



Door is a Jar

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Cover image by Carlos Franco-Ruiz

**Impressions**  
Creighton Blinn  
Poetry

What lingers in my mind  
More than anything  
Is an ambiance  
Of low light  
& lace curtains,  
Revealing a stray glimpse of the outside world;  
The ink on her arm  
Where I run my fingers;  
A sense of connection,  
Fleeting perhaps,  
Yet forceful enough  
To ripple through memory  
All these years later.

**Writing in the Dark**  
Creighton Blinn  
Poetry

Recalling first impressions,  
Which defy reason,  
Like the cigarette smoke languidly drifting from her  
lips,  
Ephemeral wisps  
Reflected in a pair of  
Bright eyes, beckoning  
To share a private exchange.  
Within the surrounding chatter  
Their conversation flows freely  
As the hours slip by  
And they are alone in the back garden,  
Sipping another round,  
Passing the joint between them,  
His smoke now mingling with hers  
And crafting an air of  
Secluded space,  
Wherein  
There rests the possibility of building something  
On this fragile foundation of a chance meeting,  
Even if such expectations often prove misguided,  
Leading to nothing  
More substantial  
Than the evaporating smoke.

**A table scarred**

Lee Potts

Poetry

A table scarred by knuckle bones and boxes,  
brushed by dusty paperback pages,  
polished with ash caught under wine-stained linen.

A table we lifted and heaved along between us  
each time we moved to new rooms.

A table that held our board games and our  
mismatched dice,  
that collected back together our scattered candles.

Our odd little altar.

## **The Best Parts Of Lonely: A List of Lost Items**

Olivia Hull

Nonfiction

A pair of mustard yellow shoes: on the side of the road in 2010. My mother's second engagement ring: beneath the pillow of a three-night affair with a New York photographer. My phone: in the sand, just after the fireworks on the fourth of July, 2012. My desire to eat meat: 2013. My bird: Later that year. I was too afraid to clip his wings. The entire contents of my laptop's hard-drive, and a bottle of red wine: the end of 2014. My wallet: 2016, a bar with my new co-worker trying not to cry. My resolve: crying in a closet at four in the morning. One of my favorite books about Hungary in World War II: when my brother came home from his first rehabilitation program, and nobody knew what to get him for the holidays. The time between when I touched something and when I felt it: getting high with my first boyfriend. The belief that I had felt everything I could possibly feel: when my step-son asked when I would become his mother.

**junk food**  
Katie Grudens  
Poetry

my ribs are wooden frames  
pictures in my chest  
pumping memories through my veins  
blood made out of exes  
love that used to keep me going  
warmth that kept me sleeping  
now I'm restless

what the fuck am I doing still thinking of you  
you were never any good for me  
but since when do I like anything  
that's good for me  
pizza so greasy it stains my fingernails  
burgers so thick I hear my jaw cracking  
fries with so much salt it starts to taste like tears  
again

my ribs are wooden frames  
you haven't even tried to make your way through  
them  
maybe you're afraid of splinters  
maybe you don't want to touch my heart  
but you're hurting me  
k i l l i n g me  
as you stand back and watch me suffer  
like I'm on an episode of Jerry Springer  
and you're too lazy to look for the remote  
controlling me is fine  
as long as you feed me attention  
like fast food  
I'll drive to your house  
I won't stay long

just long enough  
for grease marks on my lips  
for grease marks on my ribs

## **Ethnicity and Race**

Christina Ahrens

Nonfiction

My father was born in Havana, Cuba in 1964, right in the middle of Castro's regime. My mother was born in Waycross, Georgia, a small town, about an hour out of Valdosta. This makes me half Cuban. My mother never thought she'd marry a Cuban, blonde-haired and blue-eyed, she flirted with boys to get the answers to high school Spanish tests ahead of time. My mother is a southern belle. Hospitable, religious, welcoming. We always had fresh-from-scratch chocolate chip cookies waiting for us when we got home from school. My father is a Cuban gentleman. He plays guitar and makes things with his hands. He is the strong, silent, machismo type, often found in his office working or looking at the pictures he took on our last trip.

I was born with my father's "olive skin," which is to say I look white but never have to put on sunscreen. When first entering the school system, my mother listed me as "white" but changed it to "Hispanic" when she found out about minority scholarships. My father never taught me Spanish, but I always took Spanish classes in high school and college. Now I have what I call a "fluent understanding of Spanish;" I get the gist of what people say, but think too slowly to respond. This is something that is always pointed out to me on our bi-annual trips to Miami to visit my father's family, my Abuela, cousins, aunts, and uncles.

I take pride in my Cuban blood. I would do all my country projects in elementary school on Cuba. Did you know they have a baseball team for every neighborhood? Anytime the Cuban Missile Crisis would come up I would tell the story of my grandfather, the CIA agent from Cuba who cut his honeymoon short to report missile silos in the mountains. The man who took my pregnant Abuela and my infant father out of the country in the middle of the night without notice, the man who brought them to America. The man who kept our country safe from afar, and the man who made it possible for me to exist, so to speak. I remember when I was about ten, the government files for my grandfather were declassified. We all gathered around a table reading the semi-blacked out pages, finally learning what my grandfather was working towards. Being Cuban one of those things people learn about me as soon as the topic of immigration comes up or the topic of Spanish or Cuba or dictators or anything else that could possibly relate to the fact that I'm not white.

My AP Human Geography teacher taught me that "Hispanic" is an ethnicity, not a race. This means that it can be changed based on the culture you were raised in. Your race, on the other hand, is defined by your genetics. Race is something you're born into while ethnicity is something you're raised into. Nationality is simply where you live or where you're from. This means that someone born in America with a Cuban father and a white mother can be white in race, Hispanic in ethnicity, and American in nationality. If they participate in Cuban culture and traditions, they can consider themselves Cuban, at least in ethnicity.

This means I can choose to be Cuban or not. I eat twelve grapes as the clock chimes for wealth in the New Year. This means that I am white by race, but I am Hispanic by ethnicity.

When I go down to Miami, I try to be Cuban. I wake up late and go to bed later. I watch Spanish soap operas. I listen to my Abuela's stories. I cook Cuban food. Whenever we go to a restaurant I order in Spanish, although most of the time the waiter doesn't understand me.

I am not really a Cuban, I never speak Spanish outside of Miami and singing along to *In the Heights*. I go to a school in Tallahassee. When I go home I eat okra and fried chicken from Publix. No one can ever tell that I'm Hispanic at all until I tell them, then they go "oh yeah I can totally see that!" even though I know they can't.

When you look at me, I am white.

But I chose to be Cuban.

**And Then I Changed my Name to Peter**  
Pedro Delfino  
Poetry

Seemingly overnight, I went from a descendent of  
brilliant men  
To a border hopping, illiterate Mexican.  
All thanks to *Napoleon Dynamite*, my name is  
Now cut with lawn trimmings and Taco meat.  
The mixture overbears the real meaning behind  
My five-letter name.  
In a quick internet search,  
I scroll through endless “Vote 4 Pedro” memes  
Before coming across a name dictionary.

I am a rock, I am a stone,  
I am the Galician twin of someone  
Who sank in a sea of tantalizing freedom  
and bravely swam beneath the feet  
Of Roman Soldiers who nailed Jesus 3 times.  
Who was imprisoned for teaching  
Jews in Palestine then escaped over  
To Rome and became a prophet frozen  
beneath the Vatican in the cold soil of Christianity.

I am a sailor who jumped ship near Tobago  
And swam past gray sandpaper sharks  
Only to be devoured by the Spanish Rule in  
Venezuela.  
Who fought alongside Simón Bolívar, brushed  
His white horse of Independence, and was granted  
A permanent palace deep in the *fincas* of Monagas.  
Who became an honest doctor appointed to treat  
The sickly senate plagued with oil money  
And whose policies awarded him ambassadorship  
To his country’s soccer club.

Who then grew tired of trivial games, moved his  
family  
To Tennessee, studied engineering, and built great  
machines  
Whose great machines moved earth and  
Lawn trimmings.

## What Is It with All This Star Business

Pedro Delfino

Poetry

and the silver dots connecting  
into mystical animals? How about the tracing  
of palms by a psychic shuffling  
a stack of tarot cards across  
a cracked wooden table who charges  
forty-five dollars an hour?

A Milky Way is a candy bar,  
not the fabric of a galaxy sliding  
into your email inbox with a half true  
synopsis of a day the stars chose  
you to be in the same universe as them.

Believers of Astrology, you'll never know  
what I think of your irrelevant symbols.  
But I ask  
sincerely, do you know you'll step  
in dog shit on your way  
to work today?

Do you see  
your future play  
in your head like it's a movie  
produced by two fish wheeling  
around a camera, a crab directing  
with the tip of a cigarette and a lion  
roaring the wrong lines of a script?

Do you see me,  
whiskey in hand,  
ice cubes sloshing  
back and forth

in rhythm  
with my drunken stammer,  
mouthing to you across the bar  
“Hey baby, what’s  
your name, what’s your sign?”

## **A Photo of My Dad at His Graduation Ceremony**

Pedro Delfino

Poetry

I see him in a shiny blue robe  
Under a bright Miami afternoon. He smiles  
And his hands, like 30-year-old spotted bananas,  
Grab the diploma from the amiable chancellor  
Who's smirking at his own reflection  
In my father's sunglasses.

Behind the thick brown aviators,  
He is surfing powerful waves under  
The Hawaiian sunset.  
His full brown head of hair flows  
Like a spirit through a carefree breeze.  
Even his surf leash can't snag him to the ocean  
floor,  
Forcing him to groom the anemones.

Riding into the beach, he holds the board  
Between his pruned fingers,  
Much like he is holding my mother tonight  
And flipping another charred steak,  
Laughing as she complains about dinner.  
He clasps the tray and bows his shiny bald head  
With a wrinkle from an old child's drawing.  
His forehead is a picture of a dad  
Trying to teach math to his kids,  
But not quite getting the point across.

