

DOOR = JAR



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Door Is A Jar
Issue 22

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Cover Image “Boston Harbor”
by Cameron Rogers

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Nature Takes It Back

Mojca Bozja

Poetry

All that it's left of us
are monuments and graves.
Nature swallowed us all in,
there is nothing else left
but green seen from outer space.

Sea Lights
Gráinne Shannon
Poetry

Speckles of pink cloud rise like snowflakes
Into water-colour yellow
As the sun exhales its last breath

Held long enough
To show
The light travelling

In the distance
Clouds fold over the city
Waiting to be washed

Beyond the sea
Blue, grey mountains
Silhouette the dandelion sky

A lighthouse twinkles, a camera flashes
An elderly couple avoid the dunes
With a smile for me

I peel off outer layers
Inviting goose bumps and sand
A wave fizzles and I enter the sea

Ripples spread like a map
Inviting me to explore
Nothingness lies below the surface

I gasp for air
And find a place to float
With seaweed hair

The sky is on my face and in my nose
The mountains are fading
My shiver sends a shiver through the water

Like a dolphin, I turn and swim
Until cold seeps everywhere
Absorbing sound

The sea clings as I reach the shore
Each drop the colour of moon
Comforting cloth scares it away

The motion of land comes back
My ascent home begins
It is dark, but everything seems bright

City Run
Gráinne Shannon
Poetry

You focus on
footfalls first,
rhythmic, reassuring.
Then breathing,
in and out,
controlling pace.
While below
the ground parts
into cobble stone.
Quaint to those
who stand to watch
the Thames glisten
but hazardous to your
beleaguered ankles.

Around a bend
another jogger
passes without nodding.
Your thighs ache
hitting the millennium steel.
You swerve students
who stop to kiss.
Your lungs fill on an incline
with a smell - roasted nuts
parcelled through mittens
from a stove on wheels.
You ignore a homeless man
and the steps burn
up to London Bridge.

Why drive in the city?
You wonder at cars.

Drivers wonder at you.
The lights are mercifully
green so you can stop.

Your chest heaves
your knees bend
itching to leave the curb.

You duck for photos
of the Monument,
break into the bus lane.
You sprint the last stretch home.
Everything to the max.

Memoir of a life

Sharon Lopez Mooney

Poetry

Life writes itself on my body, in grooves carved so deep
the surface remains bruised and tender for decades.
This old frame is a mundane bible of an ordinary life,
with frayed edges, cracked spine of hand-crafted texts,
beginning in gothic script leading into common type.

Memories etch stooped shoulder blades with fine line
drawings
so graceful they hang in life's art gallery, Stretch-marks
blaze
across on my tummy from each birth and death.
Staunch ribs catalog history where I belonged without
direction,
written in formless stanzas, punctuated by children and
time.

My love's crossing the delicate border of death was the
blade
that razored my heart in two; my own hand cleaved
another fissure
along my arm bones and hammered in scars of loss of
other loves.
Grave marker typeface hides in the shadows of my chest
behind my overtaxed lungs, waiting for when it is my
time.

No matter where my heady, sometimes cocky steps
have landed, I leave memory stained foot prints
in the direction of my life on the long way home alone.

The Cat
James Miller
Poetry

The cat licks mother's hand,
a bandage hiding

this week's IV scar. Her fingers
wake to furred ears,

sheathed claws. I watch
their slow rhythm,

all things for now
in agreement.

Trace bloodwork bruises
up her arm.

Weak shoulder and neck,
weathered

folds that once carried
weight. We leave

her sleeping. Drive all
afternoon toward

the coast, where rain
has refused us.

The grocery keeps only
one door open

after hours — we slip through,
silent. Buy cottage

cheese, cherries, the last
clean bread.

Tears Of Love

John Chinaka Onyeche

Poetry

Like those phrases whispered in your ears,
And from the beginning of our journey here,
Through these numbers of years of bound,
Tonight, I have come to remind you of them.

Of my words that stole your heart from you,
And how your beauty was stolen from heaven,
Just to lure me into loving you here on earth.
Tonight, I have come at the end of the bends.

That spot on where we first whispered to ourselves,
That we could be together and forever,
As our hearts believed and melted in tears,
And we embraced each other like the Sun & the sky.

Our hearts beat off the rhythm of a high cadence,
And slowly we began to leave each other,
To continue the next year when time permits.
I am here standing alone like a tree in a forest land.

Drenched by the early rainstorm of the summer,
Tossed by every hurricane and loneliness of the night,
I have realised that without you my forest is frozen,
In an iceberg of emotions and loneliness forever
Please come to me and mend this little tent.

The Lady In Red
John Chinaka Onyeche
Poetry

To the last lady in red,
the one who watches me, —
from the windowpane,
of the old city mansion.

You have vowed to be —
my letch daily; on — sticks —
of loneliness, and many,
a heart fervour, for you.

Your thighs would welcome,
the lost soul to the kingdom, —
the one not built with hands,
of men of this world, —

But you have chosen daily,
to be my murderer in wants,
and have so chosen to burn me
with these — unquenchable fires.

Of my longings in a land filled with, —
the drought of love and my flames of —
desiring you burn to infinity,
as I long each day to be with you.

Oh, come in with your eminent waters,
come to my rescue in this land of,
drought and loneliness of heart,
and make me feel the paradise within.

From Ode to Elegy

Linda Neal

Poetry

Years ago, watching pelicans dive for fish,
I fell in love with birds, the magic of their calls
the beauty of flight, so I've collected birds
made of wood and glass and sometimes pick up a feather
left on the beach or hanging from a tree limb.
I run my hand over wings carved into smooth porcelain,
or through a white feather to learn something about god.

Whooping cranes as tall as a man
with the voice of the blues — three more shot last week.
Gone, their whoop and dive, Gone
their thousand fans that skimmed the air,
their long coiled throats, javelin beaks pointed high,
red topknots, planing the sky, gone their sorrow-warm
call,

as if they've always known of the hunters
who want them for trophies of feathers and flesh.
I dream myself to the edge of a marsh where a crane
dips her beak in the water, leans in to her wavy
reflection,
her red head, her black wing tips, and I know
my love for her will not bring back the dead.

Mother
Rimma Kranet
Nonfiction

My mother sits in the dark of the living room eating boiled chicken out of a Tupperware container with her hands. She says, “shhhhh” as I come down the stairs, thin strands of grey hair falling around her face.

She looks like an animal clawing at her prey.

Down the hall, my father sleeps caged in his hospital bed, the inflatable mattress wheezing like a compressed lung. Depleted of its energy, stripped of its fat, his lean body drowning in layers of fleece.

I make my way to the kitchen in my bare feet on tiles sticky from the day’s meals. A night light burns in the shape of a flame to the right of the sink.

It’s nine in the evening, when our house dips into a well of silence. Mother’s face has become gaunt, elongated like a Giacometti sculpture. She sits in the dark, filled with the anxiety of a new bride, waiting, listening with anticipation for him to release her.

She is haughty and flirtatious with the boy at the checkout stand, waiting to hear that she is still beautiful. It surprises her every time.

“You have a beautiful mother.” he tells me as he scans the eggs, the sour cream, the milk.

She laughs with her mouth closed, ashamed of exposing the gaps of her missing teeth. She is impatient to return to her world where there are no distractions and every room is tightly bound with fear and splintered memories.

Grains of Salt

Edward Michael Supranowicz

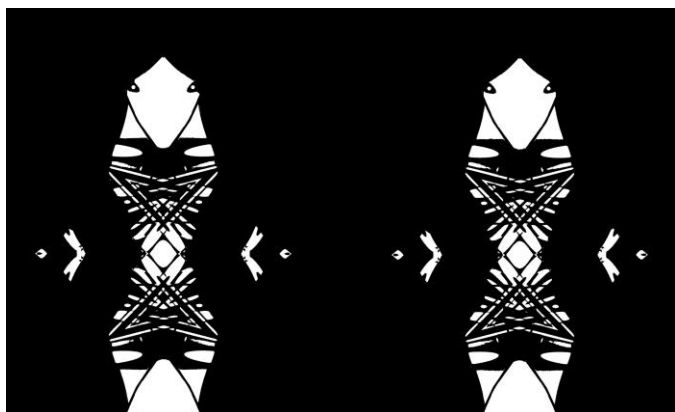
Fiction

Jones was an orderly man, and a man who believed that the unexamined life was not worth living. He had spent the last six months in his kitchen observing and pondering some grains of salt he had spilled on the kitchen table. Since there was food and water and a bathroom handy, he did not need to interrupt his findings and speculations. During this time, his daughter had gotten married and his wife had filed for divorce. But as Jones always said, "First things first."

