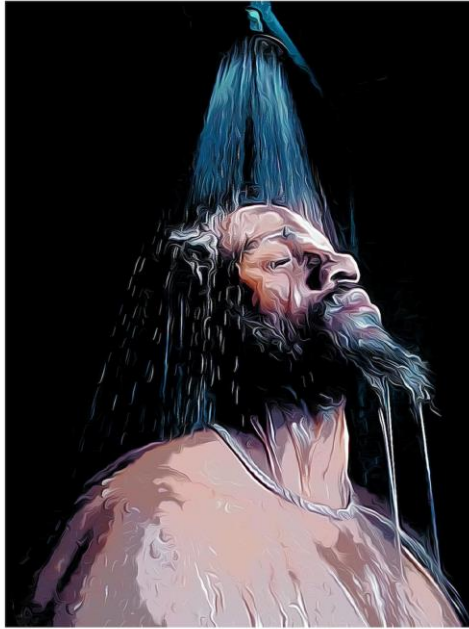


# DOOR = JAR



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ISSUE 18

DOOR = JAR

Door Is A Jar  
Issue 18

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Cover Image “A Tear Under Shower”  
by Elijah Christopher

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**Iced Over**  
John Tustin  
Poetry

I lie broken-backed in the gutter  
During a new sunlight.  
X'd out eyes oblivious.

I wake up trembling  
Without love  
As a young bird sings outside my window.

I am desolate in my heart  
As music plays all around me:  
Beautiful music.

I look in the mirror,  
Gaze upon my tragedy  
As the moonlight shimmers in a puddle  
Now iced over in the night.

Grand design, randomness, entropy,  
Chaos, whatever.  
I sleep at last.

The morning will come  
And I will shiver anew, again  
Without embrace or clear purpose.

Outside, the frost quivers on the grass; grass  
That awaits  
The emancipation  
Of spring.

## Letters From Home

Harvey Silverman

Nonfiction

The box had remained undisturbed and usually unnoticed in the corner for a couple of years. Finally, one quiet afternoon I sat down and began to go through its contents which had been haphazardly collected from my late folks' home; the box contained an assortment of papers, documents, photos and the like.

Suddenly it was 1956 again and I was ten years old. It was my first year at overnight summer camp, the first time I had been away from home without my folks, and it was to last four long weeks. The camp was in the woods, the accommodations could be kindly termed rustic, the amenities few, the food sometimes unpalatable. Some of the other kids, especially the veteran campers, were intimidating, threatening. I was immediately homesick.

In the box I had come upon a collection of letters my mom had written to me that summer at camp. She wrote often, happenings from home, news of the Red Sox, greetings from Teacup, our pet parakeet, the weather. There were the motherly concerns, gently stated, was I eating well, was I warm enough at night, should she send another sweatshirt. And the motherly advice, *be a good boy*.

I recalled how I had looked forward to the day's mail and how comforting her letters were, how they had helped me get past those first days of insecurity and homesickness, and how even after I was settled, happy, and enjoying camp they kept me connected to the security of family and home. I had saved them all, had brought them home and they had been put away and not seen again for more than half a century. Now I had

found and read them, each one, and then put them away again, happy and content with the memories.

But just a few days later, contemplating my reading of those letters I had a reaction, almost an epiphany, that went beyond happy and content. I could feel, viscerally feel, my mom's love. I had not, I could not at age ten appreciate how much pure and simple love was contained in those letters. At age sixty-six I had first read them from the perspective of a memory of childhood. But now there it was, a mother's love, mom's love, warm and doting and embracing. As I contemplated it further I realized for the first time it had not been just me who had dealt with the angst of separation. It had been so for my mom as well, her only child away from home, away from her for the first time.

There is no grieving or sorrow when I think of my mom and those letters. Love, that real yet intangible something, connects us still, her love for the ten-year-old me and the sixty-six-year-old. And mine for her.



**The Promenade**

C.G. Nelson

Poetry

Up the gleaming streets  
and up the marble steps  
climb to the National Gallery.

We visited on a sunny afternoon —  
it was my last week in the city.  
Remember — you came out to visit me.  
We only had a day or two for me  
to show you all the sights that  
had become loved by me.

But this one most of all.

A couple hours — that's  
all we had to go rambling through the  
halls of exhibits.

You wanted to see your favorites —  
mostly Van Gogh and Monet and the Impressionists.

But when I saw her —  
my favorite painting —  
you let me stand there for what must have been  
twenty minutes. You let me take  
twenty minutes to admire her  
curves, and colors, and depths.

That was the moment —  
the day, the hour —  
that I knew you loved me.

Then you grabbed my hand

and we went roving once more.

**Nomads**  
C.G. Nelson  
Poetry

Sitting by their used Airstream  
and listening to them talk  
with their legs folded neat  
listing off their plans for the future,  
my mind wanders away.

It gets lost in the  
shaded campground, looking  
up at the leaves, and  
the trees and the birds  
and the smoke.

The fire is crackling  
nearby, in a small silver  
pot. It pulls me from my  
foliage-filled reverie and brings  
me back to the campsite.

The future would take  
them to beautiful, far off places  
and to the great American landscapes.  
They would be untethered  
to everything but each other.

As I lie in bed that night,  
a few selfish tears find homes  
in my smoke-stained hair.  
“What a dream,” said I,  
“Not to live life like a passerby.”

**Foxes**  
C.G. Nelson  
Poetry

You moved across the country  
for the second time in your life.

You had left your home and everyone  
you had ever known the first time  
and you just did it again.

You wandered away, you suppose,  
your friends and family could not anchor you.  
This is because you were meant to be a nomad —  
shifting from place to place  
looking for an elusive idea of happiness and warmth and  
home.

You will miss your old friends, and place, and life  
but you cannot live somewhere just for the foxes.

u/s

Jane Ayres

Poetry

dwelling in dreams  
(our preferred homes)  
we are all looking for clues

the beaded shape of u/s  
wavy lines  
parcels of love in a jet stream

en  
    gulfed  
sub  
    merged  
a *should* life

**Haricots Noir**

Jeff Fleischer

Fiction

I had just taken the last bite of my gordita when she walked in.

Women like that didn't come by my franchise very often. The way she dressed, the way she moved, she was a bit too classy for this joint. You could say she was a tall drink of Baja Blast in a medium paper cup.

As soon as I recognized her, I left the rest of my lunch on its tray and sidled back behind the counter. I tapped my assistant manager on the shoulder and let him take a quick break while I manned the register. Of all the Taco Bells in all the strip malls in America, she had to choose mine.

The two men in front of her placed their orders, then parted like a snapped taco shell as she approached. Her lipstick was as red as our crunchy strips, and looked no less delicious.

"Can I help you?" I asked.

"That all depends," she replied, giving me a sly smile as her eyes scanned the extra value menu. "Can I get one of those party packs with only burritos? I've got a few friends coming over."

I couldn't tell if she recognized me. She used to come by my old store, way back when we had a chihuahua in our commercials and served our drinks in *Godzilla* cups. The years had been good to her. She was clearly living *más* these days, while I was still stuck trying to think outside the bun.

She placed her to-go order and handed me her credit card. Her name was different than it used to be, but I noticed the space on her finger where a ring had sat. The skin was a little lighter there, like our refried beans not fully seasoned.

“Anything else I can do for you?” I asked as I handed her a few packets of red sauce.

“Got anything spicier?” she asked. “I want something that will burn my tongue.”

“Sounds like you need some fire sauce.” I reached down into the pocket behind the counter and brought out a handful of the red packets. “Careful now,” I said as she took them slowly from my hand. “A little goes a long way.”

“Is that so?”

She gave me the kind of look that could have melted my cheesy quesarito, which was still congealing on my tray at that very moment.

“Steve is it?” she asked, glancing at my nametag. “Better give me a soft taco for the road. Can’t leave a girl unsatisfied, after all.”

I don’t know if I believed her, but I believed the ninety-nine cents plus tax in cash she paid for the taco.

She leaned in to take her receipt, and I could smell her perfume, as sweet as a fresh order of cinnamon twists. We locked eyes as she took her bag of food, maybe about to walk out of my life forever.

“Don’t worry, Steve. I’ll be back soon. I hear you guys are open till four, and I’d love to come by for fourthmeal sometime. Or maybe some fifthmeal, if you get my meaning. Maybe have a few margaritas.”

“That’s only at our cantina locations,” I said. “But for you maybe I can make an exception.”

“Oh, that’s too bad, Steve. We really could have had something.”

As she walked out, past the tape on the door that showed she was five foot three, she turned and blew me a kiss. I thought about following her, seeing if maybe we could make a run for the border together. But I had a date with a quesarito. The cheese would be tough by now, but things were tough all over.

**Untitled 1**  
Simon Perchik  
Poetry

You become a shell, this time  
hardened by so many times  
though the dress is empty

— your arm around the Earth  
lets nothing brush against the sleeves  
except the soft dirt that remembers

clearing out a place for snow  
to be scattered the way you dead  
give way to the great weight

pressing against your wish  
that everything be as it was and you  
no longer broken apart by those stones

you let pass through your fingers  
—it's all uphill and grass is everywhere  
struggling to bring you to the surface

with nothing in your heart: a buoy  
taking the lead as it used to  
beginning to fill with air and marble.



