your dark solemnity,
the notion that words enter the nose
and coat the tongue before leaving.

Fossils

M. Benjamin Thorne

Poetry

The jagged cuts and dried blood
on your legs look like baked mudflats,
cracked, fissured, and rust-red.
Ever the paleontologist, digging into skin.
It's hard to resist the urge to break
the surface, search for answers under
the dirt of daily existence; but
some old hurts needn't be unearthed,
some sentiments are best left buried deep;
others can be rediscovered in time—first
let them accrete the sediment of years
pushed down by the gravity of still more
years, and become encased by experience,
pain replaced with something like grace;
fossilized, old bones to be examined
sometime far off with clinical dispassion,
when seeing the impressions left on flesh
doesn't leave a burning feeling; so fold
up the knife, walk away from the mirror
I tell myself, and add another day
to surviving extinction.

Cleansing

Christopher Ankney

Poetry

The night sky replays Blue Angels,
filling the pool with cicadas. I need you

like a pepper plant needs soil and sun.
You remind me not to hold out on eating

snacks, and you say it cutting through
the years of knowing: the sky sounds

like it's detonating souls. I say I savor
things and you walk out the room;

your voice broke the speed barrier.
I'm hoarding food like my childhood,

like the mountain of outgrown, dated
clothes she made of the room I left

for college. Blue Jeans Mountain, Bell
Flower Dress Peak, Corduroy Creek.

The newspapers piled on her coffee
table, her Salem 100s daring forest

fire. When I call it *savoring*, you
call it *savoring*.

You say we can always
buy more, you allow that here.

fire / escape
Nicholas Olah
Poetry

There is too much space
between us

the same way
there is too much space

between November and March
in the Midwest

everything half-dead
or worse.

What are the chances you slip through
my side door

this time not as a fire
but as an escape

and this time your words
don't leave wounds

because this time
I don't let you

leave

Rebirth

Nicholas Olah
Poetry

On a Thursday in March,
season's last snow melts
into the ground.

In winter we felt the cold come in
through the cracks
of our love,

boarded up the shutters
until now.

Mailboxes on a Lonely Road

Linda Conroy

Poetry

Sentries at the edge of winter, intricate with rust,
aslant, old beauty disappearing, but for
expectation in the faces of those metal flaps.

With a listless sky, neither night nor morning,
wind rustles through the fallen leaves,
stalks, deadened grass, to read the questions

dust and dreams have left. Letters, magazines
or invitations, the Herald's messages,
might change the staleness of this scene.

Good news or greetings will go far
to hearten many a mind that waits
to find fulfillment in this solitary life.

By afternoon cold rain begins.
Rotting posts hold, sullen, patient, still
waiting for a boot's scuff, a reaching hand.

Clockwork — a Duplex

Linda Conroy

Poetry

I like the ticking of the wind-up clock,
its comfort station just beside my bed.

This bed where I am comfortable, awake
but dreaming, in the quiet of night.

Quiet dreaming of past soothing nights
and bygone days, when old clocks spoke

of older tales. Those bygone days
when mother wound the clock each night.

Each night with mother was the same,
her steady stance, the stories in her voice.

those steady stories make me yearn,
remembering the rhythm, ritual,

old rituals of soothing memories of home,
the ticking of the night-time clock.

Tell My Ex You Win

Jean Marie Hackett

Nonfiction

You're trapped. The heart stomps as if two thumbs thrust on the throat, rhythmically. This is almost cliché so let's put it this way: a bulbous live animal clamors inside your chest with manifest destiny, covered in thorns, beats like a subwoofer within the cavity, each vibration a lurch with pricks. Into space that isn't. The reverb is in the gullet; it cannot be swallowed, only stuck, like rage in traffic.

It's an eagle trying to fly and eat you alive.

You feel trapped in the biggest airport in the world. You feel it as you walk down corridors and corridors and twists and turns, with artificial lights like one surgical ward after the other, no life, just heavy fire doors, sealed dark visionless windows, the bottom of another milky way's lone ocean of plastic, metal, linoleum, periodic elements, escalators, electricity; a bloodless badland, a dystopian abandoned mall, with only you, or you and maybe one slumpy off-duty human ahead.

Welcome to Atlanta.

You're traveling alone to Costa Rica. It's amazing! An Instagram filter-y blessing. It's also a terrible.

When you finally find outside, air floors the lung. *Could you actually be free.* You wait for a hotel shuttle as the hour picks up and on. There are none. Another driver for a different hotel takes pity, adopts you and a stranded older woman. But: who is he dropping off first and will you be alone with him and what will you do then? *No, actually.*

The subwoofer pumps again. You once lived on the 52nd floor next to a room inhabited by seven gamers who played at 4AM with speakers, aliens that pushed

sound into galaxies, movement, bas relief. A bad doctor, misdiagnosis. A baby that could only explode. Boom. You almost dead. Others dead in you. Beat. When you see your hotel oasis, you're first to go. Were you sorry for the woman you abandoned? Nope. Anxiety is a self-absorbed little whore. Like you.

The front desk informs that you're on floor two; no stair access. Stairs only for emergency exit. Stairs that cannot get you in or out or up or down unless emergency. Stairs that stair nowhere. You're alone heading to a hotel room only accessible via elevator which is a no. Your booked-to-avoid. It's late and you cannot process. The night an inky mess. You slump into a furry chaise probably from Wayfair or an estate sale to panic. See above.

See everywhere. See inside. See deleted scenes. See trauma. See history. See what happened Volumes I, II and III.

You tell yourself what Buddhist Sylvia Boorstein said, which is that if other people can do this, so can you. The thing is Sylvia Boorstein never saw Instagram. Algorithms. Never saw handstands at edges of cliffs or BASE jumping. Hot dog eating contests. Etc. The world is full of people who can do stuff you could never do.

The problem is Sylvia Boorstein is Sylvia Boorstein. The problem is you are you.

Before you can blow your own speakers out the woman says, I can take you up there, if that would be better. She's a take no prisoner's night shift no time for this shit bitch. But.

It would. Ish. You literally can't even but you literally might. If the world ends, you want company.

In the morning, what then. She asks, what time is your flight. It's early. She says I'm here until six. We can call you at 5:30 and grab you then.

Could you actually be free.

To anxiety mind it's not quite good enough. Rational mind says there's a phone that you can call front desk that eventually you will get out of here. Rational mind plots Cartesian coordinates, time zones, Socratic method calendar entries, meal plans, root vegetables. The Rational Mind is doing a Whole 30. No processed food. Anxiety mind says sealed windows no stairs no exit no running away screaming with mascara dripping eyes busting out the gridlines of rational like a joyless rave, spilling a neon slushie.

Here's the thing. Each thing of worry on each leg of this journey could be no problem for rational minded Conventional Barbies. You know intellectually you will emerge from this room for the next wildfire. That you aren't Matt Damon marooned on Mars.

But that's what you feel. Minus the humor, the disco, the MineCrafted happy ending. Minus the science the shit out of this. You've done EMDR and cannabis and Huberman Lab. But anxiety mind scraps the rational mind story like soiled balls of kitty litter grit, nail clippings. Flush it. Anxiety mind is a parasite, fungus driving the rat and the thermostat, with only one primordial command. Engulf. It's the last of us inside the frontal cortex, minus Pedro Pascal dancing. Anxiety is the mind's fiction.

The problem is you.

You envy people at airports in wheelchairs rolled by helpers. You feel like screaming. You need help. But you don't. You scan physically capable. Normal. You're conventional Barbie though not as pretty; Weird Barbie in the head, though not as funny. You're gurgled strange, the fascial network crossed. Someone played with you too rough.

Maybe God.

Sleep is no calm. Submit. Say it. *You are here to kneel where prayer has been valid.* On your knees, hotel bathroom tile. Penitent. Say it. Tell my ex: You Win.

You wanted alone, and you got it. Wild. You were right. You left marriage for touch and sex and love and alone. You're trash, you can't do anything, a fallen star who can't blink or ride an elevator (remember him, laughing as you did breathwork in one). You're the pathetic. The pathos-ed, pulpy with stresses chick, the overflowing toilet who demands we wait in a longer customs line because you have to pee, so, so bad. You're claustrophobic. A selfish narcissistic bitch and a stupid spoiled brat and whatever happened to you in this life is no excuse.

What happened to you?

Could you actually be free?

What happened?

Blush Hum
Lauren MacKinnon
Art



Celestial
Lauren MacKinnon
Art



Interrelation

Amy Guidry

Art



Woven
Amy Guidry
Art



Interconnect
Amy Guidry
Art



STUMP UP
Diane Webster
Poetry

A pine tree dead
from the stump up
finally cracks
and falls
into its own nest
of splinters.

It leans onto live
sister pines
holding her
as if their sap
could flow
through the deceased,
rejuvenate, reincarnate
the sibling the tighter they hug.

But no, she's dead weight
they push aside
with a breeze exhale;
they hear her fall,
and silly aspen leaves applaud
or laud her demise.

Her stump spikes
in tombstone silence
to mark her grave,
her green burial
splitting into soil compost.