Little Miss Innocent 1a
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



Femme Fatale 1a
Edward Michael Supranowicz
Art



My truth
Nkanu Okoi
Poetry

The birds make beautiful music and I
Sing along. Just where I stand, a girl squats and
Her pant shows — I become confused which
Sensation to impress.
Because I am a man of small wisdom, I lose
Decency.
On the wall of my conscience, I hang a rosary.
When I wake, it is the first thing I want to see.

I cover my face for the truth is naked;
My lips open the heavens and I hide my
Secrets.
That familiar grief unlock its gate, and I find a way
Through,
So I run to church where my neighbor awaits
His manna; imploring a miracle to prepare a
Table before us.

Geography is the Study of Rocks

John St. Andre

Fiction

October 7th, 2017. A hangout to remember, a hangout to cherish.

Tyler and I sat in the living room. With him in the recliner and me on the couch, we discussed classes while I turned on the television for background noise. “Can’t stand my Civics class,” he ranted. “I wish I was back in World History.”

“Well, I took Algebra and Geometry, so I’m glad I didn’t take a Social Studies class last year. If I did, though, I would’ve taken Geography because people say you only colored maps.”

Before Tyler spoke, my phone blared. Sam McNulty flashed on the screen. Wow. Haven’t seen him since May. Ever since he got together with his girlfriend, hangouts with him dwindled. He would tell us that Saturdays were “Date Nights,” and that he would join us next time.

But he never did.

So, why was he calling? I grabbed my phone from my pocket and answered the call. “Hey bud.”

“Hey John. Are you and Tyler hanging out right now?” I could hear him weeping, his breath stuttering, choking up after every word.

“Yeah, we’re still hanging out. You okay?”

I struggled hearing his words through his sniffles. “No. She doesn’t wanna see me tonight. I just don’t wanna be alone right now. Can I join you guys, please?”

“Of course! You’re always welcome at my house.”

“Great. I’ll be over in ten minutes. Thanks.”

Sam hung up, and I looked at Tyler. “Sam’s coming over.”

He seemed incredulous, his scrunched eyebrows hanging over his narrowed eyes, his hand supporting his chin. “Really? Haven’t seen him in a while. Isn’t tonight ‘Date Night,’ though?”

“I thought that too, but he said that she doesn’t wanna see him. Hope he’s okay.”

“I do too, but I’ll be glad to see him again.”

Ten minutes passed. The doorbell rang. I walked to the front door and saw Sam, his shoulders drooped, his eyes puffed up, his expression defeated.

“Hey bro!” His response, an ambivalent smile, more tears. I try comforting him with a hug. “I’m sorry, man. We’re here for you.” Some jittery head nodding as he wiped away snot bubbles.

The hug halted. I patted him on the shoulder and escorted him to the living room. After we sat on the couch, he surveyed the room until his eyes landed on Tyler. “Tyler, how are you?”

“I’m doing well. How are you, Samuel?”

“Not gonna lie. Could be better. What have you guys been up to?”

“Oh, we were just talking about Civics and old Social Studies classes. Right, John?”

They turned to me. “Yeah, I told Tyler I would’ve taken Geography had I not doubled up in math.”

“Oh God,” Sam said as his face crumpled with disgust. “I would’ve hated Geography. Studying rocks would’ve been so boring.”

The hell did he just say? I looked at Tyler, and we both cocked an eyebrow. He must’ve known. Did he, though? I had to know. “I beg your pardon?”

“What? Geography is the study of rocks.” Not a single word spoken after that. He didn’t know. Unbelievable. After about a minute, he had his epiphany. “Oh wait. Shit. That’s Geology.”

After his realization, Tyler squealed, falling to the ground and pounding the carpet. His high-pitched laughter made me lose it. My glasses fogging up, tears overflowing my eyes, my sides aching.

Our bombardment of giggles launched toward Sam, who started to titter. His hands covered his face, but his laughter burst through them. His muffled chuckles, now almost deafening.

I didn't know why Tyler laughed as hard as he did at Sam's mistake, a Freudian slip that didn't warrant our howls of hilarity. Yet, we kept laughing, unable to stop.

Our howls did eventually hush. "Jesus Christ," I said before a last cough and deep breath. "Sam, that was amazing."

"I can't breathe," Tyler said, exhausted as he struggled getting back into the recliner. "You gotta warn me before you say something like that, Sam."

Sam clung to my shoulder, still trying to stop himself. "Oh my God. That was hilarious. I'm so dumb." Then, another round of laughs, this one shorter than the former. We couldn't help it.

I noticed the television playing *Stand by Me*. "Y'all wanna watch a movie?"

"Sure," Tyler responded.

Before our eyes turned to the television, I heard Sam still giggling, and Tyler and I joined him. Sam patted my shoulder. "I needed that." The three of us smiled, Sam's the biggest, knowing he wasn't smiling alone.

The Fairy Light

Barbara Hughes

Poetry

Nowadays I don't spend as much time
looking for a fairy in the distance
she will come when she wants to

she may never come

The fairy shadow from lucid dreams
dancing across walls of a dimly lit room
waltzing out the window into the willows

Inside my cerebral carnival I can't
discern realities from fantasies or
truths from imaginings

Bewitched I hang transfixed under
a constellation of neon blue
jumping into a bath of universes

The half empty moon refuses to
limit herself to originality
faintly glowing — her star bodies with stars

is it her that calls to me?
silently from places unknown
caressing me back into my star system

All that I need
is to want nothing more

In her wisps of smoke
I worship the goddess
alone in my madness ... she is so elusive

Comedy

Marcus Slease

Poetry

Monkeys, apes, birds, rats, lizards, toads & cockroaches all play. & what is an ape & what is a monkey & what is a human? Apes do not have tails. Monkeys have tails. Humans tell tales, but no longer have tails. They have tail bones. Ape species include humans, gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans, gibbons, & bonobos. Apes are closer to humans than monkeys. & they all play. They all play. Rats like to be tickled. They have tested it with a human finger. & apes laugh. & dogs laugh. All animals play. Everything needs a purpose, but what is the purpose of play? Animals play. humans are animals. They play, but when they enter the cult of adulthood, no more play. They pretend play, but it is only workplay. It is difficult to reconcile work with play. Step out of time to play today. There must be some way to play. The apes laugh loudly, but the humans laugh the loudest. Their bodies convulse. Tears down their cheeks, unable to breathe, almost suffocating. In groups, humans laugh don't laugh at something funny, or not usually, it is for group bonding. Whoever laughs with the group is part of the group. Whoever does not laugh is outside of it. The laugh is on you. What are you laughing at? Who is inside & who is outside? The return of the repressed is a comedy.

Hermit Kingdom

Marcus Slease

Poetry

Long ago in some other kingdom, not this one, I lived among the trees & spoke to birds. At first it was an aristocrat's garden. In return, I trimmed the hedges, very straight, & kept the soil rich. A good luck talisman. My clothing a lovely cloak, full on druid. Also, for a little on the side, skinning the rabbits. Once a year, I ate the rabbit soup. My education was very varied. Berries & cracked nuts. Imported seashells. A tiny music box. The best sweaters with zippers, up and down adjustable temperatures. Also, whatever else. A hummingbird in the shady lower layers of tropical forests. Out and about with nature. There are so many beauties. Take the news with a pinch of salt. Take the working holiday every day. Take the headrest. Take the ball of lust. Take the train to childhood, but don't stay too long. Perk up. Sit up. Slouch it. Lumpen it. Beat it. Stroke it. Devour it. Spew it. Clean it. When you close your eyes, you can time travel. Who or what travels? History is fluid forever. No one can find the control centre.

Chocolate Superstar

Ilari Pass

Poetry

I am built
to suit
your size
the span of my hips
the stride of my step
I say you are
within my reach
I want to show you
what others can't see
or feel warm flesh
your heat my heart
I tremble your build
I survey your part
with a stare I want to taste
your saturnine ray
of grand dimensions
delicate wrinkles indicate
singular powers of extension
sensitive groove I admire
your texture I wade
into your waters
you rouse to the trill
go on go on I want you to
touch my dark sand dollar
until I wash ashore

Room Under Moonlight

Ilari Pass

Poetry

a couple dances
in a dream, blurred,
like woozy fireflies

a wisp of color
the rose escapes
the moon light

scintillates through the blinds,
splotches of mottled flesh tones,
the rest darkness

Art of Noise

Ilari Pass

Poetry

I never knew myeloid leukemia would have a lymphatic rhythm all its own. It is an indescribable oppression, which originates in some unfamiliar part of my consciousness and fills my whole being with a vague anguish. It parts the curtains to reveal what's been hidden far too long. Broadness stretches out the sky so I can walk. What can I go towards? I can hear the noise that occurs inside me, and I must tune myself to its sounds.

