

DOOR = JAR



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DOOR = JAR

Door Is A Jar
Issue 40

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Dead Time
Jude Brigley
Poetry

There are moments—despite tendencies
to retell and retrace—that are yours alone.

The day you see a rabbit on the path, still
as porcelain. When a volt of turkey vultures

move ugly heads to slowly look you in the eye.
A cardinal flies across branches furtive as a thief,

its whistle flashing on the path before
the quick alarm of camouflage.

You overhear heated exchange in a French café.
You won't be sleeping in my bed tonight, she says.

A seagull attacks a distressed cat, chasing
down Redlands Road away from fledglings.

You are reading Dumas at the library table
kicking against the chair, plagiarizing childhood.

You sit in the silence of a remembered afternoon—
the sunshine runs stripes across the room.

After a morning walking dew on shoes,
a daisy grows in the space between the bricks.

A field in southern Utah

Jerrod Laber

Poetry

The stone mesa, kingly and blood red
in the light of day, slumbered gray
in the softening of growing darkness.
One by one the stars ignited.
We were told to be fearful of coyotes,
yet together we laid, hand in hand,
our minds and our eyes trained
only on the heavens above.
We watched for those stars that fall
from their height, following
as best we could their brief journey
from silence to silence,
each trailed gleam fading to nothingness.

Shoes

Jerrod Laber

Poetry

I left a pair of shoes, by accident,
in a Dublin hotel.
Well-worn but still plenty
of steps left in their soles.
My whimsical hope is the staff
did not discard them,
but rather found them a new owner,
particularly in such a city
known for its itinerant residents,
both real and imaginary.
Someone to whom I can lend
a few of my secrets, my sins, passions,
apprehensions, and a bit of gratitude.
All the burdens and joys of being
that bury themselves in wearied feet
as they carry us
from slumber to slumber.

Eye contact

Andrey Gritsman

Poetry

You can see that flickering
in somebody's eyes,
flaring up for a moment
lasting for centuries.

Is he one of those,
who have left the teeth marks
on the skulls discovered in mass
graves of the lost settlements
at the gate of the desert?
Their desire was sailing
on the waves of disappearance.

It is a conundrum of what
was happening between the species
as evolution spun off
and slid into the dark, flickering
and hollow space,

into the landscape with sunburned stones,
dried blood, spicy smell of the mountain grass,
shadow of a reposed reptile on the cliff.

These eyes are the flowers
grown in the dead end.

Numbers
Andrey Gritsman
Poetry

—*For A.R.*

The numbers repeat themselves,
time and again returning us in a complete circle
to our lack of knowledge, back
to the graceful logic of an unending narrative.

And we still try to penetrate
the very essence of this emanating, impersonal,
and absolutely centripetal passion,
as we live on the outskirts of the Universe
on a clear night, lost, but not homesick,
hearing time moving, going nowhere

from nowhere. Then one can see a family
by a table light or by a bonfire,
the supper is over, listening to the verses
uttered in any imaginable language.
The original version is running
like the shadow of a cloud
across the ruins of an ancient gothic
by the seashore.

A man is standing there alone
all life long, counting
unending waves.

Against the Sky
Marc Janssen
Poetry

If I were in the sky—
So far away from you.

I'd hover, you know—
Above the house while you slept
And then float with clouds over your work
and then over the grocery store.

Being in the sky isn't free, you know,
It is less than that—
It is the illusion of being free,
Because it doesn't take into account the string
Between you and me.

The Saint of Forgotten Things

Benjamin Gibbons

Fiction

I am a person who feels lonely for objects. It is an imperfect loneliness.

I select plates from the bottom of the cabinet stack. The upper plates collide and clatter. They must understand that I don't want their downstairs neighbors to be lonely. But after a while, the upper plates become the lower ones, and I'm guilty.

When the 668 CDs and 43 cassettes that make up my collection don't receive enough attention, when I neglect to kneel and marvel frequently enough at the eclecticism of the second-lowest tower row—Flying Lotus! The Chieftains! Codeine! Liliput!—I'm again guilty.

I walk my block and try to appreciate the houses correctly. Sunrooms filled with warm ease, kitchens bustling or cold, glowing amoeba forms of televisions framed by picture windows. If I don't appreciate them correctly, I've wasted them. I fail, and the houses pass in pieces, and I'm guilty.

The philodendron stooped on my kitchen table, the rabbit that freezes when I catch it nibbling from my anemic vegetable garden, the grill caught out in the rain, the sun struggling across the sky on a hot day—I feel lonely for all of them. I forget about each one as I feel for the next, and I fail all of them.

I feel lonely for Jeb Bush. He is a type of object. Please clap, he says, eight years in the past, and I do.

I try to notice things around my house, absorb their lonelinesses into myself, an unburnt candle here, a detuned thumb piano there, but invariably I miss certain objects, and fail them.

I feel lonely for the knife I find slipped underneath the silverware organizer in the kitchen drawer. I can't remember buying it. It's sharp and broad-bladed and sad. I carry it around the house, noticing its heft in my hand.

I feel lonely for one specific brick in the exposed wall that crowns the far end of my attic. I pay attention to it, and to the knife, by chipping at its mortar outline until it loosens. I notice the brick in my hand, its dense sandpapery quality, which straightens my hairs when the brick moves against my palm.

I feel lonely for the eye that watches me through the rectangular aperture that held the brick. It's tired, glassy, cradled by a purple bag. I move closer and put my own eye to the hole.

I feel lonely for the tiny room that hides behind the wall. I didn't know it was here. It's not in any blueprint. Its loneliness has pooled like long-leaking rainwater. I notice the room's yellowed plainness, the single bare bulb that dangles from the ceiling.

I feel lonely for the man who occupies the room, the man whose other eye is just as tired as the one that greeted me. He sits facing the brick in a rough wooden chair, plain-robed, his gray beard hanging like Spanish moss, his hair the same.

Hello, he says, his voice a candle. I am the Saint of Forgotten Things.

Isn't that supposed to be Saint Anthony? I ask.

No. Anthony is the Saint of Lost Things. Things that people still look for. People don't look for things they've forgotten.

Oh.

I introduce myself.

Come in, he says, and now I'm in the little room with him. A smell of clay, old earth.

My watch is over, says the Saint of Forgotten Things. He stands.

Please sit.

He gestures to the chair. I sit.

You found me, and now you'll replace me.

The knife rises from my hand and floats through the hole that leads to my attic. The brick follows, wedging itself into its old resting place.

Your only job now is to feel the loneliness of things, says the old man. You may grow bored, but you will not run out of loneliness.

I ask how long I have to sit.

Until the next one finds you. Somebody will. I found my predecessor, and she hers.

I ask why this house, my house, is so special.

It isn't. Now that the brick is back in place, we could be, we are, everywhere and anywhere. Somebody will come. Wait for the brick to move.

I have more questions, but the old man exits through a door that is not here.

The chair is not uncomfortable. I inhale the foundations of the earth. I sense a sweater rumpled half-off a hanger, somewhere in Europe, Sweden maybe, slipped to the back of a closet, buried. I notice its loneliness and feel it, finally, perfectly.

nailing the books shut

Steven Schutzman

Drama

CHARACTERS

Joy—35

Robert— 35

SETTING: Almost empty apartment in Brooklyn.
Cardboard boxes and many stacks of books on floor

(JOY sits on the floor crying softly.
ROBERT enters behind her. ROBERT
observes JOY then exits and reenters
wearing a leather carpenter's belt with a
framing hammer hanging from the
strap.)

ROBERT

Hey, Joy, I just had this inspiration.

JOY

Yeah. Sure. Another one.

ROBERT

Listen to this.

JOY

I can't believe it. Every step I took I took in... in...

ROBERT

Disbelief.

JOY

Disbelief and the last step's here and I still don't believe it.

ROBERT

Listen. What does a book resemble, really? Look like?

JOY

I don't want it over and you don't and if I don't and you don't, we don't and this is so stupid. A lotta things should be over but not us.

ROBERT

Listen: A book, after all it goes through to become a smart book, resembles nothing so much as the stupid wood it was made from. Look at these books.

JOY

Robert.

(ROBERT knocks a stack of books over.)

ROBERT

Look at them. Nothing but slabs of wood. You could build a little house.

JOY

Bobby.

ROBERT

Look at the books, Joy. Like the sawed-off ends of two by sixes I toss onto the scrap pile, like pieces of stupid wood. Slabs of wood.

JOY

We love each other and you know it.

ROBERT

We've come to lots of agreements over stuff, the furniture, but it's because we couldn't agree on the books that I got this great idea.

JOY

Yeah, yeah, the books're like wood 'til you open 'em and start to read. Big deal. You can't open and read wood.

ROBERT

That's it. See, we're not going to open them anymore because I'm going to nail all these books shut.

JOY

What?

ROBERT

I wonder why no one ever thought of this before. Books have always been burned like wood, the Nazis, but they've never been nailed shut like wood. If you ask me books have always been begging to be nailed shut.

JOY

What?

ROBERT

Nailed shut. Like this.

(ROBERT grabs a book and nails it shut. JOY crawls over to it.)

JOY

“The Little Prince”.

ROBERT

Nailed shut. Once and for all. Like we’re being nailed shut as a couple. End of book, end of story.

JOY

(An anguished cry.)

“The Little Prince.”

ROBERT

Good riddance. See, I’ve solved our problem of how to divide the books, a perfect solution combining what I had to do with what I wanted to do.

JOY

I’m sorry they kept rejecting your novel.

ROBERT

No, I think you’re glad.

JOY

Who are you? I want the you that’s you back.

ROBERT

Secretly glad. I didn’t mean that. Sorry.

JOY

It’s a beautiful book you wrote with us living together.

ROBERT

At night, after a day of hanging joists and framing walls.

JOY

But I cooked and cleaned and shopped. And the foot rubs. And left you alone so you could write. Not caring we stayed in, weekends. We worked it out and we can work this other out.

ROBERT

Don't press me. All this is on account of you pressing me. If you don't press me, I could have reached it on my own, maybe. You press and I close down. You know that. You brought this on yourself.

JOY

So what was I supposed to do, just wait?

ROBERT

Maybe. Yeah.

JOY

I don't press, you sit there a thousand years. Like a piece of wood.

ROBERT

'Cause I was writing and happy.

JOY

Like a piece of wood. Seven years. A thousand years. You just sit there.

ROBERT

Yeah, yeah, I was a piece of wood and you were pressing me into a book with your story in it, not mine.

(ROBERT pushes a stack of books over.)

JOY

‘Cause I wasn’t happy, Bobby.

(JOY pushes a stack over.)

I got this other ache in me, lately.

ROBERT

Anyway, I’m nailing shut these books we’ve been fighting over.

JOY

Oh, take ‘em.

ROBERT

What?

JOY

Take ‘em. You can have ‘em all.

ROBERT

See, see, that’s it, thwarting me again, trying to ruin my inspiration by turning around and giving in when you fought so hard before.

JOY

I don’t care anymore, I really don’t. I can get more books. You taught me to love books so you might as well nail ‘em shut or whatever. Can’t decide what to do with stuff like our love, throw it away. The baby. Cut it in half, whatever. What’d Jim say to Huck, “What good’s half a baby? I wouldn’t give you a dollar for a million of ‘em.” Where’s Huck Finn? Nail him shut next why don’t you?

(JOY pushes over another stack.)

Half a baby. I got this terrible ache in me, Bobby.

(She cries.)

ROBERT

See... This is... This is... You giving in on the books is just like the other; you wanting us to have a kid to destroy my creativity too.

JOY

You're the one destroyed it. In that fireplace. But I know why you're being so mean to me. You're protecting yourself on account'a your feelings for me and taking your self-hatred out on me and these books and your own book.

ROBERT

Very smart.

JOY

Right back at you.

ROBERT

You've got the words down, big deal. You're still just as stupid as I always worried you were.

JOY

Go ahead. Be as mean as you want.

ROBERT

To try to teach you anything just confused you more. That's why I'm nailing the books shut, for your protection and the protection of those around you. You better stick with having babies.

JOY

Come on, come on Bobby, bring it on. 'Cause we both know why a person needs to attack another person.
Projection.

ROBERT

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

JOY

Weak, Bobby, weak. A cliché. You're getting weaker. You need me. It ain't like you wrote in your book. "Whoever cares less wins." It ain't like that. 'Cause I care. 'Cause I know what I want and you don't. I want a kid and you, your kid with you. That says something. Just like you writing that book living with me says the same thing. Ever write a book with your educated girlfriends? No. And why is that? 'Cause we're right, baby. We're right. I know you like the idea a little. Just a little, don't you honey? Don't you? Tell you what I'll throw in, sweeten the deal: I'll blow you any time you want, whenever you want, wherever you want, just ask and it's done.

ROBERT

You do that now.

JOY

Public places, anywhere. Macy's window. Your parents' dining room.

ROBERT

Kid watching?

JOY

Sure. I don't know.

ROBERT

(ROBERT, needing to end the closeness, grabs the Bible.)

The Bible.

(ROBERT nails the Bible shut.)

Better use a lot more nails on the Bible. Can't have the Bible breaking out again. Who'd have thought one stinking book could cause so much damn trouble? These nails will protect us from the burning, torturing, crusading, conquistadoring Bible.

(ROBERT pounds another nail through the Bible.)

Look at us. Have we been truly edified and improved by the Bible? I've had it with the Bible once and for all. How many spikes did they put in Jesus?

(Another nail through Bible.)

You know, I've always felt violent but I never got to be violent. Never had it in me to hit a woman. Did write some violent scenes. Used controlled violence in my carpentry. But never got to be really violent like I wanted. Like this.

(Another nail. ROBERT picks up Bible, holds it to his ear and shakes it.)

Listen to them, all shook up in here, screaming, tumbling around on top of each other; Abraham, a dirty fighter, hair puller, eye scratcher; Jesus, the make-out artist copping a feel from a maid servant tumbling by; Moses, looking for someone to blame; Mary and Mary Magdalane, having a menage a trois with horny King David; the sheep, the asses, the goats, the chickens, being tossed all around. It's like a Mexican train wreck in here.