**Untitled 2**  
Simon Perchik  
Poetry

And though this door is locked  
it leans into the evenings  
that hollowed out the place

for its marble and grass  
where you still hide, afraid  
make the dead go first

— they already know what to do  
when the corners are no longer enough  
and with your finger become

the sudden breeze filled with moonlight  
and distances opening the sea  
holding it over the fires — pilings

are useless here, these great walls  
cringe from the cries rain gives off  
where a morning used to be

and you are following it alone  
as if there was a light in the window  
waiting for you to come by.

**Untitled 5**  
Simon Perchik  
Poetry

It was a lake, used to bodies: islands  
With an everlasting sunset and the glare  
From jewelry, veils slowly drifting down

As the footsteps that now weigh so much  
— it came here the way an icy stream  
enters a slope that can no longer right itself

has no water left to give, no nights, no arms  
though you are reaching for these dead  
by hauling off smaller and smaller stones

on tip-toe, paving your hands for the unease  
already smelling from wood, rope, holes  
hidden in bracelets and never let go.

**Mess Hall Duty, on the Goddamn Weekend**

June Son

Poetry

There are big sleeping bags  
and very small beds  
spinny chairs but not floor  
underneath me, and above  
there is the war but I'm never  
sure it's going well,  
how's it going with you? Today  
I washed aluminum cups found in  
70s rations and Cold War households  
were're still brooding 50 years later  
on the same exact conflict  
Maybe it's a scheduling thing,  
maybe it's because the stars  
never rest their berets,  
snore a few times. If it's tapped,  
if you're listening, sir,  
please give me one weekday  
where I can close shop,  
do that thing, go to a nice school,  
wear two watches, feed the stray cat,  
catch a stray bullet, watch myself grey  
lay peacefully reviewing and learning,  
claiming this decade is my last.

**He Who Saves One Life**

Maxwell I. Gold

Poetry

Where candlesticks and carrion flesh bubbled  
in hot oil and curdling nightmares,  
rusty wheels screeched over demented train tracks.  
We were slave to its existential locomotion  
and burning ashy stomach.  
Faster and faster it went,  
without any signs of slowing  
or the faintest idea of its final destination.

Stoking the flame and fury,  
its iron belly coughed plumes of thick  
brimstone and charred realities.

Nothing made sense,  
only that the train was our world.  
Crooked eyes and sinister chuckle  
were the only music we heard,  
bathing the crowded wooded boxes  
with disdain and dread.

Heavy iron chains clamped our wrists,  
restricting movement,  
restricting life;  
our bodies crammed  
like fleshy sacks of brain and bone  
as the train kept deadly pace in the cold,  
dank wintry night.

*“Ru’ah tezazit,*  
was the only word for such monsters  
in the tongue of our people.

An unclean spirit composed not of the living,  
but metal and cold idealisms;  
forged of blood and hatred in a desolate,  
far off world where candlesticks and carrion flesh  
bubbled  
in hot oil and curdling nightmares,  
as rusty wheels screeched over demented train tracks.

**Chasing a Dream**

Mehreen Ahmed

Fiction

I am old. But I wear a slippery, silken skin without a single crease. I carry a great many twigs, logs and sodden leaves. I bear boats and swords and house swordfish, home to spoons, plates and glasses. Gold, and silver of priceless trinkets. I witness listless stories of storms and floods. Human dramas played out upon my body. Great tragedies, even comedies sometimes upon my breast, cherished ephemera, jeweled bridal cavalcade of lost arks. Destruction of land, giving way to new ones across the other side. New farms yellowing, new laughter ringing, new loves budding, on the far stretch of the alluvial soil.

Then one day, the drama takes a turn as I bend around the lofty gums. All is going smoothly on the precious, fine land. There is a thud. A branch falls off. Splosh, Splish, Splash. I cave in, a moment, pirates are on the run. A sepulcher is lowered. It touches the bottom of my gut. That the pirates mutter, not enough, not enough is taken from the new land. A new bride's home has been ransacked. Her bridal Jewelry in the casket; bales have been torched, and people burnt alive. Yet, that is not enough, the weighty sepulcher, more gold and more silver on the horizon. My body is murky and heavy in places. Dark and grisly sorrow is painted. In my burrow, I see what I see, I hear thee. I record all your grievances and I bury them down-under. I record, not recoil, but the vengeance is mine.

A cyclone slaps hard, a catcher in the rye, takes the pirates on the lurch, in frenzy of a ruckus. They flee as far as they see. But the eye chases them until it is dawn. It takes them astride. The pirates are funneled and then embedded, not far from the sepulcher. This is the story, I

take back to the maiden, bereaved in white garment. It has happened. Now you can move on. Make new jewelry, even more fashionable ones. The maiden hears me out. But she says nothing. And I wonder, why this news has not sunk at all. The sun has risen. Vultures have flown away. The time is now ripe to chase the dream of life.

The divine numbers, 1,2,3 and 4 are pure and willful. They do what they do. They slide, and never look back. Use it. This window of opportunity may not return. Pirates are gone and will not be coming along in a long, long time now. I cannot wait for I am the tide of both glad tidings and bad. I proceed unhindered. I mope for loss. When the bridge is crossed, over the moss, I see an albatross. Swooping low, it speaks to me, oh no no! The maiden is cursed. No rhyme, no reason. They said she brings bad luck. A community of fools has decided that they must condemn her to distrust. No happy ending, this tale ends here. My nuanced waves cannot be euphoric. No winds to stir, no big ships foghorn. On my placid waters, the maiden's body surface. Wavering, I push on at once. The chase begins. This endless motion — a metaphor, perhaps of a dream, or a destiny to conquer.

**my torso, in all its divine incarnations**

Mya Alexice

Poetry

all quiet on this chest turned front.  
here fleshy, there taut. curves and  
their meanings not born but taught.  
arms raised above my head flattens  
my breast to an androgynous ovoid  
crest. my jaw, if turned at a point  
under the right light, could be  
a knife-edge and not just a keeper  
of bones. the circumference of his  
hands can fit around my meridian  
waist. here, rounded. there, hard.  
I am a blouse turned inside out,  
raised edges along the seams  
a revolt in so many words.

they teach you to draw women  
with circles and men with squares.  
draw me with a shape we've yet  
to name. my body is prelapsarian,  
blushing fruit left unplucked.  
there are no names here, no adam  
to category and classify. this  
body is leviathan, yawning with  
rows of waiting teeth.

did you know that half of you  
is made of alien microbes, sister —  
sons of the big bang immortal. wade  
into my tidepool as coral gnaws at  
the sides. I am sentiment and  
sediment and psychosis in a gut.  
I am a fraction of a limitless whole.



with you, I am just as small but  
somehow take up the entire room.

**summer sick day**  
RC deWinter  
Poetry

even as i lay  
hating wasted summer  
trying to sleep  
words rose in my throat  
choking me  
while my body deconstructed itself

i wrote a sickbed phantasm and purged  
finally slept

when i awoke  
i remembered my dreams for the first time in months  
flickering montages

the dead  
the living

and wondered what pernicious magic  
these invading microbes worked  
to bring these memories to life

**a walk in november rain**

RC deWinter

Poetry

outraged electricity  
washes in through the ether  
making everything prickly  
unsettling my brain

the walls are buzzing  
i can't concentrate  
can't sit  
must be up and about

so hooded and wrapped  
i stalk wet november streets  
a restless wraith trying to make sense  
of a world gone mad

the rain almost springlike  
cools the crackling heat  
of breaking hearts starving bodies  
but cannot dissolve the shadows coiling  
snakelike round my chest

they constrict my breath  
my heart pounds the staccato rhythm  
of too much caffeine too much uncertainty  
too little sleep

where are the words of passion  
and tenderness aching to be written  
the unrest i'm inhaling  
takes my thoughts elsewhere

so i walk in november rain  
focused on nothing but breathing

**Safe Harbor**  
Dana Robbins  
Poetry

*After untitled print by Yitzchak Tarkay*

The print was my mother's, kept when we  
emptied her apartment after her death;  
two women in bright dresses, yellow and cobalt,

sit languidly at a table by a window  
through which the sea is visible; on it two red boats.  
The women wear bright lipstick, their mouths

two red circles that echo the scarlet curtains.  
It looks like the Mediterranean. They seem to be  
waiting for something, someone.

The picture, with its florid femininity, reminds me  
of my mother: the swirl of her hips, the coyness  
of her smile; how she was so flirtatious,

even in her 90s; how she said my father's love  
was a safe harbor. Oh, Mother, if I look at the picture  
long enough will I see you sailing beyond the horizon?

**Rage River**  
Dana Robbins  
Poetry

In my dream,  
I am looking down  
from above the water,  
whose churning roars  
in my ears,

tempts me  
to jump, just to see  
what it feels like  
to be swept away.

This river began  
silent, subterranean,  
in childhood,

crested in crashing waves  
when I was sixteen  
then grew swollen  
over decades  
of niceness.

There is strength  
in this raging river.  
My raging river.  
My strength.

**One Day...**

Drew Alexander Ross

Fiction

“One day, he’ll get you back.”

That’s what my father said to me when I first crossed the line of teasing my little brother. Benny was obsessed with his stuffed Teddy. It never left his hand regardless of if he was sleeping or awake. He even brought it on family trips. So one night, I decided to hide Mr. Bear. I put him behind the decorative plates on the top shelf of a kitchen cabinet. My mother and father tore up the house, trying to find Benny’s Teddy. My little brother sobbed and wailed. I tried to keep the huge grin off my face while I “helped” look for his stuffed companion.

Benny caught me giggling and went apoplectic.

“Ginny did it! Ginny took Mr. Bear!”

My father took me aside. I swore my innocence, but he saw through it.