2  
Jim Zola  
Art



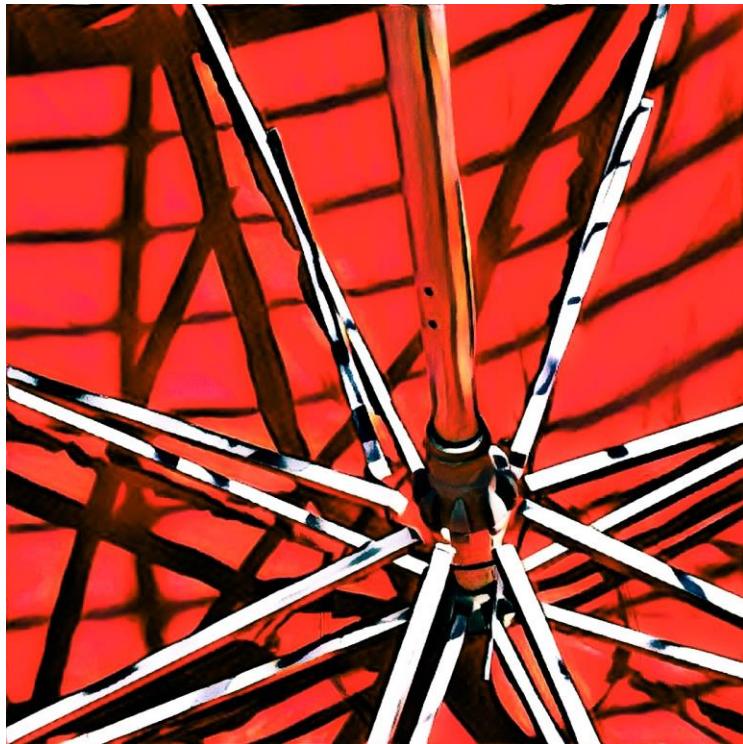
3

Jim Zola  
Art



4

Jim Zola  
Art



## The Silence Between Naming

J.M.L.

Nonfiction

### I.

The weekend before the burning, we went camping. I woke up early the morning after we drank through the beer and my clothes were musty from the smoldering fire. The woods were crisp with morning air and the leaves crackled like winter bones. The trees scattered thin like skeletons.

November's red-gold crusted across the ground and far off I heard the sound of water. You were still passed out with smoke from the fire trickling over your sleeping bag. In Georgia, winter smells misty before sunrise, like a forgotten waterfall and dew-damp leaves.

I followed that faint trickle in the silent morning down the steep mountain between the leafless trees. I wove through the skeletons of the forest until I reached the place with the waterfall. When I arrived, I lay on the stone near the mist and settled into a long quiet. I watched the fall spill onto the rock and the morning shift from charcoal to light blue as the first sun filled the mountain.

I sat alone for a long time, watching the day rise.  
Eventually, I climbed back to camp and woke you,  
still early, still hung over or drunk. But you didn't  
complain and followed me silently down to the  
waterfall. We didn't speak and walked. Somewhere  
there is a picture of us at the waterfall, smiling.

II.

When you get burned, you can take the pain and  
swallow it down and be careful not to move or cry.  
When you feel the flesh peel, you can leave your  
body and float away. And when you see your best  
friend writhing in the doorway with piss running  
down his leg, you can turn your head and look  
away, but that is all.

You writhed like god in the doorway in your white  
underwear when he burned you and you pissed to  
make it stop. I didn't piss because I knew that when  
you feel your flesh bubbling you can go numb and  
blank and deep into the place where nothing moves.  
Except once you go deep down, a part of you never  
comes back. A part of you hangs in the doorway tied  
with nylon rope watching your best friend piss  
himself.

After you go numb to keep from crying, the part you kill inside stays dead forever. When you try to reach the dead parts to tell the story of being burned, you can't touch them, but you can stare at them like the church at Dachau. The way the crucifix looked so cold and still in the flurrying snow. You can remember how awful it was that while you stared at the oven they used to burn people alive, you hardly believed it was real.

At church on Christmas Eve they turn out the lights and everyone holds up their candles to sing Silent Night and the wax burns and drips and the pastor tells you to take a mental picture of all the lighted candles to have hope for the coming year.

The bubbled flesh on my ass seeped through my pants and ached against the wooden pew for the entire service until we finally stood to light our candles one by one. The person next to me leaned over and used their light to light my light. Then it got dark and all I could see was hundreds of candles and silent night.

### III.

The way that sadness looks is a boy with eyes hardened into stares. When green eyes gray and the world veils. When life slips into static blur.

The way that heroin tastes when you first shoot up  
is like bacon; it takes your breath and covers your  
insides with a warm, tingling blanket. Then you  
numb and nod and forget the lonely.

The way that evil smells stays deeper than the other  
parts. The way that evil smells burns longer than  
fear. It smells like sweaty palms greased with cocoa  
butter noodling a little cock under stale bed sheets.  
It smells the stench of B.O. mixed with shame and  
comes in tiny bottles to huff until beady eyes roll  
back dumb with inhalant. Evil is the smell of  
chemical breath lisping its evil inventions to the  
rhythmic tug of old cock.

Once we name the evil, we name our world. Once  
we name our worlds we can hide and die in them.  
But now I name to stop the naming. I name that  
November for the waterfall at dawn. I name the  
mountains for the winter. And I name us for the time  
before.

The way that peace feels is the silence after  
naming. The way that peace feels is breathed and  
unnamed — exhaled and unspoken, like an  
unnamed morning in November where the leaves  
crisp and the stones drip with mist from a hidden  
waterfall.

## ONE DOLL: A Golden Shovel Poem

Claire Rubin

Poetry

*There is only one heart in my body, have  
mercy on me  
— Franz Wright*

There is the must of mold, the stink of rot, there  
are jumbles of grimy plates, piles of garbage, an old  
doll who is  
wearing a tattered dress nibbled-on by mice, only  
one doll with a lacquered smile, only one  
doll her eyes no longer open, my heart  
weeps for the old woman who lived in  
this dirt and decay till she died at ninety-nine, my  
shame I never stopped by before, before I saw her  
body  
slumped against the front door, no one else near,  
god have  
mercy on her withered soul, have mercy  
on this old woman who lived on and on  
with only a shabby doll — have mercy on me.

**Molting During Happy Hour Or Ode To Audre  
Lorde In A Cigarette Break**  
Siaara Freeman  
Poetry

*In biology, molting, also known as sloughing, shedding, or in many invertebrates, ecdysis, is the manner in which an animal routinely casts off a part of its body (often, but not always, an outer layer or covering), either at specific times of the year, or at specific points in its life cycle.*

I am a black feathered beast my wings pluck  
themselves you have heard  
of the black unicorn & yet when it turns towards  
flight it is something else  
entirely you don't have to be a bird to be in a cage

all you have to be is a desire to leave the trap you  
have to squeeze between  
the bars & contort yourself into the space the bars  
have left for you maybe  
you will lose a few bodies along the way but when  
they see you shake lose  
of everything the bare meat of you an aerial feast a  
leaping hunger devours

the lights in one swoop you will be mistaken for a  
bat or a flying cock-roach  
no one will call you the Black Pegasus just because  
I am one no one will say  
I am magic but they will still throw whatever is in  
their pockets at me

& make 3 wishes & they ask to ride me into the  
sunsets sweaty palm & promise  
not to pluck the feathers until they are ready to fall  
out naturally & this is all just

a lie no one cares if I grow into myself properly no  
one cares if my body performs  
its on escape plan no one guesses I have dipped  
into the waters of Darwinism &

returned a runaway no one notices as they feed me  
the bread & place the sugar  
cubes in mouth my eyes dart like everything is a  
target & I think this is better  
than being in one of their homes I think

it's better than being what they show  
to their buddies after a poker game a lifeless thing  
hanging above the mantle  
piece collecting dust.

**My Father's Gone But One Of His Friends Still  
Asked**  
Siaara Freeman  
Poetry

me what he would think if he could see me  
on this stage shaking my ass, like the whores  
they used to throw bills at.

I don't need a degree  
to know he is really asking is: *what if my father could  
see  
him watching me shake my ass tonight, like the  
whores they used  
to throw bills at.*

I think my father would be  
angry either way, so I say *yes he would be mad*, this  
calms  
him, looks like he figured I would be ready  
to argue him down

about it  
to release some of the tension that had throbbed  
him  
into approaching me. I don't back away, I don't  
charge  
him for the guilt, it's free in the club, dribbling out  
of lips and into laps.

it's not the guilt that keeps him here anyway, or my  
father  
and his ghost, a fearsome saint with one bullet  
shot to the head. He sees the g

string, slicing my ass like a warm muffin, licks

the corner of his mouth like it's a street he wants  
to clean. He sees the sweat sliding

between my tits and dreams of a river he is worthy  
enough to drown in. his dick is aimed at me  
like a lesson I am supposed to learn.

he looks the same ashamed he wants me  
to feel. I dance on him all night. I leave him  
penniless and apologizing  
to a dead man.

You  
Jesse Webb  
Poetry

Sometimes you are magnolia,  
Madam X, archaic white,  
strong-lipped and sweet-centered,  
stretching into the southern sun,  
your shadow draping over my pen  
as I draw a beetle stumbling  
in the red clay.

And then you are kudzu,  
arrowroot, eight dollars an acre,  
jade veil over sunken pine,  
vine crawling through my toes  
and leaving colonies behind you  
as I try to think of a three-letter word  
for rapacity.

Sometimes you are honeysuckle  
or tobacco, sumac or apple,  
but right now in this room,  
you are ink and napkin,  
bleeding through condensation  
as if some parts of you  
are better smudged and discolored,  
growing paler with time

like the lipstick stains on my neck  
that you probably forgot you gave me.

**TRUMP AS A FIRE WITHOUT LIGHT #138**

Darren Demaree

Poetry

There is something honorable in him telling us he doesn't care at all about our well-being. I admire the honesty. Now, let's find his place amidst Dante's tale, and give him the choice. He can have as much money as he wants. The weight will position him well in Hell. He cannot be in charge of anything other than his own descent.