(JOY starts laughing, ROBERT too a little.)

JOY

I love you so much, your mind, the way your crazy mind works. You'll be a great father. What kid wouldn't want a crazy father like you?

ROBERT

Give in on the kid thing and I'll unload the u-haul right now.

JOY

No. No. I'm not giving in. Not now. I give in, it's over for me and I got this terrible ache, Bobby. So nail the books. Go ahead. What do I care? 'Cause the books're in me now like you are and the next guy maybe won't be such a pig about all he knows and I don't, 'cause I have it in me and maybe he'll even feel wow, what an interesting mind she's got, not just the great bod you can't get enough of and yeah and yeah and the late nights and the believing in you and pulling you through 'til you finished your novel.

ROBERT

And where did it get me?

(ROBERT is at a loss. Suddenly, he grabs another book.)

Anna Karenina.

(ROBERT nails Anna Karenina shut.)

She tried to love a man and a child and wound up under a train.

JOY

The man turned rotten, the society persecuted her but she followed her passion. She had no good choices. I do.

ROBERT

Stop being so smart.

JOY

(JOY stands, resolute. ROBERT faces her, resolute.)

This is me.

(With animal quickness, JOY kisses ROBERT long and deep. ROBERT surrenders but then pushes her away. JOY exits. ROBERT sits dazed. JOY reenters carrying manuscript.)

Here. This is for you. Take it. It's your novel.

ROBERT

What? What? I burned them, burned them all in that fireplace. You watched me. You stood there and watched me.

JOY

I made this copy at the office before you go that other bright idea.

ROBERT

You did?

JOY

Yeah. Just in case of fire, baby. This copy here's why I didn't stop you. You think I'd let you burn your book, you crazy man.

ROBERT

(False conviction.)

See, see, you're trying to thwart me again.

JOY

That's right.

ROBERT

I wanted it gone. All of them gone. Forever.

JOY

Here. Here then. Go ahead. Follow your inspiration, baby. Nail it shut, then burn it to ashes. This is really the last one. I wasn't thwarting you. I was sticking up for the book because it doesn't belong to you anymore, it belongs to the world. Not to you anymore, to the world.

(ROBERT collapses. JOY caresses him.)

It's a beautiful book, Baby. Beautiful and crazy like you are. You're the beautiful crazy author of this book, like you're gonna be the beautiful, crazy father of our child someday. And write lots more books. One kid. Lots of books.

ROBERT

Yeah.

(Beat.)

I was wondering why you didn't stop me. I thought it meant...

JOY

Nope. Let me read it to you. It's so beautiful. We never did that: Me read your book to you. Please, let me read it to you.

(JOY reads, ROBERT next to her.)

Chapter 1. "Whoever cares less wins. I cared too much and lost, but not anymore..."

(Slow fade to black. End.)

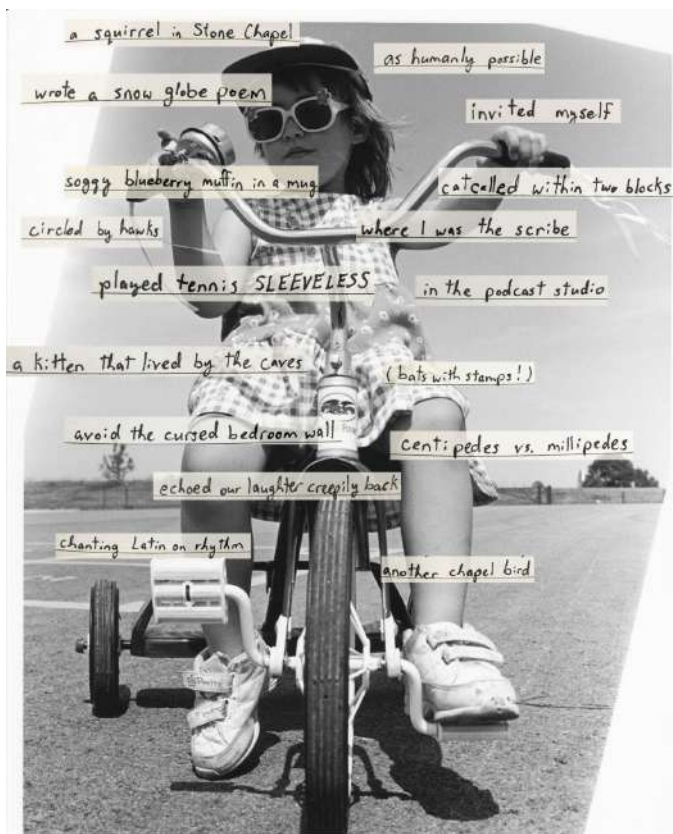
Hopscotch
Ashley Gilland
Art



Catcalled Within

Ashley Gilland

Art



poppies & tulips
Judith Skillman
Art



Bouquet II
Judith Skillman
Art



MAINE
Mark Belair
Poetry

A heavy, night sea breeze
sifts past the porch screens
and wafts through the open windows
to swell my lungs
and close-by heart
and far, far away mind
that, summoned, rolls in
like a wind-borne wave
bearing a strand of seaweed, a broken shell, and
a few stones
smoothed from rough tumbling
before it draws
out again
at the steady, tidal pull
of the warm, dreamy moon.

Percy Shelley's Unburnable Heart

Allison Goldstein

Poetry

calcified in a bouquet of tender flames
blooming from his seaside funeral pyre,

a thousand red-tongued petals
singeing the drowned muscle
into a steep, stone canyon.

When the smoke cleared, Mary
coffined the heart in parchment
and locked it in her writing desk,

dragging the songless relic
from town to town like a sad pet.

Somedays Mary's hands held nothing,
her pain busy building his absence.

At night, she buried her red words
into the brass keyhole, and listened
breathless each morning

for his ink-stained voice
echoing back from the dark,

begging for a warm body
to call home.

When You Know It's Time to Leave

Allison Goldstein

Poetry

The sun sets so loud it deafens the sky
Your throat stays dry while your fingers prune

The luggage packs itself while you're asleep
Dreams grow low and wild like moss

Rainwater collects in all the wine glasses
Even coffee tastes like salt

The neighborhood dogs ignore your sandwiches
Keys crumble in your hand like charcoal

You find train tickets stapled inside your shoes
but cannot remember your own name

Angry faces appear and disappear in every window

You ask a stranger what time it is
and they quietly slide over the bill

On the Cusp of a Shadow

Yvonne Jayne

Poetry

On the cusp of a shadow I waited for you.
Your languid eyes, thin blades of stupor
paused at the portal of my dreams.
When you drew the curtain shut,
the sky woke to pastel hues painted
across the horizon in soft brushstrokes.
Beyond my seeing, beyond my believing,
visions passed, drifting clouds in your likeness
gathered at the hems of golden fields,
seeds spreading to announce an upcoming recital.

Drawing back the veil of creation,
you removed my doubts about your arrival,
bringing with you a gift of
golden air, a standing ovation of sound,
fluttering breezes across shimmering wings,
warbles of early songbirds
rehearsing for the afternoon choir.

I dressed to celebrate, silken
scarves draped over my shoulders gliding
like lilies along my chest, rising
to meet you at the threshold of your desire.
I drank your molecules, nibbled at your
paws, and licked your eyelashes to stubble.
When I devoured you, you moaned
with gladness, your music howling with
the choir, and your smile bursting into eternity.

Crimson

Yvonne Jayne

Poetry

With each stroke of your brush
I step into your fiery vision,
with each paint mixed on your palette
I slip under your heavy torso.
The tree on your canvas, firm and growing,
sends boughs reaching to the sun in bliss,
dappled by the brightness of youth
your blue baby-tone eyes gaze at me.
Later, you destroy my portrait when I
cannot sit still for you.
You knife my face on the canvas until
I bleed crimson from your enraged passion.
When you throw the canvas across the room
I land in a heap of hungry souls
soothing my crimson to sleep.

Too Silent
Wendy Lew Toda
Poetry

My heart stops
hoping hers has not

too still
too long
come on breathe
please breathe

wild thoughts circle me
in shifting shades of fear
panic holds me hostage
as seconds stretch to breaking

I wonder if This Is It

and then a big breath

she wakes

I reassemble myself
from far corners of
worst-case scenarios
and we go to lunch.

Ominosity
Wendy Lew Toda
Poetry

Menacing tentacles wave
plotting to suck life out of me
I back up
not wanting to be found
but I am cornered
and my thoughts have no door.

The Bureau
June Gemmell
Fiction

I know you're still hanging around, mother dear. The cats sense your presence. They spit at thin air, hide behind the sofas. They liked you well enough when you were alive. Maybe they just don't like you in spirit form.

Sometimes I feel your presence close by: an occasional draught, a shiver of the candles, a flicker of the lightbulb. When we have friends over, you're there. You always liked company. You would wear your best dress and sing a song at the end of the evening, if you could get away with it.

I wear your ring, the one with the garnet. I'm not sure if you said it was your birthstone, I can't remember. You liked the deep red colour, anyway. It's slightly too big for me so I twirl it around my finger.

I, unlike the cats, have got used to you being around. You've been a quiet, gentle presence, just co-existing here in this space with us. Until this week. Now I feel your agitation, your displeasure, the air crackles with it. It's because of the bureau, I'm pretty sure.

A charity shop came and took it away last Tuesday.

When we cleared your house, a decade ago, the bureau was almost all we kept. The many tea sets, clocks, vases of every colour, table linen—enough for a hotel—we boxed up and gave away. The job took weeks—trips to the tip, council pickups for your furniture, charity-shop drop offs for most of your clothes. A grim time.

I brought just a few things home with me, family photographs, a few pieces of precious jewellery, and your set of three ebony elephants which should always face the door, for good luck, you said. The old bureau came

too. Its walnut veneer, scraped and battered by the years, had been sanded by you, then inexpertly varnished, rendering the finished article an uneven surface. Worse than when you started. A lot of things had that fate at your hands. Rolls of sticky-back plastic had contributed to many of your disasters.

The bureau had belonged to your mum and dad, my grandparents. You said when you went into the hospice it *must not* be got rid of when you went ‘away’. ‘Forever’, you added as if we didn’t know what you meant.

And so, after your demise, the bureau sat for a decade in our hallway. It was the first thing I saw as I returned home from work each day, And the last thing I saw as I went upstairs to bed each night. To be honest I think I stopped ‘seeing’ it at all. It was just there, part of the furniture. Haha. You would like that joke. Perhaps. But nothing stays the same, and when it was time to redecorate the hall the dark brown of the bureau looked out of place. It was time to get rid of the old thing.

I tried to sell it, without success, so I donated it to charity. When the men arrived to pick it up it stood on the pavement for a moment, blinking in the daylight, then it was scooped into the van. I watched the vehicle drive away. I nearly waved. Afterwards I busied myself tumble drying the sheets, but I felt a sense of guilt, that I’d let you down.

The ‘happenings’ started that night. A framed photograph fell downstairs in the middle of the night. It had hung in the hall for years—a photo of you and me holding each other close, heads touching, smiling in the Majorcan sunshine where we celebrated your eightieth birthday. You had your best pearl earrings on, your new Marks and Spencer blouse, and the ever-present addition to every outfit—a cardigan incase it got cold later.

The photo and its frame didn't just drop to the floor, but catapulted itself, helped by you, no doubt, all the way down the stairs to land near the front door with a crash. It roused us from our sleep, coming out of dark bedrooms with wild hair to find the cause of the crashing glass and splintering wood.

The next night the rail in my wardrobe broke. With a crack and a snap my winter coats, summer dresses (barely worn), and too-tight-trousers collapsed to the floor. I woke convinced a burglar was in our house.

Over the next week electronic equipment mysteriously switched itself on, or off, and strange noises came from above our heads in the attic.

I did at one point consider getting the damn thing back, phoning the charity shop and offering to buy it. My husband talked some sense into me 'That ugly old thing,' he said. 'The hall looks much better without it.'

Earlier, when I was trying to sell the bureau, I had taken a photo of it. To give it a sense of history I had placed particular items on top: the photo of your father in his World War One uniform, a cup and saucer from your mother's wedding china, your set of three ebony elephants.

I find that photo now and print it out. I tuck it into an unused frame, and position it on the wall where the bureau used to be. Alongside, I hang a photo of you, taken in the 1940s when you were in your twenties, your head thrown back in a film star pose.

I sit with a cup of tea in the front room on the big comfy armchair. Your three elephants sit beside me, looking out of the window. There is no one else in the house. A soft hum sends the cats from the room. The sound turns into a silky voice, singing a Frank Sinatra number, one of your favourites. I whisper-sing along. In

the chorus, your soprano voice hits the high notes which I can't. I close my eyes.

When I open them, there is silence, but the three elephants are lined up facing the door.

I Still Smell The Blood

James Piper

Drama

CHARACTERS

LAWKI: Male, father, 40s.

VERSI: Male, son, 20s.

SETTING

A long wooden plank with legs (as a bench). Center.

A stone wall fills the back. The stones have precise straight lines. Some have Aztec iconography.

TIMEThe peak of Aztec society, around the 15th to 16th century, and before the arrival of the Spanish.

(LAWKI and VERSI enter. They are naked except for loincloths. They have long paint markings on their bodies to recognize their status: white for farmer, red for father, orange for leader, and black for warrior. LAWKI has all four markings on his arms, thighs and face. VERSI has three markings. He is missing orange. LAWKI wears a headdress with long feathers and corn husks. VERSI wears a simple headband. They carry wooden poles, thin like a broom handle and longer than they are tall. LAWKI carries a bouncy ball the size of a cantaloupe.)

LAWKI

Are you ready?

(He hands his pole to VERSI who places it and his pole in a container by the bench that holds them upright. LAWKI bounces the ball on the ground and catches it.)

VERSI

Why? No one else has arrived.

(Another bounce of the ball.)

LAWKI

You need to be ready. I want you to be ready.

VERSI

There's no one here. Besides, you're the one who wants to win.