“If you tell me now, you won’t get in trouble.”

I was doubtful, but I thought prolonging the inevitable wouldn’t have been good for me. I tried to defend my position of why what I did was okay, though. *Benny was getting too old for stuffed animals. He was 6! What I did was going to help him in the long run.*

My father sat me down and said I was planting a seed that would grow. I listened politely and nodded my head. I said I was sorry. I pouted my lip and tried to look like the angelic 12-year-old I thought I was. Father shook his head.

Going forward, I continued to torment my brother when he annoyed me or when I got bored. I didn’t think it was a big deal. My mother always sided with Benny, though, which infuriated me as much as the curfew I had in high school. Coincidentally, my curfew was exchanged for an

outright ban on going out because of an incident with Benny.

It happened at the town fair at the end of my senior year of high school. Benny was with the kid from down the street, Gerard. I told him to stay away from me and my friends. The guys we hung out with were going to pick us up in an hour, and I didn't want my little brother around to tattle to Mom and Dad. Unfortunately, it was a small carnival for a small town.

My friend Betsy was hungry and wanted to get a bite. Gerard and Benny had just bought cotton candy. I wasn't even hungry until I saw Benny's cotton candy. When I saw him, I walked over and told him to give me some. He refused. He was small for twelve, and I was much bigger than him, so I grabbed the bag. Benny held on and didn't let go.

I yanked him around like a small dog who wouldn't let go of a chew toy. His determination surprised me. The look on his face was what made me do it. Benny actually thought he was going to win. I finally decided to impose my mantle of big sister and ripped the bag as hard as I could. I heard a loud POP, followed by familiar sobs and wails.

I didn't even know my parents were at the festival. They appeared out of nowhere. Benny cried and held his arm, which didn't look right hanging low in his t-shirt. Mother cuddled him, and father took me aside.

"I guess he really wanted that cotton candy," I observed.

That blew a fuse in my father. His face turned a funny shade of maroon. I thought there really was a wire that malfunctioned because he didn't look like he remembered how to speak. I waited patiently, though. I was off to college soon. I didn't care. That's what really set him off.

"You'll see."



That's all he said to me. I pretty much lost all privileges for the remaining months I was at home. That upset me to no end, but I finally made my peace. I packed my bags and waited for the summer to end. I had bigger and better things waiting for me.

For the next few years, I didn't visit home much. When I did, I rarely engaged with my brother. He was so much younger than me; he didn't really register on my radar. As far as I could tell, he was becoming the nerd I always thought he would be.

On my one-year high school reunion, I came back to stay at the new house. I had a new HR job in Atlanta and couldn't wait to catch up with my old friends. While I was getting ready, my brother "trained" in the small pool in the backyard like a fish preparing to migrate. After an hour or so, I decided to go out and make fun of the little guppie.

I watched him go back and forth, lap after lap and told him how big a loser he was swimming on a Friday night. *Don't you have any friends? What about Gerard down the street? Did he get tired of playing Dungeons and Dildos with you?* I went on for a while and felt energized for the night ahead.

Benny finally swam over to the side of the pool and pulled himself out in one quick motion. He did not look like a little guppie. He looked like a burly marlin. *When did that happen?* That was the thought that went through my mind as he scooped me up as quickly as a hot spoon in cold ice cream. There were no thoughts when he threw me in the pool, where I proceeded to melt.

I emerged with my hair clinging to my head and my make-up streaming down my face. He walked into the house without a backward glance. My father poked his head around the door, looked between my brother and me, and howled with laughter.

"I told you! One day..."

**showtime**  
Mark Belair  
Poetry

a poem awaits its cue / while lounging in the wings of  
the stage / undressed / casually contemplating what  
costume to wear / in no hurry for its shining moment /  
content / even / to remain forever backstage / for a poem  
has no vanity / only the poet

who must not attempt to divine what the protean  
audience wants / which is impossible anyway / but who  
must simply / calmly / alertly / gaze into the darkness of  
the wings / letting his eyes adjust from the stage to the  
backstage lights / until he registers movement in there /  
perhaps as a poem discovers / while idly cruising a new  
rack / an oddly stimulating jacket or hat / creating its  
own cue of readiness that the poet

acknowledges with an introductory line / after which he  
concedes / with a gracious bow / that his work is largely  
done / the rest just directorial sweat / so steps back and  
accepts what strange

presence / fitting into its full costume / and setting its  
final lines / only at the last possible moment / emerges /  
to join his traveling show

**THE CANOPY**

Mark Belair

Poetry

Rooted  
across the side street  
from each other, two  
blossoming pear trees, their branches  
seeking the same mid-street sunlight,  
mesh in midair, the solid  
trunks — with the long winter  
behind them—letting their  
fresh, uncurling leaves  
nuzzle one another  
in a slight spring breeze,  
even, it seems, whisper  
sweet nothings to each other,  
the traffic below — gears  
grinding single-mindedly —  
rendered, by this growing-cozy  
canopy, as going  
nowhere.

**TEARS**  
Mark Belair  
Poetry

One died when my father was two.  
One died when I was three.

One, a 1920s society drummer, was killed  
in a Fourth of July car crash at twenty-four.

One, a mill electrician and family man,  
vanished into a heart attack at fifty-one.

Grandfathers I fused, as I came of age, into  
one: the drummer and family man that

I became to complete their lives  
and keep their ancestral love close.

But once my boys were grown  
and I eased out of drumming

to write, I found myself having  
spells of tears: no longer them,

I could finally mourn them, even as  
their souls remained present within.

Then I had spells of tears again,  
this time for a different reason:

my first grandchild was born,  
a great-great-grandchild my

grandfathers — kept by love —  
got to see.

**Boxing Lessons**

Mac Bowers

Fiction

On his first day of boxing lessons, Henry wears a collared shirt he's picked out himself. His father takes one look at him and shakes his head, but says nothing, and the ride there is silent. They pull in the drive and Henry trips getting out of the car. "Are you gonna stay for the whole time, Daddy? You'll stay for the whole time, right?" A man, wearing gray sweatpants and a yellow stained wife-beater, stands in the yard with his hands on his hips, his feet shoulder width apart. Henry's father strides up to him, shakes his hand. A folded up twenty-dollar bill slips between their palms. He says, "Thanks for doing this." His father backs away as the man teaches Henry to make a fist. "Pull your fingers in. Thumb on the outside. Don't want you breaking it, now do we?" Henry pulls his thumb from where it'd been nestled against his palm. He opens his hand, curls his fingers back with his thumb overtop. Opens it again. Closes it. Does it again and again. It looks like it's pulsating. He'd learned in science class that your heart is about the size of your fist. Henry grins and closes his hand one last time, thumb folded carefully over his fingers, before turning to his father, fist raised high above his head. He calls, "Look, Daddy. I did it." He stands like that, watching as his father's car backs out of the driveway, until his hand cramps and his fingers go numb. He lowers his arm.

**The Audience Sitting Down**

Brian D. Morrison

Poetry

—From Janis Joplin

“is a weird trip. It’s like separateness.  
But when they’re dancing,  
they’re doing it with you.” A scream,  
sometimes, is like royalty of the mouth.  
It can be a bloom of throat,  
truth in decibels, exactly how a queen  
should sound. It’s how you act  
and not how you look. It’s how,  
in the back of beyond inside us,  
a floral crown is the emblem for a time  
of flowers, how a voice on a stage can set  
our wonder to growth.

The audience sits, expecting  
stems to be moved: arms  
and arms and hips. And what  
do we do, the “us” here,  
with our collected minds,  
waiting for the song that is all  
we are? It’s what we want to shape  
our worlds by. Our hope and shame,  
the latter gone in the beat, beat  
by the strings on wilder

guitars than ours. And then  
what, once we’re on our feet  
and moved, hands waving,  
toes tucked in shoes  
or not, hearts louder  
now, chairs emptier, lights

like all the sunrises, one  
after another, endless?  
We keep on, we breathe, we  
“Enjoy and have fun. And why  
not, if in the end,  
everything will end, right?”

**Rowdy Roddy Piper After An Audition**

Brian D. Morrison

Poetry

(April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1954 – July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015)

knew his fame wouldn't hang him  
a lantern long, but what was he to do  
but try? *They Live!* was the best he'd done,  
and *Family Guy* mocked the fight  
that's much of the movie with recurrence  
of a man-sized chicken. The jealousy.  
Hulk Hogan post-divorce became  
Rent-A-Center. The Rock, *The Tooth Fairy*.  
All Piper wanted was another chance,  
a role worth burning for again. He ran  
lines, was bossed around in his kilt by kids,  
ate free lunches, but no, he wasn't cast.  
This, he might say was no big surprise.  
His career came in tossing people  
like sacks, not from the cut scene or  
the pilot episode. Old men can't swing  
randomly placed metal chairs like they  
used to. Piper had no great spark  
for Muscle Milk, the Magic Bullet. No one  
would touch the Slim Jim. The wick  
lights for just some, he might say, & then,  
only well for those with the fire to sustain it.



**Castles Crumble**

Nina Adel

Fiction

We believe the simplest things.

The leaf will land unblemished on the earth. The neighbor, whose front yard blooms and reaches outward from abundant beds of color, will welcome our arrival to this street, return our optimistic waving. The driver ahead, turning, will alert us to his departure from the road while the one behind will keep his distance when we hesitate. The patch-eyed puppy we've brought home to comfort our children will sleep contentedly every night in their arms beneath a frayed autumn blanket.