Craving
Lillian Durr
Poetry

I crave the taste of peppermint,
but only the kind they gave us
during MAP testing in the fourth grade
when I first became aware of hunger;

the dollar store strawberry lip gloss she wore
in middle school, but I know the taste of,
even though I've never worn makeup;

and some fruity drink I would never buy,
but would be happy to hold
and take a sip of while she danced.

nostalgia
Jamie Lim
Poetry

Seeing an old friend
at the stoplight and waving.
Then the light turns green.

Kept
James Lilliefors
Poetry

Faith calls, comes in,
but doesn't stay, won't be kept
on display like this—in a frame,
on a cross, for people to see.
Faith loses interest in what we think
it should be. Faith waits, easy to find,
hard to follow. Faith is us
flailing, failing, falling asleep
with the television on. Faith waits,
but we can't keep it waiting.
Faith knows
that even the ocean
grows tired of itself sometimes.

Ghost Trio
James Lilliefors
Poetry

Oh, the muted sound of surprise,
the unuttered cry. The long sound
of “O,” as in lone-ly. Alone.
Pause between preposition
and proposition. To be. Oh, the places
we could have gone, drawn by
a descending D-minor melody,
the distant but steady sound
of our ghosts rubbing sticks
across the water again, working,
first for ember, then for flame.
Three of us now—what we imagined,
what we gave up, what remains.
Every love story may be a ghost story,
but every ghost story is haunted
by mortality, the ghost becoming
an elusive temperament.
“Oh,” we say, quietly stunned
by our own selves, our fragile bodies,
but still yearning
for the deliciously impossible,
the high note unheard,
unwilling to give up
the ghost so easily.
Remembering that our breath
is still the music between us.
The only thing
that is keeping us alive.

TOWER TOUR

Brian C. Billings

Drama

Characters

Rapunzel, 33, a tour guide and the owner of Rapunzel's Tower Tours

Lettice (Letty), 16, one of Rapunzel's twin daughters

Arrugala (Gully), 16, one of Rapunzel's twin daughters

Grandmother Gothel, 235, a senile sorceress

Tower Guests, 16-50, a group of tourists

Nurse, 25, an attendant from the Home for Unfortunate Hags

Setting: The action takes place inside Rapunzel's Tower during the afternoon.

Act 1, Scene 1

(Lights rise on the cellar of Rapunzel's Tower. Rapunzel stands SR between a large well and a stone cistern. Her hair is tightly bound in coils. Weak afternoon light bleeds through a few small openings along the ceiling. Guests holding scrolls stand in front of an open door SL. Lettice stands in front of the guests while Gully stands behind them. Both girls hold lit lanterns.)

RAPUNZEL

Thank you all for joining me on this tour today. I'm your guide, Rapunzel, and these are my girls: Gully and Letty.

LETTICE

Lettice!

RAPUNZEL

Gully and *Lettice*! They'll be assisting me today.
Learning the ropes and all that.

(Beat.)

Rapunzel Tower—yes, it's mine by rights—was built around 1189 during the reign of King Philip. It stands about twenty-five meters high and runs roughly thirty meters long. The foundation's solid rock with oak-piled rubble trenching setting up the rim.

(She pounds a heel on the floor.)

Talk about hitting rock bottom. You need that support, though. See those walls? Norman limestone from the king's own quarries. Six meters thick with solid mortar in between. Just like the head on my late husband. Am I right, ladies? Now then . . . what say you? Care to test that toughness? Letty?

LETTICE

Mum!

RAPUNZEL

Yes, yes. *Lettice*! Just grab the hammer, please.

(*Lettice* picks up a metal hammer from behind the well and hands it to a guest. He whacks a wall fruitlessly. *Lettice* reclaims the hammer and stores it away.)

GULLY

A goodly try.

RAPUNZEL

But no prize today. You could hammer all day, and it really wouldn't mortar.

(A creaky voice drops down into the cellar.)

GRANDMOTHER GOTHEL

Rapunzel! Rapunzel! *Détache tes cheveux!*

(The guests applaud in delight. Rapunzel plays off the moment.)

RAPUNZEL

Got you! The girls... they like their little voice-throwing tricks. And when you pitch the voice into something like this cistern, well, how can you not expect an old ghost to show up? Speaking of up, it's time for a climb!

Everybody up the staircase. That's right. On you go.

(Gully starts shepherding the guests out of the cellar SL. Rapunzel and Lettice move out of the guests' earshot.)

LETTICE

Was that who I think it is?

RAPUNZEL

Who else could it be? I thought she was locked up in the hag house!

LETTICE

That's the Home for Unfortunate Hags... and she was!

RAPUNZEL

How did she get past the walls?

LETTICE

Let's assume she climbed. Granny Gothel's got arms like an orc.

RAPUNZEL

And the same brain these days.

LETTICE

Orcs aren't dumb!

RAPUNZEL

I never said *dumb*. I meant more like one-thought-one-drive.

(Rapunzel pulls her braids and dances in frustration.)

We need to catch up with the group. Tell your sister to send off a pigeon with a note. Maybe somebody from the Home can catch her before she ruins anything.

LETTICE

What do you want her to write?

RAPUNZEL

"Gothel's gone home. Get her back. Rap."

LETTICE

Rap?

RAPUNZEL

I'll rap you if you don't start running!

(Lettice dashes away. Rapunzel strides after her and pulls the cellar door shut. Lights fade on the cellar as the room rotates. Lights rise to reveal the guests in the tower's main chamber.

Tapestries hang from the walls. A few windows flank a floor-to-ceiling fireplace. Heavy green drapes with draw-cords cover the wall at CS. Lettice crosses to Gully. They extinguish their lanterns and whisper for a beat. Lettice claps her hands at the guests. Gully runs up the SL staircase.)

LETTICE

Keep moving forward, please. Straight toward the manticore... and... stop.

(Rapunzel enters and casually scoots Lettice to the side.)

RAPUNZEL

Welcome to the main chamber. We call it the Great Room because that's what it is: great! The dining table's not here anymore, but if you'll look up you'll see a beautiful wooden-beam ceiling. The windows feature glass with a heavy glaze—a sign of affluence back in the day.

(Gully leans out from the SL stairs and gives a low whistle.)

Excuse me a moment. Take over, Letty.

LETTICE

Lettice!

(Rapunzel growls and crosses to Gully.)

Wait, Mum! Me? Give the tour? *Now?*

(The guests crowd around her.)

I guess now's a good time to talk about the tapestries. If you'll look at the woodcuts halfway down your scrolls...

(Lights dim on Lettice and the guests. A spot rises on Rapunzel and Gully.)

GULLY

I couldn't send the pigeon.

RAPUNZEL

Why not?

GULLY

The raven went and ate her.

RAPUNZEL

Then send the raven over instead.

GULLY

He can't fly on a full belly. That's cruel!

RAPUNZEL

What about the other birds?

GULLY

Granny went past the hutch on her way up. She spooked the lot of them.

RAPUNZEL

She can't be in here! Who let her in?

GULLY

She went past on the *outside*. She's climbing the tower!

RAPUNZEL

Of *course* she is. Let's see. You just saw her with the birds, so she can't be more than a third of the way up. And we had some rain earlier, so that's bound to slow her down. What's the average speed of a climbing hag?

GULLY

Less than a falling giant?

RAPUNZEL

Oh, ha, ha.

GULLY

I was being serious!

RAPUNZEL

Then you can go raise the flags. They've got people watching for that.

GULLY

The flags are for emergencies!

RAPUNZEL

Your two-hundred-and-thirty-five-year-old grandmother is scaling wet limestone by hand in the middle of a tower tour! What more do you want?

GULLY

Harpies, maybe?

RAPUNZEL

You and your birds! Flags! Now!

(Gully takes off up the stairs. The spot drops and the area lights rise as Rapunzel returns to Lettice. The guests are hanging on her words.)

LETTICE

The place was absolutely rubbish when we moved over here from the castle. Not that we had much choice after Dad died. Uncle Stephen was a real bear about it. From the stories Mum used to tell us, we expected silk and crystal and gold. What did we get? Rocks and ivy and mold. And no door, of course. We had to stand on Mum's shoulders. Gully first and then me on top of her. I had to pull myself onto a ledge leaning out from one of the mural passages, and that's when Mum said—

RAPUNZEL

That should do. If any of you need a break, as it were, the garderobes are one turn past the opening under the tapestry with the red fringe. Left for ladies and right for

masters. Any takers? No? Then let's continue. Onward and upward.

LETTICE

But first a quick look at our key renovation: the new grand window!

(She pulls the draw-cords on the drapes, which sweep away to reveal a large window fitted with nearly clear glass. The guests shade their eyes at the sudden light. A loud cracking noise erupts. A piece of rock falls past the window, a brief scream follows, and Grandmother Gothel slams into the glass spread-eagled. She slides down the glass and out of sight.)

GRANDMOTHER GOTHEL

J'ai besoin de tes cheveux! Rapunzel! *Où sont tes cheveux?*

(Rapunzel grabs the cords from Lettice and lets the drapes fall closed. The guests go wild. Gully spills out of the staircase. Rapunzel and Lettice rush to meet her.)

LETTICE

She slipped. We know!

GULLY

She was holding on by her fingertips!