(VERSI sits on the bench.)

LAWKI

We're early, I know, but they'll be here soon.

VERSI

You said that last time, and guess what? I was ready.

LAWKI

We lost.

VERSI

I'm here, aren't I?

(LAWKI sits down next to VERSI.)

LAWKI

This time, I want *us* to win.

VERSI

Again? I don't want to win, I want to lose.

LAWKI

No. Don't say that. Don't think that. This time *we* are going to win.

VERSI

I still smell the blood.

LAWKI

Focus and we will honor the gods.

VERSI

They're not my gods.

LAWKI

How can you say that?

VERSI

The smell won't go away.

LAWKI

You're young.

VERSI

Yes, with a future.

LAWKI

I've been teaching you these things since you were a baby.

VERSI

I have my own kids. They should play games for fun.
They should have their own kids. They should live until
they grow old.

(Pause.)

I won't let them see these games, let alone participate in
them.

LAWKI

You'll get used to the smell. I did.

VERSI

Today I'll watch the game as I did in the past. No shame
in that.

LAWKI

No shame? For the last year, they have feted you, given
you gifts, sent you praise so you would play today and
win.

VERSI

It's not an honor I want. You're old. You can have it.

LAWKI

I would love such an honor. That's why we must win.

VERSI

It's time for a change. The loser should get the honor.

LAWKI

No, no, no.

VERSI

It will motivate the players. They'll want to win. They'll
fight to survive.

LAWKI

They are motivated.

VERSI

I'm not.

LAWKI

Look at me. I'm motivated to win.

VERSI

And I'm motivated to live.

LAWKI

Versi, we have traditions. We cherish them. We hold on to them. It's what the people want. One year of praise for one day of glory.

VERSI

You want it. You're old. We don't want it. I don't want it. And I'm sure Wazzi and Salki don't want it. Ask them when they arrive. You'll see.

LAWKI

You planned this with them?

VERSI

They asked me.

LAWKI

Don't mess with tradition. We must respect it.

VERSI

Respect it?

(He shakes his head.)

No. Not me. Not anymore.

LAWKI

Take that back.

VERSI

No.

LAWKI

Show some respect.

VERSI

I am showing respect. It's time for a change.

LAWKI

(LAWKI stands up and glares down at
VERSI.)

Grow up. I want you to change your thinking.

VERSI

I want to live.

(Pause.)

But you would have me sacrificed.

LAWKI

And there's the honor.

VERSI

(VERSI stands up and mimics the
actions he speaks about.)

The game ends. Each winner marches up those steps and
takes their turn on the altar. The priest slices open their
abdomen. The blood starts to flow—

LAWKI

We must—

VERSI

The priest reaches in and pulls out the heart and holds it high so everyone can see.

LAWKI

There's the honor. The gods smile down on us.
(He stands and raises the ball to the sky.)

VERSI

To hell with your gods.

LAWKI

Do not say that.
(Pause.)

VERSI

You can walk up those steps. You'll have to drag me.
(VERSI sits. A long pause. He picks up the ball. Turns it over in his hands. Sets it down.)

LAWKI

(LAWKI sits back down.)
I watched my father walk up those steps of the altar. I was mesmerized. He showed such strength.
(He chokes up.)
I was proud of him.
(Pause.)

VERSI

I'm leaving.
(He gets up but LAWKI grabs his shoulder and pushes him back to the bench.)

LAWKI (Angry)

You listen. We have honor. We have tradition. This is how we live. Do you understand?

(Pause.)

VERSI

I understand.

LAWKI

Good.

(LAWKI smiles and tosses the ball in the air and catches it.)

VERSI

It won't last. It will change.

(VERSI stands.)

LAWKI

Sit down.

(VERSI sits back down.)

VERSI

In time it'll change.

LAWKI

When you're older, you'll understand.

VERSI

That's my point.

(VERSI holds out his hand for the ball. LAWKI gives it to him. VERSI rotates it as if polishing it.)

You're right.

(He plays with the ball.)

You're right. We will win and satisfy the priests, the gods and our people. Honor for everyone.

LAWKI

That's my son. I'm proud of you.

(Offstage: The shouts and noise of other players as they near the arena. LAWKI stands and pulls out a feather from his headdress. Places it in VERSI's headband. He studies his handiwork.)

VERSI

But I didn't earn it.

LAWKI

The feather is for the willingness to sacrifice. You've earned it.

VERSI

I earned it?

(VERSI runs his hand along the feather.)

LAWKI

And, my son, you've earned your orange bands.

VERSI

You want me to lead?

LAWKI

Leaders lead.

(He applies orange markings to VERSI's face. LAWKI, a proud father, examines his son and adjusts the feather.)

LAWKI

Good.

(He claps his hands.)

Time to win.

OTHERS (Offstage. Rhythmic chant)

Time to lose. Time to lose. Time to lose.

VERSI

Hear that?

LAWKI

That's the opponents.

VERSI

No. It's Wazzi and Salki. It's our people.

(Pause.)

Orange for leadership. Right?

(VERSI applies orange markings to his arms and thighs.)

Well, time to lead.

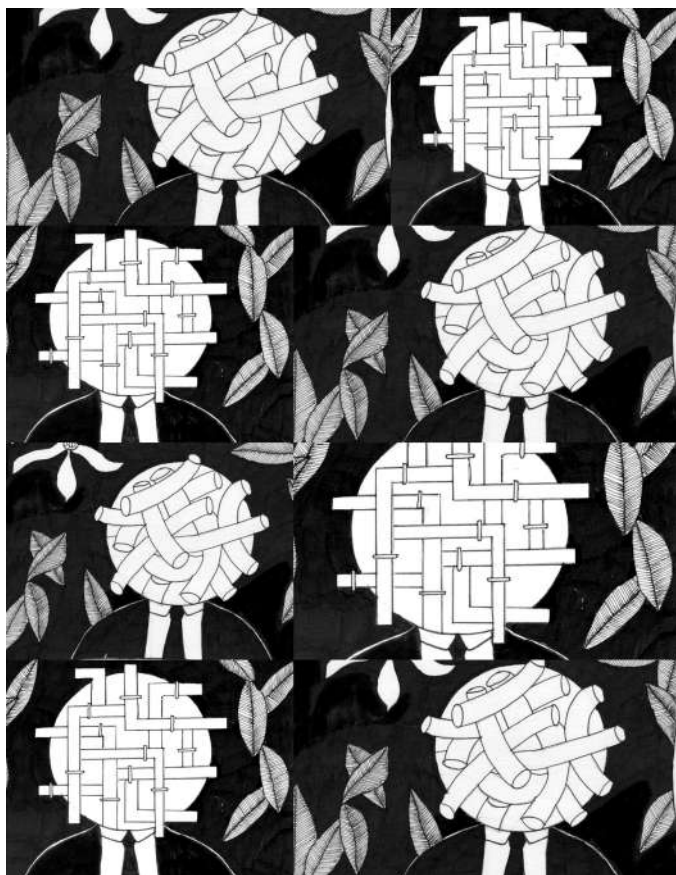
(VERSI places his sacrifice feather on the bench and the ball on the ground next to the bench.)

And time to lose.

(VERSI EXITS without looking back.
LAWKI stands over the bench looking at the feather and ball. He picks up the feather and snaps the feather in two.
Pause. LAWKI EXITS.)

CURTAIN

Industrial Conference
Eric Suhem
Art



Kelp Conversation

Eric Suhem

Art



Sunflower Situation
Eric Suhem
Art



Vases of Potential Words

Eric Suhem

Art



Uncle Wasn't a Dragon

Seth Pyrtle

Poem

light creeps through the break
of your curtains as you're sound asleep.
The sun's eyes, half-shut,
watching your frail arms.

Your skin,
folding on top itself,
resembles scales.

Not the scales of koi that dance
beneath the pulsing breaths of water,
who breach the gate atop the waterfall
and fly as dragons.
Rather,
the leftover skin of salmon,
filleted by the fishmonger's blade
clumping at the table's corner
until its finally discarded.

Calluses

Jenny Sherman

Poetry

I am learning to play mandolin
and—oh!
how tough and tender
fingertips turn
fretting the strings
pressing them taut

waxy white flesh
thumbs become thimbles
passing her needle
through hesitant hems

carapaced, crusted
his solvent-stained
hands digging
septic-tank trenches

they callused through work and
worked at each other
year upon year upon year
until all hardened but resolve

I am tugging such sound from
this finely formed wood
wire coarsening fingers
blending melody, dissonance
this cord
keratin-clawed

Dream Cycles
Ryan Keating
Poetry

When I died, I came back
as my twelve-year-old self
and I was with my brother.

When I died, I came back
and a woman is looking for me.
I don't think I know her.

When I died, I came back
running too slowly from someone
and nearly fell in real life

When I died, I came back
and tried to explain what was happening
to people who didn't recognize me.

When I died, I came back
and someone I know snatched my wallet
in the moments between dying and rising.

When I died, I came back
as my brother
and put his arm around me.

Angiogram
Ryan Keating
Poetry

A thin blue paper gown barely covers
and a needle breaks the barrier of skin
that separates me from the universe
of sharp things and people and conceals
whatever there is to see within- a world
of hidden meaning magically revealed.

Doctors hover over the examination table
As dragons circle the sky above the hospital.
Red and serpentine and not quite visible,
circulating and cosmically significant,
burning with contrast dye, my arteries
are read and fire paints the clouds.

Feel the guide wire in my chest
as cloudy images flash on grey screens
scraping my mortality like a legendary sword
on ancient scales, the edge of destiny
moments away, tooth and claw and wing beating
faster, climbing, diving just beyond the veil.

No blockage is detected, so no stent
installed to hold open a door by force,
as if beckoning bloody chaos from the other side.
But a myocardial bridge is found,
a path widening and narrowing naturally,
the rhythm of my soul keeping dragons at bay.

Ghost Dog

P. H. G. "Delta" Brandon

Poetry

black dog, high on the hillside
eating my naked breath
a shadow pressing up aside
home, and you barking
whining, growling, the skin of drums
the rhythm of a raucous heart
the space behind a barn
howling up at me
from the day where you died
shallow breathing
another shadow behind the sky

Fire-wheel

P. H. G. "Delta" Brandon

Poetry

mama shot dart board thudding down the stairs
she sank my fury or my joys;
air quenched all of my unaware feeling

phosphorescent smoke wafting altar boys
fall under hammer annealing;
alloy the secret alloy sword to share

the third-floor basement fire-a-wheeling
in hands all over anywhere;
spokes are kneeling for the sickle boys

fixed with point blank arrow through center star
of northern sky's fury and joys;
wake drenched from nightmare there hauls the keeling

Mohair Shawl
Holly Guran
Poetry

pale plaid
pink and beige

rests each night
on the mahogany chair

it belongs there
belongs near

so warm
did I ever wash it?

what dust mites live
in its loose weave?

requires washing by hand
I fear it will fall

apart the way recently
I fall apart someone

knew me

Ready
Holly Guran
Poetry

These clear sweet days
repeat. I fear drought,
the way inhaling the rose's
scent, I feel my fingers
pricked by thorns,
the way my forgotten
lover agitates my heart,
appearing last night
in my sleep, his arms
outstretched, as were
mine—not so much
desire as delight
that the fifty years,
separating then from now,
had been erased.

In the middle of this tryst
my insistent bladder
woke me, and, after
rising and returning
to bed, the fantasy
also flew, leaving
only a morning glimpse
of last night's pleasure.

Behind the Veil
Kristi Joy Rimbach
Nonfiction

I arrive at the grotto, weary and crumbling, pulled to walk the Stations of the Cross, even though I'm not Catholic; I'm nothing. And yet, I need to go somewhere that I feel like God is listening. I need him to listen, her, it, I need God to hear me, to feel like there is something bigger in charge here, bigger than the painful, legalese-filled nightmare we're living in.

My daughter, 12 years old, has been wearing a rigid smiling mask for a long time, trying to survive, trying to appease, trying to make everything ok. And the truth is, I need her to stop. I need her to stop pretending so her father will stop fighting me so hard to have her. As long as that mask is in place, she is in his good graces; I know it is the image and not the reality that drives him. But the longer she holds that mask up, the more broken and diminished she's becoming.

I recognize the unwillingness to believe the truth of who her father is. But I also know, that like me, she needs to see it. She has to know that she deserves clear, honest love. I want to pull straight the tangle of yarn we gave her as a distorted representation of marriage, of what to expect from love.

When she told me the events of the morning, indignant and wounded, there was an adult comprehension in her voice; she understood that his actions were intentional. Whatever willful blindness she had cultivated fell away, along with her innocence, truth biting with hard sharp teeth into her feet.

He wakes her up late for school. She rushes. It's

December, 21 degrees, and she runs out the door in a tank top, forgetting a sweatshirt or coat in her scramble to catch the school bus. He sits in the house as she rushes the quarter mile to the bus that surely isn't there, surely she has missed already.

She runs in her white Keds, no socks, blisters forming on her heels, quickly bursting and bleeding. Cold, she runs and rushes and of course, the bus is gone.

When she texts him he says, "21 degrees and you're in a tank top. Let's make better choices." Then he tells her to walk back home and he will drive her to school.

My daughter, her will and anger rising, refuses. She sits on a bench in the freezing air and waits.

Something broke loose in her that day: a belief that a happy life is her birthright, a trusted anchor. The love she had for a father who never existed. The constellation of chaos and pain surrounding him orbiting her obliquely, this time aimed straight at her heart.

She is done pretending and I am proud of her, and relieved, and sad, and scared. Here is what I've been waiting for, what I hope will save her, but it's a gamble and it's heartbreaking.

I walk the Stations of the Cross through the bare New England trees, stopping to sit and rest my aching hips before each statue of Jesus along the way. His acceptance, his suffering, his love regardless of who understood or didn't, no matter who attacked him or betrayed him, causes something to enter me, like a pearl plucked out of the air and placed on my tongue. I hold it there like a talisman. It will protect me. It will help me remember.