Our call for help will be heard. Heard and then responded to. Responded to with haste, with generosity. Our own generosity will be accepted, and appreciated. Our children will love us back no matter how we fail them. Our children will eat the foods we give them and these foods will grow them tall and lean and prosperous. Our children will be born with perfect symmetry, with teeth that chew and hands that write. Studying will make us learn, what we learn is needed, what we need can be understood through study, through diligence, through engagement. That we contain, somewhere within, these qualities.

We believe, and we've a reason to, that the money earned through labor, luck or cleverness will be paid to us. The things we've thrown away will be removed, the things we've shared will be utilized. The ice will hold as it always has, the coldest weather still will come. The food we've bought will nourish us, the food we've grown will be substantial. The remedies we've learned will always cure us. The egg, once cracked, will hold a yolk inside translucent matter, the shell itself will have a purpose in the garden. There will be a garden because

there is a patch of earth. The patch of earth will cleanse itself of all environmental poisons. Disrupting the natural order will spell imminent disaster. We believe that imminent disaster is a bad thing. That a bad thing will make us miserable. Is irreversible. That we will not desire things that make us ill and sad and empty. The people who bring us to the world and the ones who grow beside us will have at heart our best, and most beloved, and most essential interests.

When the castle crumbles, the ones we've fed with stolen savories and small kernels of sweets will recognize it wasn't us who starved them on the land; that all along we tried so hard to bridge the gap, to nourish them from secret stores inside our own freezing pallets on the floor. That they will reach their arms out in a brave and human net to catch us, to catch us, when the castle crumbles.

**Quilt**

Nick Visconti  
Poetry

The needle trembled  
through cloth, batting and  
backing. The order random,  
or kept secret from us;  
houndstooth pattern  
near hibiscus, turquoise, 80's  
style bar-coding, dad's shirts  
stitched neatly into  
a ribboning heirloom.  
What a small consolation,  
to pull a woven thing  
over the eyes, a parenthesis  
veiling my head. In the dark,  
spider limbs paw glass, awful hands  
shambling across the ceiling.  
I snug in the gauze wrap  
of moments such as this,  
I think — yes,  
I can almost smell cedar,  
bergamot, the vetiver  
still trapped in his fibers.

**Hazel, revisited**

Nick Visconti

Poetry

You're on the net looking for a gift  
to give eight-year-old me the one who lived  
in Arlington, Texas and never played  
a game of tackle in his life but here you are  
pushing a football into my arms too big  
for me to grip with one hand what am I  
supposed to do with this when my hands  
were built to carry baseballs and pens I can't  
fathom a leather harder than the one you gave  
signed by so many men I don't know  
don't care to know any of them but I see  
the tough gift reflected in your eye as *buy*  
*now* flashes red I can see now you paid  
for the affection you couldn't give.

**Coming Home**

Sher Ting

Poetry

in the break of day, we sat by the beach, listening to the  
rush of ocean waves  
because today isn't enough  
this moment isn't enough  
and once the sun has set  
and the purple, orange and red have dissolved like a scar,  
we'll pack up our bags and leave, walking down  
different paths  
and we'll carve out our lives from the hollow of the  
white picket fence,  
where our laughter is but a shout into the void

And one day, we'll have it all whilst feeling nothing at  
all,  
And through the left turns and cul-de-sacs, the  
bottomless glasses and regret,  
we'll find ourselves back at this very same place,  
hugging our coats close against the bitter wind, listening  
to the roar of the waves as it clamours for the shore  
and we'll find each other again and pick up right where  
we left off  
as if those years were nothing but a daydream  
and we'll lose everything but we'll have everything  
and that day, it will be enough  
Oh, it will be enough.

**Your Song Is A Cadence I Would Never Play**

Sher Ting

Poetry

I like it here in this bar,  
among the haze and too-loud laughter and empty  
barstools  
Time can't find me, the hours can't claw at my skin and  
the  
night is a child too broken to grow up

Yet, you feel so close I can almost  
feel your breath against the nape of my neck,  
your arms circling the orbit of my waist

and in the nebula of the saxophone lull, you would have  
whispered that you liked it here too  
But you didn't stay alive long enough to see that  
your life was just a crescendo waiting its turn

In the end, the darkness we had fought so hard  
To extinguish consummated its final verse in your head  
and consumed you and all your gasoline rhyme

I wanted to hate you for the songs you'd robbed from  
my lungs  
How you built octaves my fingers could never reach and  
It took me forever to realize how much pain you must  
have felt  
If you would have given up all your favourite melodies  
for a world you couldn't see

Now, I sit in a different darkness  
But seeking the same bullet at the bottom of a shot glass,

And with just enough vodka,

I can hear your laughter ringing,  
the missing bars of a time we never got to sing

**Solitude Has A Visage**

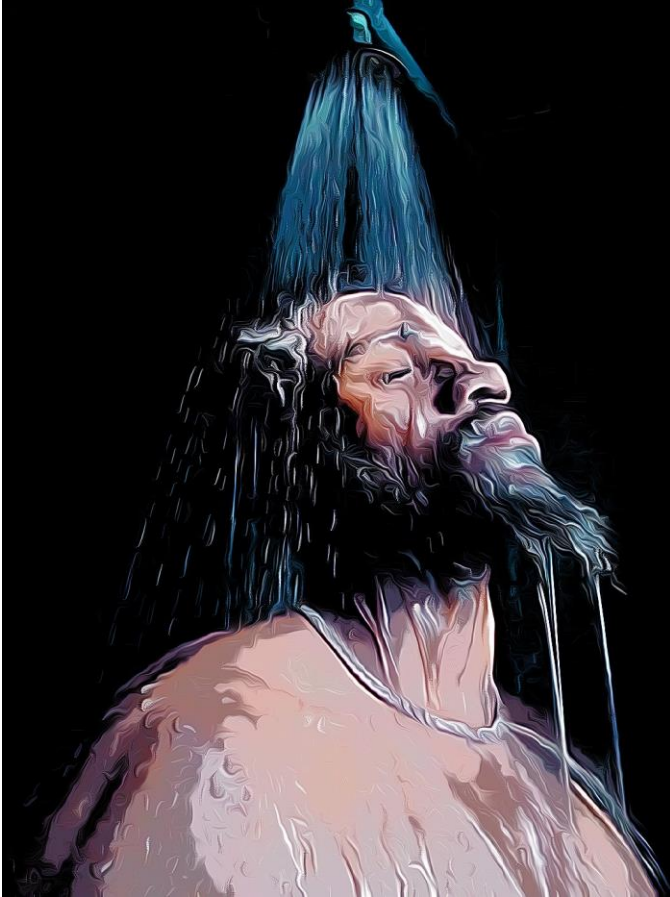
Sher Ting

Poetry

You never felt at home in your own skin,  
wore it like a shroud waiting for a wake, waiting in spite  
like you were a eulogy of apologies for answers you  
never had,  
an epistolary of letters that never formed right in your  
head;  
and no one will ask you how you walked Central Park  
till night bled to day or  
why you kept your bicycle chained in the cellar;  
They will not notice that dust has settled over your  
mailbox, or  
that you have named every cat along your street, and  
maybe you  
will learn to wipe your tears with excuses, breathe  
through the veins of a  
ripened dream, rub the scars till they bleed dry and the  
imprint is but  
an old stain in the fabric of memory, and maybe you will  
learn to hollow  
out the ribs of time, build a fortress — impregnable —  
from solitude,  
maybe then  
maybe then your smile can find its way home.



**A Tear Under Shower**  
Elijah Christopher  
Art



## **Life Between the Wheels of a Bicycle**

Elijah Christopher

Fiction

Only old men and kids rode bicycles in the neighborhood where I grew up. The men's bicycle looked like their age — old and weak. When they pedaled, the wheels cry. They rode to work, to the church, to the farm, and anywhere that was too far for their eyes to reach.

As a child, it was a big deal to own a bicycle. When a boy roamed the street on a new bicycle, kids cloud him as though he was Jesus Christ on a donkey. I never had that experience. The times I felt like I was riding a bicycle were those mornings I sat on the top tube gripping the handlebars, while my brother pedaled us to school. Then I was only five. When I got to eleven, he taught me how to ride a bicycle. While I graduated from sitting on the tube to sitting on the saddle, he graduated to a motorcycle.

"Pretty girls don't wave at lads riding a bicycle", he would say with a wink at the left side of his face.

Learning how to ride a bicycle felt like a toddler learning how to walk again. In between seconds, I'm on my way to the ground.

"Balance, your body!"

My brother would say.

"Don't put your weight on one side! Don't hold the handles too tight!"

Most times under the sun, he grew a long face. He sometimes points at other kids and mumbled words all day long.

One evening, I saw Elba riding his bicycle without anyone talking behind him. He rode alone. He rode slowly. He rode like he usually walked the edge of the

streets — quiet without waving or saying a word to anyone at the doorstep.

The following day, I rose before the sun. I walked three kilometers away from home -- pushing the bicycle at my side as if it had a flat tire. I picked a hilly spot and hopped on the bicycle. It only took a second. I found myself at the foot of the hill. The bicycle was on one side. My palms and lower lip dripped with blood. I returned home with a bruised face. I remained behind a closed-door throughout that day.

A week after, my wounds were just beginning to heal. I returned to the hill sneaking through the backdoor. Grandma had forbidden me from riding after nursing my wounds with hot water and Chinese balm.

At the hill, I spoke to the bicycle as though it was a stubborn horse. I tapped it.

"BMX, please hold still".

But I was talking to myself.