RAPUNZEL

Tell me she fell off.

LETTICE

Mum!

RAPUNZEL

She can survive it! She punched craters in the yard at least five times a year until my hair grew out. I need to know if she's setting up for another try.

GULLY

She was dropping fast the last I saw of her.

RAPUNZEL

What about the flags?

GULLY

Hoisted and full in the wind.

LETTICE

That's Granny sorted then. The Home should have a nurse here in minutes.

GULLY

Should we take the group back down, Mum?

RAPUNZEL

They *did* come to see the top of the tower.

LETTICE

Seems like pushing our luck.

RAPUNZEL

But I hate giving refunds.

(One of the guests waves at Rapunzel.)

GUEST

Miss Rapunzel! I have to say that these floor shows of yours are fantastic! We were in Bavaria last month for the castle walkthroughs, and the best those folks could

do was complimentary beer and bratwurst. I can't wait to see what's next!

RAPUNZEL

You're so sweet to say that. We do try... and if you truly can't wait...

GULLY

Oh, no.

LETTICE

Here we go.

RAPUNZEL

Next stop... the solar!

(She marches up the staircase. The guests follow her while Gully and Lettice bring up the rear. Lights fade on the main chamber as the room rotates. Lights rise to reveal the solar. Shuttered windows are present at SL, SR, and CS. Open vents in the roof let in air and shafts of white light. Gothic wardrobes and bookcases stand between the windows. A makeup table with a mirror and padded stool stands CSR. A small bed peeks out from behind the table. Rapunzel leads her group into the room while Gully and Lettice hang back in the SR doorway.)

LETTICE

Maybe she'll use the quick talk.

GULLY

Not after she's had a compliment. Look at her. She's chuffed!

LETTICE

Forget chuffed! She's gone the full cockalorum!

RAPUNZEL

I don't normally admit this on a tour, but even after all my... troubles... I have a soft spot for this room. My first memories are of reaching for the underthatching there above you. Working outward, you have beams and balings and then you hit the roof proper. Nothing but slating at that point. The sheets are interlocked these days, but back then we had to make do with layering. Each window opens out on a ledge with a gargoyle. Don't touch the shutters, please. They need to have work done.

(The SL shutters rattle. Lettice springs to check them, but she finds nothing.)

Speaking of books, none of the original volumes are missing. You'll find histories, poems, and several collections of *chansons*. Before you ask, I have a preference for Roland.

(The SR shutters rattle. Gully leaps to look them over. She turns up an empty palm. Rapunzel backs into the makeup table.)

Oh! How could I forget? This piece is a rare beauty. Maltese oak aged and smoked to perfection. The silvering for the mirror comes from Genoa. The set originally belonged to Moth—Dame Gothel. She gave it to me when I turned fourteen.

(She opens and closes a few drawers.)

After so many years trying to bring the outside in, you can't know how wonderful it was to start drawing the inside out. Kohl for the cried-out eyes. Rouge for the hollow cheeks. Pots of paints for the cracked fingernails. And my favorite.

(She brings out a stoppered clay jar. She pulls the stopper out and sets it down.)

Correctrice. Concealing powder to blend away the blemishes... but not just the ones on the face. When applied appropriately, this powder salves the lonely soul.
 (She tosses the powder over the guests in a golden plume. Rapunzel stoppers the jar and puts it away. She spreads her arms to show that the tour is ending as it should... and the CS shutters explode ahead of an angry Grandmother Gothel.)

GRANDMOTHER GOTHEL

Rapunzel!

(She grabs one of the female guests and pulls her close.)

Tu n'es pas ma fille.

(She throws the guest into the crowd and knocks over a few guests. Gully begins guiding people out of the solar while Lettice helps the fallen guests to their feet.)

GULLY

This way! Calmly! *Calmly!* Sudden movements *do* upset her!

GRANDMOTHER GOTHEL

Qui êtes vous? Quittez ma tour. À présent!

(She makes a throwing motion at the ceiling. Thunder booms, and a mess of wood, thatch, and slate falls into the room. Rapunzel claps her hands at Gothel.)

RAPUNZEL

Maman! Je suis là pour toi.

(Gothel limps over to Rapunzel while the last guests leave. Rapunzel motions for Lettice to

seek help. Lettice exits. Gothel caresses Rapunzel's face.)

GRANDMOTHER GOTHEL

Ma petite fille?

(This older Rapunzel is not the one Gothel seeks. Gothel turns away and begins searching the solar. She sings a lullaby.)

Mon bébé dort.

Ma petite fille dort.

Elle dort profondément.

Ses rêves sont doux.

Je regarde mon bébé.

Je regarde ma petite fille.

Elle soupire légèrement.

Ses rêves sont doux.

(Rapunzel crosses to the makeup table and sits on the stool. She begins undoing her hair.)

RAPUNZEL

Oh, Mother. You chase after me. I try to keep you out. Around and around we go.

(She lets down half of her hair.)

But this time I was *really* trying. I knew people would come to see the tower, and I needed to make money somehow. You said you understood. Well, you did at the time. I'm not sure what you understand anymore.

(She lets down her remaining hair.)

You don't live here anymore. You have another home. A *safer* one. For everyone's sake, we can't have you coming over here and *scaring off the customers*!

(Gothel turns and, seeing Rapunzel's long hair, she returns to Rapunzel's side. She kneels and

places her head in Rapunzel's lap. She strokes Rapunzel's hair and begins to cry.)

Don't worry, Mother. I'm not cross. Sh. *Je t'adore. Je suis ta petite fille.*

(Gully and Lettice enter with a nurse in white robes. She carries a large medical bag, which she holds up for Rapunzel to see. Rapunzel nods. The nurse sets down the bag, rummages inside, and pulls out a bottle and a cloth. She wets the cloth with the bottle's contents and walks slowly to Gothel. At about one foot away, the nurse springs upon Gothel and covers her face with the cloth. Gothel struggles, but she finally falls limp. The nurse backs away as Gully and Lettice come forward and sit on the floor next to Gothel. Rapunzel bends down with open arms until her family vanishes beneath her hair. Blackout.)

The Night Watchman

Joel Lind

Art



Dead End

Joel Lind

Art



Twilight of the Weasel

Joel Lind

Art



Gulf of America

Joel Lind

Art



Autobiography of a Painter

Kristy Snedden

Poetry

Here I am, an old woman in a floppy straw hat that ties under my chin, my bathing suit a flash of orange between the gentle waves over Fowl Cay. Far out above the Atlantic I see a waterspout drawing the ocean up. But here, the water is shallow and warm enough to float these bones and bruises that got me out of bed early this morning. Lying on my back, I am almost inert, though I cradle some water in my hands, then lift them up, as though praying to the sun. My toes float from my feet, calves and thighs covered in water. My belly and shoulders and head dip in and out of sight—it's the dead man's float but I know I am swimming, a fish-girl, frothy in the water, like in 1995. You wouldn't know this. You would see me cautiously orienting myself to the dive boat, close enough for a quick rescue if my faculties fail. You might even lean over the transom, white life ring at hand, watch me shimmy up the dive ladder, your face caught still with amazement.

i am jealous of a planet

Benjamin Starr

Poetry

It has an opaque liquid core of sinewy metallic hydrogen and is surrounded by swirling blankets of feathered helium. Its atmosphere valiantly fights off hordes of celestial debris hurled at it from the dark gummy plasma of space. And its moons, its many moons, constantly fawning over its shape, its blush, its pastoral temperament, are certainly worthy of envy. But I also think the planet is sleeping with my wife. She swears they are just friends. That they met at Jewish sleep away camp the summer after seventh grade. Bonded over Buffy fanfiction and a shared hatred of heavy bolts of duck canvas. I am dubious, as I have on more than one occasion returned home early from work to find the sheets of our bed a soupy mess of noble gases and our tiny kitchen reeking of unrefined iron ore

Everything's Peachy

Sukriti Patny

Poetry

I carry it in my hands,
Close to my ribs, like my breath.
Your words have left me broken.
You speak; I cling to it tighter; it bruises.

It's the softest thing I've held—
ripe, sweet, a slight tang to it.
But I hear your words ringing in my ear.
Pricked, a river drips down my chest.

It's so juicy, my mouth waters.
But you don't hold your words back.
So, it leaks orange blood—insipid, like you
And my skin stains; irrevocably colored.

Limply I stand here, exhausted—
helpless as it withers and pales.
Losing its bite, as you take a bite
of my sense of self and run to hide.

I can taste dismay in the air.
Every breath floods my lungs,
with your words and my tears.
So, I give it one last squeeze.

The peach is mine to give you.
But I can't quite bring myself to.
You speak again, and we both lose,
as I squash it, dropping it to the floor

Will I ever forgive you?

You Ask If I Miss You

Sukriti Patny

Poetry

Saturday morning and I am alone
in the kitchen. The house is
the quietest it has been for years.
Nothing groans.

Stray notes of music filter
in through the window,
as I pull out a saucepan and
a bottle of milk from the fridge.

While I wait for the milk
to warm, I spread
a thick layer of butter
and pomelo jam on a slice of
bread and spring bursts
into the room, into my heart,
into my mouth.