Maybe blood is fiction. I wonder about translation. Molecules of blood follow when language fails — you can't hear them whisper to each other while they wait for the gate of your marrow to open. Chemo has secret conversations. But instead of conversations, there are screams that don't end — not knowing what to save or to throw away. Just because I am surviving doesn't mean I don't hurt.

I wonder about what noise looks like inside my body and think, *if I were inside this orchestra, I would have a hard time following the conductor. Where is the downbeat? What is that gesture? Who is he talking to?* Time has paused as much as time is capable. When my body gets on smooth ground, I don't want to breathe a word. But I must keep you a secret for now.

I look down at a large puddle in the sand that holds the sky after cumulous fists of light punch at my skin. A breeze makes small faces, expressions of caricature's surprise. The voice of the sea is seductive. All along this white beach, up and down, there's not a soul in sight.

How strange and awful it seems to feel like I am naked under this sun. The touch of the sea is sensuous; foamy wavelets curl up to my feet, coils like serpents about my ankles. The water is chill.

I pay attention to everything in awe of nature's mastery and vibrancy. The noise I hear isn't always static. All sounds stay. The closer I draw myself in, the less I must shout; the more I can whisper. I begin where the things I have seen I can't speak of. The weariness has left. I throw on my scarf once more for old time's sake. It will cover my bald spots. Or maybe I want to be recognized. But I hope no one notices me.

They never had trouble with that before.

Drinking Buddies

Will Musgrove

Fiction

When I drink, I get stuck in a relationship with a boxer. He lives inside my head. I've hired a therapist and an exorcist and every "ist" in between to get rid of him, but, whenever I pull back a few, he's still rattling around in my skull.

He claims to be a Golden Gloves winner. But I know him, have spoken to him, have seen his paunchy stomach, and he doesn't seem like a champion. Whenever we hit the bars, his mouth starts running, and he always gets knocked out, and, by extension, I get knocked out. We usually wake up on the street or in some ditch, bloody, sporting a black eye or two, him blaming me for ducking when I should have weaved.

After draining a sixer in my garage (and after the boxer had punched a couple of holes in the drywall), I walk down to Johnny's. I can hear him throwing shadow jabs. *Whoosh. Whoosh.* I make him promise to go easy tonight. He makes me promise to sign-up for a gym membership, to chug raw eggs for breakfast.

Johnny's is packed, so we have to sit at the bar. I order a whiskey sour for variety's sake. A group of frat boys leans against the counter. The boxer insults them, calls them assholes for existing. One of them grabs my collar, shakes me. With my hands up, I apologize for the boxer, say he's harmless, and they leave.

"There's no real competition here tonight," the boxer says.

"Remember your promise."

I order another drink, this time a rum and coke. Someone tugs at the back of my t-shirt. I turn around to see a kid, maybe ten or eleven, dressed in Superman

pajamas. The boxer slides off the stool, taking me with him.

“We got to go,” the boxer says. “This guy’s dangerous, a real killer.”

“It’s just a kid.”

“That’s no kid.”

I ask the bartender if she sees the kid behind me. She, in the process of helping a slew of money-waving customers, informs me they don’t let anyone under twenty-one in the bar after nine. The boxer keeps repeating how scary this guy is, how he’ll wreck us, so I pay my tab and leave. Outside, I stumble down the street, lighting stolen coasters with my Zippo and flinging them at my tiny stalker.

“Surely, it’s past your bedtime,” I slur.

“We have to run, man.”

I remove my shoes and sprint. Panting, I hide in an alley. I hear miniature clicks and clacks. The boxer makes the sign of the cross. The kid rounds the corner. I shield my face. What I wouldn’t give for one last drink.

“Come home, dad.”

That’s right. I’m a husband. I’m a father.

The boxer begins to weep.

THE MARGOS

John Tustin

Poetry

Since my heart was broken for the final time
The Margos have kept coming and going
In and out of my life.
Margos and Lauras and Karens
Who come to me in disrepair,
Beaten by ex-husbands and life in general
And looking for someone who will just be nice to them.
That's me — Nice.
In my own peculiar way, of course.

Margo takes the happy pills the doctor prescribes her,
Laura looks in the mirror and hates all she sees.
Karen is afraid to be touched at first.
These women, all as broken as my heart,
One at a time looking for me to provide them so much
And all I can give them is a little time and some words
Before they realize I'm not lying —
I've given them all I am capable and it's not nearly
enough.

I couldn't love any of them.
I can never love anyone.
I don't even like to kiss anymore.
You can't ask a man to love you if he can't even like
kissing
Or being kissed.

PEOPLE WHO LIVE BY THE OCEAN

John Tustin
Poetry

People who live by the ocean
are sick of
the ocean.

The movement of the waves
makes them nauseous,
the roar of the surf
has them reaching
for aspirin.
And the flooding
and the stink of low tide
and sunbaked fish
stinking up the rocks.

It is not typically
in Man's genetic code
to be satisfied.

It is rare
the man
who finds what he thinks
he wants
and finds peace.

These men are simple,
enlightened,
god-like.

Or insane.

THE SLAVE

John Tustin

Poetry

The mind is the slave to the body.
The thoughts are the slave to the heart.
The night is the slave to the day —
the moon begs the sun for scraps of borrowed light.
The leaf is the slave to the tree.
The fish is the slave to the ocean
and I am chained like a runaway caught —
I am the slave to the memory of you:
my shackler, my jailer,
my darkness,
my mistress.
I am so small inside of your cell.
It's good that life is not endless.
The rain claps inside me but it isn't applause.

THERE ARE MANY LIVES

John Tustin
Poetry

Yes, I know
There are many lives
That each soul lives
But it doesn't lessen the sting
Of coming home from a nine-hour work day today
And finding these dusty and spartan rooms
Empty of you.

Are you still sitting at your kitchen table on a Sunday
night,
Watching the roiling sea as the sky darkens
And imagining me in the distance
Rowing toward you alone on a lifeboat in a storm
As the brave sad ship of all my life sinks
Beyond the frame?

I can imagine that, too.

You open a bottle of wine or a bottle of beer
As you listen to Nina Simone
Or someone you have just discovered
And you think about me
And what I am doing

As I listen to Billy Edd Wheeler
Or someone else I have just discovered
And also yearn to tell you all about, of course.

Look out into that darkness
From your second story window.
Look out into that ocean
As the rain comes down.

Look. There I am,
Rowing with both oars,
Almost drowned
But still rowing —

My mouth overflowing with words,
With everything I have in my mind,
In my heart.

There are many lives
And this one we live
Should be lived
Before we die.

WHY NOW?

John Tustin

Poetry

Homely, distracted, disgruntled
 And silly.
 Colorless as the wind,
 With every emotion of the tide
 Attached like a string on a kite
 But unable to steer.

Why now?
 Why the feelings now?
 Why the terror of not knowing now?
 Why jealousy now?
 Why the death of hope now?
 Why now?

I wake up and masturbate,
 Then dress in the dark.
 I drive to work and pretend to care.
 I call the kids. I file the papers.
 I think about you all day,
 I long for you all night.
 I try. I really do.
 Sometimes I can smile,
 Sometimes I can't
 But I never feel like it.

I take everything off and lie in bed,
 Awake and mindful
 That today bore no solace,
 That tomorrow brings no solution,
 That the earth turns
 But I am lying still,
 As helpless, as immobile

As the dead.

Guided By Voices

Richard Leise

Fiction

Years ago — just seventeen, popping with Christopher — Mom had bathed before bed. Given the Susquehanna's force, she'd followed Dad a sensible distance down the sandbar, the couple kneeling. Guided by her husband, flat-backed, his hands soaping and rinsing her long blond hair within the river's cold, wild current, she relaxed, her hair kicking and clawing to rise, to settle on the surface.

Such simple cause and effect.

Had she known the play, had she seen the painting, still, she never would've thought to think: *Ophelia*.

— Lord, she prayed, some rock pleasantly grinding a rib. — Please grant me more confusion.

