

Door Is A Jar
Volume 7

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Jack Fabian, Managing Editor/ Nonfiction Editor

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Clemonce Heard, Poetry Editor

Corrine Nulton, Drama Editor

Cover Image "Graffiti" by Bruce Dodson

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Creative Writing
—for Richard Wilbur
Devan Burton
Poetry

When you had already written volumes
I shared my poetry with you.
You wrote more than I did
on my best submissions.
Comments in blank verse
crowded out my metaphors.
'Do not be clever.'

I was a transfer student
from a community college
desperate for greatness,
but you instructed me
to look for what was unwritten.
I sit in your departure tonight.
Your verses litter the universe.
I long to write a line someday
that Wordsworth would have wished for.
I don't work with muses anymore
(they are too demanding).

High Culture
Devan Burton
Poetry

The Holocaust museum birthed poetry
among the relics, icons, and smells.

Jewish verses,
Jewish voices,
shared with me
what people did not listen to.
Poets who wrestled with demons
thought enough of future students
to jot down a few words.

In their lyrics,
trees stood like judges
waiting to cast down their decisions.
'Poetry is the work
people must do
to articulate the unspoken.'

Tears ran down my face
because the downtrodden
spoke in meter with imagery.
Textbooks cannot replace—capture—
the sound of fear.
Poetry possesses the life
to connect us to hate
and redemption.

Mother-in Law

Devan Burton

Poetry

She comes from clouds.
White substances I cannot touch.
If I look at her any closer,
I will see where her daughter's smile originates.
Her namesake sleeps in the bedroom with me.
The times she rolls over
she grabs my arm
as taking me to her world of slumber.
I do not tell her mother of the details.
Short hair in the summer.
Long hair when autumn arrives.
Same pearl necklace her grandmother wore.
My mother-in-law looks at me.
Because the apartment is too small.
She looks at me when I open the door for her child.
In prayers unheard,
perhaps she asks the saints
to grant me wisdom.

My Mother's Longhand

Devan Burton

Poetry

I could not put you in a basket
like was done for Moses. I drove
away because I was a flame. Nature
showed me that I could not provide.
My mother would raise you.
She kept you away from the streets.

When I left you, I slept on crowded streets.
In the functioning car we rode around in,
I drove to Florida, Nebraska, California,
but made my home in Oklahoma.
I tried to forget about the tears
you shed when I called you collect from a phone booth.

I ran to an old phone booth
to hide from the frigid rain
and jealous lovers. Life in Knoxville
had to be simple for you.
You learned the English alphabet
has twenty-six letters and a history.

The thing to understand about history
is that anyone can write it.
As a mother I understood
the dynamics of life.
I felt the knife's cold blade
against my swollen neck.

If I saw you again, I'd kiss your neck,
discussed the weight you gained, the children

you begat, and the life you made because
I drove away. Instead, you came to Oklahoma
in an oil-leaking car to carry
my ashes back to Tennessee.

You brought me to Tennessee,
adorned with a ring, in a basket.
Together, we wrote history.

Brooklyn
Joseph Buehler
Poetry

I used to live on an Indian
reservation,
but now I live in Brooklyn.
I can see
Kalamazoo across the river
and the plane trees and those
little olives
in pyramid shaped glasses
(if you turned the pyramids
upside down)
glistening in the sun,
waiting all day long for the
white rabbits
to finally make their appearance.
Kick start that motorcycle again,
will you?
Cracks in the sidewalk.
Pass the salt, no, never mind.
I seem to have lost the
marginalized glimpse of
something or other.
Can't remember what now.
Waiting for the sun to sink away
behind the skyscrapers.

Here in western Wisconsin
the lights have been extinguished
and everybody's waiting
for winter to enter its
sodden expanse of cave and say,

“Bye bye for now,
bye bye.”

RED-GOLD AUTUMN

Claire Scott

Poetry

Are we allowed to be old?

No longer color our hair blue-black or blonde,
sit in a chair for hours reading *People Magazine*,
staring at photos of stars that look fourteen,
while the stylist blathers on & on about her sex life
with Jose, Madison, Samuel or Sarah.

No longer lift our faces at Rainforest Spa,
a hundred dollars plus tip, to hear someone
tsk-tsk our blackheads, whiteheads, greenheads.

Can we wear slippers & elastic-waist
pants from JCPenney's, four for fifteen dollars,
put liners in our underpants?

Can we swirl & spin on sclerotic legs,
sing-shout along with Creedence,
high-kick to *Bad Moon Rising*?

Can our gnarled & liver spotted
hands be soft enough to touch
a grandchild's face?

Can we exhale & exhale & exhale
releasing sucked-in stomachs,
filling our lungs with the brisk air
of this red-gold autumn,
knowing full well it may be
our last.

SURVIVORS
Claire Scott
Poetry

Am I a survivor? are you?
what if we still can't sleep at night

despite bottles of Ambien & Lunesta
swallowed with straight scotch

what if staccato slides stalk our psyches
the smell of Old Spice

rough whiskers scraping
a whispered, "don't tell"

what if we hear a door squeak & flinch
hear footsteps & cower

are we still survivors
if memories loop and replay
midnight pleasure

what if we erase, eclipse, redact
replace with sunny beaches & barbeques

what if we shred the word 'survivor'
douse it in tears & toss it away

does that count?
is it cheating?

Bad Boys
Nora Seilheimer
Nonfiction

I remember our student, a Senior, who let a bullet live in his upper right arm. We stood in the windowless hallway just outside my English classroom during a passing period. Inside I'd written *137 days until graduation!* on the dry erase board with the only marker that hadn't dried out. In the hall hundreds of students in khaki pants and maroon polos that matched our student's swarmed around us, each one boasting a gold "M" over their hearts. They all shouted, teased, and laughed like other teenagers across Chicago might have, but their voices were competing with the *Cops* theme song crackling through the PA system. The Principal thought music would motivate students to get to class on time.

Our student pulled his sleeve up to his shoulder to show me the bullet, proud. It looked smaller than I expected, the size of a shoreline pebble passed over for bigger stones that skip across the water's surface. *You wanna move it around?* He pinched his brown skin that stretched around the bullet's smooth shape. He watched me as he demonstrated, sliding it half an inch toward his shoulder and then back toward his elbow like the sound booth technician working the knobs trying to find the perfect level of bass. I tried not to wince.

No, thank you. Looks like it hurts. He shook his head and tucked his Chemistry textbook under his arm. *Nah, it only hurt going in.* I tried not to wince again.

Why don't you have it taken out? It must bother you. He stood up a little taller, using all of his six feet and four inches to break eye contact and look beyond me. The

Cops theme song filled a short silence. *It's my battle wound*, he explained. *They weren't aiming for me.*

He'd been shot while walking home from school, a stray bullet with someone else's name on it. Coach had let them out of practice later than usual that night. They'd been running sprints for missed free throws at the game the night before, something about accountability. Our student was the Captain, so he didn't complain and kept running until someone told him to stop. His fatigued quadriceps and hamstrings have since released lactic acid and recovered. His sweat, evaporated. The bullet remains.

Our student looked back at me, smiled with one side of his mouth, and offered a quick shrug. Lyrics asked bad boys *whatcha gonna do when they come for you*—but our student wasn't a bad boy. None of our students are bad boys.

The warning bell rang. One minute left. The hallway buzz grew louder. *Gotta go, Ms. Seilheimer.* He curled one hand around my shoulder and leaned toward me, speaking softly. *And don't worry. I'm gonna be alright.*

My Regrets
Gary Mesick
Poetry

When you set out to break the law,
I wore my best tie –
The Italian one you like so well,
The one with the luxurious hand.