After passing the Resurrection I come again to the

stone grotto, a curved cave of silence and God's presence (*I hope*) where believers light tall candles as prayers, reminding God that we are here, each prayer \$2.

I light two candles, one for my daughter and one for myself, stuffing four dollar bills into the slot. I don't really know how to pray, but I imagine that the light from the candle somehow reaches her, beaming up to God, then beaming down to her; a specular reflection. I picture this ribbon of light linking us, surrounding her in a protective maternal glow, keeping her safe and strong and brave as we wait for the heavy, slow wheels of the family court system to turn and decide our fate.

Facing Backward

George Kelly

Drama

Cast of Characters:

Sportscast Announcer (Unseen)

Sam: A boisterous “life-long” Boston Red Sox Fan

Bill: A more subdued “life-Long” Boston Red Sox Fan

Place:

Boston, MA

Time:

Just at the end of the 2004 World Series.

Setting:

A Sports Bar in Boston

At Rise:

A sports bar in Boston, Ma. There are four sets of small round tables with three chairs at each. The bar was full but is now empty save for two men. There are peanut shells on the floor, empty beer bottles on all of the tables, bowls of half-eaten popcorn, and confetti everywhere. Boston Red Sox banners of various vintages, hang on the walls. Other Boston team banners hang there as well. Outside the bar there is a raucous celebration—horns honking, people cheering, and street bands playing upbeat music. One of the men in the bar SAM stands Center Stage, facing the audience, looking with great intensity up at an unseen T.V. screen. Light from the screen reflects its various colors off his face. Sam is a sloppy, burly looking man. He is wearing a Red Sox cap tilted back, and a little sideways on his head. He is wearing a Red Sox shirt that is partially tucked in. He

holds half a bottle of beer in one hand, and the remote to the T.V. in the other. He raises the bottle to his mouth in slow motion as he watches a replay of the final out of the 2004 World Series. Seated at a table, is another man BILL. He is staring morosely at his Red Sox hat, which he is holding in both hands. From the T.V. we hear a repeat of the “play by play,” that ended the final game of the 2004 World Series.

ANNOUNCER (Off Stage)

(With excitement building on each word)

Here’s the pitch, Renteria swings, a bounding ball to Foulke. High catch. Foulke’s got it. Running toward First Base. Underhand to Mientkiewicz who snags it—

(Pause—almost not believing it himself)

And the Boston Red Sox are the 2004 World Series Champions. The 86-year drought is over. Can you believe it? Can you believe it?

SAM

(Raises the remote and stabs it at the T.V. which shuts down)

I CAN’T believe it. I can’t BELIEVE it. I can’t believe IT! I just had to see it again. What a thing has happened—what a thing it is—really, I mean right now. I’m just plain freakin’ amazed. Awe—some! Isn’t it awesome Bill? Isn’t it?

BILL

(Looks up at Sam, and back again at his hat)

Yeah, yeah, I mean yeah! Yeah!

(Half-heartedly)

Awesome.

SAM

We finally did it.

(Sam notices Bill's lack of enthusiasm and studies him for a moment. He looks squarely at Bill. Bill looks back at him)

What!

(Sam waits for a reply then turns toward the table, flips the upstage chair around straddles it and sits—irritated, he looks straight at Bill.)

BILL

I don't know. I'm sad—the opposite of being happy.

SAM

What's the matter with you man, we did it.

BILL

I know, I know. I never thought it would happen, you know? When Foulke tossed the ball to first base, I thought Mientkiewicz would drop it or something. You know, like all the other times when "The Fates" screwed us. I don't know. I gottah tell you Sam, I don't think I'm prepared for this.

SAM

I know what you mean, good buddy. We all know that the road to disappointment runs through Fenway Park, but that crap is over. It is in the past, done, forgotten. We've done it now—and we're here to see it. Alive this very moment in history to see it done, and it's awesome!

BILL

I am happy for your feeling of awesomeness. I mean why shouldn't it be awesome? It should be.

SAM

There you go. Now you've got it.

BILL

But I don't feel... awesome.

SAM

We have been redeemed. The gods have reached down and liberated us from The Curse. Do you not understand?

BILL

I'm beginning to—

(Imitating Sam)

un-der-stand. That's why I'm sad.

SAM

Sad—You're sad. You're sad? You're sad! About what!

BILL

I think I'm sad because it's over.

SAM

You're goddamned right it's over, and it's about time! Eighty-six freakin' years is erased—gone! —over! And we are alive to see it happen. We, you and me, are the chosen ones. We'll carry this night, this memory forever. We are the bearers of the good news of the most awesome thing that has ever happened in the history of Boston, including Bunker Hill, and I mean that!

BILL

That I would live to see this day. I just don't know what to do—how to feel.

SAM

Feel awesome, feel the awesomeness, feel like a champion for a change and celebrate with me, and everyone else out there. That's what champions do. They celebrate, get drunk, scream, wreck stuff, party until the wee hours. We're kings of the world!

BILL

Sam, I just don't feel like a king. I feel badly—like something's gone that won't come back. That's how I feel. I don't know how to act.

(Pause)

I have no awesomeness.

SAM

Well get some. Look around you—all is awesome—

(Sam runs to the door and opens it.)

Listen! Look! The horns are honking, the people are singing. You're in the middle of history for Christ's sake. The bells are ringing.

BILL

Like Paul Revere

SAM

(Giving Bill a hard look)

You're freakin' weird, do you know that? Do you sense that you are weird? What do you mean Paul Revere?

BILL

Like Paul Revere. I feel like something's coming. We've got to be prepared for the something that's coming. A warning is sounding. The bells are warning us.

SAM

Warning us--about what?

BILL

I—I don't know. But something's changed. Something's gone—we've lost something.

SAM

Lost something? Look I can understand how that twisted mind of yours won't let you

(Beat)

Carpe—the—Diem. We have won—for Christ's sake, we have won the freakin' World Series of Baseball.

BILL

I know that, don't ya think I know that? I know that—but I feel like something else has left us—something else is over. Does it occur to you that now, it's just you—just me—and everyone out there left with one moment—we are in the middle of a seesaw between a beginning and an end, and I'm sad about it.

SAM

Yes, finally the end. Tomorrow, you know what's going to happen? Sons and daughters will visit their fathers' graves with great news. See this hat? I'm going to put it on my old man's stone tomorrow, so he'll know. And then I'm going to get myself a new hat, for the new age. I'm going to wear a new hat that says Red Sox. And right underneath it's going to say, World Champions, 2004. We swept the goddamned Yankees, in their own house, and now the Cardinals—eight straight wins—unheard of. And we did it with a brand-new broom, and I need a brand-new hat to celebrate. When the Sox come down Boylston Street in the Duck Boats, I'm going to jump and shout like a kid, and watch the fireworks on the Charles River, -there better be fireworks—every

revolution starts with gunpowder-- and then, you an' me, are hittin' the nearest bar for beer. Sam Adams beer— Boston beer, and to hell with Paul Revere and his freakin' bell. Didn't you see that guy over there—crying like a baby. I was talking with him. Now he had a reason to feel bad. He wanted to tell his father that after eighty-six years; it had finally happened. He wished his father was still alive to see this day—to feel this awesomeness.

BILL

His father is better off that he doesn't know.

SAM

O.K. you tell me. What have we been rooting for all these years? Why do we wear these hats? Why are we members of Red Sox Nation? We've stayed true man, through all the suffering and humiliation—every annual near miss. Don't you remember the 9th inning? Two out?

(Imitating)

The ball goes through Buckner's legs. And the day after that, and the headline in the Globe—Mudville! Don't you think we earned, and I mean earned, this victory? We're the faithful man, the die-hards, the perennial hopefuls, and now we are World Champs. And there you sit-- sad because we won't die without a World Series. Did you see the guy—the guy? Crying man. He's carried the weight—The Curse, longer than we have, and now for all of Red Sox Nation it's over.

BILL

I know, I know. But you know what I think? I think that all these years we've been rooting for the wrong thing, and now it's broken.

SAM

What's broken?

BILL

A connection, a consistency.

SAM

I'm sitting here with a crazy man—a man who cannot bring himself to enjoy success. What are you talking about— Connection? Consistency?

BILL

The connection we all had, and the consistency I could rely on.

SAM

Would you tell me please just what the hell you're talking about? Do I have a loon for a friend?

(To himself)

It's celebration time and of all the days in the world, on this day, am I'm stuck here with a loon.

BILL

We had a connection to something greater, and as long as we nearly won, but didn't, we belonged to each other. We had that in common. When we had our near miss, we were bound in our sorrow to everything and everyone that came before us—and there was comfort in that. We were part of a Fenway Fraternity.

SAM

A fraternity of failure—losers. Who wants to belong to a club that thinks losing is comforting? Every time we lost, we were depressed for days.

BILL

Actually, that's not true. If it was just that, winning and losing, we wouldn't have hung in there for generations. None of us would have. There was something bigger than that. When Bucky freakin' Dent hit one home run all year, and it was over the Green Monster at Fenway, eliminating us from the post season, we were devastated. "The Fates" had stepped in again to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. We could blame it on something bigger than us. The history of errors, from Buckner all the way back made it livable—made it colorful. We could analyze it, think about it, laugh about it, because we were used to it—it was comfortable and comforting, and expected—and we still had next year and new hope. We weren't losers. I know, I know, technically we lost, but when we did, The Dream was saved. We didn't know it then, but when the Sox lost, they let us dream on. We continued to be part of a ritual in the most perfect game ever created. And it was good practice you know—really good practice—and comforting. We knew what to do—how to handle it.

SAM

Good practice for what?

BILL

There has to be a dream Sam. A dream that is just out of reach that teaches you how to handle it when it doesn't happen.

SAM

So, we're supposed to lose to keep some dream alive?

BILL

Not lose, but when we did, to take it and come back, and keep dreaming and looking for something ahead of us. And for so many years we all shared in it, and we were all connected together every blessed spring—every April 1st. We still had our dream. Sam, we always had a near miss behind us, and a dream in front of us. Like that guy in the Greek myths pushing the boulder up the hill. It falls back down, but he keeps pushing it up the hill. There's something noble about that—you can rely on that—it's something you can depend on and it's comfortable.

SAM

What is comfortable about doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result? Isn't that the definition of insanity? And the losing—the shame? I got relatives who don't live here, and every year, I get the “Old Razz.” The goddamned phone starts ringing, the minute The Series ends.

(Imitating)

Lost again heh? I have to hear about The Curse of The Bambino. You traded Babe Ruth to New York, and you're gonnah pay forever—just another reminder.

(Holding up his cell phone)

No calls. Cuz brother this year, I'm doing the calling, and I can't wait. And I got something besides losing to hope for—I got a dynasty to hope for. A repeat for next year! How about that? How about thinking about that, this blessed spring?

BILL

We'll win again—I know it, but it won't be the same; it will never be like it is this very moment. This moment only comes once, and then it's gone forever. Those bells you hear ringing are a death knell. We won, and now we are separated—disconnected, from all those who came

before us. Now Sam, we are expected to win—we must win. Now, Jesus I never thought I'd say this— but we are now—the freakin' Yankees.

(At the mention of Yankees, both men
turn away from each other and spit)

It's horrible to even think about.

SAM

It's not whether you win or lose, it's whether you win.
Winning is what we're supposed to do.

BILL

No Sam, you're wrong. It's not only whether you win;
it's also how you take losing when you DON'T win that
matters.

SAM

You're startin' to really piss me off.

BILL

Just listen a minute, willya? We got what we wanted, but
we lost something we had. Nobody ever wins Sam—in
the end we all lose. We all roll the rock up the hill and it
rolls back down, and then one day, it rolls over us. But
they made us forget, and they postponed it for us, and
kept the dream alive. They gave us eternal life. What
they went through—the great ones— Williams,
Yaztremski, Rice, and before them, Mel Parnell, Bobby
Doer, they connected us all to a dream, and they showed
us how to take it, when the dream didn't come true.
They took it like Gladiators, out there in the oldest and
most sacred arena in baseball. And then, when they died
out there, they came back—they rose again, for another
try. And then, they too were gone—left with a memory
of what might have been.

SAM

Gone but not forgotten.

BILL

Exactly my point Sam. They remained noble—forever young and in our memories of what might have been. They acted with dignity, honor, and courage. They were as pure as a short stop going to his right, wheeling around and throwing out the guy running to first base. And they did it all in front of us. And now, it's gone. It's gone for them and for us. All those near misses. Sam, I never realized that we were always in danger of achieving "The Dream." And what remains for them now? Now, they are losers; they are the ones who lost. And what remains for us?

SAM

Those guys are heroes. They're forever the great ones. Are you calling Ted Williams, the Splendid Splinter, a loser?

BILL

They are tied now to a severed past—And we are here in the precise point between them and a lost dream and Curt Schilling, and Johnny Damon who won, and who will leave us to sign obscene contracts. They won't stay like Ted, and Yaz, and all the rest. They won't roll any more rocks uphill for us. They'll leave us disconnected, with nothing.

SAM

They'll leave us with a World Series Banner over Fenway—the first one in 86 years. What's wrong with that?

BILL

The banner will remind us of what no longer is. The Dream is behind us now. What something do you make after you get what you dream? What's left—a fleeting moment with nothing in front of it.

SAM

They'll make millions.

BILL

But inside they'll know, like we'll know. The greatest drama is over; the stage is dark. The curtain is closed. It's over. Our heroes all know this. Their best days are behind them and after that, what's left-- maybe forty years hanging on to a memory, like dead people—signing autographs for the past. They sell their past and live turned around. Everybody peaks Sam, and it's not too good to peak too soon. And so now here we are—like them. We're turned around, facing backward.

SAM

I got a headache. You gave me a headache on the greatest night in sports history. Why did you do that to me?

BILL

I'm sorry.

SAM

I'm not facing backward; I'm facing forward—me, and everybody else out there. I'm going outside with the winners! Me, I got a future. Tonight, I'm whoopin' it up and then I'm gonnah call my cousin, and a bunch of other

people. I'm gonnah wake em up in the middle of the night and crow man—just crow. Hell froze over man—we won. I gottah get outah here. I gottah move.