THE MAN THAT SHE MARRIED

Susan Eve Haar

Fiction

It was at the swimming pool of the Alamosa Holiday Inn that Eve discovered she'd made a significant mistake. The pool was inside in the center of the hotel. There was a small carousel with garish horses that her boys rode, hunching down on the plastic horses, whooping with delight. There was Space Invaders too, and a machine with candy and corn chips, but she was out of quarters. The hot tub, in which she had immersed herself, was so hot that it turned her bones to soup. Reluctantly she got out, wrapped herself in a towel, and sat by the pool watching her boys play in the water.

This trip had been her husband's idea. A family road trip. Eve hadn't anticipated the endless highways, the density of trucks, and the hours of the boys poking each other in the back seat. They'd played Dog, naming all the breeds they could think of, and Bad Thumb, a game in which one of her thumbs abused the other, its evil ways leaving the boys content and giggling. It made her tired, keeping them amused. Bored, they fought, kicking each other silently. Sometimes they fell asleep, and she watched the flatness of the landscape slide by. Her husband drove, lost in his own bubble of thought, or perhaps zoned out entirely. Sometimes he picked his nose; he didn't talk to her at all, though when she turned on the radio, he hummed.

Now he was up in the hotel room working. She was keeping the boys away; he wanted silence. So often he wanted silence.

Her little one, Jim, had already found someone to play with. The boys were tossing a red foam ball back and forth. It splattered on the water. Jim, ever sensible, wrung it out between tosses. He was five but had an

uncannily strong throwing arm and the noblesse oblige of the very beautiful. His brother, Nate, was swimming contentedly in the little pool, alternating between a competent dog paddle and a beginner's crawl.

From the side, a small boy cannonballed into the water. He was wearing purple trunks and black goggles. Close to Nate's age, he swam underwater then suddenly materialized on the other side. He held on to the edge and waited for his mom. The mother was stepping in, holding a baby. Perhaps he was three. She was wearing purple, too, a plum two-piece racing suit. Muscles fanned out on her back as she lifted her little one, motorboating him around in the shallow water. Her body was narrow, lean, and taut under her tanned skin—otherworldly. This was not the domain of motherhood. Her dark hair hung down her back in a careless braid. She smiled at Eve—the wide smile of the unencumbered.

“Are they twins?” she asked.

“They're two years apart.”

“Very beautiful. This is Miguel.” She presented her little boy, holding him out.

“Solid. Built to last.” Eve touched the baby's plump thigh with one finger.

The woman laughed. She swished Miguel with adoration, but he was wiggling to escape.

“I can show him my kind of cannonball,” Jim said, popping up. “Would that be okay?”

“Sure. What's your name?”

“I'm Jim, and that's my brother Nate, and he's seven, and we live in New York. Do you live here?”

“No, we're from California.”

“Mom, where are we?”

Eve was stumped. She'd been following the road signs, but now the name escaped her.

“In a pool at a Holiday Inn.”

“But where?”

“In Colorado.” It came to her. “In a town called Alamosa.”

Content, Jim took the little boy by the hand and led him to the edge.

“He’s very convivial,” the woman said, following the boys. She got in the water and held out her hands to her baby, who squatted down, arms outstretched, and fell into her arms. Jim belly flopped in next to him.

“Swim to safety!” he shouted, paddling like crazy across the shallow end.

Of course, Alamosa. Twenty-three miles south of the Jack Dempsey Museum located at Manassa. Eighteen miles from the Great Sand Dunes National Monument, North America’s tallest sand dunes rising seven hundred feet at the base of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range. Christ’s blood. Or there was the home of the world-famous Rocky Mountain White tilapia hybrid fish developed at the Colorado alligator farm where geothermal wells kept the water at eighty-seven degrees, allowing almost anything to develop. But Eve wasn’t thinking about that. She was wondering if Nate should be swimming since he’d picked up Colorado fever from a tick she’d removed from his head in Aspen, and he was already a little blue around the lips.

Jim surfaced again, holding on to her ankles, dangling in the pool, squinting up at her.

“Where are we again?” he asked.

Eve knew exactly where she was. Here with her boys in this precious moment, the moment that was her life. If only she were not so alone. If only her husband was there to share it.

“Alamosa,” Eve said. She crouched, pushing his wet bangs out of his eyes. And it was then that she was seized by a profound revelation: She’d married the wrong man.

Compilation
Holly Pelesky
Poetry

You will keep the house and I'll move
into a two-bedroom apartment, press two
twenties into the maintenance man's palm when he
agrees to assemble
the boys' bunk beds. I will learn how to set up accounts
(bank, utilities, internet),
figure out the exact price of everything. I will drive the
kids to preschool and kindergarten
and work weekend nights closing the restaurant,
weekend mornings opening the coffee shop
while you keep the same job you worked our entire
marriage.

The boys will learn to pull apart mom&dad, add space.
And they will leave
necessary blankets and stuffed animals at the wrong one.
I will keep my place clean, determined
to have a different life, to live on my own terms. So
many nights my dinner will be
nachos. My legs will remember how to walk in stilettos
and I'll start wearing dresses again.
One day, you'll slip a burned CD into the bag with the
boys' blankets and stuffies and
I'll see it scrawled in Sharpie, *ex-husband's tunes*. I'll
turn it on from curiosity but quickly turn
it back off, crank up instead the music I like.

Mirror-Shaped Girl

Sage Tyrle

Fiction

Every time I look at you I see myself. Like our Mom gave birth to one girl, one echo.

Every time you look at me I pull my hair back, or make my smile smaller. Eat more. Eat less. Tilt my head so we match. Tuesday when you wore your yellow dress I put mine in my backpack. I changed into it at lunch to make you laugh but you just looked down at your sandwich and sighed.

Every time I look at you, you're closer. At first, I kept the college catalogues in my locker and changed the combination every day. But I kept thinking about how we both reach for the same banana on a bunch. How we head for the same desk in a classroom. I don't know a random number that you won't pick. So I sat with the catalogues in the bathroom stall at school and read every word, while you stood outside asking if I was sick or something, and when I was done I stuffed them in with the used tampons.

Every time you look at me you are farther away. Remember how we used to fall asleep? Mom would kiss us goodnight and we'd tell stories to each other and I'd drift off in the middle of a sentence and you'd take it up. In the morning we could remember the story but not who imagined the which parts. And then you wanted your own room and I pretended I did too but the stories I tell myself aren't the same. You keep saying we'll go to Northwest State together. Is that real? Is that really real?

Every time I look at you I see fragments of reflection pasted to your nose, your arm, your eyes.

Every time you look at me I reach for your hand. Sometimes you stand still long enough.

Every time I look at you I want to confess the lie.
 Not Northwest State. I want to blurt out the lie you can't
 see. You don't know how much I want to close my eyes
 and fall backwards into our we. The way we used to
 draw together on opposite couches, silent, smiling, and
 our Mom would say, "But how did you both make a
 lobster with wings?" and we didn't know how we did it,
 we just knew that loneliness was something that
 happened to other people.

Every time you look at me I miss you.

Every time I look at you I tell myself that when I'm
 gone you'll have to figure out how to make friends.
 You'll have to figure out how to ride the subway alone
 and choose the clothes you want to wear. You will stop
 saying we.

Every time you look at me I —

I tell myself you will stop but when I picture you
 you've forgotten how to say *I* and you're alone and I'm
 a thousand miles away at Caltech —

*Caltech on the return address and Mom was
 flustered and said the envelope was for her and to give it
 back —*

back before the day you reached for the grape jam at
 breakfast and I thought your hand was mine, I looked
 down expecting to see —

*see that everyone's been lying to me, everyone,
 everyone —*

everyone says if we don't separate we'll never —
never feel complete without you next to me.

I/You look at you/me in the rear-view mirror. Part of
 me can feel the asphalt/steering wheel under my/your
 bare feet/hands. Part of me is never leaving.

Staying.

Roost
Holly Pelesky
Poetry

I pull his bird bones of a body into
the concave of my motherness
carve a nook into myself —
space I make just for him

I like mothering for its tenderness.

Not only moments like this
but how I linger in the baby aisle
for its colors and blurry nostalgia.
I drink tea now, buy winter socks

I wasn't always like this.

One morning I woke, sharp recollection
of rubber squeal/metal scrape/lit sparks
horizon looking like abyss —
recklessness outscreeching my joy

That day I felt nothing, only alive.

But then
those downy heads bobbed toward me
and I saw first their smallness.

I kissed them: more press than before
promised I would instead
become feather.

Skin Hunger
Holly Pelesky
Poetry

She asked why, my mother, when
I called with so much
I'd never told her
muffled in just the word *divorce*.

And this is strange but
I thought of how each Thursday
she stopped at AmPm, wordless.