But though the band was well-practiced
In that sultry, back-room jazz that you prefer,
It still seems to me
(if you will pardon my saying so)
Such a frivolous gesture,
To risk desecration of a stranger's wedding
Just to watch the trio play -
Though, for all their attempts at insularity,
The ease with which
You bluffed your way past the guarded gate
Makes me wonder Whether anyone can say "No" to you.

And we made such a convincing pair,
Mingling undetected among our social betters,
As we danced out onto the courtyard
Beneath the magnolia blossoms, that
I, too, came to believe.

So while I am pleased
You found the band to be to your satisfaction,
I regret that
A previous engagement
Will prevent me from hearing them again
When they perform at your wedding.

The Faith Healers

Gary Mesick

Poetry

As if life weren't capable of cruelty
To spare without mortal assistance,
She has to walk through the front door
Of the house where she was raised,
Where they lived together until her mother died,
And there behold the sight of three crones,
Eyes closed, arms outreached, as they seek
To broadcast therapeutic energies
Beyond their hands and into the voluptuous,
Naked, cancer-infested body of her father,
Lying on the dining room table,
Glowing from oils like some undercooked
Holiday bird, and pray with them
For the miracle all of them believed
Would never come.

San Francisco, 1919

Teresa Loesch

Poetry

In 1919 a man was murdered in a bar near a field that would soon be Balboa High School. He was found face down in a pile of dirt and dragged away to a funeral parlor near his house, near the docks, where he'd worked as a longshoreman all his life. His funeral was paid for with cash by a man whose face the funeral parlor owner never looked at, and certainly didn't remember. Later, he would take lunch with the man in the Italian Deli across the street, as he did most days. The widow received a beautiful cream cake, and occasional cash left in her mailbox over the next two months until her sister came through with a job for her south in Santa Clara. She packed her boxes out in the street, tied them together around what she would take, and the rest of her things she sold or left behind. She accepted farewell presents, but she never said she was sorry to go and no one said she should stay. The most they said, in quiet voices, knowing nothing and everything they needed to, is that he should have kept his mouth shut, you know, but these boys have no respect.

Visible
Teresa Loesch
Poetry

When I was young I read about an empath
that's a person who can take
other people's hurt into themselves
and heal others, and then themselves
and it hurts in a beautiful, tragic way
and I wanted so badly to be that empath
carving someone else's wounds into
my own chest, spilling my own blood
because once I took on that for them
they'd see me; they'd love me
you'd have to love someone who did
that for you
(it worked for Jesus)

When I was young I wanted to be
the victim of a disaster, a cataclysm
I wanted to stride through fire and smoke
get shot in a public massacre for standing
strong and tall, or talking back, or protecting
someone beloved and special like a baby
and I would barely survive and
be on talk shows and
be on billboards and written about
— and everyone was wrong about me —
and nothing very bad would happen to me again
it would all be used up in that bullet through
my chest or a stab wound in my face

When I got older I lowered my sights
I'm not going to survive a shooting

or magic someone's pain into me
I'm never going to be adored on a public
screen or book or see my face on a billboard
and I thought of more mundane disasters

If a car slammed into me on the freeway
and I was plunged into a coma, everyone —
who already knew me —
would care a lot
when I miraculously recovered
(no brain damage please)
I would have gone through something very deep
and have some interesting things to say.
(please please no brain damage please)

If I got cancer, eating away at me
or stabbed in the stomach
and got thin, with precise little lines down my ribs
everyone would be very impressed
and I could say I didn't care very much
about any of that — I was busy Surviving —
but of course I would. Anyone would.

Today I think of all the effortless
easy quick painful ways to get attention
to get love
adoration, praise, fame, recognition
how it had to be brutal and bloody
how I died in slow motion ten thousand times
and I wonder why I never pictured myself
winning the goddamn lottery

Resting Bitch Face Except It's My Whole Body

Teresa Loesch

Poetry

“So imagine me as a delicate little seventeen year old--”
He can’t. He stops me in my story to tell me I,
(sarcastic aggressive battle-axe harsh brusque shrew)
was never delicate, he can’t see it.

The two smartest kids in the class were
two boys who traded top grade back and forth
first and second in every contest and best
friends, indisputable champions who left
the rest of us
fighting for third.

I worked two years under the table
as a sex blog writer named Derek
who told thousands of men about
“The Ten Kinds of Sluts You Meet on Tinder”
and how to cheat on their wives
with tips like “wear a condom” because
a dozen red roses don’t cure Chlamydia.

My first kiss happened legally drunk
on my twenty-first birthday and he
stopped in the middle of making out
to say he still wasn’t over his ex.

A barista looked me in the eye
and took my order, then made it
sugar-free non-fat soy.
No mistake. He said “Some people’s doctors
don’t want them drinking cream”

and I stared him in the eyes as I took
my two dollars
back out of the tip jar
and I'm not allowed back anymore
I'm a problem

Because I am not bleeding now,
he says that I,
(sarcastic aggressive hurt battle-axe harsh burned
shrew)
was never delicate never hurt always whole.
When actually I am a phoenix, a real phoenix
exploding
into ash
and crawling out tiny and naked
eyes shut beak clicking
ruined and starting again.

Day Breaks
Michel Krug
Poetry

An April Cardinal announces
 Daybreak as I awake and the
Vague timing of morning air
 Spreads an awareness that
Warmth is finally building as the cardinal notes.

 Getting up is a re-cognition
Synthesizing the night's arsenal of
 Allegories so the day starts like
The cardinal's call, with a silent bugle
 That only I can hear.

Stenosis
Michel Krug
Poetry

In the midst of rolling down lanes of traffic
Shrunken as if by population stenosis
The instant mind wanders to conversations
Delayed, although the Brandenburg
Concerto soothes the pent
So the windows go down to invite wind
That drowns Johan, as Minneapolis
Approaches, and the cars provoke
This phone goes out the window
To take a one-handed shot of the far
Skyline which too is amazed
That this journey of a mere 10 miles
Can take an hour because these
Twins have grown
To fill our corpulent needs.

The Ordinance

Michel Krug

Poetry

It was a violation of ordinance in her mind

That irregular neighbor blades
Of feral grass would stoop to
grow
In dystopian directions so

Hippy like when longer than four inches
So I searched the city's statutes
Wading through yard borne nuisances
Finding no infractions, I returned to
The ordinances in her mind
And found the provision stating
Non-compliance with her expectations of
Order create anxieties that are mollified
Only by clipping her own blades daily.

Decisis
Michel Krug
Poetry

Learned a discipline
of stare decisis which
Can ultimately be determinative.
So inconspicuous when decisis pools
Like blood that coagulates
in the heart of clever exceptions.

The craftsman falls
and his brain scrambles
So profoundly, that expression
is sentenced within, without parole.

The proponents of clever exceptions
Seek to keep his mind jailed.
so I am called to secure the \$olace
and the exception is embroidered
by a man named Peter Diem,
whose crocodile tears
Evaporate before leaving the eyes.

Once I file, Peter Diem commences his jig
a dance of pure joy as a stream of currency pools with
Each question, like a cabby's meter
taking the road Diem travels.

And the Fiduciary is forced to play while
the bloodied wonder why advocacy is nihilistic
Exasperating the craftsman who never
Imagined integrity interrogatories.

My Talk with Harpo

Michel Krug

Poetry

I had a long talk with my Siamese, Harpo,
To assuage his anxieties.
He's worried about the wind chill,
Not outside, where's it's -22,
But throughout the States. He struggles with
His mortality, as he limps with his
Right leg,

He meows to me about his wellness visit,
But not over the trimming of his matted fur
But for those who oppose healthcare.

I voice a proposition, then repeat his
Name, and he meows in different tones,
One of which says he struggles with
Candor
A mere moral anachronism?
Overwhelmed by snark and willful mendacity,
As those who peddle fiction
Laugh heartily at those who consume it,
And at those who default to fidelity,

Like beaches of melting drifted snow.