BILL

Have fun, man.

(As Sam begins to leave, an idea occurs to Bill. Slowly he begins to brighten up. Suddenly, his face lights up.)

Sam, you genius, you're right. I gottah move too.

(He begins to become animated, running around the bar)

Sam do you see me? I'm moving. See me moving?

(Bill pumps his fist in the air)

SAM

I do nutbird, where are you moving to?

BILL

Chicago!

SAM

What are you talking about? Chicago?

BILL

Chicago!

SAM

What's in Chicago?

BILL

The Cubs

SAM

The Cubs?

BILL

Sam, The Cubs—Wrigley Field—No Green Monster, I am gonnah miss that-- but they got an Ivy-covered outfield fence. You know stuff gets lost in that Ivy? But you know what isn't lost? A hundred years and still no World Series—near misses up the gazoo—almost made its—They even got their own curse and Sam—oh Sam, a connection and an unbroken tradition—and a dream Sam—a dream to hang on to. I gottah get movin'. I wonder where I can get a Cub's hat in Boston.

(Bill tosses his Red Sox hat to Sam who catches it. Bill runs out the door, leaving Sam nonplussed.)

SAM

Nutbird!

CURTAIN

The Weight of Experience 10

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Art



It All Dances Away
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



Girl Out Walking Alone At Night

Kelly White Arnold

Poetry

She is
a guitar, vibrating at slightest
pressure, attent to humidity
and handling, strung almost
to snap.

She is
a cricket, antennae
alert, sounding sharp
chirps across
the backyard at dusk.

She is
the dusk, and she's that
finicky E on your laptop, the one
that sticks if struck
too forcefully, goes screaming
across blank document pages.

She is
the greenish-purple
of a bruised
cheek, the torn lace
frill on a choirgirl's white
church socks, a velvet
fawn hidden in tall grass,
waiting for its mother.

Memories

Kelly White Arnold

Poetry

stretch, teenagers pulling pink bubble gum—
 snap—
 artificial sweet of nostalgia, lose
 flavor if chewed too long

migrate, flutter:
 sparrows seeking
 greener branches as winter
 winds slink into barn eaves

crash, clang out of time, thrusting
 themselves into verses not written for them,
 jangling meter and rhyme, usurping melody,
 insistent in their need for notice

steal into still spaces, fidget
 in the moment between ribcage rise
 and fall (intrude, leave no space to)
 breathe

After
Kelly White Arnold
Poetry

Exiled hands brush
bark of front yard
trees, snake
their way down defiant
hips of sidewalk, slide
up crooked piano
 keys of porch
 steps, rap
on doors to houses long long
 abandoned.
Even the letter slot:
 Boarded.
 Silent.
Sparrows build nests in ruined
eaves of what we
 once were, litter
the floor with shit, sticks,
 seeds—No
eggs line these
 nests, no
hatchlings chirp for
bile-covered
 worms, no
downy fledglings
 conquer
sky's leaden expanse.

Disguise

Claire Scott

Poetry

I wear a disguise that
looks just like me
that's the point
no one can tell
I am a person
trying to imitate
a person
who left
long
ago

Pinholes

Maddie Campbell

Poetry

Behind me there is light
Ahead there is only darkness
I cannot see where I am going
Only where I have been

Soul Searching
Maddie Campbell
Poetry

Darling, you do not have a soul.
You love the lakes and the mountains,
paint deep into the night,
and you do not have a soul.
You curl your hair
and radiate sunshine
and do not have a soul.
You come alive at the sea
and run wild through the woods,
and you do not have a soul.

I'm soulless? you ask,
but how can that be?
I run through the woods, and I love the sea.
How can that happen
if I don't have a soul?

No, darling, no
you have misunderstood.
The most important part of you
lives in the woods.
You are alive in the trees,
the mountains, the seas.
You do not have a soul,
a soul simply you be.

The Trolley
Barbara Krasner
Fiction

Liza got the idea from *Downton Abbey*, when the underbutler offered his hand from a Great War trench, an invitation for enemy mutilation. If Liza offered up some part of her own body for disfigurement, she could leave her emotionally exhausting job as an ER nurse, and coast off disability benefits. She'd done the research. She could apply for Social Security Disability at any time, but even if that didn't come through, her private disability insurance would pay for everything she needed. She told no one about her plan. It wasn't that unusual. Hadn't her own great-grandfather cut off a thumb to avoid conscription in the Czar's army?

She checked the weather report at least three times. Severe thunderstorms. Possible tornado. Good. She climbed aboard the Richmond tour bus, an old-fashioned, motorized trolley, knowing full well how treacherous the cobblestone streets were to traverse. Richmond was full of ups and downs. One extra bump could send the passengers flying, stumbling headlong off the vehicle. One well-timed distraction aimed at the driver could take the trolley off course. She knew her plan was immoral because perhaps more than one person could be injured. But she couldn't hold herself responsible for sudden weather changes, especially predicted ones. She squeezed through the narrow center aisle, pushing past the tourists with their backpacks and babble to get to the backseat. She settled in on the thin, polished wood planks. Not at all comfortable. Good.

"Where are you all from?" the tour guide asked into the mic. Responses came simultaneously: Utah, Minnesota, Florida, New Jersey, Australia, Brooklyn, fuhgeddaboutit.

Liza could see it now in her mind's eye. She'd be rushed to the nearest hospital, into the ER, which in her mind would be uncharacteristically empty of patients with medical staff ready to triage and treat. An endless barrage of questions, the same questions posed by multiple people. The surgeon and anesthesiologist conferring with her, their procedure plans for surgery. She'd feel the welcome push of oxygen into her nostrils. A pinch of a needle and starting to count backwards from one hundred. When she awoke in recovery, after she stumbled to the restroom with assistance, she'd see her new reflection in the mirror: gauze bandages wrapped around her face like that van Gogh self-portrait after the "ear incident," his fur-trimmed cap on his head. The white gauze, protection against the truth.

Liza couldn't help but smile as the sky grew dark with storm clouds. Hailstones hit the sides of the trolley and then flashes of light and sizzling, crackling thunder. The trolley had just reached the top of the ridge and headed down to the Shockoe district. Just as it passed Monument Avenue, its bells clanged. Faster and faster.

"Hold on!" the tour guide yelled. Liza noticed a campus bus marked VCU hurling toward them. It was these damned cobblestones that should have been ripped up, the road macadamized long ago, but the city preferred to remain in the catacombs of the Confederacy. Someone yelled, "We're going to hit it!" Liza dug her nails into the small crevices between the seat's planks, surprising herself at her move for self-protection.

She felt a tap against the side of the trolley, and when she came to, a monkey entangled in lavender ribbons sat on her shoulder. She knew that monkey. She had just seen it in a painting at the Frida Kahlo exhibit at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The handrail had disengaged and impaled a woman with long braids, a

floral skirt, and embroidered blouse. The monkey shrieked. The woman screamed in Spanish.

Liza glanced at the other passengers. All were dressed in 1920s style, short-bobbed hair and hats for the ladies, pomaded hair and hats for the men. The bus that the trolley collided with no longer said VCU. It was something in Spanish. The woman screamed again. Liza mobilized into action, as she'd been trained to do. Where were those medical students from the college? Why weren't they helping?

She knelt before the impaled woman, whose brown eyes searched for something, anything.

Liza already knew the diagnosis, knew this woman's story: Fractured pelvis, punctured abdomen and uterus. Right leg broken in eleven places. Dislocated shoulder. Broken collarbone and three vertebrae. This woman was a miracle. She should not be alive.

Liza had been trained too well, although there wasn't much she could do without proper equipment and tools. Still, she managed to tear her jacket into strips and apply them as tourniquets. "Stay with me!" she insisted, as the woman's eyes began to close.

When Liza looked up from the woman's body the woman looked different now, no longer impaled. She no longer wore long braids, floral skirt, and embroidered blouse. Dressed in jeans and a striped shirt, her receding hairline showed a huge bump on the forehead and skin abrasions from broken glass. Liza punched 911 into her cell phone. She applied pressure to the wound to restrict the flow of blood. Police sirens pierced her thoughts, and a herd of EMTs stampeded onto the trolley. They asked for the woman's name. The woman sputtered, "Carmen Calderón."

Somewhere in the frame of the crumpled trolley, a lavender ribbon snapped.

My Maxwell: A One Act Play

Kylie Mukai

Drama

CHARACTERS:

MOTHER: Worn but warm. Holding too much.

FATHER: A man trying to keep things together by pretending they still are.

MAEVA: Nine or ten-years-old, but has had to grow up fast as the voice and only advocate for her older brother.

MAXWELL: A silent presence. Present throughout, physically expressive, but does not speak.

SETTING:

A fluid living space: dining, living, and possibly a kitchen that suggests a home but is not bound to realism. Locations shift without transition. MAXWELL's bed is fixed and elevated permanently on stage. Dimly lit, eerie. MAXWELL is always visible there. Consider ambient sound throughout: a baseball crowd, lullabies, ticking clocks, or low hums.

ACT I: SCENE 1

(Soft static. At rise, MAXWELL is seen stirring in bed. Small movements at first, growing more intense until his nightmare reaches a sudden stillness. MOTHER is at the kitchen table, cleaning up dinner. FATHER is pacing. MAEVA is cleaning up, too, though nobody asked her to.)

MOTHER

Leave it, Maeva. I will do it.

MAEVA

It's fine.

FATHER

(Beat. FATHER exhales. Speaking to no one in particular.)

She's going to need new cleats this season.

(To MAEVA.)

Your feet are finally growing into that big kick. Real athletic... Coach said you have a great field sense.

MOTHER

Like him.

(They glance toward MAXWELL, who stirs slightly but does not rise. Beat.)

He never wanted cleats, though. He'd run barefoot around the diamond until his feet bled and blistered. Said the dirt made him faster.

FATHER

Do you remember when he wanted to pitch?

MOTHER

Yes, because he didn't want to hit—

FATHER

—want to *hurt* the ball.

(They laugh.)

MAEVA

He asked me if dreams could follow you when you're awake.

MOTHER

When?

MAEVA

Tuesday after practice. I didn't know what to say.

FATHER

He was just fine on Tuesday.

MAEVA

He didn't have dinner with us.

MOTHER

That's just middle school. Boys... they pull away.

FATHER

He didn't eat dinner because he chose not to eat with *us*.

MAEVA

Maxwell doesn't pull away from me. Did anyone else check on him that night?

MOTHER

When you were little, Maeva, he used to sneak into your crib when he had nightmares. Told me that you protected him from them.

(FATHER Scoffs)

MAEVA

He still has nightmares. He just stopped telling you about them.

(Lights dim.)

ACT I: SCENE 2

(Lights up on MAEVA sitting next to
MAXWELL's bed)

MAEVA

Do you remember when you dressed me up in your church clothes and told Mom I was your little brother—because you never really wanted a sister? Me too, Maxwell.

(MAXWELL stirs)

But then you came around to the idea, and I got to dress *you* up as anything I wanted. You were such a good sport back then. We had fun. Don't you remember?

(MAXWELL rises, looks at her)

See, Max? I am here. I will always—

(Lights up on MOTHER and FATHER)

FATHER (*Angry*)

—always walking on eggshells every time that he gets quiet.

MOTHER

He is not trying to hurt us.

FATHER

He already has, dammit.

He quit the game, lashes out on you, hardly even talks to me, and he is failing every class that he's in. Maeva tells us that his dreams are back, but I am convinced that this *game is* for attention. He knows if he's quiet enough, if

he just crumbles in the right places, you'll bend. You'll blame yourself. And *I'm* the villain again.

Someone has to say it: Maxwell wants attention, and he knows exactly how to get it. His school counselor said the same thing. What do you make of that?

(Lights up on the bed. MAXWELL thrashes.)

MOTHER

I make of it that a grown man would rather call my son manipulative than admit he's in pain. And I make of it that you, his father, would rather protect your pride than protect your child.

(MAXWELL's body arches, then crumples. The light on the bed flickers. A soft hum begins. Time shifts.)

FATHER

He didn't want protection. If he did, he would have asked.

MOTHER

He asked us in every way he knew how. When he asked to quit baseball in the middle of the season, stopped hanging out with his friends and teammates, and when he didn't even look at Maeva for nine days straight.

(Beat. Lights up on the bedroom, MOTHER and FATHER exit.)

MAEVA

He wouldn't look at me, but I noticed that in the darkness of his unconscious reality, monsters of vivid

color overtook him, leaving him alone in his horror until he was released to wake up again.

(to MAXWELL)

Maxy, please wake up.

You said they chased you? Every night, something different: one night a shadow, the next a voice that sounded almost like daddy's after he's been drinking. I know.

I tried to stay up with you. Would beg me not to fall asleep, but I always did. I'm sorry. I really tried, Maxwell, I did. Every night. I am so sorry.

(Silence, and then faint sounds.)

They always started the same, you said.

(MAXWELL stands, dreaming.)

The glove was too big for your hand, but it's the only one mama could find at the Value Village.

(MOTHER enters.)

She would slice oranges for the team and stuff juice pouches into a cooler for you and your teammates. You loved eating the oranges and stuffing the rind into your mouth to reveal a citrusy grin.

(FATHER enters.)

Dad would carry the cooler—always making sure to open a juice box for me: unwrapping the yellow straw and piercing the pouch. I would sip, and color, and listen to the sounds of the little league—eagerly waiting for

you to look over at me and wave. Will you look at me, Maxwell? Do you remember when I would wave to you? It was hot outside and Dad didn't let me go and play with your teammates' siblings, but I never complained and I would sit and look at you. Wait for you. All I ever wanted was to be there for you, Max.

(Beat.)