Like you.

I submerge seven strands of *kesar*
in the warm milk and
wait for them to bloom.

Their scent fills the air, leaking.
Bees thunder against the glass,
but this nectar is out of grasp.

The *kesar* bleeds a mellow yellow.

Who knew saffron strands
stain milk with sunshine?

Who knew you'd leave me
aching with want
even when I have you?

In Light Of
Sukriti Patny
Poetry

I bathe in rainbows—
every winter, when the light
hits the window at noon
just right, slanting in to make
hazy swirls of gold
on the cement tiles
and my painted feet,
making me sigh,
as steaming hot water
scalds my body to make up
for the way the air bites
at my naked skin, chomping.
The last remaining dregs
of capacity drain
from my insides, the water
washing them away
from me.
But the light—
it beckons! And I run
my finger through
the moment where
it enters the droplets,
refracts, and colour bursts forward,
glimmering and disappearing,
suspending time,
and my body dances of its
own accord in tune with
the light and it says to me
you can do this.

Unannounced Visitor

Sukriti Patny

Poetry

She walks into my home
at four fifteen,
on an ordinary Saturday afternoon,
catching me by surprise.
What shall I do
with her? With this
love that wrecks me?
With the way my heart
wants to throw itself,
off from my body's terrace,
and plummet,
into her waiting arms?

It's too late
to hide from her,
but I could run
away. Leave and never
return to this house
we built from scratch.
where she has found me.

So, I run.
But *Grief* outruns me.

And she waits there,
at the finish line.
In all my tomorrows,
she will find me.
She promises me solemnly.

THE STAIN

Via Perkins

Nonfiction

I remember winding up the stairs with my mother and the cop, the social niceties. The swath of false calm hovering over a slab of panic as bone-chilling and unforgiving as limestone. Something that, if you're not careful, you could fall on and crack your skull open.

There were signs in the hallway before we got to the apartment. The filth collecting on baseboards and window sills, stench rising out from under certain doors, each with their own types of horrors inside, I guessed.

The cop pushed open the one door that was ajar, and the first thing I saw was a tall black trash can, looming in the middle of the room like the Grim Reaper. That is, if the Reaper opened his cloak and a thousand roaches scurried out into dark corners of the room. "They roach bombed twice, and this is all they could leave behind," the cop told us. "They had to toss almost everything."

My mother started at this; said something about wishing they had let us rifle through before purging. Then she moved on and glanced around, and I could see her trying to work out how she could salvage as much as possible from this horrific scene. A baffling conclusion, except for the fact that this was my dead father's apartment. She tsked and began to gather up filthy items in the shell-shocked way Jackie Onassis might have gathered John F. Kennedy's brain matter: thoughtfully and carefully, with the touch only a woman possesses.

My eyes darted back and forth to every small sign of movement in the room. Every roach that had survived both bombings and hurried across the edges of the black trash bag, the stained walls, the wood desk. I assumed they'd moved past the disappointment of the removal of

their large food source, and were searching for another in the nearly bare room.

After the autopsy, they told us he had died from complications due to alcoholism, but there were no bottles in the room that day. I had a thought about picking up one of the two crack pipes on the top left edge of his desk and storing it in one of my pockets. I may have reached my hand out, and then retracted it—I don't remember. But I do remember that my impulse to take it felt wrong all of a sudden. My bent towards sentimentality was overwhelmed by a sense of dread, as if touching this pipe would be a bad omen, when really it was just one of a dead man's many vices.

The worst thing, though, was the stain on the floor. I never saw my father when he was alive, but I saw that stain. He laid there for two days before someone knocked and found him, the cop had said.

I nearly saw my father, months prior (or years? They both feel the same these days). My mother and I drove into the city so she could speak to him. She told me she wouldn't pressure me to come in and meet him. I made her promise not to tell him I was waiting in the car below. She kept the promise. His apartment was above the first floor, so no possibility of a glimpse. And I didn't want one.

The stain was my closest thing to a glimpse. I never wanted that either. Seeing that palimpsest of blood and body fluids. I walked right over it on my way in.

For my mother, the worst part was the dress. She rummaged through what was left in the closet: little more than a few oversized, well-worn sweatshirts and t-shirts. I gently convinced her that they were not worth saving. But she noticed a delicate, brightly-colored dress for a little girl. Possibly another sister. It occurred to me

that I might not be the youngest of us anymore. My mother hemmed and hawed over this.

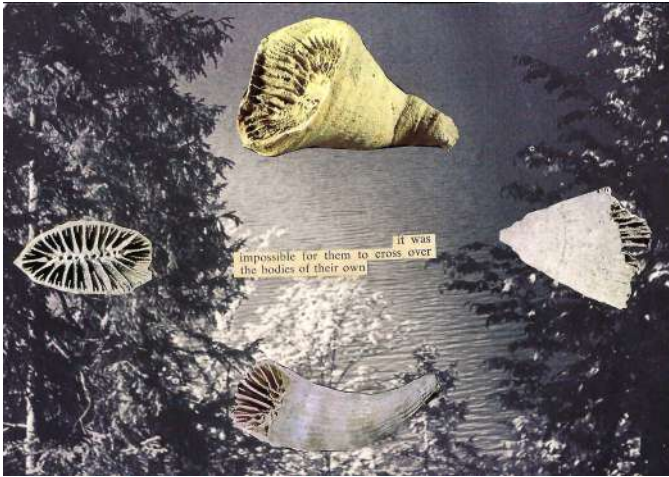
I didn't let it bother me then, and I don't now. Every day, I choose to let that sleeping girl lie. I never considered it to be cruel, because I've learned that blood is not always the family that's best for you. Forcing it can bear a heavy toll.

I want to save her from needless suffering. I want to save her from stepping right over blood on the floor with her mother and a cop.

Protecting the Ghost #36

Alison Strub

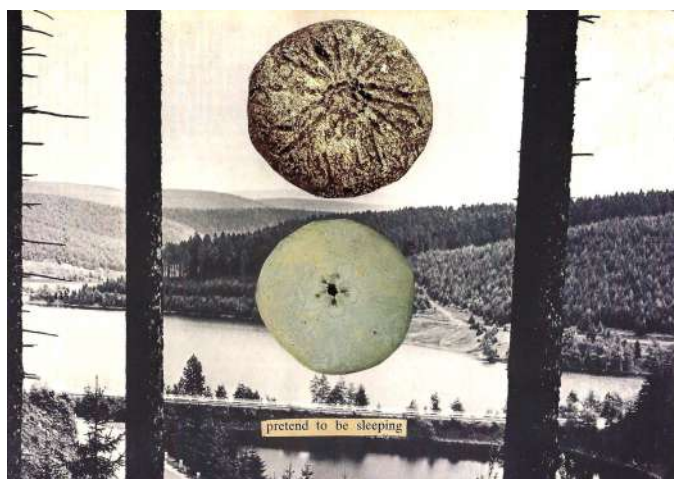
Art



Protecting the Ghost #37

Alison Strub

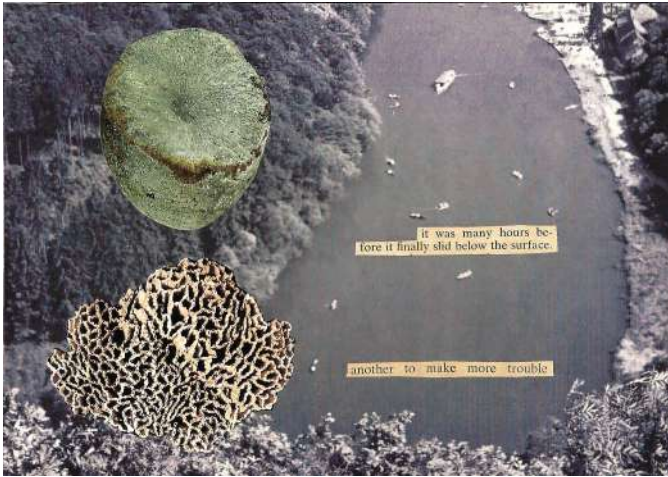
Art



Protecting the Ghost #38

Alison Strub

Art



Protecting the Ghost #39

Alison Strub

Art



Protecting the Ghost #40

Alison Strub

Art



In This Porous Light

Richard Widerkehr

Poetry

for LC and YVC

You want to meet us simply here and now,
to stand on your own side of where we've been.
A line's marked off between us as we bow
out of your life, and yet the line seems thin.

The times you looked at us with something real—
they're still in you. Why should you be so glad
to go and put them on an empty wheel
to play back mad/bad/sad/discredited?

The times you moved around us like a moon
with silence all around you when you spoke,
as morning, cold and roseate, loosened

doors, lit ceilings—no, you will not choke
on love, on fear, within this light, these wells
as we draw closer, and you turn from death.

After the Call

Jeffery Allen Tobin

Poetry

I let the phone ring twice before answering.
Too late to ignore it, too early to pretend
I was already asleep. My sister's voice—
tight, clipped—*Mom's in the hospital again.*
I don't ask which one this time.

Outside, the night sweats against the window.
A single streetlight flickers—
the same one that went out last winter,
came back, went out again. I watch it struggle,
guttering between light and surrender.