Focus
Group
Message.

A World Series is won,
Not in baseball or poker but in

Craft

Post modern cinema,
There's no need for a bill
There's no need for video tape.

In love there's urgency
In cunning there's urgency too,

Poems weave a complex mesh
That can be imaged and sustained

Truth is in the eyes of the consumer.

poetica
Arathy Asok
Poetry

What I write must be poems;
Or they must be writing me.

There must be something to write,
That will make poetry.

Something that must be different than the sky or the leaf
Or somebody's ordinary death made extraordinary.
Anything that tells of the mind's business than love
That hurt or gave happiness.

Or there must be some words that wait slimy wet inside
the mind
Waiting to slip fall into the deep darkness
Without spilling any light
On what went before.

SCIATICA
Arathy Asok
Poetry

There is a country outside my windows
When I open them I see it,
I also see the river of invisible women
Walking in the blue sunlight.

I am imprisoned in the four white walls.

Sometimes I dare to see the flicker of water flowing in a
passing cloud.

I know the sun sets every evening.

I know night is only the end of another beginning of the
end.

I know it all.

And I cannot do anything but sit with my yellow lizards
fattening on the wall and the spiders in afternoon haze
webs.

My legs are cold.

There are splinters of ice trickling where once the fingers
were warm.

There is a lead like feeling in two fingers.

I have seen death looking at me from the ceiling.

I know why she looks.

In her eyes I see the mountains I will not climb, the
people whose breath I will not feel, and the roads of red
omnibuses.

In the other country outside my window sits women
perched
Wind in their hair

I will not put out my hand to call them.

My windows are closed now.

The river outside will flow.

It shall not wait.

blasphemy
Arathy Asok
Poetry

Every night
He digs a hole in my sorry skin —
White, growing wrinkled, smelling of a day's death.
He kneads my flesh to made deep trenches;
He drinks deep.
I feel his thirst like the parched earth.

When he finishes and turns around,
I hold my thirst a little bundle
in my fists
That I keep close to the warmth, of my under belly.

Novel
Charles Kell
Poetry

I am writing a ball of snakes.
Counting & stacking pills

into a sacred monument.
Each chapter features

a body writhing in pleasure
under blue fluorescent.

Pills mixed with tea
make transparent ink.

The wood has disco balls
hanging from stiletto branches.

Snakes lunge at the wall,
crawling into grey crevices to escape.

Circus Horse
Charles Kell
poetry

cut its leg on the rusted
gate then a river
of red beat the tent's dust.
I held a silver water bowl.

Combed the flamed mane
while it melted chiaroscuro
into the hay. What
do children's hands know?

Where did the fire
in once-flaming eyes
go? On the last night
I snapped a chain

black into the cold wind.
The body gone.
I scratch my scar again.
I forget how things first feel.

Monday Morning
Doug Hoekstra
Poetry

Blew through my house like a hurricane of purpose,
following the wreckage through every room
cotton balls, moisturizer, tampons lost on the vanity
deodorant, phone charger found on the kitchen counter
sketch pad, pencils, poems scattered across the table
with

Rimbaud, the book I'd bought at a sale weeks before
and gifted her that day, as we shared another cup of
coffee
her hands wrapped tightly around the now empty
souvenir mug
beckoning me closer from inside, an intimate private
joke,
my chalky signature blend laced across its lipstick rim

I take her wool sweater, draped across the chair, and
carry it to the bedroom, placing it on the futon,
next to her jeans turned inside out; a found sculpture,
capped by tank top, underwear, socks, and pajama boxer
shorts
too big for her slender thighs. Too hot. Too much.

Discovering her layers, I smiled,
Knowing there would be more

The Death of the Stink Bug

Jennifer Moore

Fiction

Stink bugs cannot be categorized effectively with any other bug in the system of binominal nomenclature as every other creature is. Their name puts other bugs to shame. Their eerie exoskeleton resembling a procrastinated Halloween costume that nature didn't put enough time into — it just doesn't do other bugs justice or righteousness. They defeat the purpose of other bugs. Bugs live in harmony with the dirt and among others of their own kind. Stink bugs are solitary creatures. They find a way to break into your home, disrupting your peaceful and normal day to day routine.

It all started when I unlocked my aging gray Camry, her unlocked ears raise, and the kareishuu (Japanese word for "old people smell") Little Tree swayed from side to side after a day of working that dragged its feet against the ruthless needles of the clock. The door beeped in a headache inducing saga of three — annoying beeps as I opened it, settling my things into their usual places either in the glove compartment or in the arms and lap of the empty passenger seat next to me. I stuck the cumbersome key into the ignition and commenced my grueling trip home, through the dirt path that sliced like a knife through my commute time, over the rickety oak AMVETS bridge with Old Glory billowing in the wind, alternating along the barbed wire with Stars and Bars flying right next to her — leading me through the backwoods of Hudson, then I had to inch my way through the intermittent 1700 traffic through 495. Today's commute was slow and steady, a sluggish tortoise in this race against the nimble hare of time.

Every time I switched lanes in frustration of the typical cautiously slow driver — I felt myself being set back 5 minutes due to the annoying red lights halting my moderate pace home. I stared at the metronome on my dashboard that mom gave me for a graduation present, and it ticked so gently, a 76-bpm measure, sweet melodies in adagio. The tempo kept my temper at a dull roar, simmering below the surface, while waiting for this terminal red light to drop two slots into the green circle.

After a half hour of what felt like a three-hour lecture on introductory biological concepts on C4 plants, their affinity for rubisco, leaf-footed bug families — and other mundane, and boring subjects that are more relevant to stink bugs — I finally arrived back home to my apartment. Exhausted, I luggered my belongings up the infinite stairs; my cardio and strength workouts packaged into one torturous teak incline. I fumbled around with my lanyard of keys, and picked out the one for my apartment, turned the door knob, and was welcomed by my fiancé at the door with a big kiss. His blissful visage dissipated within a split second, and he said, “Honey, I have something to tell you,” Derek muttered ineffably. He grabbed my hand and walked a few paces towards the air conditioner, spun me around, and I was eye to eye with — it. In all my years of sulking around this apartment, and carefully observing all that come and go from it, this has been the worst guest I have ever *hosted*. Stink bug. A slow-moving, tai-chi guru, moving one limb at a time, maintaining contact with five other limbs like a low silhouette low crawl — this *Halyomorpha halys*, that sneaks into your apartment through a crack in the window that you didn’t note on the inspection sheet upon moving in. I was speechless,

stunned, and didn't have the slightest indication of what to do.

Derek retreated and grabbed the Swiffer wet and dry we just got, and slowly advanced forward going from an *en garde* stance, marching a few steps, executing a ready-cut sequence, lowering the Swiffer into the scope of inhibition — in preparation to murder this adversarial insect. It spent its last moments serenely climbing upon the mini-blinds covering our window like a helicopter rescue ladder. Derek inched the Swiffer closer and closer, until he struck its frail body. It alighted onto the dusty inner overhang of our window, fighting for its life that was cut short by the strings of Atropos when we took her abhorred shears into our mortal hands — it was flattened like a pressed dandelion preserved in a scrapbook. Derek wasn't done though, he continued to butcher the bug long after its heart stopped beating. It was probably cleaned up while in ten or so lifeless pieces.

This made me think for a while. I swept up the corpse and as I tossed it out into our sky-blue Rubbermaid, thinking about how lackluster this would be as a coffin, and a final resting place for this unknown aged insect. I stood in my kitchen remembering how mortal it was. It had a life just like I did, it has family, and with them probably living in our insulation, allowed me and my fiancé to live, and showed us mercy and compassion as opposed to apparent aggression. This insect did nothing to warrant such distasteful treatment, from seemingly kind-hearted and compassionate people, and yet we killed it out of pure fear and dislike. It fought against the perils that we inflicted upon it and left this world a fighting warrior. This reminded me of a poem I read a long time ago by Rudy Francisco, about freeing a

spider. Its last two stanzas read, “If I am ever caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, just being alive and not bothering anyone I hope I am greeted with the same kind of mercy.” Maybe we should’ve just opened the window and nudged it outside into the gentle grasp of the spring wind or left it alone as it did for us. I just hope it sees that we learned.