You told me once that you didn't even like baseball, but it was the only place where you saw Dad happy... proud of you. You told me that it was the only place where the four of us were together, but we're all here now, Max. Mourning you. Missing you. The monsters in your dream followed you into consciousness, didn't they? Day-in and day-out—Growing louder with every slammed door, every sharp word, every empty bottle. None of us are okay, Maxwell. But no one asked the right questions. No one saw how much you were holding. You didn't need to carry that alone. You used to come to me when you were scared, when you needed me. And now I'm here. I stayed. Everyone refuses to come into your bedroom, but I do. Your backpack sits in the kitchen, collecting dust like we're waiting for you to need it again. And nobody touches it because they don't dare to face the truth: that you were trying to leave long before you were gone. I don't know how to live in a world without you, Max. But I will try... and I'll tell the truth. Even the parts that scare them. And I will keep waving to you, Max, just like I did at your baseball games. Just wave back to me sometime. I still need you.

(MAEVA walks into the dining area and joins her parents. MAXWELL, unseen by Maeva, waves.)

ACT I: SCENE 3

(Lights up on FATHER, MOTHER, and MAEVA seated at the dinner table, though they do not eat. There are four places set. MAXWELL remains on his bed. Time is unstable. Maxwell's backpack is set on stage, untouched since his passing.)

FATHER

(Pushing his food around on his plate.)

They say it's supposed to snow this weekend.

MOTHER

Oh, that's early for October.

FATHER

Whatdya say we rake before it sticks?

MOTHER

Sure, and I will bring the mums in before they freeze out there.

MAEVA

(Gesturing to MAXWELL's backpack.)

Nobody wants to touch it, hm?

(Silence.)

MOTHER

Go ahead, Maeva.

FATHER

Maeva, you—

MAEVA

It's like if we leave it zipped, he's still a boy running late, not one that left.

(She picks it up and carries it back to the table, placing it on the fourth chair.

Beat.)

He asked us in every way he knew how.

MOTHER

I miss him.

FATHER

I do, too.

(MAEVA unzips the backpack, pulling out a notebook full of MAXWELL's drawings and sketches. She chuckles.)

MOTHER (*Reminiscent.*)

His drawings.

FATHER

That one looks like the thing from Where the Wild Things Are.

MOTHER

(Softly.)

He loved that book. I think we both had it memorized before he even turned four.

MAEVA

(Tracing a page with her finger.)

This one... I think it's the one from the dream.

MOTHER

I think we should frame one. For his room. So when we open the door again, it's not just silence waiting.

(Silence. A quiet shift. Acceptance is growing, but pain remains.)

MAEVA

When will this end?

MOTHER

Grief doesn't end. It just... folds itself in. Becomes part of the room.

FATHER

Maybe tomorrow we can go through more of his backpack. Just a little at a time.

MOTHER

(To MAEVA)

Why don't you head to bed, sweetheart?

ACT I: SCENE 4

(The lights dim on the dining table.

MOTHER and FATHER exit. MAEVA remains seated for a moment, flipping through the drawings and fumbling with MAXWELL's backpack. A soft shift in light draws attention to MAXWELL's bed. He rises slowly and begins to make it: smoothing the blanket, fluffing the pillow, and folding a corner for MAEVA to crawl into. MAEVA crosses to the bed and climbs in to sleep. MAXWELL steps back, watching. After a beat, MAXWELL turns and exits slowly into the shadows. Lights fade out

at the dinner table, leaving only the bed illuminated. MAEVA's body stirs in bed.)

MAEVA

Maxwell?

(MAEVA jolts upright briefly, gasping, but then collapses back down. She is dreaming. The bed light flickers.)

No. Don't make me go—Please—

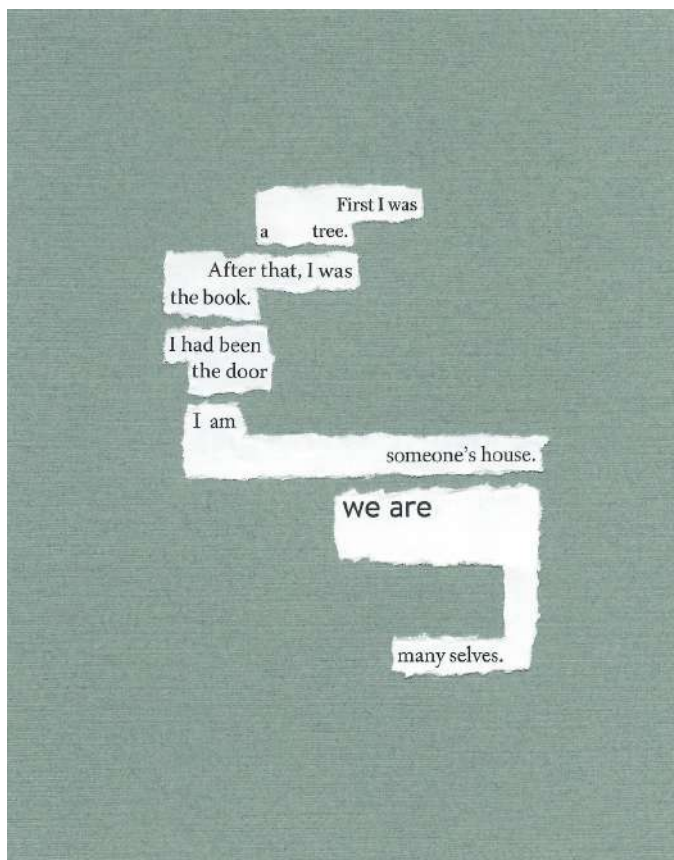
(Screaming now, from inside the dream.)

MAX!

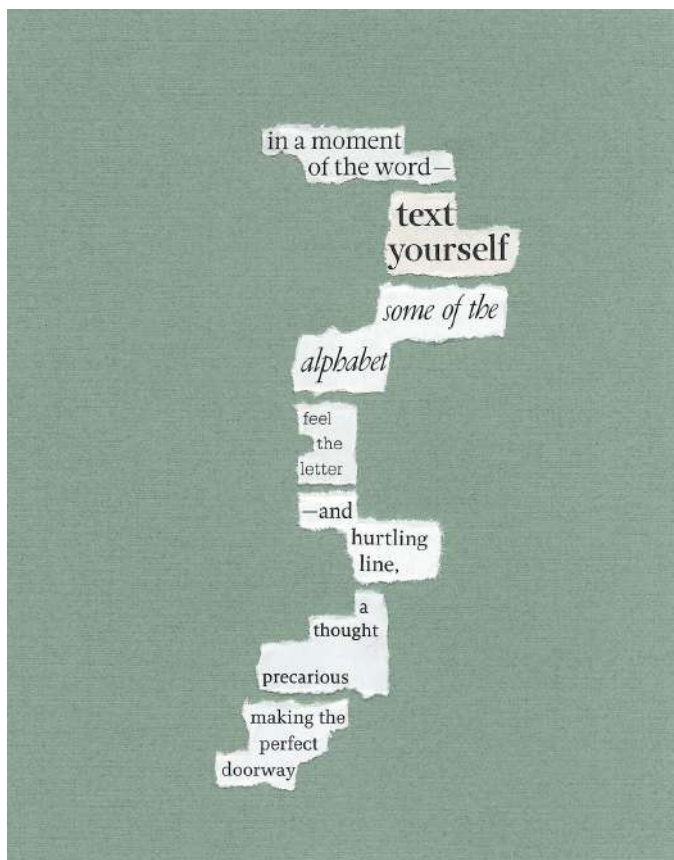
(A final flicker. Blackout.)

END OF PLAY

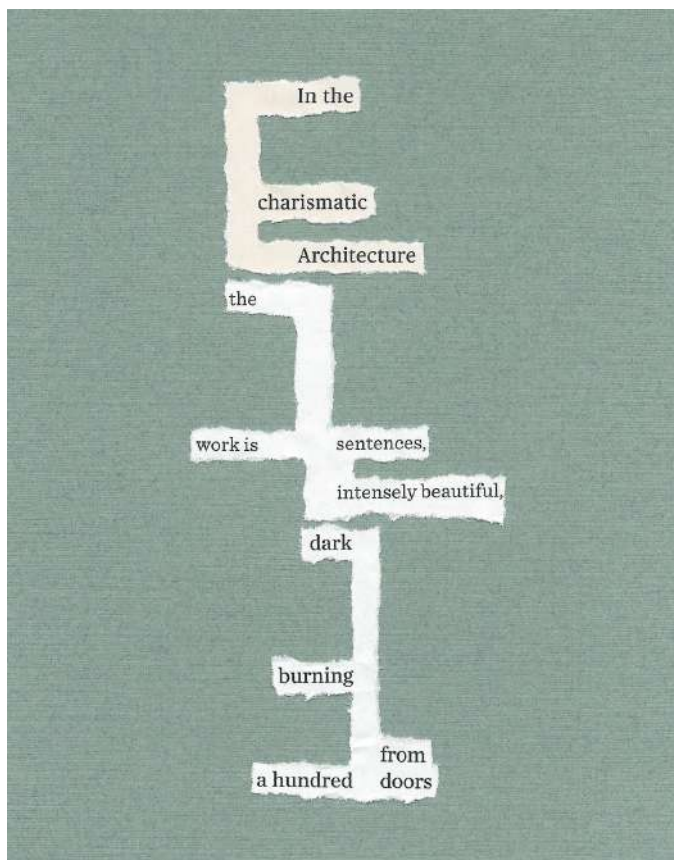
First
J.I. Kleinberg
Art



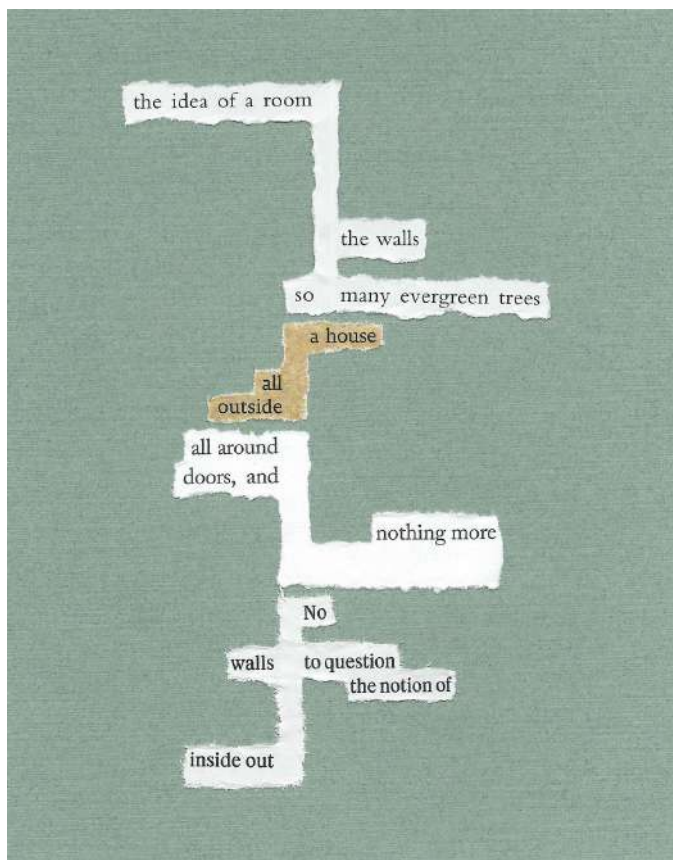
in a moment
J.I. Kleinberg
Art



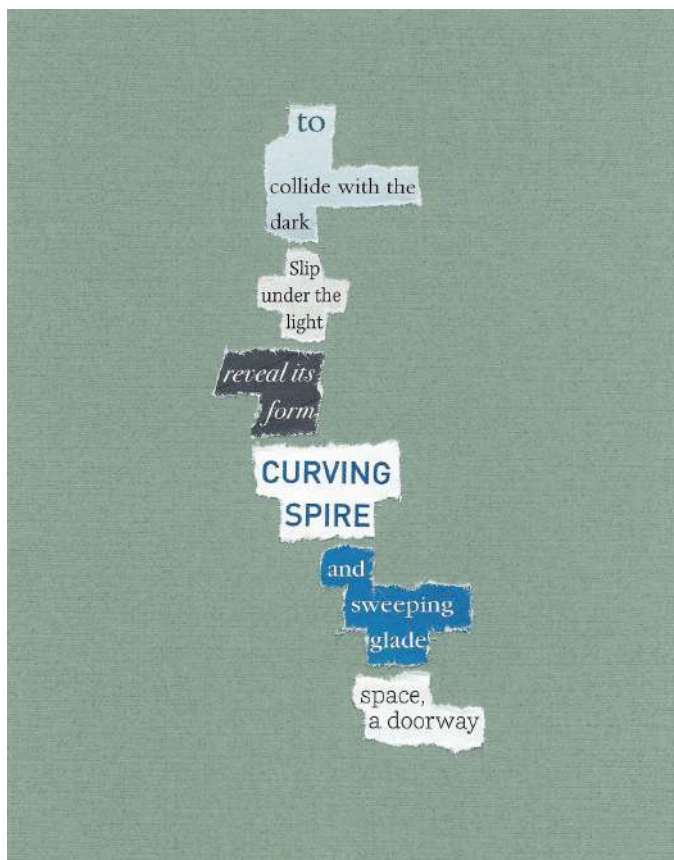
In the charismatic
J.I. Kleinberg
Art



the idea
J.I. Kleinberg
Art



to collide
J.I. Kleinberg
Art



My Life as a Rock
Gene Twaronite
Poetry

Golden Canyon, Death Valley

The walls close around me
as everything starts to flow
mustard-colored sediments
surging on violent waters
compressed in
eon-long seconds
into layers of living rock
conglomerated and tortured
tilted and thrust into
jagged tips against the sky
until wind and water
break them apart
into boulders and pebbles
that crash and tumble
down the canyon

I feel myself
newly constructed
from the surface debris
of past ages
pressed and uplifted
into whatever new life
awaits down the canyon
I savor this moment
in the brief history of me
before it breaks apart again

Return to Sender

Charles K. Carter

Poetry

I grew up with the idea that
people could be sent back.

My father always told me
I should have been aborted.

My grandfather takes down photos
of the grandkids who don't visit enough.

I wanted my brother sent back
because I wanted a sister.

I walk on eggshells waiting for you
to trade me in for a better model.