She says, *You don't have to come.*
I hear what she means.
I hear the pull in the pause,
the unspoken math of distance,
the old calculus of guilt and permission.
I say, *I'll be there by morning.*

In the hallway, I pull my coat from the hook,
feel the fabric collapse in my hands.
Old, familiar. The same coat I wore
the last time this happened. The same
as the time before that.

I step outside. The streetlight flickers.
Then steadies. Then holds.

Amassed
Jeffery Allen Tobin
Poetry

The receipts in the drawer, folded twice.
The books stacked against the wall,
spines unbroken, stories unread.
The jars of screws and nails
from things long dismantled.

A name I should have forgotten
but keep turning over like a stone in my palm.
The voicemail I never deleted,
its small weight of breath
pressing against the silence.

All of it—kept, gathered,
tucked into corners,
piled in the margins of a life
that was supposed to move forward
but instead keeps accruing.

One day, I tell myself,
I will empty the drawer,
break the spines,
scatter the nails,
erase the message.

But not today.
Today, I am still
counting.

Grandfathers

John Wise

Poetry

When fathers become grandfathers
they lighten.

They bring flowers
and speak in low tones
about construction

When fathers become grandfathers
they temper.

Bitter earth-brown
coffee mellowed with
Sweet'N Low.

When fathers become grandfathers
they soften;

they smile,
that rare as steak smile,
and tell us we did good.

Breakups & Beginnings

John Wise

Poetry

gunshots
or fireworks
far off

laying in the sun
on silt, slate, stone

overhead
a crane glides

overjoyed
my son and I

are accustomed
to crows, kites, planes

or the smoke
from the fire pit
last night

— this boy
parks his car in the yard
where the last one said
he couldn't handle your heart

and, laying with us,
names friends, family, clouds

Summer's Coda

John Wise

Poetry

yellowed parchment
and the fragrance of thatch—
flowers, soft and wrinkled flesh

in the air,
a taste of cool, peppery ale
long shadows take their share

of wine-dark berries
mellow, the first grey
blends with sunlight, pale—

We turn aside. The winds prevail.

maple leaves are freckled
like children playing tag.

Violets in the Courtyard

John Wise

Poetry

In the courtyard
violets
smiled without warning

On your front porch
my visit
too was unexpected

a summer dalliance
turned into
the day we said "I do"

Every time
I'm guided by voices
that lead me off a cliff

you look into my eyes

and I wonder
how a face so pretty
survives in this world.

A Big Something

Rachel Savage

Fiction

At the bottom of the elk trail there was a natural-made crevice caused by two great jagged stones balancing against one another like some ancient god's forgotten childhood toys, and in that cool dark fracture there were salamanders that glistened fire and worms roiling through the damp earth, and behind the hellbenders and wriggling boneless things there was an old cigar box that was half-choked by a mass of moss, and inside the decaying wood there was a key, and a sprig of red curls, and an old railroad tie, but when Cross tried to loosen the moss's clutch, he yanked too hard, and the box rained down rot all over the worms and the salamanders scurrying bewildered at this fleshy yearling predator ransacking their home.

But Cross didn't see any of that because seven-year-old boys can't see in the dark—he could hear everything like he was a bat listening for his breakfast and his ears were his eyes—and the salamander's sliding belly reminded him of how the river stones sounded when he moved them to look for crawfish, but the clatter of the key as it struck the ground made his teeth ache because it was so metallic against the verdant darkness of the cave, when the railroad tie tumbled onto his foot he yowled like a feral cat lodged in a farm truck's guts, and suddenly he wished he'd never gone adventuring at all and had stayed back home instead of going looking for treasure.

Home meant waiting for something that the grown-ups didn't say around him—like he was some sort of magpie that would spew back out whatever the secret was in a meat-grinder mockery of their words—but there

was a thick layer of specific sadness that had risen up through the wood floor and he could feel it still rising, and no-one else seemed to feel it besides Aunt Drue, but that didn't matter because Aunt Drue couldn't move any more than the stove could lift its cast-iron feet and walk onto the porch to pick out which chicken it wanted to roast, but sometimes Aunt Drue's finger would flick and it would happen so fast that if Cross wasn't staring right at her hands he'd miss it, like the movement was the beat of a hummingbird's wings while it guzzled nectar how Daddy guzzled Jim Beam.

All the other grown-ups had been hovering around Granddaddy's bed like flies swarming to a sick animal, and Doc Miller had started swinging by every day or so, and Cross started to think of him as a buzzard circling over Granddaddy waiting for that thing that no-one acknowledged even though the darkness of the unspoken was becoming too much to slog through, he felt like how Fred the mule must have when the flood washed away the butterbeans and Daddy yanked Fred out there by his bridle and hitched him to the plow cussing and whipping at him as if it were Fred's fault the crops had failed, but Cross had stood there watching Fred's legs slip-struggle through the mud, poor Fred was just an animal and it wasn't his fault he couldn't understand why he was stuck dragging around a weight he couldn't see through all that mud.

Granddaddy had waved Cross over to his bedside that morning and had got him to lean in close enough for Cross to feel the spittle from the whisper on the serpentine ridges of his ear, and he could smell something sweet and rotten, and it reminded him of how tomatoes left too long on the vine will bloat and cook inside until they're dead, even if their outsides still look right, and it takes you slicing into one to realize it's gone bad, and Cross wondered if they pried Granddaddy open

would they find worms crawling up his veins to a festering lump of flesh where his heart used to be?

Cross squatted there in the dark, his fingers spread out in the dirt like the search party for Lacey had done around the edge of the lake last fall, and when his pinky brushed against the cold slimy shock of a worm he thought about how baiting hooks always made his stomach twist, and he wondered if they felt it when the metal pierced their skin or if they were numb to it; like how Lacey had seemed that time her daddy slapped her sharp like she was a mosquito buzzing in his ear and the blood dripped from her nose all over her overalls, but Mama had grabbed his arm hard and wouldn't let him go, even though Lacey was stood there staring her daddy's rage in the face, and Lacey named him a drunk, then Cross heard a sound like a tree splitting, and when he was finally able to wrench away from Mama, he saw Lacey laying on the pinestraw with a busted lip and her daddy was cussing at her like his daddy cussed at Fred, and that couldn't be right because Fred was just a fly-bit mule but Lacey was a little girl and little girls shouldn't be spoke to like they're stupid.

Cross' fingers were mud slick by the time he felt the cold tang of the key underneath them, and he pulled it out of the hole and shook the pill bugs free from the barrel and bow of it, then they rained down like the hail did last spring when it trampled down all the rhododendron and poplars until the whole mountain smelled like mud-soaked bone, and he side-wound his way to the two-trunk locust until he stood in front of that natural wrought door and he held out the key to it and waited for a sign that he could enter, and above a hawk called, and Cross walked between the gap in the conjoined trees and the sunlight turned golden through strange leaves and *there* he said *i found you*.

Laurel St. Lovers

Grace Ann Elinski

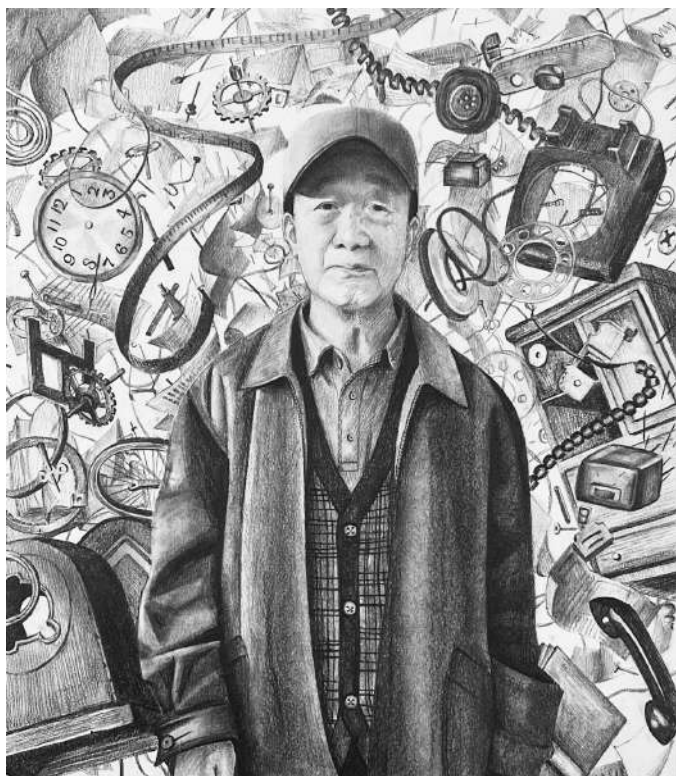
Art



Learned
Grace Ann Elinski
Art



Memory in Motion
Teresa Song
Art



Within and Beyond
Teresa Song
Art



the confidence

Mark Belair

Poetry

my grandmother once cared for an elderly man who /
years before / had lost a leg

his daughter / unmarried and still living at home / was a
bank officer / always in business dress

the man was mean to my grandmother / and always
smelled bad / no matter how many baths she gave him /
he never used crutches / said it made him winded /
giving orders from his wheelchair his preference

my grandmother complained of his cursing and cursory
treatment / of her and his daughter / but since recently
widowed / with no skills but the domestic / she needed
the job

the daughter was kind / though she worked long hours to
keep the house and my grandmother's help / some nights
she got blue / my grandmother said / from her choice of
father and work / over two proposals of marriage

yet despite their troubles / both women set their hearts /
to the care and comfort of this heartless old man who /
one day / confided to me / the only other male around / if
only six years old / how he resented these dumb / weak /
hysterical women

and when i burst / on behalf of my grandmother / into
dumb / weak / hysterical tears / he barked a black /
mocking laugh / which made his short / hanging pant
leg / which my grandmother had pinned up / shake from
the stump

when he finally died / both his daughter and my
grandmother / cried at his funeral / a development i
made peace with / by figuring that even the evil dead /
deserved some respect

but i wouldn't cry for him / or cry / ever / before
anyone / again

until / decades later / at my grandmother's funeral / i
found myself purging him

I Love You, I'm Afraid

Sid Joannette

Poetry

i named it writer's block—the seal that holds the bottle
of unsaid emotions that i'm desperate to keep safe. in
some prized decanter it stays locked away. up in a
cabinet far out of reach, from both you and me.