**In the lingerie posters**  
Tara Isabel Zambrano  
Poetry

These girls with nude lip color and hot pink frown  
look amazing.

Just the fair amount of curls on their face,  
velvet straps on skinny shoulders,  
flick of a shutterbug strips bronze navels.

Not a crease in the waist,  
or a stretch mark along the torso  
from being a real woman.

Even if I try, I don't look like them  
stomach sucked in, an indecent pout,  
grotty hair above greyed out eyes.

I wonder if these girls ever love to clean,  
dig dirt to plant bulbs, rummage  
a scrapyard, barefoot.

Maybe it's tedious: stiletto-stuck  
heaving without a smile, posing  
with so much perfection, it hurts.

**Untitled**  
Carlos Franco-Ruiz  
Art



**Sponge**  
Jennifer Patino  
Poetry

Blossoming in my chest,  
my heart is a bursting sponge.  
It has reached its level of  
maximum capacity. Absorbent.  
They told me I was tough.  
Extra strength. They were  
lying. I am the dawn after  
it breaks. Confusion of  
colors. Sun beams are  
undecided. There are too  
many colors to paint  
the sky.

With one branch you can  
swing from. Too high, the  
pulse rate. Too low, the  
energy levels. Too often  
you want to show that  
you are alive in there.  
That the heartbeats may slow  
but the morning comes anyway.  
And you're thankful. Because  
the splattered pigments,  
above and inside,  
they mean you still care.

**CHURCHES**  
Fred Dale  
Poetry

are venerable surveys of air, atomizers of all our earthly woe and awe.  
And like us, they sometimes die without becoming sick, thriving less and less on the catcall lure of poverty's servitude.  
God and man, we build the gaudy thing that holds the other. Yet for all the bodies raised in our image, who meditate for centuries on, bearing our most sainted names, braced by the austerity of illusion against the occasional burn down of black metal, there are other churches who sleep unaware into decommission, their deities matter-of-factly shown the door, shooed away with the Latin tongue and infants ruined by original sin.  
Sin like a boy and a priest — a Patrick each, and one a suicide attempt, cast aside by his molesting confessor, an inconvenience moved on to newly hewn ground. My child, my child, vermin shut eateries right down. It's quick. People are not let back in until it's safe. Churches, their leaders gnawing away at their young, are never made to close.  
But when the officiant genuflects to the opened tabernacle, we watch in reverence that moment between them, a parent and his very best

returned to say, *you were right all along, forgive me,*  
stowing the  
reconstituted savior for safe keeping, as if they  
might come for him  
again. I can see, over his shoulder, into the curving  
golden cell tomb.  
It's unnatural white and it is beautiful, if woods were  
soft and white.  
The heart of this love, the things he's said to have  
said, are they worth  
it, and these bodies cantilevered? Ask the boy.  
Eventually, churches  
wince and shut down. We visit them, though they  
want to die alone,  
given up on heaven (such bulk can't float), the dull  
thunk of aft souls  
cued against their dead rails. Recede bereft his  
chosen ones, absolved  
of everything — to the backwash of sin that is  
somehow yours too.

**the myth of being alive**  
Tara Isabel Zambrano  
Poetry

I'm holed up in a motel following the night  
buttoned down all the way to bloodied dawn  
wrestling with a fresh roll of *USA Times*.

Despite the police sirens across the street,  
I remain asleep. Needle marks on my arm heal.  
Coughs from the next room grow quiet.

The sun eats itself, footsteps outside the door  
grow and fade, steam of cheap coffee and  
popcorn sink into the semen-rotted carpet.

Some days I walk out of my skin. Red hollow  
of an afternoon rivals my crimson eyes.  
Empty pizza boxes cover my face.

Car clotted streets gasp for air. On dead ends,  
I unfold a gang war. My hair turns gray in light,  
my voice at the end of a muzzle, tries to sing.

**Dear Gender**  
Zee Altherr  
Poetry

Why do you purr in my ear  
and tickle my breasts  
when I am trying to make  
hard lines in my face, and space  
around my forearms  
the way you taught me?  
You taunt me like a dog  
searching for that dizzied pigeon  
to play with  
or completely consume,  
depending on the day. It's hard to say  
I don't want you  
when you expose me in ways that are easy,  
like Playboy or the Surgeon General's Warning.  
I can be the held or the holder,  
just don't put a dress on me;  
I can't catch myself in drag.

**Bricks**  
Kleo Alexandra  
Fiction

“Brick delivery!” My younger sister, Izzy, squeals, while running past me to the front door.

“Wait Izzy! The bricks are too heavy for you.” I hesitantly get up from the couch and follow my sister.

“I hope this one’s for me.” Her bright blue eyes twinkle as she opens the door.

“Delivery for Emma Marshall.” A sturdy man, wearing blindingly white knee-high socks holds out his clipboard for me to sign.

“Oh.” Izzy folds her arms. “Why do you get so many bricks? I still only have one.” Her neon-green lips from the Popsicle she was sucking on earlier quiver.

“Don’t be upset.” I kneel down and brush her crazy curly hair away from her sticky face. “When you’re older you’ll get more bricks.” I hoped her collection wouldn’t be as big as mine. But I couldn’t tell her that now.

“Good.” She twirls around and zigzags back to the kitchen.

“Your sister is lucky she only has one brick.” The deliveryman remarks, handing me my brick. “My daughter’s about her age and she already has three.”

“I’m sorry.” I half-smile.

“That’s life you know.” His eyes dim, before he turns and saunters away. I close the door and tromp upstairs to my bedroom, brick in tow.

When I make it to my sanctuary I shut the door and lock it. I didn't have to open the box filled with protective peanuts, bubble wrap, and of course the big block of hardened clay, to know that like the other bricks; I didn't want this one.

"Emma." Mom knocks on the door.

"Just a minute." My eyes flit around my very aqua room in search of a place to hide the new brick.

"Honey." She jiggles the handle.

"One second." I push the box under my desk, before opening the door.

"Do you need something?" I stand in the doorway, trying to act casual.

"Nope. Just wanted to say, "hi"." She moves her head in further like a turtle stretching out his neck.

"Okay, then. I better get to studying." I stay in the doorway blocking her like a defensive lineman.

"I can help you study if you want?" I see the cogs in her pretty blonde head spinning.

"I got it covered."

"Well, we can talk about your brick then." She carefully tucks a stray strand of my mousy brown hair behind my ear.

I think about telling her that there is no new brick, or that the brick was meant for someone else and that it accidentally got delivered here. But my mom is too smart for that, and even if she weren't Izzy would blab.

"It's under the desk." My arms drop and my mom scurries past me.

"Why is it still in the box?" She picks up the brown package and sets it on my bed.

"Because." I pause, placing my hand on the box.  
"I'm not keeping it."

“You can’t do that Emma.” Her clear blue eyes cloud with concern.

“I don’t want another brick that is going to make me even more different.” I timber face down into the fluffy pillows on my bed and sigh.

“What do you mean?” She strokes my hair.

“I’m weird!” I shriek into the pillow. “Don’t you see that?”

“Honey.” Mom lets out a chuckle. “I know you’re weird. It’s my favorite thing about you.”

“I just want to be normal, like you.” I roll over and sit up.

“I’ve got news for you. No one is normal and everyone has bricks to carry around.”

“But life has already given me enough bricks.”

“You have more than most people, but each one makes you the person you are. The person I love.”

“So,” I fiddle with the butterfly charm on my necklace. “I was meant to lose my hearing when I was ten, be the tallest most awkward kid in middle school, and have a pain in the butt and everywhere else kind of neuropathy?”

“Yes.” She answers without hesitation. “If you didn’t lose your hearing, you wouldn’t be a cochlear implant recipient, and you probably would have never decided that you want to be an audiologist.”

*Mom had a point.*

“And if you weren’t so tall, maybe you wouldn’t have been the best player on the girls’ basketball team.”

*Um. Tall or not, I still would have been an awesome player.* But being tall did have perks like: not having to get a stepladder to reach the candy mom squirreled away in the cabinet over the fridge.

“And if you didn’t have Small Fiber Neuropathy, you wouldn’t have joined a neuropathy support group and made so many wonderful friends.”

She was right. I never would have met my best friend, Lucy, and it was hard to imagine life without her. Slowly, I scoot closer to the box.

“I thought this brick was a choice. I didn’t want to open it because I didn’t want to choose something that would make me even more different.”

Focusing on my mom’s loving eyes, I set my hands on top of the box and quickly flip open the flaps. Reaching in my fingers graze peanuts until finally I come in contact with the brick. My heart races, but in a good way. I pull the brick out, rest it on my lap, and look down. Across the top in big bold letters it reads: “BISEXUAL”. Holding the brick I stand up and walk to the shelf full of trophies mounted over my desk. I move the biggest one to the back and set the brick in its’ place.

“It looks good there.” Mom smiles.

She’s right. In a sea of rich gold and shiny silver the red brick looks like it belongs. I dash to my closet and pull out my other bricks. One by one I put them on the trophy shelf. When I’m done I stand back and admire them. They are each a part of me and something to be loved.

**Engaged**  
George Held  
Poetry

When parental pressure  
blew the whistle  
on the teapot,

we bought a ring  
with a good  
fake diamond

to reassure  
your dad and mom  
and let them

show their friends  
at cocktails  
their daughter

was at l(e)ast  
engaged.

**Night Fires**  
Natalie Crick  
Poetry

It is night.  
Smoke curls around me,  
Enveloping in it's touch, sustaining  
A soft drifting of thought,  
Languid spell of memory.  
I wish it were always like this,  
Moonlight reaching into every corner,  
Burning it raw.

My withered eyes are like  
Cherry stones lamenting  
Their lost sweetness,  
Singing like a shadow.  
Speechless.