Sawyer and Batman (A Terza Rima)

Jennifer Moore

Poetry

Sitting silently on my silky bed
My ear jerks in the leftward direction
Hearing sounds from a cat that doesn't shed
Mews fill the void of communication
Crazily convinced that I can hear walls
Speaking parseltongue with feline diction
A feral fight between fur balls befalls
Thumping and meowing and clawing around
Nearby fur cascading like waterfalls
A blanket of silence emptied the sound
like a gas tank after a long day of
driving to the vet from a battleground
Out of the cage they share brotherly love
And their place in this house fits like a glove

Men at Twenty-five
Michael Hammerle
Poetry

Men at twenty-five
dream through the night
sleeping when they can.
Days are for work, wanting
to fast break on life, looking for a layup.

Sharp as the knife of spirit—
cutting through the competition,
they have just arrived.
Enthusiastic like so many tender feet before.

Their legs are not yet fatigued
by those countless steps of validation.
But their heads are heavy
and the necks that carry are sore.

Men at twenty-five have just arrived
upon a stoop where strike plates hang
and through the door there's a steep flight of stairs.
You can't see the top stair in the dark—
when you start up
the stairs coo like a night owl.

Outage

Michael Hammerle

Poetry

Random jazz
played from a battery-operated radio,
big windows opened
and the curtains drawn wide,
overlooked a pale field
the property enclosed with pines,

little moon high in the sky,
white sheets and candle light.

Laughed how it couldn't have been
any more fun
cleaning the old fishing cooler.
Filled it with ice and food
from the fridge for the week.

Kissed a woman goodnight,
who, save a white sheet, was bare
to stay cool.

Much as you'd of loved to
when she asked,
you didn't put down the pad and pen,
you sat and in your own way sketched—
fought sleep for a little while—
trying to capture all of the moment.

Songs segued,
stout candles burned bright
because their wax pools were shallow.

She was more beautiful than ever
for no reason

besides she had kept cool under pressure
as 1 a.m. neared,
with work in the morning
before sunrise.

We Are the House We've Built

Michael Hammerle

Poetry

We love this house
because we built it
with our own hands.

We filled the house with light
and made sure our house overlooked the sea.
We are the house we built.
Slab and frame;
walls and roof.

We built it by the sea
and the sea is not always made of water.
A sea of Kentucky blue grass.
A sea of all the times we missed
each other. A sea that could be flat,
but this sea shimmers for every time we've laughed.

Every sea has its tides and beaches,
remember each reflection is a laugh,
and each grain of sand a hard time;
grains that make the beach—
we walk down to the water's edge
and say,

"I'll love you forever.
We are the house we've built.
We filled the house with light
and made sure our house overlooked the sea."

Age is Sobering
Michael Hammerle
Poetry

You can be drunk on youth; age is sobering.
One is a time where anything is possible,
versus, “Seen all – done all I will partner.”
Coachella to cubicles and cost tables.
Serendipitous turned cynical.

What Cambridge is to Southies in Boston.
James Taylor vs. Aerosmith’s Walk This Way.
Holding hands in comparison to rompin’.

Super charged with a heartland hemi.
Hybrid: half-electric / half-fuel.
Moore Demi opposed to Lovato Demi.
Seniority over new. A law. A rule.

Greenhorn jitterbugs gab until foot’s in mouth.
Age, works hand over ~~ages~~ fist to unbury the house.

Finite As the Body
Michael Hammerle
Poetry

Here's a mouthful
of starches

and an eye-
full of tears;

a heart
to fill with smoke;

a heart
that beats slow.

Can't lift these hands
above my head.

Can't hold this numb head up
through another night.

If I could I'd eat
the tune.

Chewing
on a song.

I'd make it a sweet one
that'd split a tooth—

fork lightning
in my veins.

Loose this crick
that whines in my throat

and ticks,
tightening like ice.
Thoughts can be gems
or stones.

Either way you carry the weight.
Emotions for fuel,
that's finite.
water the bones. water the bones. water the bones.

Parsley
Michael Griffith
Poetry

The herb's own greenness,
its firm texture and feel,
peppery-sweet taste and sharp smell
all take me back to my great-grandfather
and to my first true home.

Pappy's yard garden
brick-lined and mostly flowers,
held remnants of his life as a farmer:
tomatoes, onion sets, five stalks of corn,
and the parsley that grew beyond the brick border.

I could play with his tulips and zinnia,
but had to respect the "crops" he was growing,
for they meant work and tending,
a level of care reserved for
Depression-survivor menus.

As I learned to write in lower-case
and to color between the lines,
I learned to pinch off beetles
and how much water was too-much water;
that tomatoes like heat, onions like cool.

And after Pappy died,
still Abraham Lincoln tall and dark,
I tended that garden until I left for college.
Came home and it was a ruin,
but his parsley still grows beyond the broke bricks.

Ash
Michael Griffith
Poetry

To leave us the way she wanted, she held
her tongue, hid the diagnosis
until her illness would no longer be denied.
It stripped her power over the truth as it sapped
her strength and ate her resolve.

No longer denied, the cancer became
a glutton for attention simply by being
there. Her weakness, her pains, her clenched lungs,
our tears, near-constant callers and over-staying guest.

No to therapies, no to drugs stronger
than Advil P.M., no even to in-home aides until
that last week. If the dying
can not be selfish in dying, when can they be?

No to a funeral, no to a viewing,
just spread her out around her yard
and her garden; let wind and rain,
sparrow and squirrel carry her off.
If life can't take away the dead,
what is worth taking?

The last coughing, the wish for
one last smoke, sweet as
that first one, and 26 minutes later
our tears visited again.

Rx
Michael Griffith
Poetry

Child-like scrawl,
serpent's belly run through ink,
a prescription for another pill.

Nine orange bottles now
on the kitchen table next to vitamins, pepper, and
napkins.

Will this new drug betray any of the eight others I now
swallow?
The two I inject?
The foods I ingest?
The body and blood of
Doctor,
how well do you heal me?
Heal thyself (as you would heal those who trespass
against thee)

Doctor, how do you know so well,
prescriber or describer?

Doctor, how well do you know me?
Do no harm (that you care to know about)

Doctor, how do you make me well
healer or preventer?

Graffiti
Bruce Dodson
Art



Pastoral Mosaic
Brian Michael Barbeito
Art



There is an old man on a bench

Alec Prevett

Poetry

who looks boyish
from a distance dressed in shorts
and belts with shirts tucked in,
though he doesn't have a knapsack he really looks
like a child, from a distance, so naptime,
so crackers and juice, so first day of school.

but still his skin is creased, his skin,
that soft, leathery thing, is
slipping away
 from his face as ice cream
 down a cone,
slipping away,
 dressed in shorts as a boy
 with hair slicked with mother's spit,
slipping, slipping, he is slipping.

You want to offer him a napkin
"because you need it,"
you'd say, "because I said so."
You consider making the napkin into a hat
with a brim that goes all the way round like a parasol.
You consider making the napkin into a parasol.

Is he everybody's father?
You want to ask,
"Are you everybody's father?" but then a boy comes
and takes his hand. This one
is ironed linen, fresh, creaseless.

You wonder if everybody's father
looked that way when he was young.

You think of the boy growing old.
You think of the boy old. It is easy. It is so fast.
You want to tell him
"You're growing so fast."
You want to tell him
"You're already slipping."