unlike the bottle of shame and guilt I let pour out of me
and into the drain
(like the gin i put down over a year ago now)

i can almost imagine its taste. (a pink wine i tasted one
summer before I had lost control of all things around
me.) the syrupy sweetness of words gliding off my
tongue, sticking onto whatever parts you might let it
linger on. Flowing out like a river's current, while we're
safely floating along, unafraid of drowning in it.

yet.

it's writers block, that's keeping me from opening this
up.

or the remnants of its awful aftertaste. choking on the
bitterness of not getting it back once i've already let it
go. the rosy pinkness slowly darkening to red, deepening
into a pool of black ink on the paper before me. shaping
into words i never meant to say. they dribble down my
chin and slip through my fingers, until it's bleeding on to
everything else.

as much as i try to wipe it clean, it's already been
stained.

well, maybe the writer's block isn't to blame.

i think i'm terrified of pouring this one out.

Empty Spaces
Sid Joannette
Poetry

sea glass eyes
moving over
fading pages
fingers turn in
their familiar paces

i followed the pattern
for selfish reasons

savoring the movement
moments before

confession:

i am envious
of what your
hands hold
when i'm not
in them

Awake
Gail Tirone
Poetry

The house at 5 AM
pokes me awake a thin hard
stick of consciousness.
In the distance a train
sizzles down the tracks
weighted with freight,
heavy and insistent it
invades my pillow — awake.

My mind at 5 AM
collects problems like
pebbles on a beach —
the sharp black stone of
my son's unhappy job,
the smooth pearl circle of
my daughter and her new husband
building a life a continent away,
the green glass chip of
my husband's health
with its twin question marks
of dizziness and rising blood pressure.

My solace at 5 AM
floats in strong Earl Grey
or a stiff latte —
fortifying me to face
the day as hope rises
in steam faint from the cup.

My Lingua Franca

Gail Tirone

Poetry

My immigrant grandmother used a feather
duster to banish dust and ghosts.
From her small kitchen she navigated
this city, this country—
a strong domestic force
stirring always stirring
stories and tomato sauce ladled
on semolina bread.

Her broken English was my childhood
norm—a melodious silver lattice inlaid
on my child's brain and ear.
Her voice—our lingua franca, our patois.
They tell me as a child
I spoke like her.

On Saint Lucia's birthday she boiled
ancient grain and fed it to me for
vision and wisdom.

She was my retreat, her house,
my refuge—my humble nirvana,
blooming with shade and space
to be and wonder and
become.

Wartime Triage

Shannon Frost Greenstein

Fiction

December 26, 2004

Come with us, we say. We know where there's a doctor.

I can't. I can't. My child.

The seconds are ticking by, the Golden Hour which governs salvation in the wake of trauma relentlessly leeching away. We have to help. We have to help someone.

You're hurt, we urge. The water might come back. Please come with us.

I have to find my child. I had him. I had him, and then he was gone.

We'll find him, someone suggests, and the rest of us agree. Anything, to get her to come. We have already seen so much death in the roiling murk; we must protect this fragile light.

I have to look for him. Leave me. Leave me.

The water might come back.

We have to go.

Good luck, we say. And we leave.

Everywhere there is moaning. Everywhere there is death. We see a family trapped in their car, now flooded, now upside down; we hold the hand of a tourist in a bikini as she cries for her mother and then stops breathing.

There is blood, but not just blood; there is evisceration. An object in motion will stay in motion, and we have just been through a washing machine filled shrapnel. The damage is unimaginable; the body horror is proof of God's wrath.

There is a doctor at the hotel. We need to get to the hotel.

Help, someone is calling. Please help.

We hear you, we say.

Please help. I'm here. I'm here.

It is a voice from the remnants of a shack, dismantled like a child's Lego toy left forgotten in the dirt. Only the jousts of the structure remain. The voice seems to be calling from another dimension, from another point outside of spacetime; someone is buried beneath the debris.

It's going to fall, we discuss amongst ourselves. It's coming down.

Most of us don't even have shoes.

We're sorry, we say. We'll come back. We're sorry.

Our voices are quieter now. The human body is not meant to keep trudging forward while it is actively unraveling, while every instinct is screaming for both safety and rest at the very same time. We are less in number than when we started.

We keep going.

The hotel is gone. Everything that was the hotel—luggage and metal trusses and rocking chairs and pool towels and cinderblocks—is where the hotel used to be, but in entirely the wrong order.

There are people gathered, people milling about, people crying and collapsing to the ground.

We need help, we plead. We are hurt.

The ground is strewn with bodies; leaning bodies, lying bodies, unconscious bodies, and a legion of family members who dragged those bodies all the way here, begging for a miracle. It is the chaos of wartime, human beings as collateral damage in this epic showdown between Nature and Man.

A single doctor runs between makeshift bedsides and hastily-constructed gurneys, a Hippocratic Sisyphus

with the remnants of a waterlogged first-aid kit, trying to save as many innocents as possible. All of Thailand seemingly waits in line.

The Golden Hour passes.

We wait. We separate. We are triaged or treated or shrouded with rough woolen blankets, more work for the Municipal Medical Examiner if the Municipal Medical Examiner is ever found and if anything remains of the Municipality in the first place.

Then there is a jet ski; a helicopter; a passenger boat with a full crew wearing matching polo shirts and khaki shorts. There is finally help.

Get us out of here, we beseech as one with a single collective breath, those of us who can still draw breath to talk. *Please take us with you*.

Some people get to go. Some are left behind. Some might be able to be saved. Some have simply run out of time.

More help arrives in noisy droves. The rescue continues, first-responders and civilians alike using their bare hands to dig through the rubble without respite; it is still not enough.

Slowly, the water returns to the sea.

A quarter of a million souls leave the planet in a single day.

A quarter of a million souls leave the planet in a single day, but not mine. Mine is still here.

I am lucky enough to be all that remains of we, but try as I might...I still can't figure out why.

B&W Photo 1
Stephen Jackson
Art



B&W Photo 2
Stephen Jackson
Art



B&W Photo 3
Stephen Jackson
Art



B&W Photo 4
Stephen Jackson
Art



Winter Camping

Mary Senter

Art



MKS'25

Ghosts of Soldiers

Mary Senter

Art



MKS'25

A Review of *Larks* by Han VanderHart

Eleanor Ball
Book Review

Larks

Han VanderHart
Ohio University Press
March 2025
9780821425916
96 pages | \$17.95

Larks (Ohio University Press, 2025) is Han VanderHart's second poetry collection and the winner of the 2024 Hollis Summers Poetry Prize. I began avidly reading VanderHart's work last year, so I was thrilled to hear they were publishing a book in 2025—and I was not disappointed. Unflinching and dazzling, *Larks* is a powerful exploration of the process of healing from lifelong trauma.

Larks chronicles VanderHart's experience growing up in the rural South and the lingering effects, many years later, of the violence and abuse they witnessed. While VanderHart does write briefly about cuddling barn kittens and weaving clover chains, their childhood was far from the mythic ideal of rural life. Throughout the book, VanderHart evokes the ominous, claustrophobic atmosphere of their childhood home. While reading *Larks*, my hair stood on end. I felt the heat of beady eyes watching me. Take "Isabel," where VanderHart recalls the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel in 2003:

When Isabel blew the oaks around
us sideways— no light. No water
pumped from our well. We carried
five-gallon buckets from the pond

to the house, filled the toilet bowls.
 I wore overalls. My hair in braids.
 For nine days, home was a dark
 dream and hurricane lamps.

And in “Partial List of Hauntings,” they remember
 “How white everything was, from / neighbors to church,
 to storybooks— / like on cloudy days when / the sky is
 all glare.” Throughout the book, VanderHart explores
 the parallels between their psychology, their body, and
 the body of the earth. Looming pine trees shadow their
 hurried excursions from the farmhouse, hurricanes of
 rage sweep through them, and, most importantly, birds
 from hawks to nightingales to larks glide through the
 poems. VanderHart constantly iterates on the word *lark*:
 lark as in songbird, lark as in caper, lark as in desire, lark
 “like a bird that roots in the dirt with its beak / like a hog
 in the woods for morels.” Lark as in the poet finding
 their voice.