**Shimmy Shimmy Ko-Ko-Bop**  
John Repp  
Poetry

*... Ladies shimmy/ at Jimmy in waves.*  
— Ted Berrigan

Once shed of his painter's whites,  
Jimmy glistened Mennen-smooth in fake  
alligator loafers. Winston-tipped,  
get-some-pussy vodka sipped, he slipped

out the Maintenance back door to his black  
& beat Chrysler. Somewhere around 1985,  
someone admonished me about "glisten"  
& "gleam" & I bowed to his or her wisdom

right off — *Yes sir yes ma'am you are correct*  
*I will work harder to be so.* Waves are wan  
in Berrigan & often the clock strikes 5:15.  
Jimmy worked the 'Rican club where the ladies

glistened & gleamed. He liked the sequins,  
the conga hips, the red, red lips.

**How to squid**  
David Pischke  
Poetry

The tide there goes so far out.  
Two reefs, parallel to the beach, revealed.  
All the jet skis and inflatable bananas are back  
to a marina hidden in the point a couple miles away.

I'd seen two squid before, red at their cores,  
surrounded  
by plastic-blue casings, eyes as big as shirt buttons.  
Those two hovered by the outboard motors  
while the boat was anchored to a dive site.  
This one was solid red, short tentacled,  
large, equilateral triangle fins arrowing  
its body, eyes as big as nickels.

My wife saw it first. *See this big red fish!*  
It only took a moment to realize  
its clumsy movement was something else.  
All but our youngest touched its slick body.

And, with the tide still ebbing,  
There was a conclusion: it was sick and dying.  
*Why else would it just wait to dry up?*  
*Its instinct must have been altered.*  
*And so, it will probably die.*  
*The birds will feast today!*

*It must be saved.*  
*At least it should die less awfully.*  
So I picked it up and it shot a jet of water,  
not ink, as my son will tell you.  
At first it was stiff, but it sagged by the time  
I threw it over the second reef into deeper water.

Later I found out it was an adaptive oddity:  
It should have been seven feet long  
and highly aggressive to any fisherman who  
happened to hook it.  
Some anomaly with its climate forced it to change,  
change into a smaller, gentler, and shallower  
version of itself.

I'm glad it didn't cut me with its toothy suction-  
cupped tentacles.  
I'm satisfied I threw it back.  
I'd like to believe my sons see me as heroic, or at  
least brave.  
But they probably just expect that there will always  
be a squid that needs saving.  
I bet they'll never stop looking for one of their own to  
rescue.

# I Believe in the Curve, the Changeup and the

## Almighty Fastball

Gregory A. Fields

Nonfiction

I wanted him to love the game as much as I do, so we started when he was very young. When he was three he had a plastic bat and ball, and he would knock the ball around the living room, swatting it off the bookcases and the coffee table, or bending over awkwardly to field the soft grounders I sent his way. During the summer of 1999, when he had just finished his first year, he fell in love with Sammy Sosa, who would rhythmically tap his chest and send kisses to the cameras after hitting a home run. Michael copied Sammy's moves, and dreamed of one day hitting the ball as far.

Living in Minnesota then, we treasured the summers. On nights that were as soft and sweet as a mother's kiss, we would go for a quick swim at Lake Minnetonka, then swing by Dairy Queen for a cone before heading home and watching the Twins for a while until the fireflies pocked the twilight with their brilliant floating pinpoints, and it was time for him to go to bed.

He learned the language of baseball. Michael went to his first major league game when he was two, and a year later David Ortiz picked him out of a crowd to give him a huge smile. He learned division by calculating batting averages. Whenever I traveled I would come back with a baseball cap from the city I visited. By the time he was ten he had official caps from more than 20 big league teams. Baseball was our language, our comfort, and our common ground.

I look out now at the backyard where he learned to play this game. Most nights in the spring and summer, I would meet him there, after work, after school and homework, and we would throw. Timid at first, and somewhat afraid of the hard stone-like sphere that came his way, but with time he grew more comfortable, then confident, and at last magnificent, diving to his left or right to snag grounders that I threw to be just out of his reach. He developed quickness, and, on the uneven turf, he learned to keep his hands low and loose to handle bad bounces. The pop flies that eluded him, or he dropped, when he was seven he caught with ease when he was eight.

Our yard was just big enough to lay out a small baseball field, and neighborhood kids would come over for pickup games on the weekends. Ten or twelve kids, boys and girls both, would divide into teams and play for a few innings. Home plate was in the corner, near the point where the garden intersected with the woods out back. The bases were no more than twenty feet, but that was enough for a bunch of eight-year-olds looking to play.

They're all gone now, the neighborhood kids who all grew up, or moved away, or found interest in other things. The base paths that would wear thin each summer are now grown over with thick grass.

Somewhere out there is the pitching rubber that I dug into the ground sixty feet from the pitching net I placed behind home plate. It's grown over, too.

Michael would pitch to the net when no one else was around, and some nights I would come home to find him back there throwing into its tape-drawn strike zone. The balls bounced quickly back to him off the net, and he sharpened his reflexes as they jumped back at him with a force equal to his own throws.

I sit here now holding a baseball in my hand, regarding its weight and shape, smelling the earthy small of its seams, and considering what power there is in simple things. We played catch with this ball, and with maybe a hundred of its brothers, hearing the *plock* of good throws smacking into the pockets of well-broken mitts, watching the arc of dirty-white against the green of trees, smelling the grass beneath our feet. We would talk then, as we threw. Little things mostly, but things that would otherwise go unsaid — bits of information, a quick story, maybe a piece of gossip. I would encourage him, or offer tips on catching, or throwing, or positioning. He became a better player because of it, but that was never the point. The point was to be father and son. The point was to form something that was as strong as a real diamond.

This week he leaves for college, and eighteen years channel into a single day. Because of this, I see the things at hand that must carry me forward, that confirm who he is, and what we are together. I hold this ball now, as mystical to me as the bone of a saint, or a druid's staff.

And I realize again that baseball was never a game. Baseball was a sacrament.

This spring, after Michael had played his last competitive baseball game, I planted a tree in the back yard. It's a lovely little red maple that promises to reach 6 or 7 feet when it's mature. I planted it right where home plate used to be, and, as I did so, I said a silent prayer that its roots would develop as strongly and as deeply as the roots that had already grown so well in that sacred place.

**Self Portrait**  
Clyde Always  
Art



**Aubade**  
Guia Nocon  
Poetry

I see you now more clearly than when you were alive.

I want your ghost to haunt me so I know you're dead.

Desperately, I want you to know,  
while your body struggled through the current,  
limbs tumbling into greater darkness,  
tangled in something you immediately without shock  
but probably with no small amount of regret,  
knew you couldn't get out of,  
I want you to know,

I never thought you'd actually go away.

I certainly didn't know I could miss you.

And now — God forgive me (but maybe let's leave him out of this) -  
I grieve for your violence, everlasting stain. You are dead and I  
am so relieved I am fucking crying.  
The joy almost stifled by shame  
except how could a child not love the death of its monster?  
How can you ask a child to mourn the absence of terror?

I see you now, floating in panic, wishing  
for a familiar face in the weeds  
as the rock came to kiss you.

Did you see my face?  
Was it me you clung to?

Now I wish I could reach out after all these years  
and hold you. Hold you then let you go  
into that deepest dark where the water embraced  
you,  
contained your malice, while the birds circled  
overhead.

Can you hear me?  
I whisper into the darkest place.  
Can you hear me?  
I'm shouting now.  
To you, my forever lost.  
Can you hear me?  
I hear the birds and I panic.

**Anatomy**  
Guia Nocon  
Poetry

This poetry knows no spine.  
Has nothing to keep it standing.  
Doesn't have the luxury of malice,  
malice made useless now with death.

This poetry knows no fingers can't point  
nor feet to carry it further than parsing.  
Maybe not "parsing"  
that implies some understanding.  
It can barely organize.  
It tries to draw a line,  
place hash marks so events  
line up with all the emotions jostling for space.  
But all it knows are lazy circles.

This poetry has no stomach.  
Can't keep anything down.  
For godssakes how many days  
lying on the ground?

Has no knees to knock together.  
No fists to clench to beat bloody.  
Not even a wall to ram a head it doesn't have  
against.  
Has no shoulders to shake.  
No vocal chords to shut up.

This poetry has no ears to listen to your therapy.

Has no heart to give one damn.  
Has no nose not even to smell its own bullshit.

All it has is a mouth.  
Angry, red with gnashing, black teeth.  
Greedy, a mouth that bites at everything.  
Marking the passage of time by how often it can spit  
into eternity's face.

A mouth with  
bad breath, a  
dead breath, heaving  
full into the face of redemption.

**Lining**  
Samuel W. James  
Poetry

His room is the attic  
and he has lined it  
with posters of singers,  
guitarists and drummers.

He plays a little but listens  
more than he plays,  
smokes weed and drinks cider  
while he listens then plays.

The skylight doesn't let  
much light into the room,  
the floor doesn't tidy itself  
and songs go unwritten here.

He plays the songs  
he listens to and struggles  
to find new groups to poster up.

**Untitled**  
David Thompson  
Art



**Gilded Life**  
Eric Lochridge  
Poetry

His body lost its magnetism.  
She sleeps now in a far country  
on the lee side of a linen mountain range.

Nothing he does — rose petals, witty banter,  
promises of breakfast in bed — coaxes her  
off the foothills of her pillows.

Nothing kills her dream of ore buried  
in the quilted ground beneath, entombed  
in abandoned mines of loves that never came to  
light.

Wrapped in an impenetrable thread count,  
she lies still in the dark, desperate to extract  
another ironclad excuse from a lead played out for  
worse.

Undaunted, he digs till he strikes  
the mother lode, a heart caged. He sets  
the dynamite, plugs his ears, holds his breath.

Shiny chips rain; luminous dust sneaks to daylight.  
The heart is gone, blasted away, not flesh after all,  
just lustrous specks carpeting the floor of the cave.

He heaps the fool's gold at his feet, praying  
for an alchemy to make them richer again.

**Outline for an Autobiography**  
Eric Lochridge  
Poetry

Birth then a move.