When the tires began to roll, the evening Elba rode his bicycle alone flooded my mind. I gripped the handles firmly as the crushing sound of pebbles under the tyres pinched my eardrums. The bicycle headed straight for a rock. My heart lobbed into my mouth. I turned the other way as it got closer passing in between an anthill — twice my height — and a tree. At the foot of the hill, I pedaled home with trembling hands.

The next day, I was at the hill before the sun rose again — until I no longer needed the sun to rise — or the hill to help me set the pace. The next time I saw Elba; I asked him to race with me. Nobody in the neighborhood knew who won. There was no finish line. When we got to the other street, we joined a group of bikers racing to the stadium for another race.

At home, I enjoyed going for errands far away from home either to the market — in the next street — or the one in the middle of the town. I now rode to school on

my own and carry friends at the back. I once went to school late and the prefects were ordered to make all latecomers with bicycles go on a race. We raced back home laughing our heads out. It was the best punishment I ever had.

Life between the wheels of a bicycle thought me one thing — balance. So when I grew brown beards and drove a small car down a lonely road to work, there in the boot was a BMX.

**Ethical Infidelity**

Keegan Waller

Poetry

We listened to *Illinois* and lay naked on sweat-stained sheets,  
the curtains blocked out the moonlight,  
all I could see was the shine from your eyes when they opened.

You told a story  
about a New Orleans night,  
your porch illuminated by a pile of your burning books  
and clothes,  
the sounds of a city drowned out by a screaming man  
and the smell of gasoline that worked its way up your nose  
and made you high from love and fear and fumes.  
And you took my hand and ran my fingers across the  
bridge of your broken nose,  
it was lumpy like a topographical map.

I fell in love that night,  
not with you but with a hope for permanence,  
a fire kindled by distance,  
sparked by proximity.

You asked me to take you away,  
away from the burning clothes and the screaming and  
the ridges on your bones.  
Or did I ask you?  
I said yes,  
and I meant it.  
But you didn't.  
So we drove to the airport through Parley's Canyon with  
the sun rising behind us,

half drunk and dazed,  
I kissed you at the tarmac and watched you walk away.

**There is a Monster in the Waters at Loch Ness**

Liam Stainsby

Poetry

*Fort Augustine and Loch Ness*

The night is alive.  
The wind brings memories —  
careening across the bay  
in an ocean of night;  
and the infinite blue  
and the waves of thunder;  
that splits the dark in two.

And all this – tradition -  
what is left to perish  
beneath the veil  
of antiquity  
and rumour  
and imitation.

Yet morning light — warms —  
and what is shown  
what little here — is truly known  
in that endless, that aging dark?  
There is a monster in the waters at Loch Ness.

**White Iris on the Shore at Strathy Bay**

Liam Stainsby

Poetry

*Strathy Bay*

All in an empire of sand;  
bearded Iris  
on endless beaches —  
dream of still, blue waters  
by day  
and die in electric fields  
cloaked in the comfort of night.



**Kingdom**  
Liam Stainsby  
Poetry

*Corrieshalloch Gorge*

Were there ever — here — an ocean as wide?  
Rushing through streams of ochre and jade  
flood the forest and running through fields —  
where night is slow — and suffocates  
the air around us.

I am in love with loving you.  
I breath in the salt and treasure the tide  
as the sea falls dark into velvet blue  
and we sail lovingly  
into the arms of sleep.  
And yet we wake, and yet we wonder  
on all this weight in our bones —  
eyes like fire — heavy on the ground  
and we are the end of a dying sun  
collapsing under the weight of starlight.  
We live and we die —  
by the air of tonight.  
We forget our pain, by morning light.  
For tonight, we were simply made to be —  
etched in the fabric of the sky.

**Flameseeker**

Jason de Koff

Poetry

Roasted red embers,  
capture undulating shadows,  
across their faces,  
like showy chromatophores.  
Dusty smoke of wispy wraiths,  
bring scented memories close,  
punctuated with punctilious popping,  
and expected pyrotechnic surprise.  
As molten wood turns snow white,  
and yellow tongues grow weak,  
heat without transforms,  
to silent stillness within.  
The blackened bones remaining,  
from forgotten forests shorn,  
pave the earth with relics,  
like books on bursting shelves.

**An Amalgamation of Life**

Jason de Koff

Poetry

Crow calls,  
across the health and gorse,  
create odd dissonance,  
with the soft-textured mist.

The curling ocean waves,  
spit playfully,  
at their hard worn neighbors,  
and apply the morning dew.

A line of mammoth oaks,  
with lustrous polished leaves,  
catch and release the first rays,  
in a shower of twinkling stardust.

Impressions of life,  
two lines among pearly grains of sand,  
are erased by the incoming tide,  
as I melt into the landscape.

**Tending, Not Trending**

Jason de Koff

Poetry

Slipping seamlessly,  
beneath the cool sheet,  
is the deep dive,  
into the pool,  
on a heatwave afternoon.

In the dark,  
it's a slipstream journey,  
through veins of,  
galaxy spirals,  
devoid of corporeal feeling.

Eyes closed,  
a surround sound,  
of empty vastness,  
losing the sense of being,  
and just becoming instead.

Breathing deeply,  
releasing time,  
from its throne,  
to seep into self,  
and be.

**What else I do**  
Sandip Saha  
Poetry

I know I have asked  
too much from you  
but what shall I do  
what shall I do?

The stars are witness  
the sun has seen  
the moon keeps mum  
when I meet only witches.

One tries to snatch my home  
another woman rebukes me  
as I call her for some work  
she shows red eyes on the street.

I bring her giving father's love  
try my best to keep her happy  
she yells on my face saying  
'I do not need you'.

Many more take help from me  
in return I only get jealousy  
or even curse by some people  
whatever I may do, get no relief.

At last at the twilight of my life  
I find you so kind, so intelligent  
I have asked too much from you  
what else shall I do?

**IT IS LIKE**

Lydia Waites

Poetry

the unconscious probing  
of the tongue  
in the gap of a lost tooth,  
raw and lingering  
or it was, at first  
*at first* – no –  
that was more  
like an ice-pick  
in my chest, hollowed  
chiselled now occasionally  
by guilt at  
remembering  
(which means I have forgotten)

it is like. It is it is it is  
nonsynonymous

it is 43 weeks,  
according to my screen.  
Almost a year  
and there aren't any words for that

**You're It**  
Phebe Jewell  
Fiction

We run from the cross-eyed kid every time we spy him in his front yard. My legs can never keep up with Joni and the big kids. I stop to rub the stitch in my side.

"You're such a baby," Joni scoffs when she sees me lagging behind. "I should have left you at home."

I suck in big gulps of air. Nothing I do pleases her.

"Hurry up," Joni laughs as the cross-eyed kid shambles toward me. "Wait," he calls, and I freeze. I have never been this close to him before. High water jeans above thin white ankles. Brown eyes, drawn together by some invisible magnet. 'Don't cross your eyes,' Mom warns when I make funny faces. 'They'll stay that way forever.'

The cross-eyed kid raises his hand in a shy wave. "Can I play?" If he wanted to, he could touch me.

He smiles. I giggle at the gap between two front teeth. A spray of freckles plays across the bridge of his nose. His eyes settle, find mine. When I cross my eyes, I see double. Does he see two of me?

Joni calls from the end of the block. "Don't stare or you'll get it too." She takes off running.

I shove his shoulder and he stumbles in surprise, nose pointing like a dog sniffing air searching for me. My feet carry me down the block, slowing when I round the corner. The others are already at the park. Sprawled on the grass, they spring up and run when they see me coming, shouting "You're It."

Joni speeds past me. "Don't let her touch you, you'll turn to stone."

Breathless, I chase after them, but they fan out in all directions, disappearing into sunlight. I follow the sound

of their laughter, my hand tingling from the cross-eyed boy's shoulder.

We play Statues until dinner. Joni marches ahead of me, so she doesn't see me wave at the boy's house on our way home. Someone moves behind curtains, but I can't tell if it's the cross-eyed boy or his shadow.



**Impulse**  
Jean Biegun  
Poetry

A hit of sweet attention  
and you're a tether ball.

Easy to get caught in the game.

All it takes are those eyes  
like headlights that track you  
and the silky smile  
that lures appetites.

A happy bounce of hope  
begins again  
in your ready step.

You weave the pretty tether yourself  
hand over hand  
breath to ear  
senses spinning to an endless score.

Just some needed kind attention  
and you're a tether ball.

**NEWCOMER**

Sophia Kouidou-Giles

Nonfiction

Check their expressions. Is it interest or curiosity when you spell your last name? “K-o-u-i-d-o-u.” You are not sure. They ask, and you explain that yes, you grew up in Greece; no, your parents do not live in America. Yes, your mother speaks Greek and English, but your father speaks Greek and Turkish; yes, you studied English at school. Smile politely when they say you hardly have an accent. You know better.

You are officially a ‘foreign student.’ After graduation from high school, you got a scholarship and admission to a liberal arts school in Oregon, half around the globe. There are 3,000 students on this campus; 5.5 percent are foreign students. Do the math: 165. You write it to your mother. She loves getting your letter. “Sophia” she answers back, “I am so proud of you!”

Don’t bring up your homesickness in your letters, especially to your mother. Don’t share the hours of studying tethered to the Dictionary, scribbling Greek translations on your textbook margins. Don’t remind her you miss your friends. Yet life here is much freer than home. You love your independence. Don’t tell her you don’t intend to stay, but could you?