Five in a Day at the Bay: Pathetic Fallacy

Keith Moul

Poetry

The wash slips past the bow's design, adoringly.

Water, by nature, not by choice, abets the breeze.

The distant craft, at last, gambols in swells.

Shadows gather to swell behind moving things.

Day ends certain of its next victory over the dark.

Thoroughbreds Race, an Allegorical Polemic

Keith Moul

Poetry

Each horse a champion, prancing its bloodline pride:
nurtured on oats, brushed coats, glossed and bronzy,
blazoned by silks to the finish, aristocrats of charm.

But a stallion, Swift Corruption, commands the track;
baffles the underdogs, especially Reform, a gelding,
first forcing it to the rail, then crowding it at the turn.
The muddy track with a good bottom favors a devil
in a deep blue sea, another bounty for corrupt repute:
a hose pours puddles in the infield, at the quarter pole.

But greed cheers Corruption; its mechanical motion;
its manes unstrained; its slight ankles pumping pistons
that bet life on a win; its royal progress at the final turn;
its trod of losers down the straightaway spotted in dirt.

Reform carries its colors to place, no threat to the lead.
Reform can but sniff Corruption's tail, braided with silk.

A few self-restrained fans may praise the haughty beast.
Even my lazy, incorruptible eye notes a rippling energy;
its easy gait exploding to a race; the spell to seduce our
repeated presence; its command rivets us at full
attention;
its wild breath; its obliging wreath of magnificent
flowers.

In the circle, Corruption nuzzles a bulging purse, lighted
eyes shine like the sun. Yet, time guarantees no favors,
nor promises additional starts. To make its bed of roses,

a winner must grease many palms. Comely mares sidle by, slim, sleek, and eager in display to new generations.

Possible Parallels

Keith Moul

Poetry

A single hiker on the road, not obviously obsessive, plods forward. The more remote the road, the more he plods forward, the more the single mind obsesses.

He may prefer daylight, but, to reach an end planned for this day, yields to a few more miles into darkness. He knows that dying light has long sped ahead of him, and, continuing, he gains on morning, more obsession.

Another hiker, amid general population, gets distracted: traffic lights burst in the foreground; peripheral sparking lays on the finite optic nerve; sight diminishes at night. This road is similarly built, lain for commercial cartage rather than astral siege; lain to deny pleasing wanderers; lain in uncouth macadam above which no dream unfolds.

Every road affords a truth to a hiker. But truth springs from wind, rises from night, changes by photosynthesis, bends space, breeds a lily, emits a light, yet emerges in waste, collects as residue, drifts as dust, piles as grit on the ashen plain as the day's ache writhes into muscles.

X X X X

The physicist drove a manageable distance on a chosen road, did not stop to conceive quantum, the impossible parallel motoring beside what had always been probable.

I stop myself in shared, ordinary, linear time. I proceed again without Einstein relativities, without special focus, rather the blur of zipping lights costing great effort to see
new shapes: my mathematics works when it makes sense

Discovery's Dark Side
Sankar Chatterjee
Fiction

Prof. Ben Rhodes of MIT came to his laboratory in early morning. He was eager to know the result from a novel experiment that one of his graduate students had undertaken previous evening. Waiting inside his office for the student's arrival, he looked around and stared blankly at his recent prestigious award. A brilliant physicist, he received the medal from his own international professional society. His breakthrough discovery involved precise targeting of a tumor inside a human patient by laser, without destroying surrounding tissues. During that research, he also came to the realization that in wrong hands the fundamental technique could be utilized as a destructive mean. With spread of global terrorism in a rapid pace, the technique could find use in bringing down a plane-full of innocent passengers during take-off or landing. Deep down, the thought would make him feeling guilty for his own discovery.

His phone rang. On the other end, it was Prof. Carl Max, his long-time collaborator from CalTech with a sorrowful voice. Prof. Max would intimate that previous night he had lost his only son Bob to an overdose of a street drug. A brilliant student throughout his academic carrier, Bob, after graduation, joined lucrative financial world. With fame and money, also came to Bob's life, long hours of working as well as the stress of meeting the profit margin. And that's when Bob found the dark side of his profession in late-night parties with alcohols and drugs. Prof. Rhodes consoled Prof. Max as much as he could, though he knew words were meaningless to a

grieving parent who just lost his only child to an overdose. Prof. Rhodes promised Prof. Max that he would fly to California to attend the funeral.

Prof. Rhodes hung up the phone with a heavy heart. He glanced at his medal again, now dazzling from a brightly reflecting sun. Suddenly, his old fear resurfaced. A monumental “opioid crisis” had taken over all the big cities in the country along with the poor regions of the Appalachian Mountains. Citizens from all levels of social statures had been getting addicted to these readily available street drugs. With knowledge widely available from social media, a few entrepreneurs found a few rogue scientists to tweak the old pain medicines into these street drugs in clandestine facilities. Due to their poor quality, many of the sold samples were getting contaminated with impurities with deadly consequences. In fact, the local authority of his own city traced in a street sample a compound, being used to tranquilize the wild elephants in South-East Asia. Due to globalization as well as availability of cheap labor, batches made overseas had been showing up on the streets of western hemisphere.

Prof. Rhodes began to drown in a deep sorrow, while pondering “How could a scientist measure the welfare to harm ratio to the society from a discovery beforehand?” In parallel, Pogo, the cartoon figure flashed in his mind delivering his wisdom: “We have met the enemy and it is us.”

Family Ties
Lauren Barnett
Poetry

I.

No Father is more Loved
than by the daughter
resting on bleeding knees
certain she deserves her pain
for falling so low
in her father's eyes.

II.

How easy to find fault
When looking through
Familial eyes

III.

Parents leave gifts
as well as scars.
We choose how long
we take in unpacking
both.

Bootlegger Shared Glory

Thomas M. McDade

Poetry

It was the year of the strike and no beer deliveries.
To get on the good side of a watering hole proprietor
Who was also a bookmaker I volunteered to be
A thirst quencher, get at least a line of credit raise.
I made runs over the line to Massachusetts and I felt
Like a bootlegger and risk ran higher
Since I'd lost my driver's license.
The first night the work stoppage was settled
Was like New Year's and I couldn't buy a drink
My trunk brew remembered besides horse luck
Galore that day, no need to use the cuff.
About eleven Pete, a regular at a lounge down the street
Came in talking karate, demonstrating this pose and
There wasn't a warm body present
He could not do serious harm.
Denny, a tall, thirtyish man in the siding
Racket usually quiet, laughed at the intruder
Who gave out a curdling yell, spun
Around, hands set like cleavers.
Denny roared again and to the surprise
Of all removed his dentures; set them
On the bar and made fists.
Pete glared at the teeth as if waiting
For them to curse him as he backed out the door.
Denny pocketed his choppers and in an old
Gummy voice that may have echoed
Off Prohibition itself, ordered drinks
For everyone, added thank God
For the bootlegger.

The Sewers
Thomas M. McDade
Poetry

Gina says, “merde,” no dice. She’s off to explore her old university haunts. The sewers reek up to reputation, worse than the live chicken marts in the Marais and I’m glad the Brit woman I’m trailing is drenched in a pungent perfume often christening me dwarf Sneezy. She tells her friend that they are in “Hugo’s Intestine of the Leviathon.” There are many references to *Les Misérables* among the historical placards, page numbers included. I wish Gina were here to translate but no worry, I’m saved by a headset rental that also includes the history of Napoleon’s maze in English. Perhaps there are rats in the shadows descended from Valjean’s rodents but no flashes of green or yellow teeth. Did a mischievous kid ever flip cheese from an baguette attempting to lure them for the sake of authenticity? Or crumbs to commemorate Valjean’s original bread sin that led to nineteen years imprisoned in Toulon and I remember that port and my short liberty stay. B-girls were crazy for U.S. sailor white hats. The perfume protection lost I reach back

to the boot camp toothbrush scrubblings
of those chapeaus and the sinus
clearing yin and yang of bleach and Wisk
for an inspection by some officer likely
an ancestor of Valjean's thorn Javert.