Then a move across state,  
divorce, a move back  
to where it all began.

A second wedding.  
Someone important leaves for Denver.

Stepsiblings, middle school, distance running;  
high school and finally some friends.

College and a girl, engagement.  
A newspaper job, a daughter, a son.

The death of the one who left for Denver.

A move across town.  
Another death.  
Another move.

**How I Picture Kyle**  
Carly Taylor  
Poetry

He passed the cigarette nervously between his hands,  
because we were so young,  
because surely we were not grown up,  
and anyway it would be a year  
before I'd fuck his brother in a parked car  
in the back lot of our old school, the swings  
empty, swaying to things not returned. We were not  
grown up, no, I was not a wrecking  
ball swinging, not holding in my breath the things  
we would not discuss. The shell of  
the once-new neighborhood  
crumbling without stories to fill it. Memory making  
skeletal playgrounds lovely, still and untouched but  
for trash,  
the crumbling bank of that river, pack of that dirt  
where we built because to stave off imminence,  
innocence, smoked another cigarette without really  
taking the smoke  
and pretended none of it was coming right at us.

## **Chandeliers & Red Velvet**

Lori Lamothe

Poetry

only a few stores apart.  
And it seems to me  
that's what it all comes  
down to — spirit hived in glass  
or the voluptuous.  
Behind its window  
the chandelier prisms  
the moon into a thousand  
ghosts — hall of broken  
mirrors diamonding  
the unseeable into  
an idea of the thing inside  
that flickers, won't be  
snuffed out. The neon  
sign down the block  
has its own answer.  
Does it even matter  
if I tell you the store  
sells lingerie, sex toys,  
or cupcakes rich with  
sweetness? If I remind  
you what it's like to  
run your fingertips along  
the velvet of desire?  
Maybe what matters  
is we're all searching  
for the amalgam of two  
kinds of light — want  
at the end of our darkness  
to locate the soul of heat.  
Let us keep searching  
until we find it.

Let us burn a hole  
in the silent glittering sky.

## THE TREES

Carl Boon

Poetry

A friend tells me she hears the trees cry,  
that they bleed as we do.  
We must listen, listen as we do  
in the morning when Hatice, dead to all  
save the photos in her kitchen,  
scoops five olives onto her plate  
to keep her breathing, thinking,  
nimble enough to slip candy  
in the children's pockets  
winter Ramadans.

Now I watch her pair of olive trees go.  
The chainsaws follow the dozers,  
then men's hands to clean up  
all remainders, reminders  
that we didn't listen well enough.  
And for a building — a building  
beside a building beside a hundred  
just the same: doors to reject summer,  
roofs so that the birds  
won't disturb us.

The men call this progress.  
They stoop among the already-dying  
roots and drink their tea  
from plastic Thermoses,  
wishing there were not such wind,  
or rain, or fruit as black  
as infants' eyes to cling  
to the heels of their boots.  
I watch long as they laugh forward —  
far from the making of anything.

THE LAST  
Carl Boon  
Poetry

The last of where I lived: March mud  
aside melting snow,  
the rhododendron  
attempting blossom.

My father called  
from the kitchen window:

there was fresh coffee, a Saturday,  
and where would I go,  
being too young to know  
that going was more  
than saying goodbye,  
more than the cuffs of my jeans

scraping the snow?  
I suppose he wanted only a moment  
to talk, to evade that season  
of cruel promises,  
but there were girls  
and dark music, picnics in the weeds.

**Dashed on the Rocks**  
Lauren Scharhag  
Poetry

If I were light, I wouldn't be a star.  
I'd be the flickering pink-and-blue of an all-night sign  
Luring, like sirens, the thirsty to their ruin.

**Meteor**  
Lauren Scharhag  
Poetry

My head is a falling star.  
It roars and sighs and plummets to Earth  
Until my skull is a crater  
My toes pointed at the firmament  
Arms waving and drifting like kelp,  
Seeking something to embrace.  
My heart is a moon rock, pale and porous,  
My bones are debris, my blood is ore.  
My purpose is something  
That can only be guessed at.  
I am an alien specimen, fit for a display case  
On a Smithsonian shelf.  
Yet, I am of the same cosmic dust  
As the hand that plucks me  
From the site of impact.  
Did I come all this way to share this moment  
With someone I don't understand?

**Disqualified**  
Theresa Dozier  
Fiction

It's my first visit home since leaving for Nashville almost a year ago. My folks don't have money for travel, plus they know I've been busy preparing for the Miss Nashville beauty pageant.

As the Greyhound bus approaches my stop on County Road, I smell the town's paper mill. It stinks like rotten eggs and makes me nauseous. The day I left for Nashville I thought I'd never smell this town again.

When dinner is over, everyone sits in silence at the kitchen table. Mother squeezes a dirty dish rag in her hand and stares out the window. Her knuckles are splintered with cracks and faint traces of dried blood.

Father grips his bourbon glass, eyeballing one last swig of Jim Beam from a melting ice cube. A letter stamped FINAL NOTICE sticks out the back pocket of his pants.

Dylan flicks the mashed potatoes on his plate. The scowl on his face is the same one he had when he was kicked off the high school football team.

Grandpa nods off, oblivious to the corn lodged in his white beard. He doesn't even flinch when the freight train crossing County Road vibrates the dry-rotted planks on the wooden floor.

The silence in the room feels like safety pins piercing my swollen skin, so I finally say, *It's not my fault.*

I wait for a response, but Mother close her eyes. She and the rest of them are probably thinking how I've ruined everything. Winning the pageant and bringing home \$25,000 would've made things better, or at least the last nine months.

I rub my finger over the chipped edge of my plate and wait for a response. Dylan pushes his chair back from the table and stands up. *All you had to do was put on the stupid pink dress and prance around the stage like all the other phony girls.*

The way Dylan narrows his eyes makes me feel like a stranger. Before I can say anything, he shouts, *You know how this town is — if I lose my job at Walmart, that shit's on you!* Dylan hates his job at Walmart and the other crater-face teens who work there.

Mother finally opens her eyes and yells, *Enough!*

The last time I heard Mother raise her voice like that was a year ago, the day I waited for her in the parking lot of First National Bank. I remember that day well because she told me to wait in the car while she got out to talk to some woman who was standing on the sidewalk and smoking a Newport. I had never seen the woman before, but I figured she wasn't a friend when Mother screamed, *Don't ever show your ugly face around here again!* Mother gave the woman a fat, brown envelope and got back into the car.

On the way home, I didn't ask Mother any questions. She drove with both hands tightly gripped on the steering wheel and didn't even slow down after grazing the hind leg of a deer that darted out from the woods.

When I went to my bedroom that night, she and Father had argued.

*Don't you realize how you've cost us everything!*

*How many times do I have to tell you that she doesn't mean anything!*

*It didn't take long for Mother's voice to crack. I never thought that my tips from wiping up slop at the diner would have to pay for your whore's abortion.*

I waited to hear Father's response, but the porch door had slammed so hard that it vibrated the walls in my bedroom. He came back inside a couple hours later and turned on the radio station that always played Willie Nelson songs.

*I have an idea, Father said. We can get it all back if you tell her to enter the pageant. It's a little more than nine months from now, so she's got time to figure out the talent portion.*

I guess Mother had thought the pageant was a good idea since she asked, *You think it'll work?*

*What else are we going to do, Father said. You know how this town is.*

After that all I heard was their headboard thumping against my bedroom wall.

Once Dylan sits back down at the table, the room is again silent. I look at Father and say, *The pageant people could've given me a chance if they wanted to. It's not like I planned to get pregnant.*

Father continues to swirl the melting ice cube in his bourbon glass. *It's done, he says in a low voice. The bank won't offer any more extensions.*

Mother walks over to the window and cracks it. The rotten-egg smell from the paper mill perfumes the room. As I push my chair away from the dinner table, it gets stuck. Lady, our mixed beagle, is on the floor behind me. I try to rouse her and say, *Hey girl, come on*, but she doesn't move. Lady is still recovering from the litter that she dropped yesterday.

**Photos of Food**  
E Martin Pedersen  
Poetry

So many photos of food  
So many photos of food  
Can we eat the photos?  
If I send them to Africa or Alaska  
If I send you a photo of food  
are you nourished?  
warm and dry inside  
or envious as ice  
of my delicious  
food and you  
only get a frozen photo.

Yet when food is gone  
Photos remain.

**Bedtime Prayer for the Brown**  
Claire Castaneda  
Poetry

Now I lay me down to sleep  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.  
But if racist shit still flies in heaven  
go ahead and cancel my ascension.

I'm sure the heaven He created  
wasn't fashioned segregated.  
But when the well-intentioned die,  
You *know* they'll separate the sky.

The good Lord, will he take me brown?  
Does heaven have a Chinatown  
I want it scrawled in angel's ink  
to n'er again be called a chink.

If I should die before I wake,  
does the Lord a woman take?  
Let no dudes e'er get pissed again  
if I get an equal cloud to them.

And don't get me started on the boss.  
I'm not so ready, if I cross,  
for the oldest white fraternity  
to give me orders for eternity.

Now I lay me down to sleep  
I pray it not be me he reaps.  
Give me afterlife, no god around  
but if not that, give me the ground.

**Jimmy and Me**  
Chanelle Moore  
Fiction

When I was a girl I wanted to be noticed, I wanted to be a star, like the sun in the sky, bright and shinning, pushing away dark waves in a sea of nothingness. There isn't much left to look, but back then The Aperture Theatre on Fifth Street had two selling points that packed the house every night: odd shows and nudity, so I went there and became an actress.

I can still hear the shock in the whispers of the people in the audience. *Was that a body suit or was she nude? Did you see her tits? Are those freckles on her...?* I couldn't blame them for their wonder at genuine nudity; who ever really sees anyone fully exposed anyway? Lovers aren't spectators, and most people shy away from their own stark reflection. The closest dignified people get to witnessing nudity is ten-feet back from dollar-dancers, slipping down poles before disappearing behind dusty, velvet-red curtains; or taut, shorn strangers on their television screens.