Much of *Larks* deals directly or indirectly with trauma—
 specifically, the incest committed by VanderHart’s
 brother. In “Larks, Four Variations,” VanderHart
 explores the culture of silence that enabled abuse and
 stifled healing in their family:

ii.
 we were laughing or crying
 eating black-eyed peas
 hushed by our mother, either way
 when my parents found out
 my brother taken to the back field, whipped
 and at dinner he sat by my sisters
 and at dinner he sat by my sisters
 my brother taken to the back field, whipped

when my parents found out
 hushed by my mother, either way
 eating black-eyed peas
 we were laughing or crying

Like VanderHart's language, the figures in the poem are locked in a cycle, which is enabled by a culture of silence and shame: "Hushed by our mother, either way." VanderHart explores the paradox of trauma: how it can be erased from the mind, yet manifest in the body. "I did not remember my sisters' suffering / or mine—" they write in "Larks, Four Variations." "it was as though suffering / had never happened, as though / consent had always existed." When they eventually discuss their childhood with their sisters, they are surprised to find they remember things differently. VanderHart's mind has blocked out certain memories in order to protect them, but it leads to a feeling of dislocation in their own self. In "Larks," the title poem, VanderHart wonders:

[. . .] What
 is this? This

nothing
 in my brain—

this blank day—
 my life had stood

a loaded gun.

While VanderHart eventually begins to recover their memory, the effects of lifelong trauma still linger. They come to understand that when our minds block out traumas, these same traumas can become rehomed in our bodies, often without us realizing. In "Poem with

Trauma, Winter, and Pandemic,” VanderHart explores their issues with migraines and teeth-grinding:

*the trigger could be now, says the doctor,
or it could be something that happened twenty years
ago*

I carry my mother and father and brother
in my body

each pill is for them as it is for me
take it, my body, eat of it:

In this poem, VanderHart also mentions their children, who “lay their weighted blankets on me / cluster like chicks on the couch.” Juxtaposing this with the image of their parents and brother calls to mind the dangers of intergenerational trauma, highlighting VanderHart’s determination to stop the cycle of violence from continuing any further.

Every poem in *Larks* earns its place. VanderHart excels at approaching the same subject from a variety of angles—different forms, times, places, and so on—so that every poem feels fresh and unique. While reading, I was frequently inspired by their formal experimentation, such as in “Excuses and Waivers,” an erasure poem of Virginia’s religious exemption for homeschooling, and “Brief Catalog of Blue,” where nearly every line starts with the same word—until an unexpected subversion of the poem’s own “rules” ends the piece in fireworks.

While VanderHart’s trauma impacts every aspect of the collection, they expertly weave in many other threads, such as the importance of sisterhood, allusions to Greek

mythology, beautiful nature writing, and conversations about family heritage. VanderHart never loses control of the pacing or mood of this collection, effortlessly balancing every element they introduce—or at least, it *looks* effortless, which I imagine must have actually taken a good deal of effort. This is a book that inspires rereading. While revisiting *Larks* as I wrote this review, I heard a new birdsong every time.

Contributor Bios

Christopher Ankney

Christopher Ankney's first book, *Hearsay*, won the 2014 Jean Feldman Prize at WWPH. Post-publication, it placed as a finalist for the Ohioana Award for Poetry. His poems have been published in *Boston Review* (online feature), *Electric Literature's The Commuter*, *Gulf Coast*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Verse Daily*, and more. He is a tenured professor at the two-year College of Southern Maryland, and lives in Annapolis, Maryland, with his wife and two sons. Links to his work can be found at www.christopherankney.com

Eleanor Ball

Eleanor Ball likes French doors, spice jars, and buying more books than she can read. Come say hi @eleanorball.bsky.social!

Mark Belair

Mark Belair's poems have appeared in numerous journals, including *Alabama Literary Review*, *Harvard Review*, and *Michigan Quarterly Review*. He is the author of eight collections of poems and two works of fiction: *Stonehaven* (Turning Point, 2020) and its sequel, *Edgewood* (Turning Point, 2022). His most recent collection of poems is *Settling In* (Kelsay Books, 2024). He has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize multiple times, as well as for a Best of the Net Award. Please visit www.markbelair.com

Darlene Bester

Darlene Bester is a writer, cat lover, and fashion enthusiast from Minnesota. She draws most of her

inspiration from nature and the change of seasons. She has been featured in Bella Grace magazine.

Brian C. Billings

Brian C. Billings is a professor of drama and English at Texas A&M University-Texarkana and the editor-in-chief for "Aquila Review," the university's literary journal. In addition to managing TAMU-T's drama program, he teaches courses in drama, creative writing, and children's literature. Publishers for his scripts include Eldridge Publishing and Heuer Publishing.

Robin Brooks

Robin Brooks is a Nova Scotian writer on submission with her upmarket fiction novel about a fifty-year-old woman addicted to time travel. She is currently revising her next manuscript inspired by her grandmother's involvement in the British Union of Fascists. Robin is represented by Jessica Berg of Rosecliff Literary. Please connect with Robin on Instagram at [robin_brooks_writes](#) or sign up for her newsletter at www.robinbrooksauthor.com.

Eric Carlson

Eric Carlson feels best when he can write, play his guitar, and swim. He loves the ocean in the summer and walking after dinner without a destination. He is a middle and high school teacher.

Shannon Cates

Shannon is a UX designer and poet based in Annapolis. She blends her passion for digital design with her love for poetry, capturing the world through both mediums. When not working or writing, she's curled up with her cat, finding inspiration in the quiet moments.

Linda Conroy

Linda Conroy, a retired social worker, enjoys writing about the complexities of human nature and our connection to the natural world. Her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies. She is the author of poetry collections, *Ordinary Signs* and *Familiar Sky*.

Lillian Durr

Lillian Durr (she/they) is a writer and poet based in Springfield, Missouri. She explores performance, the queer experience, and Midwestern culture in her writing and is pursuing an MA in English at Missouri State University. You can find more of her creative work on Bluesky @lillian-durr-art.bsky.social.

Grace Ann Elinski

Grace Ann Elinski is a graduate student, writer, and photographer in Jackson, Mississippi. Her creative work has been featured in *The Southern Quill*, *PRODUCT Magazine*, and *Across the Margin* and is forthcoming in the *Reckon Review*.

Shannon Frost Greenstein

Shannon Frost Greenstein (She/They) resides in Philadelphia with her family and cats. She is a former Ph.D. candidate in Continental Philosophy and a multi-time Pushcart Prize nominee. Her passions include Friedrich Nietzsche, anti-racism, ballet, the Seven Summits, the Hamilton Soundtrack, motherhood, and acquiring more cats. Find her at shannonfrostgreenstein.com or on Twitter and Bluesky at @ShannonFrostGre. Insta: @zarathustra_speaks

Amy Guidry

Amy Guidry is an artist currently residing in Lafayette, Louisiana. She comes from a family of artists including the late painter Eleanor Norcross. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and museums nationwide. Her paintings are present in public and private collections throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia.

Jean Marie Hackett

Jean Marie is a former overachiever turned writer and yoga teacher in Park City, Utah. She recently graduated with an MFA in fiction from Bennington. Her work has appeared in Hobart, Passages North, Five on the Fifth, Does It Have Pockets and Bullshit Lit. She likes to write about transformative sex, innards-ripped-out-loss, and alligators. She writes with the hope of making the world fall in love with her, but she'll settle for a crush.

Sid Joannette

Sid Joannette (they/them) spends the majority of their time in vivid daydreams.

Stephen Jackson

Stephen Jackson is a working-class poet and sometimes photographer living in the Pacific Northwest. His work has appeared in over sixty different online and print publications from around the world, including more recent work in *Prairie Fire*, *Allium*, *A Journal of Poetry & Prose*, and the *International Human Rights Art Movement* anthology, *A Human Voice*, with work forthcoming in the *Washington State Queer Poetry Anthology*.

J.Joy

J.Joy is a teacher, artist, and writer who lives with her husband and daughter in a little yellow house on a

stream in Maine. Find her on social media
 @Great3rdGrade and
<https://sites.google.com/view/jessicajoyaae/home>

Jacqueline Jules

Jacqueline Jules is a former librarian who found herself intrigued by almost every book she put on the shelf. As a reader and as a writer, she doesn't restrict herself to one topic or genre. Her work has appeared in over 100 publications as well as four poetry collections. She is the author of 50 books for young readers on a wide variety of topics. Visit www.jacquelinejules.com

James Lilliefors

James Lilliefors is a poet, journalist, and novelist, whose writing has appeared in Ploughshares, Door Is A Jar, The Washington Post, Anti-Heroine Chic, Salvation South, The Miami Herald, and elsewhere. His first collection of poetry, SUDDEN SHADOWS, will be published in October.