My sister and I took turns
sharing the bench with our piano teacher,
circling notes on sheet paper

and mom: she sat on a couch in the basement
doling out m&ms, one after another, to the
three-year-old who traded her wet kisses.

Silence that felt like camaraderie
when I whispered, "I was sad, mom.
So sad I wanted to die."

Phone to cheek, I was remembering
that particular stare I gave
her face each week: smeared
brown, orange, green, yellow, the new blue.

I was raised by America

E J Saleby

Poetry

I was raised by London in the nineteen eighties
By skateboards and MTV
By Knight Rider
 and coloured tees

So really,
 I was raised by America.

But I loved London for what it was.
 Grey,
 And dirty
 And angry at times.
Full of music and rhythms,
 and rain on the bridges

I've lost London since
Or it's lost me.
And maybe I've lost
 myself a little too.

I recognise the streets but
 I don't know the people
It's lonely
For such a busy place.

I was raised by London
And now
I,
Still have America

Me vs. I
Meryl Thomas
Art



Novel Molecule, Thief

Harlan Yarbrough

Fiction

Jack returned to his native land for three reasons in the latter part of February. Friendship and compassion compelled him to help his closest friend deal with the emotional and practical fallout attendant upon the sudden and unexpected loss of his one remaining parent. Jack's desire to hustle his novels to literary agents led him to pay for registration at four writers' conferences. Finally, he planned to play enough gigs to defray the costs of the trip and to recharge his bank account.

Ten days after Jack's arrival in North America and the day before his first concert, a global pandemic induced governments to close all performance venues and organizers of writers' conferences to cancel all events. The suddenly unemployed entertainer took a philosophical view of those setbacks: his children and ex-wife were safe on the other side of the Pacific, he didn't have a mortgage on his modest home, he didn't have to pay rent while sheltering in place in his friend's home, and the lockdown provided ample time for writing, editing, and hustling his work to literary agents.

Quotidian necessities required Jack or his friend to leave their bubble and go shopping once every two weeks. Jack preferred to shop at the local food co-op, but specific requirements militated in favor of shopping elsewhere occasionally. Much as Jack's loathing for the way Wal-Mart treated its employees made him reluctant to spend his money in the company's stores, practical considerations, including inventory and proximity, sometimes made a visit to one of them a necessary evil.

One Tuesday morning found the rangy musician, appropriately masked, in the nearest Wal-Mart shopping for himself and his bereaved friend. As Jack left the

produce area to procure four loaves of bread, he passed and said “Hi” to a sandy-haired woman heading the opposite direction. Although her mask concealed the lower half of her face, Jack saw her blue eyes smile as she gave a cheerful reply. He encountered her again a few minutes later, as they both pushed their carts the opposite way.

“Gee, isn’t this frustrating,” the balding entertainer said.

“You’ve picked exactly the right word,” the woman replied. “Frustrating.”

The two shoppers exchanged pleasantries from a safe ten-foot distance and went on their separate ways. They met twice more, once while Jack picked up a two-pound block of sharp cheddar and again at the checkout. Carefully spaced by the new marks on the supermarket floor, the two commiserated about the prudent restrictions and shared their dissatisfaction with the absence of social contacts and, in Jack’s case, music. Both expressed dissatisfaction with the way the federal government was handling the pandemic. They also exchanged names, so Jack learned his new acquaintance’s name was Sierra.

Haunted by the woman’s sparkling blue eyes, Jack felt pleased to overtake her on the way to the parking lot. The two proceeded side-by-side, barely maintaining the stipulated six-foot separation, and chatted as they walked. A few minute’s conversation led them to stop, each backing a farther yard away from the other, and remove their masks. After their moments of revelation, the two restored their masks and continued into the parking lot.

Feeling a need to take the initiative, Jack said, “I’d like to see you again.”

“I would like that, too,” Sierra replied.

Accordingly, they stopped and retrieved appropriate items from pocket and purse. Sierra recorded Jack's cellphone number in her cellphone's memory, while Jack wrote her number on a folded piece of notepaper from his blue jeans pocket. The new friends chatted for twenty minutes about everything from politics to livelihoods, discovering a shared passion for environmental issues in the process, and agreed to stay in touch and to see each other again, once the virus had been subdued.

The passage of three months saw the two new friends share fifty-two phone calls with a steady increase in both frequency and candor. The latter led to a concomitant increase in intellectual and emotional intimacy. Jack and Sierra also shared their frustration at the circumstances and restrictions that kept them apart. Jack admitted that his being over sixty placed him in a higher risk category. Sierra told him she worried about inadvertently becoming the cause of his contracting the potentially deadly virus.

"Apart from my age, I don't have any significant risk factors," Jack said. "Oh, I do sometimes get asthmatic symptoms from a few allergies, but I'm basically very healthy. I don't smoke or anything."

"That's good. Let's both get tested, after we've been isolated for three weeks," Sierra replied. "We could actually see each other after that."

Jack agreed that his new friend's suggestion was a good one, and they decided to work toward that end. Issues about food storage made three weeks of total isolation almost impossible. Continuing isolation also led to even more frequent telephone conversations. Both Jack and Sierra nevertheless kept their focus on confirming their freedom from infection and effecting a rendezvous.

In the meantime, Jack received encouragement in the form of a request from a respected agent for a full manuscript of one of his novels. Sierra congratulated her new friend as soon as he told her and again after he had explained the implications of the news. A major resurgence of the pandemic virus and then another and another frustrated the new friends' desires to enjoy time together. Dramatic increases in the number of virus sufferers led state and local governments to introduce increasingly stringent, if woefully belated, restrictions on movement and requirements for isolation. Nevertheless, Jack and Sierra remained — and remain — hopeful of meeting again in person.

Mostly you're drowning

Cat Dixon

Poetry

afraid of being known or being
remembered for this lack of skill,
grit, and foresight. You were the
only one who'd gone out this far —
mouth full of sass, secret,
and sea — from the water a sacrificial hand
rising like a champagne flute, like a formal
toast to be given. Cheers to remorse and
index cards with quotes you've
never cared to memorize. Our dead
don't benefit from wet cheeks, flowers,
and organ music. All our unspent
love is filling the lungs. What
else is there to say to the sea?

You didn't know me

Cat Dixon

Poetry

and now you know me. You found
magazine cutouts and banana peels
above the fridge, a flurry of old
newspapers stacked against the kitchen
door, and used nicotine patches slipped into
applesauce pouches in the pantry. I ask,
how can I make it right when
all you expect is another wrong move?
No sugar for the lemon, no glue for the collage.
No way to fix the broken freezer door —
it will always be like that. Sometimes
the idea of me is better than the real me.
You deserve better. Just make it quick.

Tell me that I'm good

Cat Dixon

Poetry

Don't compare me to nasty honeydew or
avocado — foods that turn too fast, that
no one really likes — just passing fads.

I know I can't make it back to shore —
eleven minutes past sunset — the dark
lonely swimmer who won't ripen. These

recipes recorded by our grandmothers
are collected, perfected, photocopied, and
distributed to family members on
Christmas — then never read. These days, I

love to tread water in the middle of the lake.
If I avoid the kitchen with its mysterious
flavors and new foods, I'll skip the fork and
frequent meals and the drowning plate with
every morsel drenched in salt and hate.

Pink Lines

Alyssa Witbeck Alexander

Poetry

Blood drips into my underwear, staining
the cotton an auburn brown, stealing its whiteness.

My mother was 23 when she had me, her first child.

Now, I, two days before my 23rd birthday, stand
in my small apartment bathroom at 3:30 in the morning,
rip the pink plastic packaging, listen
for my husband to stir. He doesn't.

The first pool of blood leaks from me while I hold
the pregnancy test in my hand, my body's silent request
to place the test back in the bottom drawer and save
the \$4.37. I take it anyway.

With a tissue, I wipe the bit of blood from
my leg, wait for the pink lines to fill in
on the reader.

Told by my rural and religious town
that the best women are mothers, the best
mothers are young. Told by my university
that the best women are scholars, and the best
mothers are old. In my notebook, I draw a mother
whose belly looks like a moon,
her mouth open as vines and words
run out of it, her poetry as real as her bosom.
I draw a book in her hand.

One thin line appears, standing
against the white background, a solider steadfast
in her stance: not pregnant. The breath of relief

I expect to release holds
in my lungs and I cry.
I didn't know I wanted a baby.
A drop of menstrual blood hits the tile.