The Aperture was putting on a three-act play with five roles. The director only had the budget for two actors, so he picked Jimmy and me to split the parts, because he said we had chemistry.

The play was about a married man who falls in love with Rome, who the married man thinks is a man, but is really a woman, in disguise. When the married man's wife turns up dead, and Rome is accused, the man and Rome go on the run, because the man believes in Rome's innocence. After taking a vow to stay together, they are ready to consummate their relationship. Rome confesses

that he is really a woman, and although the man feels betrayed, they make love. The play ends when the man kills Rome.

Naturally, Jimmy was cast as a detective and the married man, I was the narrator and the wife, and we both were cast as Rome. I played Rome three times: in the flashbacks when he was a she, when Jimmy played the married man, because of the love scene, and then when Jimmy played the detective, and Rome was on the run. Jimmy played Rome when I played the wife so Rome could kill her. When the detective and the married man (two of Jimmy's characters) needed to be on stage, the director dressed in a trench coat and hat, kept his face upstage, and for the lines put on a record he'd made of Jimmy's voice as the detective. Being the narrator wasn't so bad, I didn't mind the mustache, but the bald cap ruined my hair, so for playing the wife and female Rome, they stuck these awful wigs on me, for quick changes and hairstyle continuity.

I told Ma she shouldn't come, because the show was odd, and she wouldn't like it. I thought she'd listen, so I didn't warn her about the nudity. Opening night Ma showed up. She brought two of her best girlfriends and some guy she was dating. When the curtain came up, and I was lying there naked, Ma disturbed the performance when she and her entourage got up and walked out. The director said he could see the pain in my face and my eyes watching Ma leave the theatre. He called an emergency rehearsal the next morning, where he stomped 'round the theatre, and had the lighting guys sit in the audience talking and giggling, getting up, sitting down, and walking out to make sure I didn't break character again.

We were rehearsing the part where I was female

Rome and Rome was dead, so I was lying on the dirty stage, naked. Jimmy was playing the man, Rome's lover, and he was walking circles 'round me, because he was the one who'd just killed me. My eyes were supposed to be open for that part, to show I was really dead, but I had to close them when I saw Jimmy had his shoes off, and his sweat-wet socks were mopping up the powder-looking dirt off the stage. He was making a slob of himself, mopping the floor with the bottom of his sweaty socks, and I couldn't stand to watch it. The director kept spitting on me when he stood above and yelled for me to *open the fucking eyes!* He'd say it like that every time he caught them closed, like *the eyes* were not mine, like they belonged to the theatre, the audience, the play. I understood what he wanted, to make sure I could do it, make sure I wasn't all blinky-eyed on stage when the curtain went up, that I only took a blink on the beats he planned, so the audience would be looking off, stage-right with Jimmy. But I couldn't keep my eyes open, couldn't stand to watch Jimmy degrade himself.

My eyes were closed when Jimmy whispered my name and his breath tickled the back of my neck, like he'd gotten down on his knees to wake me up. I never knew I was sleeping until I woke up. In a huff the director told us to take five. Backstage, at the craft service table, Jimmy said he'd overheard the director say he was thinking of replacing me, said he was looking for *fresh talent who can take direction.* "Jimmy, dear," I said. "All men want fresh talent who can take direction." I knew I'd said too much when Jimmy dropped his head, put down his half-eaten donut, and walked away.

When we got back into place on stage, Jimmy's wife tip toed into the theatre, and sat down in the

audience, smiling. My eyes were open, my mouth was shut, and I blinked on cue, but otherwise I didn't move. The stage belonged to Jimmy and Me. We were the only talent The Aperture needed, and I didn't want to fall asleep; I didn't want to give Jimmy any reason to breathe on the back of my neck ever again.

**On Demand**  
Jeffrey Bernstein  
Poetry

What about those leaves  
gamboling on the wind  
that knits all autumns  
into a single garment?  
It used to be they'd pile  
together, awaiting a match.  
But you'd have to step  
through decades to find  
those smoky mounds, not  
just a fifteen-minute walk  
on an October road.  
You might wander  
until you return  
to the present when  
you hear mother's  
larder is bare. Once  
confirmed by a third party  
living in this world,  
rush to the market  
for fruits, bread, cheese and meat  
and the long weekend  
heartbreak of finding her  
crooked on the concrete  
retaining wall that fronted  
her building, barely able  
to ambulate, she asks  
if my car is new  
(it's not) and each day  
the question's not  
what's added,  
but what's lost,  
and when her eyes alight

on the roses,  
you could almost forget  
the last two years of misery,  
and live in that  
one moment forever,  
but you can't.

**when a lobster is**  
Kate LaDew  
Poetry

dropped into a pot of boiling water  
by hands with as many fingers as it has legs —  
is this hell? what crimes did it commit on the ocean  
floor?  
whom did it betray and why? a corporate takeover,  
midnight mugging,  
a slew of unkindnesses, added up over the years  
that were infinite  
and now lie swirling at the bottom of stainless steel,  
reflecting back its own dissolving eyes, it's  
reddening claws,  
three pairs of antennae sending a message through  
the bubbles and into the air  
I didn't mean any of it, at all,  
may the lord lobster god almighty forgive me  
everything

**Untitled**  
Clinton Inman  
Art



## The Early Bird's Reward

Alex Feldman

Poetry

Sneaky is the worm  
It always manages to be there before you,  
Early Bird

The worm is sure  
It is mundane  
It is a bland meal  
It is a whore who will have anyone

The worm is unoriginal  
It is prevalent, common, and can be found on all  
seven continents

The worm is fat and juicy  
Still, we may not live long enough for our bodies to  
utilize all of its nutrients

The worm stinks,  
We have shamefully become accustomed to the  
smell

The cunning worm  
Builds us up  
To knock us down

The worm has hand in the relationship,  
It will never come to you

The worm caused the Trenton Disaster  
And the accident in Chernobyl

W O R M

Is carved into our brains  
Is draped over our eyes

You eat the worm—the worm eats you  
The worm has mastered the art of limitation  
It shouts  
“Come get me!!!  
I hold no promise of happiness  
Or health!!  
I cannot prevent war,  
Bad television or  
Death  
Yet I am sought after by all!!!”

The worm murders great men and women  
They die without ever knowing of their magic

The worm makes us sore  
Makes us tired  
Makes us smile  
Only to later make us weep

The Leech Worm sinks into you with his sharp  
teeth  
But is still more than happy to slither away  
The second you are of no use

The worm slaps us in the face  
With its slimy member  
And laughs

**The Wave**  
Doug Hoekstra  
Poetry

The bullpens disappeared  
In the offseason

Taken from the fans  
And hidden underneath  
The bleachers of Wrigley Field  
Where deals are sealed  
And barons reclaim  
The wave — money changing hands,  
Adding value to the franchise and  
The killing of the filibuster  
Brown ivy on the wall, withered  
Wiping the canvas clean  
Leaving those too young to know  
Without a compass

I think of old WGN  
Black and white static  
Late night Jimmy Stewart,  
Mr. Smith and the  
Slaying of the Rains,  
Following the money  
While losing his innocence  
Like gourmet popcorn  
And flagship stores rising  
From the ashes of the  
Old Wrigleyville, in sync with  
The parting of the classes  
Right field sucks, Left field sucks  
City boy, country girl  
Rich man, poor man.

It was a joyride for the ages  
While it lasted. The Cubs  
Kicked the curse, while we were  
Flattened by the aftermath,  
Winning after losing after winning  
And what that means to our identity  
Me, I'm getting lost in nostalgia

Dollar fifty bleacher seats  
Rodney Scott, Pete LaCock  
The running of the goat  
And the days of negotiation  
Because the sun shines on us all  
No matter where you sit  
Or how much you pay to sit there

## **There's a trick to it**

Jennifer Davis

Poetry

You ask if I'm okay  
while I'm chopping onions.  
I don't cry when I chop onions  
because I know a trick.  
If you run the sliced faces under  
cold water right after you cut them,  
the compounds that attack your eyes  
and leave you a weeping disaster  
wash away.

I tell you it's nothing I want to talk about  
right now, not with the children in the room.  
I don't cry when the doubt in my head stabs my  
heart  
because I know a trick.  
If you focus, really focus, on the task at hand,  
run through each step in great detail,  
the pain that melts from ice to water under pressure  
and escapes through your eyes  
remains solid.

You say nothing, an animal that senses danger  
and chooses flight over fight.  
You don't cry when you smell a risky conversation  
because you know a trick.  
If you run away, pretend my feelings are mice in the  
walls,  
watch some TV and wait for the threat to pass,  
the fear that something will eat you this time  
keeps to its burrow in your eyes  
and decomposes.