Ephesus Again

Thomas M. McDade

Poetry

Was the beret-topped Turk at the school bus wheel fantasizing the Indy 500 or a Monaco Grand Prix? Did the yellow of the vehicle demand he gainsay that cowardly hue? Squealing around hairpins, rubber scorching the roads leading to Ephesus might have had some sailors hoping the farmers sowing their fields looking biblical were praying for us. Others imagined corpses

returning to the ship slung over donkey and camel backs. A stoic corpsman calculated blood spill coverage a gallon and a half each passenger. Without a drop of alcohol, a crazed NASCAR fan cheered and egged the fool on, put up twenty bucks to hike his daring. This scene was one I often reran, driving school bus in Greenwich. No shrieks or lawsuits

resulted since the speed governor was set at a mere thirty-five or forty. No Blessed Virgin's last home visit as in Ephesus, Turkey, but one run did end at The convent of The Sacred Heart. On the public high school trek I was no Turk—I'd stop dead and stay put until the aroma of tobacco or marijuana ceased. No hat ever passed to bribe me elsewhere: beret yellow *or* red.

Reputation
Thomas M. McDade
Poetry

The pink-haired daughter holds a black kitten
and stands beside a load of luggage. The duffel,
is stenciled in faded white, "T. C. Jones."
Her petite sis, in a pink-polka dotted dress, is armed
with a camera that appears to be professional
judging from the lens size and no need to
shout "Cheese" at this group.
The smiley dad's paint-splattered
blue chambray shirt lacks pink.
His trousers once part of a suit,
are baggy and wrinkled, shabby Topsiders
loose on his feet. Crannied face, plentiful
grey hair I imagine him combing
Elvis style when he was young.
Is that his duffel, a Vietnam Vet?
Is the aura framing this dandy crew
what causes sky-bound admirers
to discount the reputation of that green-
eyed, pink-collared cat that can't be doing
anything less than purring like a patient fuse?

Making Time
Thomas M. McDade
Poetry

Mary's advice
to new female
AA members
regarding folks
encouraging them
to drink at parties
was to say
they'd love to
have a cocktail
but it might
cause the syphilis
to act up.
That way
she swore in
her 100 yards
of driveway
gravel voice
that more
than one
dose of
hourglass
sand
stalled
as if each
grain swelled
to gonad
size.

Last Days
Michael Estabrook
Poetry

At the club pool
squeezing the last rays of sunshine
out of the last days of summer
but I'm not anxious
about the coming fall
because I'm not returning to school
not going back to work
seeing as I'm retired, relaxed watching
as the woman in the orange bikini
surveys her domain
and the wasp
beneath my chair
continues building her nest
of dried grass.

H₂O
Emily Lonie
Fiction

The ramshackle water taxi delivered them to paradise at two o'clock in the afternoon. They hadn't said a word to each other during the short crossing, but this was not unusual. As the boat approached the dock, Fiona glanced at Will, who was absently staring out the window and tapping his fingers against his right thigh in a hypnotic rhythm. It was a habit he had developed during the merger. Dr. Walker said that they had to forgive the little things. They couldn't move past the larger issues in their marriage without letting the small things slide. Fiona visualized the bespectacled therapist and grasped for one of her coping techniques. She took a deep breath and focused on the fact that they were finally taking a vacation.

It had not been more than twenty minutes since they had left the car. Fiona could almost make out the dock on the mainland and yet she already felt the urge to check. She shifted her weight and removed the phone from her back pocket. The little battery meter flashed red, mocking her. Shit. She had meant to charge it in the car. She hurriedly hit reply to the first unread email. The samples were due to be shipped on Monday and she was sure Laura would mistake the cobalt for ultramarine. Frustrated, she stuffed the phone into her day-pack, then swung it forcefully over her shoulder and climbed awkwardly onto the dock.

The couple stood on the weathered pier and surveyed the island. Fiona raised her hand to shield her eyes from the sun. She slumped the day-pack off her shoulders and rooted around in the top pocket for her

sunglasses while Will consulted a brochure he had collected from the info booth in Lund.

“This is Keefer Bay and Mermaid Rock should be around that spit to the right. South Beach is where we will get the best sunset.” Will suggested they locate the bike rental shop indicated on the map with a tiny hand-drawn bicycle.

The brakes squealed in protest when force was applied, so Fiona was obliged to embrace the white knuckled terror of the many undulating hills. Conversely, Will seemed in his element, hands outstretched in a sun salutation. Fiona could sense relaxation spreading, breathing new life into her husband. She longed to abandon the resentment she felt watching the tension recede from his shoulders.

They ditched their rides on the bluff, having glimpsed the white sand below. The sun kissed Fiona’s bare shoulders and she paused to welcome the warmth. She removed her sunglasses and felt soothed by the orange glow behind her closed eyelids as she stared up at the sun. By the time she opened her eyes, Will was halfway to the surf, having stripped down to reveal figure-hugging briefs that accentuated his athletic frame. Fiona tried to recall a time when this view of her husband would have excited her. Instead, she felt annoyed that he hadn’t waited for her.

Unlike her husband, Fiona wasn’t keen on exposing her carefully curated lace to the ruinous salt of the sea. She rummaged in her pack for her swimsuit, a simple black number in two pieces. After a cursory check for curious neighbours, she changed and folded her clothes in a neat pile, leaving them in the lee of a weathered piece of driftwood.

When he reached the water's edge, Will dipped a toe as a test. The extraordinary warmth of the water surprised him. He started forward into the surf but something made him pause. He decided to wait for his wife. He had a sudden urge to share this experience with her. When Fiona reached him looking annoyed, Will extended his hand to welcome her into the sea. The last breath of a wave lapped over her toes and she softened, the corners of her mouth rising ever so slightly as she reached out her hand to meet his. The couple delicately waded into the water, careful not to interrupt the sideways darting of a legion of Lilliputian crabs. This was not the Pacific they knew. Theirs was churning, violent, and brisk. This was welcoming, calm, and snug. Hand in hand, they slipped below the surface, letting the rolling surf envelop them.

Will folded his wife into a towel and she pressed her back against his chest. Fiona's cell phone triple beeped its death knell in her pack but she didn't seem to notice. Her attention was focused on the electric touch of Will's fingers. Having found the perfect vantage point from which to observe the setting sun, they settled into the sand, resting their backs against the driftwood, worn smooth by time. Fiona nestled into the triangle formed by Will's clavicle. He gently kissed her hair, no longer imprisoned in a rigid knot atop her crown, but flowing down her back, catching the breeze. Hands clasped, they were lost in time, watching the sun dip into an ocean that stretched endlessly to the horizon.

A Heart Shaped Hole

Katherine L. E. White

Poetry

Two doves
nestled on a telephone pole
heads bent back,
necks touching,
breasts curving
forming a mirrored arch
wreathed in soft gray.

Instant Chemistry

Katherine L. E. White

Poetry

As a 15 year old, I knew ALL there was to know of the world.

I went to be tutored by a man who could not possibly teach me anything (he only taught chemistry, after all). Presenting myself to Mr. McCormick, who never failed to remind me of Doc Brown from the *Back to the Future* movies. He proceeded to talk of moles and periodic tables.

(I watched through the window as 6.02×10^{23} of people headed toward the buses).

E=mc² and H floated below my intelligence.

He must have seen the omniscience in my questions, for he ended up sending me away.

As I began my long walk home, I mused that, like an atom,

his head was mostly unfilled space.