Peter Lilly

Peter Lilly is a Best of the Net and Pushcart nominated poet who grew up in Gloucestershire, England. After studying theology and working with the homeless in London, he moved to the South of France in 2014. He lives in a rural village with his wife and son, where he concentrates on writing, community development and English teaching. He is the author of the collections 'A Handful of Prayers' (Wipf & Stock, 2024) and 'An Array of Vapour' (TSL Publications, 2023).

Jamie Lim

Jamie Lim is currently an undergraduate student at Johns Hopkins University studying chemical and biomolecular

engineering. She aspires to be a physician-scientist and bring hope to patients with chronic diseases. In her free time, she writes poetry, designs houses on *The Sims 4*, watches African wildlife documentaries, and dreams of bringing home a Doberman puppy one day.

Joel Lind

Joel Lind holds a B.A. in English from George Mason University. He has been a sailor, a construction worker, and a high voltage electrician. He currently builds light traps and photographs moths. Sometimes he writes poems about them. Sometimes he writes poems about other things. He lives in an old house in Virginia. He doesn't think it is haunted. He also, occasionally, makes collage pieces.

Lauren MacKinnon

Lauren MacKinnon is a poet and artist from Oregon. When not creating, she can be found listening to Elliott Smith or in curious amble with her peculiar but precious goldendoodle, Darby. Her work appears in *Poetry Northwest* and is forthcoming elsewhere.

Emily Molinari

Emily Molinari (she/her) is a Canadian poet and writer from New Westminster, British Columbia. Her writing draws from her lived experience as a queer woman with mental illness. She is passionate about supporting community and local arts movements, and runs a small-batch zine called *SAPP* that publishes print editions alongside in-person arts events.

Nicholas Olah

Nicholas Olah has self-published four poetry collections, *Where Light Separates from Dark*, *Which Way is North*, *Seasons*, and *You Are Here*. Olah's work has been

published in Humana Obscura, Cozy Ink Press, Querencia Press, Wild Roof Journal, and more. Check out more of his work on Instagram at @nick.olah.poetry or visit his Etsy shop at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/nickolahpoetry>.

Sukriti Patny

Sukriti Patny is a poet and writer based in India who turns to the words in a flailing attempt to stay sane. Her work has appeared in Rogue Agent, Dogwood Alchemy, Molecule, Body Talk, and others. When not overthinking everything and drinking copious amounts of coffee, she can be found writing Soul Gazing—a newsletter on Substack featuring her poetry and personal essays, and on Instagram at @wordsbysu

Via Perkins

Via Perkins is always on the hunt for community, stray cats, and a great cup of chai. She's been on Prozac for a year, and wishes she had started it at age 12 instead of age 32, because the last 20 years would have been way easier. She collects animal bones, shopping lists, and vintage fridge magnets.

M.P. Pratheesh

M.P. Pratheesh has published several collections of poetry and personal essays in Malayalam. His texts and images were part of 'let me come to your wounds; heal myself', a cross-disciplinary art event curated by C F John (2020 & 2022). His poems and object/visual poems have been appeared at various places including Singing in the dark (Penguin, 2020), Greening the earth (Penguin, 2023), Modern Poetry in Translation, Almost island, Portside Review, RIC journal, Indianapolis Review, Indian Literature and elsewhere. His recent

publications are *Transfiguring Places* (Paperview books, Portugal, 2021) and *The Burial*, (Osmosis press, UK, 2023). He is the recipient of Kedarnath Singh Memorial poetry prize, 2023. He can be reached at; treesnriver@gmail.com

Elizabeth Sackett

Elizabeth Sackett has been writing since childhood, and uses poetry as a way to examine emotions in a fragmented state closest to the subconscious. She hopes her work can find its way into the strange tapestry of human ideas. When not writing, she can be found acting (Greek tragedy is her favorite) or organizing bookshelves at her workplace.

Rachel Savage

Rachel Savage is an oversized hobbit living in a kudzu-choked crevice of North Carolina. Her stories tend to lean toward the Southern and strange. When she's not wrangling her offspring you'll likely find Rachel wandering deep in half-forgotten woods.

Amy Newlove Schroeder

Amy Newlove Schroeder's collection of poems, *The Sleep Hotel*, received the Field Prize and was published by Oberlin College Press. Her work has appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Arts & Letters*, *Witness*, and *Tin House*. She teaches writing and ethics in the Viterbi School of Engineering at the University of Southern California, where she completed a doctorate in literature and creative writing.

Claire Scott

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary*

Review, New Ohio Review and Healing Muse among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called and Until I Couldn't*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.

Mary Senter

Mary Senter is a multidisciplinary artist who creates in a cabin in the woods on the shores of Puget Sound. Her work can be found in *North American Review*, *Gulf Stream*, *Exposition Review*, *Paper Dragon*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Ponder Review*, *Cleaver*, and elsewhere. Her work has been supported by ArtsWA and nominated for Best of the Net. She served as the graphic designer for *Crab Creek Review* and is the founder of Milltown Press. Visit her at www.marysenter.com.

Kristy Snedden

Kristy Snedden added three new bird feeders to the deck this winter. Although she can only identify a few of the birds, they all recognize her when she fills the feeders and greet her in various bird languages. This year she started playing with Procreate on her iPad and now it is hard to find time to do chores around the house. Filling bird feeders is not a chore!

Teresa Song

Teresa Song is a freshman at the Harker School in San Jose, California. She is a national Scholastic gold medalist. In her free time, she creates haute couture-esque clothing and grinds Tetris.

Benjamin Starr

Ben lives in Los Angeles with his wife, a high school teacher, and three extremely powerful little girls. Ben studied poetry at the University of the Pacific and as part

of the UCLA Extension Writers' Program. His work has been (or will soon be) published in Club Plum, Glint, Ink in Thirds and other journals.

Alison Strub

As with most of my art, the onlooker should be unsettled, inspired to be curious, and feel a sense of cold and dampness. Fragmentary dialogue with characters encountered along the way provide companionship or apprehension alongside the bleak journey.

Jamey Temple

Jamey Temple lives and writes in Appalachia where she also teaches college students how to craft essays, stories, and poems. In her free time, you can find her at the local art center, either hand building and glazing clay vessels or cutting glass and soldering the pieces to make stained glass panels. You can learn more about her at jameytemple.com.

M. Benjamin Thorne

A Pushcart Prize nominee, M. Benjamin Thorne is an Associate Professor of Modern European History at Wingate University. Possessed of a lifelong love of history and poetry, he is interested in exploring the synergy between the two. His poems appear or are forthcoming in Feral, Gyroscope Review, Red Eft Review, San Antonio Review, Thimble Lit Mag, and Last Syllable Lit. He lives and sometimes sleeps in Charlotte, NC.

Gail Tirone

An ardent traveler, flâneur and sometime expat, Gail Tirone has lived in cities from Charlotte Amalie to Taipei. Her poems explore the intersection of time, place, memory and myth – and she's loved poetry

and chocolate as long as she can remember. Gail's poems have appeared in *Cider Press Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *NDQ*, *The Hong Kong Review*, *Mediterranean Poetry*, *Panoply* and elsewhere. See www.gailtirone.com.

Jeffery Allen Tobin

Jeffery Allen Tobin is a political scientist and researcher based in South Florida. He has been writing for more than 30 years. His latest poetry collection "Scars & Fresh Paint" was published in 2024 with Kelsay Books, and his poetry, prose, and essays have been featured in many journals, magazines, and websites.

Ash Vela

Getting ready to plant a Gothic Garden this summer. Woman, mom, millennial, dog owner. In love with cloudy skies and all things dark and beautiful. Love to read, write, and do anything creative.

Diane Webster

On my walks I enjoy seeing the neighborhood cats, all the birds and even being barked at by the familiar dogs. I caw at the crows and put my footprints beside the deer tracks. I love the smell of mowed grass.

Richard Widerkehr

Richard's fifth book of poems, *Missing The Owl*, is available from Shanti Art Publications. He has three chapbooks and one novel, *Sedimental Journey* (Tarragon Books). His work has appeared in many magazines, including *Door Is A Jar* and *Atlanta Review*, and *Midwest Review*. He won two Hopwood first prizes for poetry at the University of Michigan, three prizes at The Bridge, and first prize for a short story at the Pacific

Northwest Writers Conference. Garrison Keillor
broadcast one of his poems on Writer's Almanac.

John Wise

You may have heard my tired voice when you called
about your car insurance. Perhaps you even purchased a
box of Seventh Generation diapers that I packed on the
11th hour of my shift. I now teach English to middle
schoolers, where I promote writing that is deeply rooted
in curiosity, collaboration, and the sheer joy of creating
(when they are not writing on each other with Sharpies).

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, Ph. D.

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.

Submission Guidelines

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

Please read over our submission guidelines carefully.

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

Submit all work in Times New Roman font size 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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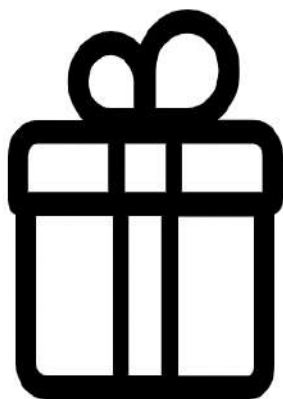
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