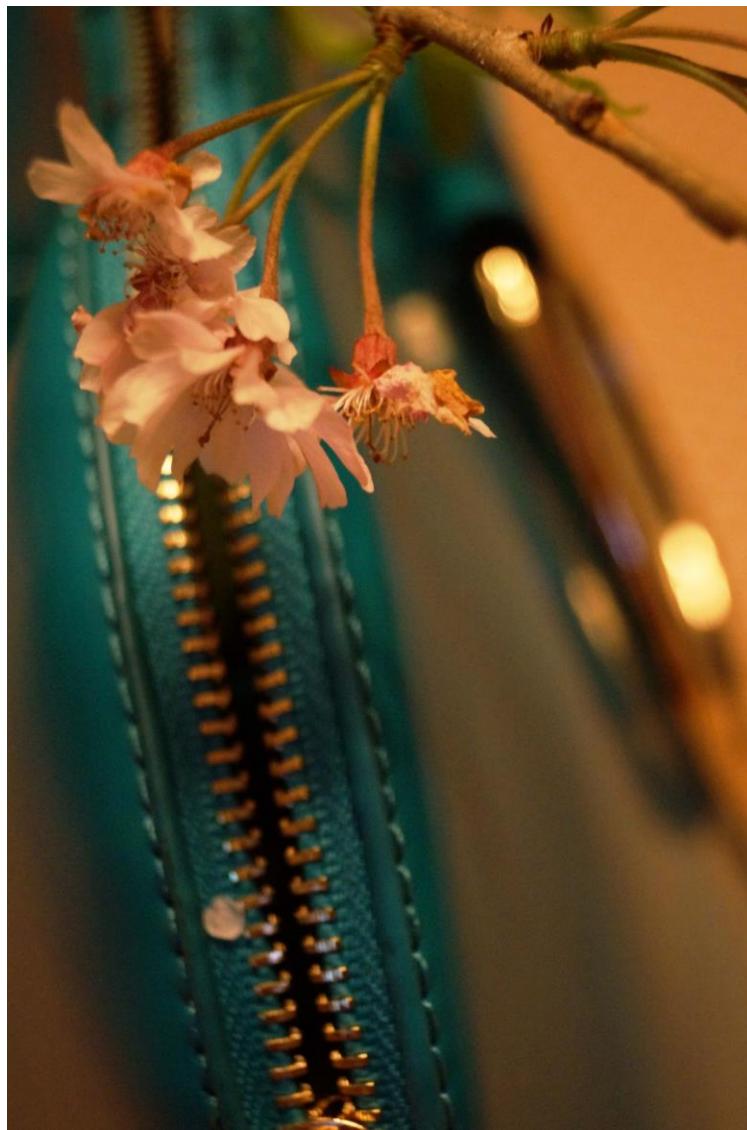
**Form and Shadow Magnolia**  
Melanie Faith  
Art



**Unzipped**  
Melanie Faith  
Art



**Renascence Possibilities Warm**  
Melanie Faith  
Art



**Form and Shadow Magnolia**  
Melanie Faith  
Art



**Fever**  
Sergio Ortiz  
Poetry

A boy buries his hand  
in his fever and pulls stars  
from his pocket.

Nobody sees it, I see  
the child with a fever,  
eyes closed and trembling

animals adrift in his sky.  
Did he extract sorrow  
from his soul, a soul sunk

in its own ashes?  
He walks down the street  
with his hand in his pocket

loosing fevers nobody sees.  
He stares at an ox pulling the sun,  
bones of the seas scrambled

in his heart. His letters  
have fever, stars cast to heaven,  
goodness set out to dry in the sun.

Death is death, my son,  
and nothing more than that.

**HOOKS & EYES**  
Sonja Vitow  
Poetry

We are placed on this earth strange  
and sudden as crop circles. Craters  
on the moon swirl in the same  
way as a baby's hair. Everything  
is a mystery. Our loose milk teeth  
are a mystery, our own knees. A pile  
of leaves is a mystery. Midnight  
is impossible.

I got lost in a department store  
when I was small, only I didn't  
know I was lost, just that  
everyone was looking for me.

Over time, we realize that feeling safe  
is different from being safe, that we're  
supposed to be somewhere. We learn  
the backs of other people's knees.  
We learn to greet the day from both  
sides. Even our teeth, carved from our  
own bones, grow back stronger.

I go back for the hook-and-eye  
latch, to be the one to take it  
down, to see it dismantled  
in my palm. The door's been  
repainted, the tessellating  
wallpaper steamed clean  
off. I know I left something  
in that room but I'm never sure  
what it was or if I want it back.

Someday people will only  
remember what we were  
like at the end. Then they'll  
only remember the best parts  
of us. I wonder which is worse.

I used to wish there were two  
of me. Then three, then seven,  
then twelve. Now if only there  
were just one! That hook-and-eye  
latch weighs me down with my  
other vestigial organs. If I could pull  
out the xylophone of my spine,  
I would do it note by note.

**Mountain or Pebble**  
Safiyah Motaib  
Poetry

what's the difference if one  
makes up the other,  
a mountain of rocks  
was once just a pebble,  
like the ones flat enough  
to skip across a pond,  
or others that can be scraped  
to draw like chalk with a child,  
and like that child, whose mother  
it came from, the pebble tumbles  
down the mountain side  
when once the two were the same.

## Author Bios

### **Creighton Blinn**

Creativity is a drive, almost an obsession, and Creighton Blinn has been spinning stories for as long as he can remember. Whether in prose or poetry, he strives to convey both the personal and universal of his experience. And have a good laugh, before he ends up taking anything too seriously.

### **Lee Potts**

I am returning to writing poetry after a 25-year hiatus. I've learned that unearthing notebooks, manuscripts, and drafts from that long ago can be a real mixed blessing. I most regret forgetting how much fun working out a poem is. I was an editor of the Painted Bride Quarterly in the eighties. I really wish we had Submittable back then.

### **Olivia Hull**

My name is Olivia Hull. I live in Orlando, Florida where I am an undergraduate at The University of Central Florida. I'm currently studying English Literature and Creative Writing. I work at the county library in a crumbling plaza just outside of the downtown district. I'm a step-mother to a six year old boy and a two year old cat. The future freaks me out.

### **Katie Grudens**

I am 23 years old and live on Long Island, New York with my parents and my identical twin sister. I graduated from college in May of 2016 and for the past year, I have been trying to find what I want to do next. I've been reading articles, watching documentaries, exploring new places and, of

course, searching for new content to read both on and off line. This is when I found Door is a Jar Magazine! I was immediately drawn in by the beautiful cover art of all of its issues and by its mission to steer away from academic writing. To create meaningful art and to lose my college-centered writing style and drift toward a more creative one are actually the two things I have been focusing on the most right now and I just couldn't believe how good of a fit this magazine seemed for me.

**Christina Ahrens**

I am a Christian, half-Cuban half-White woman who is about to graduate from Florida State University with a bachelors in Creative Writing, and I will be attending FSU's Law School in the fall. I love folktales and fairy tales, I really like the concept of storytelling and I would love to share my story with others. I'm a realistic optimist and I try my very hardest to be organized (but I often fail). I think humanity is inherently good, and that we all do our best to make, what we consider, the right decision. I am going to Law school so that I can make enough money to eventually be a stay-at-home mom.

**Pedro Delfino**

Pedro Delfino is a writer and skateboarder from Miami, Florida.

**Jim Zola**

Jim Zola has worked in a warehouse, as a security guard, in a bookstore, as a teacher for Deaf children, as a toy designer for Fisher Price, and currently as a children's librarian. Published in many journals through the years, his publications include a

chapbook — The One Hundred Bones of Weather (Blue Pitcher Press) — and a full-length poetry collection — What Glorious Possibilities (Aldrich Press). He currently lives in Greensboro, NC

**J.M.L.**

Jonathan lives in Southern California and teaches at Southwestern Academy in San Marino, CA.

**Claire Rubin**

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Her work has been accepted by the Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, Enizagam and Healing Muse among others. Claire is the author of Waiting to be Called and the co-author of Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry.

**Siaara Freeman**

Siaara Freeman is 27 years of dramatic entrances and exits & from Cleveland Ohio. She is a 2016 pushcart prize nominee, 2016 best new poet nominee, 2017 bettering American poetry nominee & a 2017 button chapbook contest finalist. She is the founder of online magazine [wusgood.black](#) and an editor for Tinderbox Literary journal. She is the current coach for the Detroit Brave New Voices team. In her spare time she is growing her afro so tall, God mistakes it for a microphone & speaks into her. You can find some of her work in CrabFat Magazine, Rat's Ass Review, Black Napkin Press...

**Jesse Webb**

I am an emerging writer from Atlanta Georgia and the Editor-in-Chief of Populi Magazine in Oxford, Mississippi.

**Darren Demaree**

My poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/ journals, including the South Dakota Review, Meridian, New Letters, Diagram, and the Colorado Review. I am the author of six poetry collections, most recently "Many Full Hands Applauding Inelegantly" (2016, 8th House Publishing). I am the Managing Editor of the Best of the Net Anthology and Ovenbird Poetry. I am currently living and writing in Columbus, Ohio with my wife and children.

**Tara Isabel Zambrano**

Tara Isabel Zambrano lives in Texas and is an Electrical Engineer by profession. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Moon City Review, The Healing Muse, Rogue Agent, Hayden's Ferry Review and others.

**Carlos Franco-Ruiz**

Carlos Franco-Ruiz (°1987, Managua, Nicaragua). I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Miami in 2011. In 2013, I moved to Uruguay where I recently had a group exhibition "La Mirada del otro" at the Museo De Las Migraciones. Currently living in Sauce, Uruguay.

**Jennifer Patino**

Jennifer Patino lives in Las Vegas with her husband and loves to read, write and watch all kinds of movies.

[www.prettykooldame.com](http://www.prettykooldame.com)

Twitter: @jenniferapatino

**Fred Dale**

I am a husband to my wife, Valerie and a father to my occasionally good dog, Earl. I received my master's in English from the University of North Florida, where I serve as a Senior Instructor in the Department of English. I am also pursuing an MFA at the University of Tampa. My work has appeared or is forthcoming in Sugar House Review, Dunes Review, Chiron Review, Crack the Spine, Clackamas Literary Review, and others. An audio chapbook The Sleep of Blue Moon Flowers was released through Eat in 2016. I am an avid road cyclist and a part-time community activist, but mostly, I just grade papers. The included poems have been simultaneously submitted to other publications.

**Zee Altherr**

Zee Altherr is a young voice speaking to the experiences of the queer, introverted, and humorously awkward. Their writing is a quirky concoction of the magical and the mundane. Zee has studied with the poets Aaron Smith, Jan Beatty, and Kayla Sargeson. They are an active participant in Pittsburgh's Madwomen in the Attic writing workshops at Carlow University. Zee currently lives in the small neighborhood of Friendship, Pennsylvania.

**Kleo Alexandra**

My more confident self's name is Kleo Alexandra. I am legally blind and am a cochlear implant recipient. I wish I lived in Oregon, but currently I reside in the dry desert with my super sweet guide dog, D, and my most of the time funny husband Chris. Before I started writing, I used to be a competitive figure

skater. I currently, under my not as confident self's name, have one self-published middle-grade fantasy book featuring a main character that is blind, but very independent. Many of my stories star a character with a disability and touch on bullying or feeling different. I hope my writing can make my readers feel like they're not alone and can also inspire them to embrace their own unique qualities. Because I definitely give my unique qualities a good bear hug everyday.