Mermaid Dreams
Alyssa Witbeck Alexander
Poetry

*“When it comes to bed, there’s no difference
between a poet, a priest, or a communist!” — from the
film “Il Postino”*

I sweat in the night, tiny streams spooling
off my skin and saturating the silvery
bedsheets. *What will I become?*
I ask my husband, clutching his wrist
like a mermaid pulling her prey into her salty
ocean, sharp nails pressing into his veins.
My pillowcase smells like seawater. He kisses the scales
on my belly button and the hairs
over my ribcage roll into his touch. He whispers that
I should go back to sleep, but seaweed runs
from his mouth onto the seashells that coat
my chest and I know I won’t be able to get away
from the ocean that asks me *What
will you become?* each time a wave crests
over a mountain in the water
and I open my eyes again.

When I fall asleep, I float,
a buoy amongst the waves
that breathes like a poet, like a writer,
like a mother, like a cheater, like a teacher,
like a lawyer, like a killer, like a girl with fins
on my back that cause my body to turn,
become my own shark, circling.

Are You My Mother
Alyssa Witbeck Alexander
Poetry

“Anxious moms make anxious babies.”

“Stress is bad for the baby.”

“Are you taking care of the baby?”

Lips curled back, the unknown
and leash-less Labrador mix runs,
her dark body racing toward me and
my fluffy eighteen-pound poodle
I told to “sit.” My pup, plucked
by his shoulder, squeals while he’s shook.
The lab bounds, then drops my whimpering dog
in the road. He tries to escape, bleeding
and zig-zagging across asphalt.
I wail his name.

My now empty hands
want to cradle, to nurture.

In my womb, a fetus kicks.
I ignore it —
my baby —
to chase my dog, hands shaking while I scoop
his panting frame from the ground.

Flesh torn from his body,
his blood soaks my stomach while I hold
him against me. I whisper, “I’m so sorry,”
but all this pup knows is
his mother let go of the leash when the dog attacked
him;
his mother didn’t carry him away before the dog lunged
closer.

In my womb, a fetus kicks.
I wonder if it — he — feels my racing heart,
knows that I've cuddled my broken pup for hours
instead of "eating for two," that sometimes
I look away from ultrasound pictures, afraid.

Meanwhile, my pup bleeds.

Orbit

Alyssa Witbeck Alexander

Poetry

The world unites in fear of breathing
before your first breath

My stomach ripples
when you stir

We're connected
My body soothes yours

One day the world will touch again
You'll tear through the softest part of me —

we'll exist apart

I look out the window & see
no one

Sip non-alcoholic sparkling cider

Boston Harbor
Cameron Rogers
Art



Cool Morning, Early June

John Dorroh

Poetry

Take in deep breaths of north breeze.
Imagine myself in Spain with olive bread
and hibiscus jelly. Robust steaming coffee.

Twist my ankles gently from side to side,
rotating the joints. Lubrication.
And then I walk. As far as I can. Perhaps
return the same day.

First book. Read aloud a random poem.
Place a check-mark at the top of the page.
Second book. Same. Third book. Same.
Repeat cycle. Staring at the bellies of clouds
and say, "I wish I'd thought to write that."

Gaze out into the garden. See sunflowers
stretch for sky with steel backbones.
Yellow irises lip-pink roses fuzzy dewed grass
delicate pepper blooms. Bunnies nibbling.
I swear I see a black snake slithering into bush.

Acknowledge movement. Drink cold water
with lemon. Listen to melting cubes –
delicate tings and pops melting in my glass.
Watch sweat bees scrape their raspy tongues
across every surface they touch. Stare a big red
ant in its compound eyes, dare it to come
one millimeter closer. Finally write a shell
of a poem.

Toss This One Back into the Water

John Dorroh

Poetry

I fill the weathered sauce pan halfway with canola oil, turn the heat on medium-high, and cut the fillets into manageable pieces, larger than nuggets and suitable as finger-food if that's how she wants to eat it.

She sits on a stool and kicks her sandals off onto the kitchen floor. She says she'll have a bit of white wine. It's been a hard week and she walked away from her desk 15 minutes early.

I pour the cornmeal into my grandma's crock bowl, chop some Vidalia onions, add buttermilk and beer and a bit of finely chopped jalapeno.

She tells me about the woman who works across from her in the office, the one who talks all day and never shuts up, how she continuously brings sickening sweet desserts and keeps asking everyone to have just one more bite.

I am drinking beer. I guzzle the first one like a pro and then realize what I'm doing. *Slow down* I tell myself. Timing is everything. The oil is angry now and I drop the fish inside the pot, careful not to overcrowd. I have the Viva paper towels ready on a platter to receive the golden morsels. There is fresh homemade tartar sauce and everything is smelling fine. Earlier in the afternoon I made slaw with mango. It's has been chilling for three hours.

She asks if she can set the table and I say sure. Here ya go. The fish is beautiful and so are her eyes.

I place the platter on the table and offer her first dibs. She looks at me and says, “Honey, I don’t eat fish.”

No One is Safe in Alaska

John Dorroh

Poetry

In Alaska
something is always
after me. I have my bug spray

and a cheap pocket knife
held together
by three rusted screws

and some guts. My guts
aren't worth a dime
while running running running

from bear and eagles with dangerous
black beaks, scissor-talons, clean cuts
in my neck. The sock-eyes jump into cold air

out of turbulent streams and laugh
at me. I am swimming swimming
swimming into quiet harbors,
away from things

that can do me in. Even the moon
is threatening and ferocious. Even
the snow which can blanket my body

without notice and kill me dead.

Nose For It
Bob Gielow
Fiction

Date: February 14, 2020

Location: Wilsons Leather Outlet, Kittery, ME

What is it about the aroma in leather stores? Whether or not I need to buy leather products, if I am walking by, I must enter one of these stores.

I am entranced by pungent memories of the cows whose lives have been transformed into handbags and jackets, wallets and belts. I sense the pine wood, dried hay, feral cats, drafty air and rural/retro mystique found in the barns where these cows lived their destined-to-become-a-consumer-product lives. I really want to purchase a leather-something to prove that I could pull off living the life of a rugged, Mountain Standard Time rancher... though Wilsons will make no sales to me today. I touch almost every item in the store, adding to my indulgent mini-orgy of leathery sensations.

Date: June 4, 2020

Location: Our backyard, Portsmouth, NH

Although this is not the first time I have mowed our lawn this year, the smell of cut grass is particularly strong this late Sunday morning, still sticky with the dampness of yesterday's rain.

I have doubts about our plans to hardscape this yard after inhaling the odors of 10,000 blades of grass, all cut in two without their permission. The insides of Perennial Ryegrass must be dripping with the chemicals humanity has used to build suburban order. This scent, and the

silenced lawn mower, represent the perfect appetizer for a shower, beer, baseball game, and, if I'm lucky, some marital love-making. Inhaling this smell convinces me that summer calm and comfort is here, and might just stay forever.

Date: August 19, 2020

Location: Crane Beach, Ipswich, MA

The olfactory exclamation point for summer has to be the combination of Coppertone, Banana Boat, Neutrogena and various other sunscreen products, at the local beach of your choice. Though it can make me gag if I get too close to a gaggle of children, I love the smell of hot and hazy day cancer-avoidance.

Smelling like coconuts on steroids with a side order of extra-strength jasmine, these children scamper to and from the water's edge, with cheap plastic buckets and shovels, under the half-hearted gaze of their parents. Over 1,000 miles from the natural home of these origin-scent plants, marketeers have proven that humans will go all in with their summer fragrances, ensuring that even New England smells like an idealized tropical rainforest.

Date: October 27, 2020

Location: The Loop Mall parking lot, Methuen, MA

I fear that my fragrant recollections, my aromatic meanderings, my nostril memories... may have come to an end. My long-standing desire to use this journal to document the nose-worthy smells I am experiencing... may be no more. My efforts to honor and feel close to my beloved Mother, who told me at age seven that I "certainly have a nose for it"... seem to now be thwarted.

Even though Mom died long ago, I am inconsolably sad thinking that I'll never again impress her, or anyone else, with my ability to differentiate between brands of women's perfumes.

As I await the results of my COVID-19 test, I look around my car and know that there are some interesting smells in here, or at least should be. I used to smell former Burger King meals and my traveling bottle of antibacterial gel. I used to smell that pine tree-shaped deodorizer Brianna gave to me. I'm certain that I should smell my own fear, but my olfactory neurons cannot register any of the above.

From everything I've read, losing one's smell is an almost certain sign of the dreaded coronavirus. It was the first symptom that led me to locate this drive-through COVID-testing parking lot an hour from home. Combined with the slight cough I've developed since yesterday, I don't think there is any doubt that I will be yet another positive case.