Oregon Donor
Charles K. Carter
Poetry

When I first moved here,
they found a human skull in a backpack
on the side of the road on I-5.

A few months ago,
there was a human foot
found near Bend.

I'm still wandering through the Oregon countryside
trying to find my heart,
my sanity.

I'm still trying to feel whole.

Where the Desert Meets the Sea

Danielle Hanson

Poetry

The ocean climbed
the ridges of the
shore—wave over wave—
looking for water
but the sand
had drunk it all.

The Lake is an Eye

Danielle Hanson

Poetry

The lake wakes up
and stares at the sky.
A bird flies over.
The lake swallows it.
I mean, a swallow
flies over and the lake
captures it as memory,
slowly dissolving until gone,
like paper in a water glass.

Dirt
Rasmussen
Poetry

Only the post-hole digger, tractor-pulled
could break the claybaked soil this year.
The party tents went up by worklights, late.

Reunion of a family whose birthdays were all
in summer, when strawberries ripened, regardless
of arrival date. Whose cakes were sugarless

biscuit tack, unleavened Depression-
grown in the sun outside. Cracked and dry.
Kids who caught the cream that wandered by.

This late July, a fantasy in the heat:
Grandma's making Dirt, or rather, brought
a large flowerpot, brown Jello pudding,

Coolwip (no H for us), and Oreos.
Aspartame, sucrose. Megapacks.
We mix and crush with tenderizers, fists,

layer it up and scoop it into bowls, all
mismatched, flown in from distant states.
Weeds no longer. Not squatters,

moonshiners, drifters, trailers-
after-land. Strawberry season is over.
We can't go back.

First-Class Spring: Special Delivery

Alan Toltzis

Poetry

This spring, coyotes too
are in full blossom. Unchecked,
they encroach on SoCal,
halting mail delivery nearby.
So what,
who can blame them
for napping on my front lawn?

Warsaw found a solution
to the inconvenience of nature: Edward,
a humanoid, patrols for wild boars,
dispatching them to the woods.

Somehow, I get the message
and drive north looking
for superblooms but find
endless fields of light instead.

In Over My Head

Tom Harmon

Poetry

I always asked my dad
How deep is it? before jumping in.
I wanted to make sure it wasn't over my head
and my feet could touch bottom
should I tire of the lesson.

He'd reassure me.
He taught me to float and the basic moves
front crawl, side stroke, scissor kick and such.
But he's no longer here
and life ain't no day at the pool.

Ocean waves of spreadsheets crash overhead
while currents of deadlines suck me in deeper.
My suit and tie are as of much help
as a lead belt and empty air tank.
I'm grateful for the days he took me to the deep end
and taught me to tread water.

Timid

Tom Harmon

Poetry

I never skied.
Sure, I took a T-bar and did a bunny slope
once or twice.
But I mean really ski—
down tight, tree-lined black diamond trails
with moguls and turns.
I was too afraid.

Same with public speaking.
I would crunch numbers behind the scene
parse policies and draft testimony for others to deliver.
But I never took to the podium
to share my work, my thoughts with the assembled.
I was too afraid.

That's also why my poems sit on a shelf
safely tucked between others' books.
The soul is too fragile to risk.

Ode to Summer Fruits

Morgan Matchuny

Poetry

the tongue can always find more to taste
in summertime. papaya bruises gold

under silkscreen sunset,
the haze all warm pink

and fleshy orange. I crave constantly
the touch of another body.

my tastebuds—dragon fruit skin,
prickly pear—soften when peeled.

I undress in moonlight to rinse the day:
hand prints bloom magenta, crimson,

plucking each thorn
from myself.

Concealed Shoe
Sarah Carleton
Poetry

Boot behind a wall, slipper on a lintel,
oxford in the chimney, high heel

in the eaves—around the world
when buildings break they reveal

single shoes planted like bulbs
in unlikely places. Scholars can't say

who put them there or why.
No one knows whether a grommet,

like a Greek glass eye, guards against evil
or a size 9 behind drywall brings luck

to the builder who squirreled it there.
I like to think the shoes are tricksters

playing hide-and-seek, leaving their partners
back on the rack just to bewilder us,

but my Crocs whisper that all homes
need a socked-away shoe and that

electricity would shut off without a pair
of sneakers dangling from wires.

Postcard to the Finger Lakes

Sarah Carleton

Poetry

I no longer live where spring hangs
like a hot-air balloon and tank tops
hatch from bottom drawers while snow
still stings the patio furniture, where
the Persian-carpet meadows hold back
till June has done the full intro—*jazz hands*,
presenting flora!—and in every home
coats are slung over chairs for weeks
as seasons stay stuck in a standoff: frost
fuzzing at dawn, rivers melting at noon.

Review of Richie Hofmann's "The Bronze Arms"

Jonathan Fletcher

Book Review

The Bronze Arms

Richie Hofmann

Knopf

96 pgs.

ISBN: 978-0593804742

Feb 10, 2026

\$15.99-\$24.95

“Love is a memory now, / you said to me. If antiquity can survive, love can too. / But it must be forceful” (Hofmann 3). And so begins Richie Hoffman’s latest collection of poetry, *The Bronze Arms* (2026). Part-celebration of queer love, part-meditation on masculinity (both the traditional notions of it and the artful subversions thereof), and part-imaginative retelling of autobiographical events, Hoffman’s poetry collection is wonderfully transgressive, unapologetically erotic, structurally compelling, and beautifully rendered (if admittedly aggressive at times). A formal departure from *Second Empire*, as well as a thematic elaboration on *A Hundred Lovers*, *The Bronze Arms* goes where Hofmann hasn’t quite gone before, says what he hasn’t quite said before, does what he hasn’t quite done before. With titles as equally imperative as striking—titles like “Breed Me,” “Armed Cavalier,” “Men’s Beds,” “[the statues are broken],” and “Elegant Perversion”—the author honors his promise to the reader, discomfiting them at times, enrapturing them at others, guiding them through at various points, abandoning them in equal measure, though always doing so with admirable craft and artistic sensitivity.

In “Young People,” is a free-verse piece about a male speaker and his lover, not only does homoerotic imagery abound, but the poem, which beautifully and unapologetically narrates the former’s sexual desire for the latter, concludes on a wonderfully subversive gesture: “The sky becoming white then black, / That submissive sleep / *On the bed I gave to / My friend’s sister when I moved*” (emphases mine) (Hofmann 22). A few things to note here: the speaker does not offer or gift the friend’s sister the bed on which his lover and him lay and have made their own. Rather, he *gives* the friend’s sister his bed, suggesting an assertion of homoerotic power (though, importantly, not control), as well as a subversion of bedroom heteronormativity. Although the sexual orientation of the sister of the speaker’s friend is not made explicit, the fact that the speaker makes note of her gender and constructs the sentence to read “My friend’s sister” (as opposed to “sister of my friend”), reinforces the relational power structure that the speaker both deconstructs and reimagines here (ibid.). There is also clever meta-moment in the poem. Just like the piece concludes on the speaker’s departure (seamlessly transitioning to the first line of “Armour / Amor,” in which the speaker mentions a bus, another means of locomotion), the fact that the speaker makes mention of his move suggests a progression, as well as the things discarded in order to make it (the bed). If not a sociopolitical commentary, it is very close. Very close.

To take another poem in which as much happens beneath the surface as on it, “Black-Figure,” also a free-verse piece, narrates the seeming short-lived relationship of a couple (maybe even the dissolution thereof?) through imagery and language of perambulation and locomotion: a walk through a museum and a doze in the back of a car, respectively. Also significantly, the poem starts with the plural pronoun, “We,” suggesting a type

of unity, if not an outright regal/divine nature of the speaker (à la God's use of plural pronouns to refer to themselves in *The Book of Genesis*). Only later does it break down into its constituent parts: a you (as in "Your pillows that smelled like chemical chamomile") and the first person (as in "And the hours turned, and I woke up" (ibid. 67, 68). Although the speaker does indeed seem to desire the solitude ("Then driving in the back of a black car—dozing, / *Voraciously alone*"), the transition from the plural pronoun ("We") to the singular ones ("your" and "I") suggests a gradual yet definite end to his relationship with the lover (emphasis mine) (emphasis mine) (ibid. 68). The speaker's use of phallic/bodily imagery for the weapons of the museum guards implies an inextricable link between the erotic and the aggressive: "The guards at the museums, / Younger than we are, / *With machine guns / Across their narrow chests*" (emphases mine) (ibid. 67). Furthermore, the thematic contrast between the fragility of the black-figure vases (many of which depict sexual acts between males) and the potentiality of violence inherent in the firearms further underscores such a connection between the aesthetic and the destructive. Implicit in the mention of the ancient Greek pottery is also the reality of survival. Coupled with the homoerotic imagery within (specifically, the motif of blackness, which suggests both a stain and a polish), the vases arguably serve as symbols of queer existence.

Later in the collection, "The Bronzes," the theme of survival is also addressed and explored. For example, as the speaker narrates, an amateur scuba diver happens upon a pair of male bronze statues: "their calcite eyes and silver teeth, / their lips and nipples copper. / There are two of them, both with beards. / Like father and son" (Hofmann 72). As with the other pieces in *The Bronze*

Arms, homoerotic imagery and language overlay the poem. However, other elements are also introduced. For example, the speaker, having narrated the discovery and recovery of the statues, themselves enters the poem: "This year it's been fifty years above the water again. / That's before I was born" (ibid.). A few things to note here: the birth of the speaker in the context of the water strongly suggests amniotic fluid, even the idea of the speaker's immutable sexuality. Also, the speaker's birth contrasts with the scuba diver's mistaking the statue for a deceased person ("He thinks it a dead body at first. / But the arms are bronze" (ibid.). Lastly, the water itself suggests baptism and, in the context of the speaker's birth, sacralizes his queer existence and survival: "Something was lost, something wrecked. / Something looted, something recovered" (ibid.). As with the element of water, there is as much beneath the surface as above it. Freudian in nature (given the fraternal/filial appearance of the statues), this poem operates on so many levels. As with the rest of the collection, it is a rewarding read. It is a necessary read.

Reading Richie Hofmann's *The Bronze Arms*, I am struck by its relationship to, as well as its departure from, his previous two collections: *Second Empire* and *A Hundred Lovers*. Although there are indeed similarities in structure and theme, Hofmann is not just relying on previous devices, forms, and moves, however sophisticated and successful they have proven to be. Instead, he keeps finding different and unique ways to both explore and question, both affirm and celebrate. This is a poet who knows exactly what he is doing and why. This is a poet who's made me suspect that there's so much more I could be doing in my own work. And that maybe, just maybe, I've been doing it wrong all along.

**A Home for Longing: Joelle Maxx Milman's
"Reportings"**

Hannah Butcher-Stell
Book Review

Reportings: Poems of Haftara

Joelle Maxx Millman

Ben Yehuda Press

118 pgs.

ISBN: 978-1963475777

March 6, 2026

\$14.95

"Reportings: Poems of Haftara" by Joelle Maxx Milman contains 22 poetic responses to Haftara, or weekly portions from the Book of Prophets. While a reader may be initially intimidated by the source material (Haftara passages are often spiritually complex, involving violent and sometimes erotic imagery), Milman's poems are accessible, with each poem beginning and ending with an em-dash. Like its own version of a choose-your-own-adventure, you can take any poem as a starting point.

As if that structure isn't enough of a treat, Milman also includes her own fresh, accessible translations of each Haftara. Interestingly, the poems *precede* the translations, forcing the reader to meet each poem blind, without its Biblical context. This structure touches a highlight of Milman's poetry: she can drop the reader abruptly into space and speaker, run far away from context, and get away with it. In this book, the reader's experience is its own poem.

I am impressed and fascinated by the collection's speaker and her spiritual transformation. The text is constantly moving, and so is the speaker. The first poem drops us into her travels, like a camera abruptly

swinging to her feet: “—look, it’s me, walking / the pavement’s street...” (1). As readers, we often literally find ourselves in the speaker’s footsteps, sometimes “far from the sea” and “stumbling” (31).

Who is the speaker? We are not entirely sure. Part angel, part human, and without gender, she has a confident, authoritative voice throughout. She knows her strength is to approach life with childlike curiosity. In the first poem, she observes a couple prostrating on the ground and explains, “...I’m very intrigued, so I skip to go see” (1). She is also unapologetic about her physical desires, declaring things like, “I want / to / take / a / hot / sovereign / nap / alone” (21). (Yes, I very much want to be like this speaker.)

The most intriguing aspect of the speaker, and the most overt, is her tumultuous relationship with God. She is bursting with a desire to be one with the divine, which in turn gives her a sense of radical empathy and inclusion. In one poem, she tends to her friend’s wounds and holds her chest open for their tears (7). In another, she tries to make a protective window out of string, hoping that it signals to the army that “these people are people at least, can / those little boys made to soldiers pause / before they knock ‘em dead” (14). She craves friendship in many poems, especially with God, and she rejects a God who champions a holy few rather than the collective. In Whitman-esque tones, she declares, “you know what even the unrighteous deserve to eat the almond branch!” (32) and “everywhere I roll I become moreso best friends / to all!” (39).

Part of the speaker’s wrestling with Godliness is engaging with issues that straddle ancient and modern times. She is often exasperated by guns, flags, and nationalism. In one poem, she addresses all of humanity, as if standing on a soap box: “Such beloved guns, dear people!” (25). And in another, the speaker complains,

frustrated, almost under her breath, “my lovers leave to fight dumb wars” (43). The speaker is, in essence, a social commentator. Elsewhere, she imagines humanity as a collective:

Again in Jerusalem, god watches us
 crouching amidst nets and snares
 street signs saying stop, protest
 signs blank with demands for
 justifications that arrive out of
 nowhere...
 imagine all the sons
 we could bear together if collective
 we finished into a giant, agile
 push— (53).