### **George Held**

I write whatever comes into my head, often while riding the subway. I jot down on paper the original phrase or image in my head and then back home type whatever follows into my computer. I'll revise a piece over months before it satisfies me, and then if it works, I'll send it to a zine like yours.

### **Natalie Crick**

Natalie Crick, from Newcastle in the UK, has found delight in writing all of her life and first began writing when she was a very young girl. She loves cats, chocolate and Winter weather. This year her poem, 'Sunday School' was nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

### **John Repp**

John Repp lives in Erie, Pennsylvania, where the motorcycles roar and the lake perch harbor a lower PCB count than they did twenty years ago. In his only foray in organized sports, he batted .200 for the 1963 Sasdelli Oilers of the Minotola Farm League.

**David Pischke**

David Pischke works as an elementary art teacher and lives with his wife and two boys on a small farm near Phoenix, AZ. He is the Visual Arts Editor at Serving House Books, holds an MFA in Fiction from Fairleigh Dickinson University, and has stories in Driftwood Press, Digital Americana, and Reaching Beyond the Saguaros, a collaborative anthology of haibun.

**Gregory A. Fields**

I am the author of *Arc of the Comet*, a lyrical, evocative examination of promise, potential and loss, published by Koehler Books and set for release in September 2017. *Arc of the Comet* explores universal themes in a precise, lyrical style inspired by the work of Niall Williams, Colm Toibin and the best of Pat Conroy, who had offered a jacket quote for the book shortly before his death last year. I am also the co-author with Maya Ajmera of *Invisible Children: Reimagining International Development from the Grassroots*. My writing has won recognition for presenting the plight of marginalized young people during my tenure at the Global Fund for Children, and I have had articles published in the *Harvard International Review*, as well as numerous periodicals, including *The Washington Post* and the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. More information about my writing and my career can be found on my website [www.gregfields.net](http://www.gregfields.net).

**Clyde Always**

Clyde ALWAYS, for the promotion of bliss, writes and recites his own blend of tall tales and clever verses.

**Guia Nocon**

Guia Nocon was born in the Philippines and became a naturalized American citizen at 16 years old. She spends most of her time doing SF Chronicles's crosswords, revising poems on her typewriter, and eating ice cream. She lives in Oakland, California with her dog.

**Samuel W. James**

Samuel W. James is a new writer from Yorkshire. Poetry is his desperate attempt to fight the confusing enemies of today.

**David Thompson**

David J. Thompson is a former prep school teacher and coach. His interests include movies, jazz, and minor league baseball. He lists Frank O'Hara, John Sayles, and John Prine among his heroes.

**Eric Lochridge**

I write poetry in the rain in the Pacific Northwest. I run long distances in the rain in the Pacific Northwest. I brew beer in my basement while it rains in the Pacific Northwest. On the days it's not raining in the Pacific Northwest, I hardly know what to do with myself.

**Carly Taylor**

Carly Taylor is a Boulder, Colorado native educated in Creative Writing and Dance at Knox College in Illinois and now thoroughly enjoying the constant rain of the Pacific Northwest. She spends a lot of time reminding herself that art does not have to be hard to be worth making. She loves glitter. She loves loud music. She loves, though occasionally

yells at, her cat. And she is glad she gets to make poems.

### **Lori Lamothe**

Lori Lamothe is the author of three poetry collections, including *Kirlian Effect* (forthcoming FutureCycle Press, 2017). Her work has appeared in *Borderlands*, *The Journal*, *New Madrid*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Verse Daily* and other magazines.

### **Carl Boon**

Carl Boon lives in Izmir, Turkey, where he teaches American culture and literature at 9 Eylül University. His poems appear in dozens of magazines, most recently *Lime Hawk* and *The Lullwater Review*. Forthcoming work is scheduled to appear in *The Maine Review* and *The Hawaii Review*. He is also a 2016 Pushcart Prize nominee.

### **Lauren Scharhag**

Lauren Scharhag is a writer of fiction and poetry. She is the recipient of the Gerard Manley Hopkins Award for poetry and a fellowship from Rockhurst University for fiction. A recent transplant to the Florida Panhandle, she lives with her husband and three cats.

### **Theresa Dozier**

Theresa Dozier has a Master's of Liberal Arts degree from Johns Hopkins University and teaches writing at University of Maryland University College. Her fiction has appeared in *101 Words* and is forthcoming in a flash anthology. She is the only person in Annapolis, MD who doesn't eat Maryland crabs.

**E. Martin Pedersen**

E. Martin Pedersen, a San Franciscan, has lived in eastern Sicily for over 35 years. He teaches English at the local university. His poetry has appeared in Alexandria Quarterly, Scarlet Leaf Review, Literary Yard, Ink Sweat & Tears, and others. Martin is a 2011 alum of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers.

**Claire Castaneda**

Science is my day job. My favorite art is that which doesn't try to tell me anything at all. I name my houseplants after my ex-boyfriends. My claim to fame (and this is 100% true) is that I once molded my butt in silicone for a design project in college. If accepted, this would be my first publication.

**Chanelle Moore**

I am a thirty-six-year-old mother of two from California, living in Georgia. In September I will have been writing creatively for thirty years. I've worked hard to find a unique voice, while steering clear of taking myself and my writing too seriously. My goal is to create well-written works, which are entertaining.

**Jeffrey Bernstein**

A lifelong New Englander, Jeff Bernstein divides his time between Boston and Central Vermont. Poetry is his favorite and earliest art form (he can't draw a whit or hold a tune). He would most have liked to have been, like Thoreau, "an inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms... [a] surveyor, if not of highways, then of forest paths and all across-lot routes." Recent poems have appeared, or will shortly, in, among others, Allegro Poetry Magazine,

Best Indie Lit New England, The Centrifugal Eye, Cooweescoowee, The Kerf, The Midwest Quarterly, Mulberry Fork Review, Paper Nautilus, Pinyon, Reckless Writing Poetry Anthology, Rockhurst Review, Silkworm and Third Wednesday. He is the author of two chapbooks; his full-length collection "Nightfall, Full of Light" will be published later this year by Turning Point.

**Kate LaDew**

Kate LaDew is a graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a BA in Studio Art. She resides in Graham, North Carolina with her two cats, Janis Joplin and Charlie Chaplin.

**Clinton Inman**

Retired school teacher, Renaissance painter, poet, and piano player, born in England, graduated from SDSU in 1977.

**Alex Feldman**

My name is Alex Feldman and I'm a 24-year-old writer in New York City. I'm inspired by everything good and bad in this city full of random happenstance. Fighting to keep the city weird and put a stop to our current cultural lull. Previously published by Silver Apples Magazine, Pig Latin Magazine, Steam Ticket Review, and Claudius Speaks

**Doug Hoekstra**

I'm a Chicago-bred, Nashville-based writer. My first book, *Bothering the Coffee Drinkers*, appeared on the Canopic Publishing (TN) imprint in April 2006 and earned an Independent Publisher Award (IPPY)

for Best Short Fiction (Bronze Medal). Several of the selections in the book appeared in other publications, and one story, "The Blarney Stone" was nominated for a 2006 Pushcart Prize. Other stories and poems have appeared in numerous online and print literary journals and a second book of prose, *The Tenth Inning*, was released independently in 2015. In a previous life, I was a singer-songwriter troubadour who released seven albums of original material on labels in Europe and America; performing in the US and Europe at bookstores, coffeehouses, clubs, libraries, pubs, festivals, radio stations, and castles, solo and with band in tow. Highlights included Nashville Music Award and Independent Music Award nominations, lots of Top 10 lists, and many groovy times.

### **Jennifer Davis**

JEN DAVIS lives, loves, and peddles her wordly wares in Northern Kentucky. She has poetry published or forthcoming in *Door is a Jar Magazine*, *Whale Road Review*, *Peacock Journal*, *Licking River Review*, *Eclectica Magazine*, and several others. She also does a little acting and most recently popped up in John Cariani's "Love/Sick" in Ft. Thomas, KY. As a freelancer Jen is churning out copy and relocating poorly placed commas like the Two Men and a Truck of punctuation. On the creative side she's actively seeking shelter for her unpublished works and trying to figure out how to turn them into a cohesive collection.

### **Melanie Faith**

Melanie Faith is an online writing instructor and a tutor at a boarding school in Pennsylvania. She was featured artist in OVS Magazine's Spring 2017

issue, where her scale from Pisa made the front cover <http://ovsmag.com/>. Her photography was recently featured as the cover of Jessie Carty's latest poetry book, in the Birmingham Arts Journal (Spring 2016), Cargo Literary Journal (June 2016), and Sandy River Review's Fall 2015 issue. She enjoys collecting quotes, books, and shoes and spending time with her darling nieces.

### **Sergio Ortiz**

Sergio A. Ortiz is a two-time Pushcart nominee, a four-time Best of the Web nominee, and 2016 Best of the Net nominee. 2nd place in the 2016 Ramón Ataz Annual Poetry Competition sponsored by Alaire publishing house. He is currently working on his first full-length collection of poems, Elephant Graveyard.

### **Sonja Vitow**

I teach French, Spanish, and Creative Writing at a small, progressive middle and high school in Boston, MA. I have many only-child hobbies such as: an internet Scrabble addiction, playing various sizes of ukulele, teaching Spanish to my small dog, excessive arts and crafts, collecting tiny things. I edit a literary magazine called The Knicknackery. This weekend I bought a used ouija board for \$4 at the thrift store near my apartment. It is probably haunted which is the only kind I'd really want anyway.

### **Safiyyah Motaib**

In this bundle of poems, I tried to put more of my perspective on things and use relatable experiences to get my point across. I've always been more of a subtle writer so I'm trying to expand what I can do.