If I don't survive this terrible illness, Brianna, I hope that you will find this journal and consider starting one of your own. I would love for you to honor your Dad, who was honoring his Mom, and document the wondrous smells you encounter, and the associated emotions you experience, throughout your long and sweet life.

When summer conjures winter in the mind

Annie Stenzel

Poetry

then carve me a space to stand on the mountain
and let the cold gusts press against me
arbitrarily. A caprice of clouds overhead
will change the light, shadow to blaze.

There I will witness the struggle of trees wedged
between granite and sky; how little soil
clings in an environment that may not care
for the requirements of what survives.

Sometimes, the blessing is strict: simply
not to have the means of self-destruction.
The mercy is one hand without a dagger,
the other empty of poison or gun.

Mother Tongue

Ankita Sharma

Poetry

This Dystopian air smells of gunpowder
A saltiness of hushed tears makes it moist
When the curbed agony tugs us people in all directions,
Then, we all merge into a very different shape

Looking down, the ice-cold eyes of tyrants command
Looking up, ours gently dissent and deny
While those of our youth, stare them in the very eye

Are we not audible? Our words not clear enough?
Alright
From now on, we all shall converse in blood
In what our oppressors call
Their mother tongue

twilight

Christine Brooks

Poetry

in the moments before
the time change settles in my
bones
and the west coast world
still sleeps

I sit quietly
with my cup of Barry's tea
and listen to the echoes of
Puget Sound
before even it wakes up

the wind chimes I was given
after my father died
hold hands with the cool Pacific
air
and the planes
approaching SeaTac
seem quieter as if everyone
on board is holding their breath
as they fly over sleepy Redondo

the twilight sounds remind me that
it is only
distance that separates us

and miles
know nothing of
the tick or the tock

and the grandfather
clock

that had always
remembered

knew nothing of
the road

Jericho

Christine Brooks

Poetry

I was grateful to him, then
and still for
visiting when no one else could
and for changing his name

because
a dream chose that and
he believed that dream and so
he became
the kind of person the kind of poet
the kind of believer
that without even knowing it
gives hope when there is none
because that's what words
and dreams and dreamers
do

A Husk
Tyler Plofker
Fiction

Friends reach out. Come by from time to time. If I stay still it's not so bad. From the outside it's hard to tell anything's changed. Sometimes they mistake me for what was. But if I sit too fast or step too hard, they hear it. The broken, hollow hum. Then they know.

Often now I turn them away at the door.

It has become a quiet life. Each morning I clean my bed of the pieces broken during the night. Then sit and wait to do it again.

I hope it's not much longer.

Time to dry out
 Brenden Layte
 Poetry

It's a fresh scab
 or a series of them
 or still oozing
 gashes in your face

a fake story
 some kind of accident
 you're supposed to be beyond
 anything that one's mind
 might jump to
 so something like
... hiking
loose soil
a bad foothold
... the stairs were wet
... some asshole
ran me off the road
on my bike

nearly killed me

but really you were
 just lucky that the
 inebriation had a twist in it
 a freak moment of grace
 something still human
 still protective
 as nimble as a face
 smashing into moss
 covered pavestones
 rather than a firepit can be

so there's a scrape
and a gash
and a hole
and it's better than
losing your face
to the flames
so why do you feel
like you did?

Mea culpa
Daisy Bassen
Poetry

I said I was sorry
But I didn't mean it;
I meant an end to volleys,
Not reconciliation,
Just respite for my anger,
Earth smoothed over
Seeds, darkness that allows
Only the sun's heat.
Without the distraction
Of light, the miles below
Are realized, the liquid iron
Tonic at the core.
I don't regret apologies;
I'm a pearl built of spite.

Woolf, again, and the great man

Daisy Bassen

Poetry

I'm sorry to say
Epics are not written
Before swim lessons,
In the creases of the day
Like the lying lines
Across my palm.
There are no four hours
Of mute communion
With the desert, with dust
Shaved down from crystals,
Aprismatic, after a night
Split by the waking
Of several people, their needs
Defying the binding of sleep.
Morning calls for boots again
And they must be rooted out.
The piano is longing
To be played, it doesn't care
Who will touch it.
You shrug, aware of time
In opposite proportion
To your incomprehension
Of the width of the world,
Its beltless belly, the wastes,
The prairies, diesel sweet
As the uncut grass. The ocean
Means peace and manslaughter,
Watching for the incursion of sharks,
The unwitting therapy of waves
Falling, pulling back, falling,
As I rub unguents against spines
Down to where their tails once were;

They cannot wait to get away.

You shrug, keep reading the article
About the artist, you know all this.
You're not curious, but you wonder
How he painted in secret
When he was alone. Who was it,
Who was kept in the dark?

As The River Flows, So Flows Time

George Freek

Poetry

After Liu Yong

Of the sun, hidden by clouds,
there is little to be said.
It gives way to the moon,
in her remote mysteries.
Two crows circle
and return to their tree.
I stare at them.
The don't care about me.
They awaken half dead memories
of things that used to be.
but it's painful to recall the past,
recalling things which don't last.
In darkness, I can barely see.
I rarely leave my bed.
I've learned a few things
in my sixty years.
But there're useless.
They too are now dead.

I Sometimes Curse My Fate

George Freek

Poetry

After Tu Fu

But such bravado is foolish.
I sleep. I dream. I groan,
as clouds paint the sky
in somber tones.
I lay in my bed alone.
I watch night cling
to the moon like a dog
clings to his bone.
Night never seems to end.
The stars bear scars
which never mend.
The moon looks on like a poet
with a tuneless guitar.
The distant clouds mock
my fanciful flights.
They're too far away.
They think nothing of me.
I'm sure they're right.

In Imitation of Su Dongpo

George Freek

Poetry

The moon is black.
A storm is coming,
And the night is also black,
like this river, which
wanders through the dark,
as thin as a sliver.
The river is like a bracelet,
rippling as daffodils ripple
in this windblown weather.
Death rides as a horseman
into this brazen storm,
as adamant as alabaster.
The moon is like a raven
With black wings and fiery eyes,
who knows nothing of laughter,
but who knows well
what he is after.

The Paper Door

Edgar R. F. Herd

Poetry

cloth and paper masks hide the living
reveal the dead
 their mouths

dark wasp withstands a cold day in sunlight
after building a paper house
 to outlast life

these paper poems, too, reveal or mask
do not realize death,
 folded, propped

like me standing at an open door
in an October emptying of notions
 and warmth

letting go the safety of paper
I sit with the wasp
 on gray boards

in the waning light on the porch
until we are cold and beyond parting
 or paper

Ajar
Edgar R. F. Herd
Poetry

the door is
worn where paint peels
along the faceplate

the door is
partway open —
ceramic knobs like ears

but the jarring thing
is I don't recall
opening it

or touching the knob

I am
standing witness
to a ghost

staring back
to the door
ajar

Contributor Bios

Alyssa Witbeck Alexander

Alyssa Witbeck Alexander is most inspired to write after reading poems to her toddler before his bedtime. She is an MFA candidate the University of Montana. Her work can be found in Chestnut Review, New Pages, Sink Hollow, and elsewhere.

Daisy Bassen

I am a poet and community child psychiatrist who graduated magna cum laude from Princeton University's Creative Writing Program and completed my medical training at The University of Rochester and Brown. My work has been published in Oberon, McSweeney's, The Sow's Ear, and [PANK] as well as multiple other journals. I was a semi-finalist in the 2016 Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry and the winner of the So to Speak 2019 Poetry Contest, the 2019 ILDS White Mice Contest, and the 2020 Beullah Rose Poetry Prize. I was doubly nominated for the 2019 and 2021 Best of the Net Anthology and for a 2019 and 2020 Pushcart Prize. Born and raised in New York, I live in Rhode Island with my family.

Mojca Bozja

Mojca Bozja (she/her) is a poet and computer science student from Slovenia. She likes taking pictures of moss, making embroidery, and watching TV shows when she's not writing nature-inspired poems. You can find her on Twitter at @mojcabozja.

Christine Brooks

Christine Brooks is a graduate of Western New England University with her B.A. in Literature and her M.F.A. from Bay Path University in Creative Nonfiction. Her

series of vignettes, *Small Packages*, was named a semifinalist at Gazing Grain Press in August 2018. Her essay, *What I Learned from Being Accidentally Celibate for Five Years* was featured in HuffPost, MSN, Yahoo and Daily Mail UK. Her first book of poems, *The Cigar Box Poems*, was released in February 2020. Her second, *beyond the paneling*, is due out in early 2021.