During your first week of classes, you meet your assigned Big Sister at the foreign student lounge. She knows French and has been to Europe. The advisor counts twelve of you in the room. Look around and read their name tags; they spell the countries they have come from: Botswana, Chile, Mexico, Japan. A Babylon. The get-acquainted activity is sharing names and family background. You say “Parents, brother and sister.” You miss them.

You learn that there is folk dancing every Saturday evening at the large hall on campus and you are all invited. They play music and teach steps. All present feign excitement and agree to attend. Except, you know no international folk dances. You try to explain. In the middle of speaking English, a Greek expression pops out, interfering with your effort to communicate. “At home, you know, we d-d-d. And I try, you know, d-d-d. I don’t know d-d-dances...They patiently wait for you to finish.

You glance at a nametag and don’t know how to pronounce his name. *Hideyuki/Japan*. He looks in your direction and smiles. Your Big Sister says he is a senior.

“Will you come on Saturday?” the foreign student advisor asks. All heads bob “Yes.” It is time to escape. You look at your watch and tell them you have to go. Your Big Sister follows you and you forget to say thank you and goodbye.

Lunchtime in the cafeteria. You are in line when you hear a voice from behind. “What is good?”

“Hi” you say, turning. The boy that follows you is the Japanese senior, tall and thin, with buck teeth. You wonder if he is flirting with you. You don’t answer. He gets the same salad, bread and coffee that you have chosen and follows you to a table.

You ask him about himself as you pour the dressing over your salad. He tells you his name is Hideyuki; he is from Tokyo, here to study medicine. He lives off campus and asks how you like the school and classes, and how it is that he has not seen you before.

“I just arrived.” You listen to Hideyuki’s voice and trace an accent. You hear him say “elevator,” but it sounds like “Erebeetaa.” It’s different, the way the sound and his lips don’t match; like artfully clashing

percussion. It takes time, but you soon know that Ls become rs and the v sound becomes a B.

“Say something in Greek,” he says.

“Like what?”

“Like hello.”

You think for a moment and then say: “Yia sou. Teekanees?”

“What does that mean?”

“Hello. How are you.”

He leans across the table and holds your hand. He squeezes gently, and you smile. His warm touch is welcome. You return the squeeze.

He invites you to see the state park. You ride borrowed bicycles and arrive near sunset. He spreads a blanket on the grass strategically placed to face the hills where the sun is sinking. You have packed a snack, ginger snaps from the cafeteria, and a coke to share. You bring the treats from the bicycle basket, place them between you and sit next to him. Some couples stroll by in the park.

The blanket feels soft, woolen with green and blue stripes, and he says it's his bedcover. You ask him about the long title of the book he carries. He says he would need a dictionary to give you a good answer. You both giggle. You offer him cookies and ask him what his plans are in America. He tastes one and says that next year he hopes to go to John Hopkins in Baltimore. You don't know where Baltimore is, but you have a whole year ahead of you. Your first friend!

You ask if he knows Greek restaurants in town. “Yes. Next time I will take you there,” he says. The sky is bright red and orange, and you both watch the disappearing sun. It is chilly. He offers his coat, and you accept. You tell him about your mother and how she expects you to write often. You need stamps. He tells

you about aerograms and where the post office is. He offers to walk you there on Monday.

On the way back to campus, he follows you to your dorm and gives you a quick goodnight peck. You grin and wonder what the local Greeks will think when they see you with a Japanese man. Will they invite him to parties? You will. Then you wonder, *What will mother think?* But he is nice, and you are free to choose. Good to be in America.

**ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BLACK HOLE**

Glory Cumbow

Poetry

I press myself into the cosmos,  
letting the stars kiss my skin.

I drink the elixir of the galaxies,  
satisfying my thirst for the truth of the universe.

I wrap myself in a cloak of a supernova,  
swirling in chaos, an unstoppable force.

The black hole did not ravage me.  
It was a birth canal.

**I CAN'T EVEN PRAY**

Glory Cumbow

Poetry

Angels dragging me  
from the mud,

I stare back at the trail  
my limp body leaves in the soft earth.

I don't even know if I want  
the divine to carry me to safety.

It's too little too late,  
don't you think?

I tried screaming for help until my throat bled,  
but the sludge slurped me down further.

So I let it.  
And now they show up on the scene when the fight is  
over?

Don't touch me!  
I'm a groundling, melded in sod.

Just put me down,  
rooted in reality.

Don't put dream clouds  
back in my head.

**I Resurrected Stephen Crane and He Wrote These  
Poems about Social Media**

Robert McGee  
Poetry

A user said to the Twitterverse:  
"Sir, I exist!"  
"However," replied the Twitterverse  
"That fact has not inspired me  
To retweet."

\*\*\*

On Instagram  
I saw a woman, naked, bestial  
Who, seated at a table  
Held her lunch in her hands  
And photographed it  
I typed, "Was it good?"  
"It became cold — cold," she answered;  
"But I liked it  
Because it was cold,  
And because it was my lunch."

\*\*\*

I saw a man arguing on the Internet  
Back and forth he argued  
I was disturbed by this;  
I chastised the man.  
"It is pointless," I said,  
"You can never —"

"You lie," he typed,  
And argued on.



\*\*\*

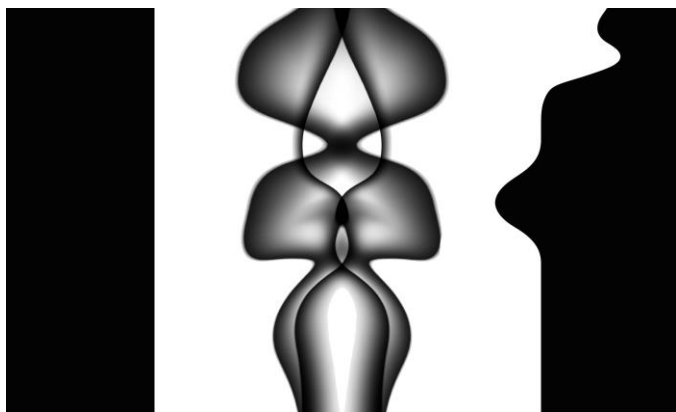
A man felt his phone vibrate in his pocket;  
He reached for it,  
And eventually unlocked it —  
No message.

Now this is the strange part:  
When the man returned the phone  
And felt again,  
Lo, it was vibrating.  
Now this is the strange part:  
It was vibrating.  
Aye, by the heavens, it was vibrating.

\*\*\*

Many orange Cheetos sprang from my mouth  
And out upon the keyboard  
They were so fragile  
My fingers could crush them  
Many struggled between the keys.  
It was strange  
To type in this orange muck  
Of things from my mouth.

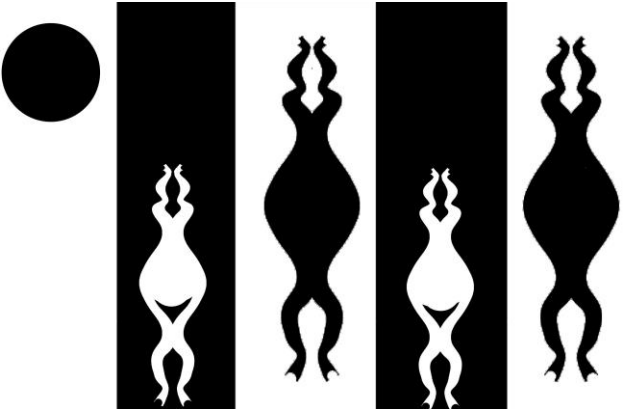
**The Proper Lady**  
Edward Michael Supranowicz  
Art



**American Beauty 21a**  
Edward Michael Supranowicz  
Art



**Eve Dances First Dance 1a**  
Edward Michael Supranowicz  
Art



**SURPLUS**

Bear Weaver

Poetry

The opposite of *deficit* is *surplus*, meaning there are people with a surplus of attention. I am searching for a state of enlightenment where being *thought of* is the same as being *held*. If I pull my hands inside me, burn desire to ash, I can find that holy place called *intimacy*. Common sense says it's housed in the chest, but I have this chronic ache at the top of my spine. The spots between my vertebrae tense and contract, though I feel you most often as a stutter in the lungs. My friend the pastor told me once the correct term for this thing's early stage is a *heart sparkle*. Select synonyms for *sparkle* are *gleam*, *glimmer*, *glitz*, *radiance*, *twinkle*. But also, *vitality*. The easy antonym for *sparkle* is *dullness*. Another is, apparently, *reality*. I think hard of you, willing my attention to warm you. I try to define *inevitability*. There is a light in my belly and an impression of you behind my eyes. The words I write are in *surplus*. The words I speak are in *deficit*. I scribble out a prayer that somewhere between them lives the muffled truth of you and me.