Throughout the collection, she is suspicious of any straightforward path to holiness. “God doesn’t care or need a flat freeway for cars,” she insists (40). In fact, performative acts of holiness dampen her search for God. Regarding temple service, she admits, “—it seems the temple’s priest only wants to have me mourning / from the mountain perch of stones where I’m meant to hear god roaring” (35). Instead, she finds her own holiness in nature: “the tip of the greens tickle my little arm hairs... this soil and my flesh are twins” (39). In one of the most fundamental poems in the book, the speaker and her friend the angel approach God, who rests his feet on Jerusalem. The two tug God’s toenail and plead, “can / there be a home to this longing / that you built into our bodies?” (47). I believe this collection attempts to become that home.

Milman exquisitely weaves surrealism into these poems. In the first poem, the speaker parties with the angels—almost like Natalie Diaz partying with Jesus in

“Soiree Fantastique”—and is sent back to earth to offer prophecy. The poems often exist several layers removed from reality. And yet, Milman’s poetry is thing-y in the sense that it is full of holdable emotions and imagery, of vessel-making and vessel-breaking. In one of the last poems of the book, the speaker floats over a promise, “whispering to it / adding to it / adding olive oil to the clouds...” (76). Olive oil to the clouds! The speaker, and Milman, want to season the world. To wake it up.

The speaker expects holiness and repeatedly demands to meet God face to face, completely unafraid to do it. Yet after finally meeting God, she regrets it, in true human fashion: “My head in hands, this is not / the audience i desired, i had hoped / we’d meet like the girls in the street do” (25). Later, holiness itself becomes exhausting and lackluster, with Sabbaths blending into one another until she takes the Sabbath in her hands and breaks it (65). Eventually, she angrily questions God’s intentions: “Raging, but dead, I ask god / what the promise is, I ask god / if he’s the lover she says / she’ll be...” (71). Despite her disillusionment, she still fantasizes about the future and is hopeful that the oneness she craves will become a reality. She says, “For even / when lost or far god finds / a way of knowing me... I wonder what that will look like / if it’s just one land / all loving a same god / that is forever making promises...” (76).

By the end of the collection, the speaker is quiet, intimate, and confessional: “—but i didn’t mean to walk / this path, i didn’t mean when i said the circles i...” (91). She is truthful about her humanity here, acknowledging both her resistance to the straight path and the difficulty of having chosen another. Milman holds a voice capable of shifting from immovable to delicate to defiant. It is a gorgeous collection, written for readers both deeply familiar with Haftarah and entirely new to it.

Contributor Bios

Kelly White Arnold

Kelly White Arnold is a Southern poet whose work has recently appeared in *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *As the Crow Flies*, and *Reedy Branch Review*. Her first chapbook, *Decidedly Uncertain*, is available from Finishing Line Press. Online sporadically @KArnoldTeaches.

P. H. G. “Delta” Brandon

Born in a bathtub but preferring showers, Delta was about to tell you that they started wearing jeans last year, and it’s a big deal. They live in Somerville, frying eggs on high, covered, until steam condenses back into the pan: set white and runny yolk.

Mark Belair

Author of eight collections of poems—most recently *Settling In* (Kelsay Books, 2024)—Mark Belair has also published two works of fiction: *Stonehaven* (Turning Point, 2020) and its sequel, *Edgewood* (Turning Point, 2022). 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

Jude Brigley

Jude Brigley is Welsh. She has been a teacher, an editor and a performance poet. Now in her seventies her writing has had a late flowering with over forty poems published last year in magazines such as 'The Alchemy Spoon', 'Gyroscope' and 'High Window'. She lives in Wales in her hometown but visits the USA often because her daughter and family live there.

Hannah Butcher-Stell

Hannah Butcher-Stell is a New Jersey-based writer. She holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College, where she served as Poetry Editor of *Lumina Journal*. She currently works as Director of Operations and Communications at Daily Giving, a growing nonprofit.

Maddie Campbell

Maddie Campbell is a music fanatic who loves to crochet (her favorite thing to make is blankets). She is in the process of rediscovering her childhood love for writing.

Sarah Carleton

Sarah Carleton writes poetry, edits fiction, plays the banjo, and knits obsessively in Tampa, Florida. Her poems have appeared in numerous publications, including *Nimrod*, *Valparaiso*, *Rattle*, *ONE ART*, and *As It Ought to Be*. Sarah's poems have received nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Her first collection, *Notes from the Girl Cave*, was published in 2020 by Kelsay Books, and her second book, *Sprung Loose*, will be out in the fall.

Charles K. Carter

Charles K. Carter is a queer, disabled poet who lives in Oregon. They are the author of *Follow This Blood to Find a Dead Thing* (Fernwood Press), *The God of Loneliness* (Rebel Satori Press), and *If the World Were a Quilt* (Kelsay Books). Carter can be found on Instagram @CKCpoetry.

Jonathan Fletcher

Jonathan Fletcher holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Columbia University School of the Arts. A Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and Best Microfiction nominee, he won Northwestern University

Press's Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize contest in 2023, for which his debut chapbook, *This is My Body*, was published in 2025. Currently, he serves as a Zoeglossia Fellow and lives in San Antonio, Texas.

June Gemmell

A writer all my life, it wasn't until I was in my sixties that I finally decided to share my writing with the world (whether they wanted it or not). And I became a published writer! I spend my time walking in the beautiful Scottish Borders countryside or on Bluesky chatting about literary things with my virtual chums.

Benjamin Gibbons

Benjamin Gibbons is a Pittsburgh-based writer. His fiction has been published in *Fourteen Hills*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and elsewhere, and he covers local music for the Pittsburgh *Manifold* newspaper and for his website, *Bored In Pittsburgh*. He was a finalist for the 2026 *Passages North Waasnode Fiction Prize*.

Ashley Gilland

Ashley Gilland is a writer and multimedia artist from Missouri currently pursuing her MFA at UW Bothell. Her work is published in *So to Speak*, *Peatsmoke*, *Thimble*, and *whiptail*, among others. When not writing poetry, she also loves composing music and embroidering mixed media art projects.

Allison Goldstein

Allison Goldstein received her MFA from California College of the Arts. Her horror movie-themed poetry chapbook, *"In The Night, In The Dark"* was released by Bottlecap Press in 2025. Her work has also appeared in

Not Very Quiet: The Anthology, Saw Palm, Last Girls Club, and Maximum Rocknroll.

Andrey Gritsman

A native of Moscow, Andrey Gritsman emigrated to the United States in 1981. He is a physician who is also a poet and essayist. He has published eight volumes of poetry in Russian. A 2009 Pushcart Prize Honorable Mention, he has also been Short Listed for the PEN American Center Biennial Osterweil Poetry Award and Best of the Net. Andrey's poems have appeared in over 90 literary Journals including Nimrod International Journal, Cimarron Review, New Orleans Review, Notre Dame Review, and Denver Quarterly. His work has also been widely anthologized including in *Modern Poetry in Translation* (UK).

Holly Guran

Holly Guran is author of *Now Before and Ever*, *Twilight Chorus*, *River of Bones* and two chapbooks. She received a Massachusetts Cultural Council award, and the popular Boston reading series she helps coordinate encourages new writers to try out their work. Selections from her narrative poems, based on a 19th century correspondence between a mill girl and the editor she married, have been performed at the Lowell National Historic Park. She was recently nominated for a Pushcart prize.

Danielle Hanson

Danielle Hanson is author of three poetry collections, most recently *The Night Is What It Eats*. She won the Elixir Press Prize and the Codhill Press Prize, and was Finalist for Georgia Author of the Year. She is Marketing Director for Sundress Publications, Poet

Laureate of Costa Mesa CA, and Professor of the Practice at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Tom Harmon

Tom Harmon worked for more than 45 years as an advocate for persons with disabilities. Now retired, he lives in upstate New York with his wife and enjoys kayaking, daytripping and reading and writing.

Marc Janssen

What is there left to say about Marc Janssen, other than he should eat more vegetables? Maybe his verse can be found scattered around the world in places like Pinyon, Orbis, Pure Slush, Cirque Journal, Two Thirds North and Poetry Salzburg also in his book November Reconsidered and his recent book collaboration A Resurrection of Trees. Janssen coordinates the Salem Poetry Project- a weekly reading, the occasionally occurring Salem Poetry Festival and keeps getting nominated for Oregon Poet Laureate. For more information visit, marcjanssenpoet.com.

Yvonne Jayne

Yvonne Jayne lives and writes in Hawaii. Her poetry is published in "The Twisted Vine," Western New Mexico University, "The Tipton Poetry Journal," "The Sacramento Poetry Alliance," "The Monterey Poetry Review," and is forthcoming in "Prosetric, the Magazine," a publication from the Netherlands. She has recently completed her MFA at Concordia University, St. Paul.

Ryan Keating

Ryan Keating pastors Fellowship Church in Middletown, Connecticut. He lived and worked in

Turkey and Cyprus for many years with his family. His work can be found in publications such as *Christianity Today*, *Fare Forward*, *Roi Fainéant*, and *Funicular*. He is pursuing a PhD in Philosophy of Religion at the University of Cambridge. His chapbook, “A Dance In Medias Res” is now available from Wipf and Stock.

George Kelly

I am a retired educator. I am 81 years old, and devoted to the writing of plays, teaching part time at our local college, and fishing, and playing golf when I have free time.

J.I. Kleinberg

J.I. Kleinberg lives in Bellingham, Washington, USA, where she tears words out of magazines and stares at them until they turn into doors, or poems. Find her at chocolateisaverb.wordpress.com or on Instagram @jikleiberg.

Barbara Krasner

Since her diagnosis of a rare, incurable autoimmune disease, Barbara Krasner has turned to art as a healing mechanism. Once allowed out of the house after nine months of isolation, she drove seven hours from New Jersey to Richmond, Virginia to see the Frida Kahlo exhibit at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. While there, she and her rollator climbed aboard a motorized trolley to see the city. This story developed from those two experiences.

Jerrold Laber

Jerrold Laber is an Appalachian writer and poet, and a previous nominee for the Pushcart Prize.

Morgan Matchuny

Morgan Matchuny is a poet and visual artist based in Lexington, Kentucky. Her work has been published in HAD, Rawhead, Anti-Heroine Chic, The Shore Poetry, and elsewhere. She is a participant in the 2026 Poetry Gauntlet workshop and is a poetry editor for Tiger Leaping Review.

Kylie Mukai

Kylie Mukai is a full-time student pursuing a MA in Theatre for Social and Civic Engagement at New York University. Mukai graduated from Gonzaga University in 2025, earning a BA in English, a minor in Comprehensive Leadership Studies, and a secondary teaching certification in English Language Arts and Theatre Arts.

James Piper

I am a Canadian playwright who prefers to ask questions and listen rather than spout nonsense. I lived in Sweden where, as a handsome blond, I didn't stand out, but I sure did when I lived in Nigeria. I read one picture book a day.

Seth Pyrtle

Seth Pyrtle, born and raised in the greater Houston area, is a poet and MFA candidate at Sam Houston State University. His work focuses on class and individual struggles using horror-inspired poetics as an outlet.

Piper Rasmussen

Piper Rasmussen (she/her)'s not a theatre kid, she was just drawn that way. She's been thinking a lot about food and ants lately.

Kristi Joy Rimbach

Kristi Joy Rimbach (she/her) writes poetry and creative nonfiction about her fumbling human journey. Her work can be found in “Here: A Poetry Journal”, “Flare Literary Magazine”, “Wild Roof Journal” and elsewhere. She lives in a small town in Connecticut with her husband and their three kids, two dogs, and a cat.

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Steven Schutzman

I am a fiction writer, poet, playwright and satirist whose work has appeared in such journals as The Pushcart Prize, Alaska Quarterly Review, Night Picnic, Rattle, I70 Review, TriQuarterly, and Gargoyle. I am the author of the recently published novellas “A Bride At Every Funeral, A Corpse At Every Wedding” and “Pablo, Pablito”, and of the one-act play collection “Where Things Are”. I am also a seven-time recipient of a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Grant, awarded for creative writing excellence. Website:

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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*.

Jenny Sherman

Jenny Sherman writes poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. She mentored teenagers through Girls Write Now, was a regional judge for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards,

and taught a magazine writing workshop in Bratislava. She has worked as an editor, writer, and rowing coach in Minnesota and New York City. Find her @jennythesherman.bsky.social.

Judith Skillman

Judith Skillman paints expressionist works in oil on canvas, board, and paper. She is interested in feelings engendered by the natural world. Her paintings have been featured on the covers of Thin Air Magazine, Torrid Literature, and Thin Air Review.

https://www.saatchiart.com/account/artworks/823323_judithskillman.com

Eric Suhem

Eric Suhem dwells in the Pacific Northwest. When not wandering around in the forest he can be found in the orange hallway (www.orangehallway.com)

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz is the grandson of Irish and Lithuanian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in Fish Food, Streetlight, Another Chicago Magazine, Door Is A Jar, The Phoenix, and The Harvard Advocate. Edward is also a published poet who has had over 700 poems published and been nominated for the Pushcart Prize multiple times.

Wendy Lew Toda

If I go outside, it takes me forever to walk anywhere. There's so much to notice—like the prints on the concrete left by rain-soaked leaves or the unfortunate outdoor light knocked flat yet again by someone cutting

the corner. I'm a Los Angeles poet/artist.
www.wendylewtoda.com

Alan Toltzis

Alan Toltzis has published plenty of poetry. But what's most important is that after a lifetime in Philadelphia, he and his family are now happily ensconced in Los Angeles. Find him online at alantoltzis.com.

Gene Twaronite

Gene Twaronite is a Tucson poet and the author of thirteen books, including six poetry collections. His first poetry book, *Trash Picker on Mars* (Kelsay Books), was the winner of the 2017 New Mexico-Arizona Book Award. He has also published two juvenile fantasy novels as well as collections of essays and short stories. He is a former Writer-in-Residence for Pima County Public Library. His latest collection is *Watch Us Burn: Poems for a Lost Earth* (Kelsay Books). Follow more of Gene's writing at: genetwaronitepoet.com.

Door Is A Jar Staff Bios

Maxwell Bauman, M.F.A

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 is a 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.

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