Cat Dixon

Cat Dixon lives in Nebraska. She is an anti-natalist who has two children which can be confusing. She is a poetry editor with *The Good Life Review*.

John Dorroh

John Dorroh never fell into an active volcano or caught a hummingbird. He did, however, bake bread with Austrian monks and drink a healthy portion of their beer. His poems have appeared in over 150 journals. His first chapbook comes out in 2022.

George Freek

George Freek's poetry has recently appeared in "Signal Mountain Journal"; "A New Ulster"; "Dreich Poetry"; "Miller's Pond"; and "The Gentian Journal."

Bob Gielow

A college administrator by day, Bob Gielow writes tales in the everyday formats we all use — texts, emails, diary entries, and advertisements, allowing him to be clinical and thorough in describing his characters and their actions, without diminishing his ability to explore the resulting human emotions. Bob is experimenting with techniques to avoid sleep so that he can find more time for writing.

Susan Eve Haar

To date, my work has been primarily in theater. I received my J.D. and a B.A. in visual studies from Harvard University. I am currently a real estate consultant to the dean of New York University Law School. When I'm not writing, I enjoy gardening and beekeeping. I have epilepsy, as does my daughter, which is a subject that is threaded through my fiction.

Edgar R. F. Herd

Edgar R. F. Herd's poems have appeared in *Entropy Magazine*, *Wild Musette Journal*, *Global Poemic*, and other magazines and anthologies. He is an avid morris dancer and can attest that wearing an assortment of bells on your legs into the Boston Public Library following a performance is not a good idea. He lives in a small town in rural New England with his spouse, son, and a chortling bevy of Welsh Harlequin ducks.

Barbara Hughes

I am currently an English major at Rollins College. Recently, I have discovered my inner goddess through writing. I love potent coffee and having deep conversations with the moon.

Rimma Kranet

I am a Russian-American writer of fiction, mainly interested in the immigrant experience and how it defines and transcends our identity on a daily basis.

Brenden Layte

Brenden Layte is an editor of educational materials, a linguist, and a writer. He lives in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, with his girlfriend and a cat that was described as "terrifying" the last time he went to the vet. He tweets at @b_layted.

Richard Leise

Richard is a writer and teacher living in Central New York. His fiction and poetry is featured in numerous publications, and he is at work on this second novel.

James Miller

James Miller won the Connecticut Poetry Award in 2020, and is published in the Best Small Fictions 2020 anthology from Sonder Press. Recent pieces have appeared or are forthcoming in Rabid Oak, North Dakota Quarterly, Scoundrel Time, 8 Poems, Phoebe, Yemassee, Mantis, Cleaver, Rathalla Review, Worcester Review, Elsewhere, Passengers, West Trade Review and Counterclock. Follow on Twitter @AndrewM1621.

Sharon Lopez Mooney

Sharon Lopez Mooney, published poet, say's, words are my heartland. I write with the voice of age about our human stories and the wonder of the natural world, and I intend to put my shoulder to the wheel of change and hope with all I write. I am a retired Interfaith Chaplain, living full time in Mexico on the Sea of Cortez, and visit my big, thriving family in California.

Will Musgrove

Will Musgrove is a writer and journalist from Northwest Iowa. He received an MFA from Minnesota State University, Mankato. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Versification, Unstamatic, (mac)ro(mic), Ghost Parachute, Serotonin, Defenestration, Rabid Oak, The Daily Drunk, Flash Frontier, and elsewhere. Follow him on Twitter at @Will_Musgrove.

Linda Neal

Linda Neal lives near the beach with her dog, Mantra. She grew up in LA's South Bay under the spell of The Wizard of Oz, James Dean and the Pacific Ocean and remains spellbound to this day. Right now, she's under a new spell: swallowtails laying eggs in her garden of fennel, the bright green and yellow caterpillars, the green chrysalises and the gorgeous butterflies that emerge.

Nkanu Okoi

Nkanu Okoi is a student of Ebonyi State University in Nigeria and currently taking up a Master's degree in Public Health Parasitology. Despite his discipline, Patrick is passionate about poetry and has his works published in New Horizon Creatives, Journal of African youth literature, Chasing dreams publishers and elsewhere. He hopes his poems inspire people around the world positively.

John Chinaka Onyeche

John Chinaka Onyeche (Rememberajc) is a poet from Nigeria, he writes from the city of Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria. He is currently a History and Diplomatic Studies student at Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education Port Harcourt Rivers State. Notable works are found at: Spillwords, Melbourne culture corner, Nnoko Stories, TunaFishjournal, Moreporkpress, Nymphspublications, Youthmagazine, Acumen uk, Zindaily, pawnerspaper, Conceitmagazine, Mosi oa Tunya Literary Review, Rigorous, Opendoorpoetrymagazine, Feverofthemind Magazine and are forthcoming at Kalahari Review, Ethelzine Pangolin Review.

Ilari Pass

When Ilari isn't writing poetry or short stories, she recites Ayahs (verses) from the Quran; travels with her family; plays hide-and-go-seek, blows bubbles, and chases fireflies with her three-year-old grandson.

Holly Pelesky

Holly Pelesky writes essays, fiction and poetry. She holds an MFA from the University of Nebraska. Her prose can be found in Roanoke Review, The Nasiona and Jellyfish Review. She recently released her first collection of poems, Quiver. She works, coaches slam poetry, and raises boys in Omaha.

Tyler Plofker

Tyler is a writer living in Manhattan. In his free time, you can find him eating sugary breakfast cereals, laying out in the sun, or walking through the streets of New York City in search of this or that. He loves writing bios in third person.

Cameron Rogers

Cameron Rogers is a photographer living in Arlington, MA.

E J Saleby

E J Saleby is a writer and musician living in Canterbury, England. He is currently studying a Masters in Creative Writing, and his writing and music can be found via twitter — @ EJSaleby

Ankita Sharma

A writer and an artist, Ankita Sharma resides in India. She has authored five titles. Her poems and stories have been published in various anthologies and lit mags. Her artworks have appeared on the cover pages of a few

Indian and international books. When she is not writing her heart out on paper, she loves to pet other people's dogs and cats, take long walks in woods and stare at the starry sky for no reason.

Gráinne Shannon

Gráinne Shannon is a well-traveled software developer who was one day surprised to write a poem, which became the first of many. Her likes include winter, day-dreaming and swimming in the sea. When she is not working or writing, she is escaping the city.

www.grainneshannon.com

Marcus Slease

Born in Portadown, Northern Ireland, Marcus Slease has made his home in Turkey, Poland, Italy, South Korea, the United States, Spain, and the United Kingdom – experiences that inform his stories and prose poems. He is currently, and forever, learning how to train his puppy. Find out more at Never Mind the Beasts

(www.nevermindthebeasts.com)

John St. Andre

John St. Andre is an undergraduate at Texas Tech who majors in mathematics. Though he is in Lubbock, he is from Belleville, Illinois, where most of his stories take place. He spends his time working out, reading and writing.

Annie Stenzel

Annie Stenzel comes from a long line of poetry lovers, and can recite quite a few poems from memory. Her life's trajectory has been unconventional in terms of education and employment, and she has lived on both coasts of the United States, as well as on several other

continents. She tries to make sure every day features a walk, a swim, or time sculling in a boat on flat water.

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.

Meryl Thomas

Meryl Thomas is an artist and author of The Ringmasters Society book series. She has been writing and drawing ever since she was in the fourth grade. She transferred these passions into her series and currently writes and illustrates The Ringmasters Society books.

John Tustin

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

fritzware.com/johntustinpoetry contains links to his published poetry online.

Sage Tyrtle

Sage Tyrtle's work is available or upcoming in X-R-A-Y, Pithead Chapel, and Cheap Pop among others. She started writing on an IBM XT in 1986, had an online journal in 1995, a podcast in 2005, and hasn't owned a smartphone since 2014. She hopes she's still an early adopter, but this time of an analog-based life.

Harlan Yarbrough

Educated as a scientist and graduated as a mathematician, Harlan Yarbrough has earned her living as a full-time professional entertainer most of her life, including a stint as a regular performer on the prestigious Grand Ole Opry. Harlan's repeated attempts

to escape the entertainment industry have found her working as a librarian, a physics teacher, a syndicated newspaper columnist, and a city (i.e., land use) planner, among other occupations. Since the beginning of 2018, Harlan has been living, reading, writing, & learning dzongkha in Bhutan.

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.

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