The Kite
Christine Brooks
Poetry

The kite
So frail and thin
Flies high among the
Great winds, ripped and
Torn, fearless, she flies higher
Still. The fiercer the gust, still she rises
Until the time comes that she has given all of herself,
and there is nothing left but the
String that like an arrow, gave her life.

The Moments
Christine Brooks
Poetry

I wonder, how long you sat with me, telling me
everything would be alright,
Stroking my cheek
Touching my face.
Looking into my eyes.
Did you cry, I wonder, or did I?
Did you feel a great sense of relief when you left me, or
did your heart shatter a million times over?
Did you say a prayer for me, or
Sing me a song, or tell me you
Loved me?
Did you try to breathe me in before you put me down,
never to be held again by you?
How long did it take?
I wonder,
For you to spend a lifetime with me?

Cocktails with Dad
Christine Brooks
Poetry

I can get my original birth certificate now.
Don't tell me.
But I want you to be part of my life, this new chapter.
Don't tell me.
He would say
Over and over
Which only made me feel like
More of a liar
More of a betrayer
Judas.

Being born gave me a little of all of those.
Birth alone provided me with a crime
Without alibi.

A few more Bud Lites for him
Yes
More wine for me, yes.
But no
Even more adamant
PLEASE
Don't tell me.
Covering his ears.
Ok.

I hate secrets.
I am not built for lies. My house
Of cards, while wobbly, is built
On the wobbly truth,
Not that steadfastness of a lie.

Here's a chip
And another
Drinks all around.
Cheer for everyone.
Don't tell me anymore.
Let's dance.
Please
Let's just dance.

Ugly Girl
Christine Brooks
Poetry

Look at you,
Hand me down clothes,
Silly sneakers, and
Who cuts your hair?
Ugly girl.

I can't play with you anymore
You're adopted. I don't play with
Adopted people.
That's what my mother said as she rang the dinner bell,
And said you have to go home
Ugly girl.

I can't do this assignment, I don't know my
Genetics. Oh, just make it up. It doesn't matter anyways.
Not really.

I would not, make them up. I would guess, and that was
Different.

Just put your finger on the fan blade, we'll be blood
sisters
Since we're not really sisters.
But it hurts, and it's bleeding
ALOT
It will scar, what's one more anyways? Don't be such a
baby
Ugly girl.

Write down your family history
The stark white nurse says.

Oh you can't? Ok we'll draw a big X through your history.
I would prefer it if you just leave it
Blank, not crossed out.
Why are you being so difficult?
It really doesn't matter
Ugly girl.

And so the ugly girl came to believe that ugly meant
different, having battle scars, and Fortitude.
She came to believe that ugly meant brave and resilient.
She embraced her inner ugly, And
Marched onward, rarely questioning her uniqueness, or
the fact that she was often Marching
Alone.

Still though on nights when there was no moon, she
would look up at the dark night
Sky and wonder about her
Mother. She wondered why she gave her away, and if
she knew how far she
Had come. She wondered if she ever thought of her, or
had ever seen her. She wondered If she
Talked to the dark night sky too, or the thin blue line or
anyone for that matter, that might Be
Listening to her wishes and dreams.

Mostly though, she wondered if she was an ugly girl too.

5
Christine Brooks
Poetry

Pure white,
Secluded, strange,
Union news, father's house,
Letters, unrequited love
Death of mother.

Starch white, life happens
All over us, all the time
Staining
Ever slightly
The perfect immaculate envelope.

Pearly white, streaks of platinum
Less bright, but still
Shining, others will notice
Still,
That they are strange.
Bit by bit, white coals
Turn to ash.

Embers now, being fanned
Secluded, strange,
Union News, father's house,
Letters, unrequited love
Death of mother.

***I very recently learned that Emily Dickinson was my 5th cousin, I used the number 5 to describe the 5 different generations.

TRASH

Courtney LeBlanc

Poetry

Drunk in a bar he corners
his ex-girlfriend, the one who cuts
his heart into paper valentines
then lit them on fire. I'm the new
girlfriend watching the man I love
yell at the woman he still loves.
Friends drag him away, hand him
sheepishly off to me. I take him
home, force his weaving body
into the elevator, into his apartment.
He stumbles, knocks a picture off
the wall. He collapses on the couch
while I sweep the tiny pieces
into the garbage. The next day
he apologizes, tells me he loves me.
I mention the shattered glass, my heart.
He looks confused, tells me he took the trash
out this morning. *Yes, I smile, you did.*

Der Schuh
Christina Legler
Fiction

I am a shoe.

I am small, smaller than a child's hand. I am a loyal guardian, a protector of your tiny, precious foot, buttoned snugly over your soft skin.

Your mother carries you—carries us—among the crowd as we emerge from the cramped cattle cars. It is a large crowd, squeezed together so closely that people scream. Confusion and chaos suffocate us. Eyes bulge and faces sweat, even in the winter cold. You cry and you cry and you cry. Don't worry, little one. I am here. I am your shoe.

"Mach schnell! Mach schnell!"

The crowd starts pushing forward, past the train tracks and barbed wire fences and into the snowy camp grounds. No one knows where we are or where we are going. We just follow orders. Some of the others understand the words. Some of them don't. Mother does. You go wherever Mother's arms take you. I follow.

Your little feet dangle as the men in green-gray uniforms push everyone along. You won't stop crying. I wish I could make things better. I've never been given the chance, but if you let me, I will carry us far away from here.

But no time for that, I think. The uniformed men push us into a line. The crowd heads for a cement building in the distance. It is a low, flat building with one door and no windows. More uniformed men stand outside the building, screaming orders at the approaching people. Smoke billows from the tall, red chimney. It smells awful. It smells sad. It smells terrified.

We are almost to the front of the line. I wonder what will happen to us. I wonder where we are going. There are a lot of whispers, a lot of speculations, but no one knows for certain.

A uniformed soldier stands on the roof of the building. *"Ausziehen los,"* he barks. Get undressed. *"Eine Dusche. Heisse Suppe später."* We must take a shower. Hot soup comes later.

No one moves yet. We just look at each other. Are we to undress right here, men in front of women and women in front of men?

"Ausziehen los, los! Schneller! Na los!" Louder and angrier this time.

Now, they begin to strip. Mother removes her clothes first. Stark naked, she stands there shivering from head to toe as flakes float down from the white sky. She chokes on a sob as she sets you down on the cold ground. First she removes your small red coat. Then your little white dress.

Then me.

She gently removes me from your tiny foot, along with my mate. Mother leaves us on top of your clothes and hitches you onto her hip. She holds back another sob.

"Geht hinein," the soldiers shout. Go inside. Into the cement building. I watch as you and Mother leave. Mother enters through the door, carrying you with all her remaining strength. From where I sit, I can see inside the building. A narrow cement hall leads to four cement walls, boxing you and everyone else in. You cry harder. Mother starts asking questions. Everyone starts asking questions.

"Geht hinein! Schneller! Schneller los! Geht hinein!" They scream it again and again and again until, at last,

everyone *is* inside. The door slams shut, and the questions and the cries and the weeping disappear behind that steel door. Two soldiers climb onto the roof. They share a joke, have a laugh, and smoke cigarettes. Once given the signal by another uniformed soldier on the ground, they don masks. They approach the short, narrow cement shafts on the roof, carrying green tin cans with loud yellow and red labels on them that read "GIFTGAS!" They pour the contents of the tin cans into the cement shafts.

Screaming follows from within the building. Ungodly shrieks and moans and wails.

Then silence. Absolute silence. Deafening silence.

I do not know how much time passes when they finally open the door. Several emaciated men in striped clothing enter the building. Several more come my way and collect the briefcases and clothes lying on the ground. One of them eats a cube of cheese hidden in a briefcase.

Another comes and collects me and my mate. He is not gentle like Mother. He takes us away and throws us into a heap of other shoes behind the cement building. I try to call for you but I am only a shoe.