**SELLING SHORT**

Claire Scott

Poetry

The future not in high demand  
last time I looked, selling short  
in a frenzy of activity, traders not so sure  
the future will arrive in decent shape,  
worried it will be scorched by fire or  
drenched in flood waters, worried  
it might be virus ridden or tainted  
with rage, long past the possibility  
of compromise, each side so certain, fighting  
for survival, firing epithets and vicious lies  
destroying the little that is left

What if we see the future just ahead of us  
yes, right there behind that row of junipers  
or perhaps across the street, shuffling  
along the sidewalk outside Target,  
disheveled, limping, looking lost,  
holding out a coffee cup, *please*  
will we turn away, shame-faced, tucking  
our heads into our hoodies or will we hurry  
to catch up and hold the future in our arms  
weeping for what we have done  
and tending to the little that is left

**BECOMING**

Claire Scott

Poetry

I wanted to be a boy or at least not a girl  
cropped curls, ripped jeans and muscle T-shirts  
but biology betrayed, breasts bound  
in tight bras, bleeding a bother, embarrassing  
stains on your skirt, classmates snickering

My mother was into gin and Whitman's  
chocolate, wandering the house in her underwear,  
elastic sagging, strings of safety pins across  
the back of her bulging bra, belly slopped over  
greying underpants, girdle with dangling garters

When I was ten, she showed me a diagram  
of what was meant to be my body, her body, peculiar  
parts, something about laying eggs like a chicken  
something about a cervix, both of us flustered,  
looking away, lesson over, duty done

How could girls want breasts, want to bleed  
look forward to curves and wide hips  
and Kotex that bulged your bathing suit  
what kind of mothers helped them  
become women

**BITS AND PIECES**

Claire Scott

Poetry

*for my children*

of paper wadded up next to the Jiff peanut butter,  
carefully folded under a car seat, scrunched on top of the  
TV

one has the capital of North Dakota (Bismarck)  
one is the name of my first dog (Woof)  
another lists the names of the Seven Dwarfs  
and the nine planets including Pluto  
today I found one describing our vacation  
in the Adirondacks, canoeing on Saranac Lake  
you two in puffy orange vests, paddling in circles  
squabbling and giggling and splashing each other

memories tumbling through cracks and crevices  
of my mind, stuffed into boxes labeled with your names

*Ben and Lea*

asking you to care for them when I no longer can  
the snowman you brought inside, the gerbils  
who escaped, skittering behind walls,  
the burnt birthday cakes, the Santa who used  
the exact same wrapping paper, so you knew  
shedding memories as I speed toward eighty  
before the Final Erasure  
when death will find little left to take



**BEFORE**

Claire Scott

Poetry

Some people want to go back to being six,  
riding a bike for the first time, feeling the thrill of taking  
off, flying into a future where the world is waiting.  
Others want college days again, freedom to skip classes,  
slug beer and hook up on Saturday nights.  
Some want to start over when their first child  
howled into their lives, all innocence and joy,  
despite sleepless nights and stacks of Pampers.

But all I ask is to go back one month,  
actually only twenty seven and a half days, before  
the church filled with purple and white gladiolas,  
before the doctor said *I'm sorry*, her eyes moist,  
before the shriek of the siren split the night,  
before the car that didn't see the light,  
to just before you woke up that Sunday,  
your heart beating next to mine.

**DEAR SETH**

Claire Scott

Poetry

I have taken everything  
that is mine from your  
one bedroom apartment  
on Talbot Street  
the stuffed bear missing an ear  
the pile of Eminem CDs  
my tube of Tom's and  
my Sonicare toothbrush  
the quilt we hungered under  
your hands spectral  
my tongue a sorceress  
I took my Copco tea kettle  
my Lenox dishes along  
with my Henckels chef's knife  
in its tanned leather sheath  
I took my sheer mesh slips and lacy  
camisoles, my satin trim bras and  
and skimpy nightgowns  
that you no longer deserve to see  
I load boxes and bags  
and tears and torment into  
my beat up Toyota and drive  
out of your life, images of Medea  
flashing through my mind  
brandishing an unsheathed knife

**Lincoln Park Zoo**

Selena Cotte

Poetry

at Lincoln Park Zoo  
where the vulture did hip-hop,

the giraffe confined to the corner  
and I loved you but didn't say —

the sparrows bounced in and out the cage  
a choice we only pretend to make:

instead, we more beautiful birds  
fenced in,

or too afraid to fly.

**Red**  
Amanda Woodard  
Nonfiction

*for Holly*

When I see her home for the first time, I can tell: There's something warm about her. It's the sentimentality of it, I think — how each piece of furniture has a story, rescued from the side of the road in a rich-kid neighborhood or purchased at a thrift-store price she's excited to recite. Little trinkets & tiny works of art hug one another on her bookshelves. Soft rugs swaddle the floors in every room, even the kitchen.

She's politically opposed to overhead lighting. Fairy lights hang on the walls & keep the corners from getting lonely. It's not bright enough to read by, but the ambiance adds a twinkle to her hazel eyes, like someone drew her, like an artist placed it there. In this light, like early-morning sun, her whole apartment becomes a fireplace on a cold night. Lying with her on her bed, her smooth shoulders still speckled with shower spray, soothes me like warm soup on a sore throat, an elixir.

A dresser, a cabinet, a bold stroke in a painting — each room in her home has something red in it. In my own house, blue has magicked its way into the upholstery, the details, & I wonder if red came to her in the same way: unconsciously & also by fate. When I'm with her, I find myself thinking of chakras, the seven colors that mark each one, from the purple Crown representing oneness with the divine to the red Root representing the fulfillment of our most primal needs. Something primitive & hungry, satisfied at last.

I'm not sure how much I believe in that kind of thing — chakras & clairvoyance & all that — but I've been told before that my aura is blue, a bright blue, my Throat chakra opening.

Maybe hers is red.

**See Me**  
Alexis Beale  
Poetry

I hope this haunts you.  
Take a look at what you did,  
You've cast holes all along  
The moon's core. They run  
Deep enough for you to see  
What's on the other side. Get closer,  
Now tell me, what do you see?

Keep looking through me.  
All bones and meat. Move whatever  
Parts you like, don't let me stand  
In your way. Keep going,  
What do you see?  
Are you able to see me?

**I died a romantic**

Alexis Beale

Poetry

Dark days in those summer nights  
With the pink sand itching at my feet.

I dived in the water, headfirst  
Expecting you'd help me float.

Instead, your grip wrapped around  
My ankles. I didn't fight you off, or rather  
You wouldn't let me go. We both

Went under and never  
Really recovered.

**Miserere**  
Ashley Wagner  
Poetry

There is no end in sight  
experts say  
but our own.

Like the crumbling summer ice,  
buildings like silver knives  
will plummet to the sea.

The only thing left to do is kneel  
against the dirt that birthed  
us all. Feel it there:  
the breathless things  
we once were.



**Levels of Down**  
Luis Jefeé Lacourt  
Poetry

I measure my crisis by the levels of clutter on the sink.  
Some days I can't see where the water goes.  
Other days I can't see the bubbles spawning from the  
soap.  
But when I can't see the noodles that slipped away three  
days ago,  
I know I  
I'm still on the way down.

**Divorce**

Luis Jefeé Lacourt

Poetry

The snow melted  
at the rhythm of the trees,  
unnoticed,  
and uncovered the trash  
left in the grass.

## Contributor Bios

Nina Adel

An MFA graduate of Hamline University, Nina Adel recently won the Bellevue Literary Review's 2020 Buckvar Prize for Nonfiction and has been published in *Moria*, *Sweet Tree Review*, *matchbook*, *Selcouth Station*, *Linden Avenue Literary Journal*, *The Tennessean*, among others, and is a *Glimmer Train* honorable mention recipient. Once primarily a singer-songwriter, she lives in the heart of Nashville with her two children and teaches writing at a local college. She's also the manager and instructor for the Creative Writing for Immigrants and Refugees program at the Porch Writer's Collective.

Mehreen Ahmed

Mehreen Ahmed is an award-winning author, internationally published and critically acclaimed by *Midwest Book Review*. She was one of the winners for *The Waterloo Short Story Competition, 2020*. Her works have been nominated twice for *The Best of the Net, 2020* and *Ditmar Awards, 2016 and 2019*. Her book has received *The Drunken Druid's Editor's Choice* in June 2018.

Mya Alexice

I'm driven by inconsistencies, historical legacies, and questions about the ancestors. I spend too much of my time playing video games, worshipping my cat, and reading queer science fiction.

Jane Ayres

Jane Ayres is partial to melting big chunks of dark chocolate on her porridge. She was a pole fitness teacher in her forties and is still unnaturally fond of her lime

green pvc platform heels. Her favourite TV series ever is Buffy the Vampire Slayer, which she is currently rewatching — again.

Alexis Beale

Alexis Beale is a Black poet and graduate student at the University of Southern California. She has had the privilege of having her poetry published in Off the Coast, Blue Monday Review, and the Apprentice Writer

Mark Belair

Along with being a poet, I've made my living as a drummer in NYC for over forty years. In music a collaborator and in poetry a solitaire, I find I need both modes to keep me going.

Jean Biegun

Jean Biegun who taught in Special Ed got in trouble once because of poetry. During a faculty in-service, the principal caught her revising a poem under the table instead of eyes forward to the overpaid, stylishly-dressed consultant who blathered on about stuff everybody already knew. She's glad poetry still saves deadening moments.

Mac Bowers

Mac Bowers graduated from Susquehanna University with a degree in Creative Writing. When she isn't experiencing frequent bouts of existential crisis, she enjoys writing weird stories and talking about Scotland while sipping on far too many cups of coffee. Other works of hers can be found in F(r)iction, The Lindenwood Review, littledeathlit, Longshot Island, RiverCraft, and forthcoming in Corvid Queen.

Elijah Christopher

I am a twenty-three-year-old creative writer who have had pizza once. I hold a bachelor's degree in English from Obafemi Awolowo University. I spend most of my time at the riverside of Lagos walking, meditating, writing and taking spontaneous pictures of nature.

Selena Cotte

Selena Cotte is a poet, journalist, media studies academic & shapeshifter living in Chicago by way of Orlando. She is interested in internet culture, theme parks, shopping malls, and other delightful simulations on this thing we call Earth. Poetry is merely one of her many coping mechanisms.

Glory Cumbow

Glory Cumbow is a writer living in North Carolina. She works as a strategist helping other writers to get their work published. She is dedicated to the arts and works with local theatres and sings in her community choir. When she's not writing, she enjoys traveling with her husband, catching live shows, and visiting art museums.

Jason de Koff

Jason de Koff is an associate professor of agronomy and soil science at Tennessee State University and lives in Nashville, TN with his wife, Jaclyn, and his two daughters, Tegan and Maizie. When not writing, he is teaching farmers and anyone who will listen about drones.

RC deWinter

RC deWinter writes in several genres with a focus on poetry. She is also a digital artist and sometimes chanteuse. Her only claim to fame is a decent Twitter following.

### Maxwell I. Gold

Maxwell I. Gold is a Rhysling Award nominated prose poet, focusing on weird fiction. His work has been featured in numerous publications including Spectral Realms, Space and Time Magazine, Weirdbook Magazine, and others. Maxwell is a Columbus, Ohio native who loves the great indoors, reading about philosophy, spending time with his cat named Juno, and admiring his fountain pens whilst playing the piano — all at the same time.

### Jeff Fleischer

Jeff Fleischer is a Chicago-based author, journalist and editor. His fiction has appeared in more than fifty publications including the Chicago Tribune's Printers Row Journal, Shenandoah, the Saturday Evening Post and So It Goes by the Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library. He is also the author of non-fiction books including "Votes of Confidence: A Young Person's Guide to American Elections" (Zest Books, 2016 and 2020), "Rockin' the Boat: 50 Iconic Revolutionaries" (Zest Books, 2015), and "The Latest Craze: A Short History of Mass Hysterias" (Fall River Press, 2011).

### Phebe Jewell

Phebe Jewell's recent flash appears or is forthcoming in "Five on the Fifth," "STORGY Magazine," "Fictive Dream," "Bending Genres," and "After the Pause." A teacher at Seattle Central College, she also volunteers for the Freedom Education Project Puget Sound, a nonprofit providing college courses for women in prison. Read more of her work at <http://phebejewellwrites.com>.

Sophia Kouidou-Giles

Sophia Kouidou-Giles lives in two worlds, easily transported from one to the other in her mind. Her cat is also bilingual, accepting services in either English or Greek. In the sun and in the rain, even on coronavirus days, she loves being outdoors.

<https://sophiakouidou Giles.com>

Luis Jefté Lacourt

My name is Luis Jefté Lacourt, Puerto Rican writer, illustrator and veteran based on Mount Holly, New Jersey. I was born in a rainy day in 1983, my favorite color is green and I love the smell of movie theaters. In this life or in another, I want to be a very small bird, a mother, a planet, a traveling cloud and the first fire.

Robert McGee

Rob is an English lecturer and humorist living in Germany. He doesn't like talking and he can't spell, so lecturing and writing were fine career choices. At least the Germans don't seem to mind his living there.

Brian D. Morrison

Writing has been fun lately, what with the pandemic and social struggles, and with the election around the corner, there's nothing to be anxious about at all. :) I'm using the time to write about famous people I like.

C.G. Nelson

C.G. Nelson has been an avid reader of poetry since she was thirteen years old. Her first loves were Emily Dickinson and Edgar Allan Poe. C.G. Nelson is a new poet. She went to the University of Washington, where she graduated with a degree in English and Philosophy. Find her on Twitter @CGNelsonwrites.

### Simon Perchik

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Forge*, *Poetry*, *Osiris*, *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. His most recent collection is *The Reflection in a Glass Eye* published by *Cholla Needles Arts & Literary Library*, 2020. For more information including free e-books and his essay “Magic, Illusion and Other Realities” please visit his website at [www.simonperchik.com](http://www.simonperchik.com).

### Dana Robbins

After a long career as a lawyer, I obtained an MFA from the Stonecoast Writers program. My poem “To My Daughter Teaching Science” was featured by Garrison Keillor on the Writers Almanac in November 2015. I also won the Maine Senior Poet Laureate contest in 2013.

### Drew Alexander Ross

Drew Alexander Ross studied business and film at the University of San Francisco, class of 2015. His primary focus is screenwriting, and he enjoys reading a book a week across various genres, fantasy foremost. He resides in Los Angeles, where he has worked in education and writes freelance film articles. Drew has placed in three screenwriting competitions and has multiple short stories featured in various publications.

### Sandip Saha

Sandip Saha is a chemical engineer and doctorate (PhD) in metallurgical engineering from India. He has got three awards for his scientific work and 33 publications on his scientific research work including three patents. He is a winner of Poetry Matters Project Lit Prize-2018 and finalist in 'Origami Poems Project BEST OF KINDNESS' CONTEST, 2020, both USA. He has



published one collection of poems, "Quest for freedom" available in [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). He is published in 28 poetry journals (59 poems) including Juked, Origami, North Dakota Quarterly, Peregrine, Door is a Jar, Better Than Starbucks Poetry Magazine, Pif Magazine, The Cape Rock: Poetry, Las Positas Anthology-Havik, Pasadena City College Inscape Magazine, Shot Glass Journal, The Wayne Literary Review, Tiny Seed Literary Journal, felan, Oddball, Snapdragon, The Book Smuggler's Den, The Ghazal Page all USA; in Poesis, Romania; in WinglessDreamer, UK; in VerbalArt, Phenomenal Literature, Tajmahal, The Criterion, Poets Choice, India and in The Pangolin Review, Mauritius.

Claire Scott

I am a recently retired psychotherapist and am enjoying having more time to write, take long walks and try to stay ahead of the weeds. I am totally missing my five grandchildren who are scattered over the country, but thank god for Zoom.

Harvey Silverman

I am a retired physician and write nonfiction primarily for my own enjoyment. My nonfiction stories have been published in various places. I am a serious fan of the Red Sox and watching them at spring training in Florida is a dream come true.

June Son

Formerly a freshman at Tufts, June Son was drafted to the South Korean Army last year. He now serves as a tank gunner for the armored reconnaissance battalion of the Eighth Mechanized Infantry Division (a pleasant afternoon walk away from North Korea). His work recently appeared on Thimble Literary Magazine and is forthcoming on Train Poetry Journal.

Liam Stainsby

Liam Stainsby is an English Teacher, podcast host, and burgeoning poet with a BA in English Literature and Creative Writing. While working on his first collection of poetry 'Borders' he traveled the world searching for inspiration. The aim of the project was to explore both the metaphorical and physical ideas around the different borders that divide us. This project is set to be completed and released sometime in 2021.

Edward Michael Supranowicz

Edward Michael Supranowicz has had artwork and poems published in the US and other countries. Both sides of his family worked in the coalmines and steel mills of Appalachia.

Sher Ting

Sher Ting has lived in a land of eternal summer, otherwise known as Singapore, for 19 years before spending the next 4 years in Australia. She can be described in a series of twos — two main languages (English and Chinese), two hamsters and two left feet. Growing up, she has subsisted on a diet of Dead Poets Society and elusive indie bands.

John Tustin

John Tustin is currently suffering in exile on the island of Elba but hopes to return to you soon.

[fritzware.com/johntustinpoeetry](http://fritzware.com/johntustinpoeetry) contains links to his published poetry online.

Nick Visconti

I have been published by the Cordite Review and the San Antonio Review with poems forthcoming from Prelude and Image. I was also a semi-finalist for 2018's

Discovery prize. I currently study creative writing at Columbia University.

Ashley Wagner

Ashley Wagner is the poetry editor for *Ligeia Magazine*. She is a hobbyist photographer and a horrible painter. You can find her reading, writing, and roller-skating all over Maryland.

Lydia Waites

Lydia Waites is a writer and poet, though she primarily writes short stories. In her spare time, she is the editor of *Tether's End Magazine* and fiction editor for *The Lincoln Review*. She lives in a field somewhere in East Yorkshire.

Keegan Waller

Keegan Waller is a writer and poet from Georgia who lives in Utah. His writing primarily focuses on people and places that he loves or loved at one time. He is currently in the desert and therefore cannot be contacted.

Bear Weaver

Bear Weaver, writing and residing in coastal New England, was built by Florida's Gulf Coast. As were their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents. Bear's writing centers themes like identity, queer love, and the absurdity of being alive on Earth.

Amanda Woodard

Amanda Woodard is a freelance poet, essayist and ghostwriter, and an MFA candidate at Antioch University. She studied Social Science and Journalism at the University of North Texas and attended writing workshops at the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction

Conference and Writing Workshops Dallas. Her work has been performed in Oral Fixation and published in Ten Spurs, eris & eros and FlashFlood.

## Submission Guidelines

Door Is A Jar Magazine is looking for well-crafted poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama and artwork for our print and digital publication. Please read over these submission guidelines carefully before submitting any work.

Our magazine features new artists and writers and works that are accessible for all readers. Please look at our current and archived issues before submitting your work. Works that are confusing, abstract, or unnecessarily fancy will not be considered.

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

Contributors can submit to multiple categories; however, only submit once to each category until you have received our decision about your piece.

Upload your submissions to Submittable with the category you are submitting to and your first and last name as the filename. Within the cover letter please include your full name, contact info, and 3-sentence bio.

We accept simultaneous submissions; however, please notify us immediately if a piece is accepted elsewhere. We reserve first initial publishing rights and then all rights revert back to the author. We do not pay contributors at this time.

For more information please visit  
[doorisajarmagazine.net](http://doorisajarmagazine.net)