I do not know what has happened but I think, *Surely you will find me. Surely you will come back and we will be together again.* I will take you far away from this place and those barbed wire fences and that cement building. I will be there when you take your first steps. This will all be behind us soon.

But days pass and you don't come back. Three sunrises, three sunsets. The pile continues to grow. They bring out other shoes, all missing their feet like me. I am buried somewhere in the middle of the heap, suffocated and squeezed underneath several pounds of weight.

Where are you, little one? I will keep waiting for you.

The uniformed men collect us, shuffling the pile along the way to our new home. They take us to a dark room and dump us there. Thousands of us. Thousands of shoes, all sizes, colors, and ages. We all cry at night, thinking of our feet. We ask each other when our feet will return for us. Some of us think it will be soon. Some of us have given up.

But I will keep waiting for you, little one. Even as I wither and fade, even as the pile grows, even as the others abandon hope and go silent. I will always wait for you.

About Those Shoes ... (Cinderella's Manifesto)

Janice Northerns

Poetry

I love my Jimmy Choos, but where and when,
I choose, not you. I've shed shoes, not to leave
behind a trail of blistered crumbs or blood-
tinged prints for you to find, vestige of heart
lopped to fit, no, not to tease or lead you on,
but to sprint through a dark forest of possible
ruin, starring at last in my own neon-lit
action flick. Unhobbled, unspiked, unstilted,
my toes grip ground, soak up dirt's current,
ancient tales feeding my feet as bright ancestral
arrows pulse out a path. I pause, let tendrils
caress instep, curl around calf. A vine
shoots up my spine, trellis to the sky.
Climbing that ladder through the window
of sunrise, I kiss my own waking. Then,
and only then, I will let my hair down
(for you) and slip into those shoes.

Ticket Girl's Day Off

Janice Northerns

Poetry

The poseable starlet in babydoll
pajamas scratches her velveteen
centerfold — what's left after shaving
the bikini line — though no sign of a beach
or time for a tan in this rumpled

cubicle. Visible in the chilled frame
of her window, the carnival squalls
across the street — no grease for machinery
except here — KY Jelly and condoms.
The sex is oral and audible

a tilt-a-whirl screeching, leaving a smear
across his spent beer belly, tainted
coinage of lust still good on all
the rides. Funhouse mirror above the bed
blurs a circus of red velvet plush

and condoms rolled translucent. She smokes
broken joints in a haze transient
as the men — ticket holders to a sideshow
of snakehandling, the dollar swallow,
sword down her throat, come one come all, sold.

Driving Back from Bandolier
by Janice Northerns
Poetry

Time for lunch, my tongue already tasting
New Mexico green, we slow in Los Alamos.
As we drive through town, I blink in surprise
at street signs: *Trinity, Oppenheimer, Bikini Atoll.*

In search of parking, we come upon crowds,
picnic baskets, blankets spread on the grass.
Buckets and buckets of sunflowers surround a pond,
blossoms exploding on my retina in a golden flare.

What day is this? We ask, suddenly grasp
Hiroshima's pall. Taste of chile verde fades
as a scorched memento mori settles
on my tongue, yellow burst blotting out the sun.

My Ex-Husband's Last Breath

Janice Northerns

Poetry

Left alone in this room
for a private goodbye,
I held you for the last time
in starch and harsh light.
Fingertips already cooling,
I stretched across your still
heart, our clustered chests
warm, and held on.

My hospital stays birthed
our children, who slid
into your arms slick,
pink-sueded. Today, I pushed
your mouth shut, and air
wheezed out, almost human.

I did not hope breath back
or wish you one minute more
of the slow morphine drip,
though all you've left me
is knowing that you're gone,
my mouth a hollow *O*.

At the Whorehouse

Jack D. Harvey

Poetry

The world's best available playgirls,
in brief, the duchesses of delight,
at present at leisure, waiting
waiting in the whorehouse,
garter-belted gum-chewers,
sitting on their asses
like bored kids in classes,
tits awry and
passing time chit-chatting,
for a price
will now be ready
for large-folio labors
on your behalf.

Is your desire the
best standard debauch
or less simple in taste,
an afternoon in an arbor
under Madame de Sévigné?
Or scholarly with
ten thousand props on stage
or in your fantasizing head,
the fully perverse.

Whatever, sweet friend,
you will pay and
you will have it.

But regard and remember
as you leave

your petite death-bed,
sated and serene,
plebeian or patrician,
you, too, on the wild-maned
horsewomen of the night
suffered and conquered
and however quaint,
straining under the reign
of looming delights
and uberous splendor,
painted faces, sloe eyes, sweaty thighs,
however dirty and discreet,
gave to life what is life
and in your own careless loveless way
advocated creation.

A Goodbye
Jack D. Harvey
Poetry

Earlier in this book
of my life
one night I left her;
some stupid fight,
ruthless, important in my own mind
my reasons seemed clear;
so long ago,
one moonlit white night,
one Christmas so green,
a foolish lad, more foolish mistake,
a dunce, her tears fell, I remember
the bells of a nearby church ringing,
the singing of children;
the door banged shut and
I was gone.

She remains in my heart,
steady in place
like a vessel's figurehead;
a lovely girl with soft cheeks
and white breasts standing there
always before me;
open for mourning her always
I never return.

Contributor Bios

Arathy Asok

Based at Kerala, India, Arathy Asok likes to think beyond the borders. While writing then, sometimes, words tend to slip into a world where politics matters as long as it speaks along with those who were denied a voice. Also interested in writing stories. The stories go hand in hand with poems that the author wonders where the genre slips.

Brian Michael Barbeito

Brian Michael Barbeito is a poet and writer residing in Ontario, Canada. His work appears in various print and online journals. He is the author of *Chalk Lines*, from Fowlpox Press, and has been nominated for two Pushcart prizes.

Laruen Barnett

This writing is how I comprehend and tell the story of my emotions as companions, willing and otherwise.

Christine Brooks

I am a graduate of Western New England University with my B.A. in Literature, and am currently attending Bay Path University for my M.F.A. in Creative Non Fiction (Graduating in 2019). Last year I began biological research. (I was adopted at a young age) I learned my mother died in 2008, my brother is a homeless Navy veteran and my father (unconfirmed) is a serial rapist in prison for life. On the bright side, I learned that Emily Dickinson was my 5th cousin and my name was originally Monica Dickinson.

Joseph Buehler

Joseph Buehler has published 76 poems by February 2018 in ArLiJo, Nine Mile Magazine, Sentinel Literary Quarterly in the U.K., Ottawa Arts Review, H.C.E Review in Dublin, Ireland, The Tower Journal, Futures Trading, Green Hills Literary Lantern and in other literary magazines. He was a finalist for the

Adelaide Voices Literary Award in poetry for February 2018.
He is retired and lives in Georgia with his wife Trish.

Devan Burton

I live in the Knoxville Tennessee area where I teach at two colleges. I have been published in numerous literary magazines and journals such as Literary Orphans, Forth, and ALM. I also have two works available at Amazon Kindle: chapbook titled "In Quiet Hours," and a play "A Patron of the Arts." Follow him on Twitter @SirWriteRight

Sankar Chatterjee

Sankar Chatterjee possesses the passion for traveling worldwide to immerse in new cultures and customs to discover the forgotten history of the societies while attempting to find the common thread that connects the humanity as a whole for its continuity. His recent essays appeared in Foliate Oak, Wilderness House Literary Review, Subtle Fiction, The Write Launch, and Friday Flash Fiction among many others.

Bruce Dodson

Bruce Louis Dodson is an expat living in Borlänge, Sweden, where he practices photography and writes fiction and poetry.

Michael Estabrook

Michael Estabrook has been publishing his poetry in the small press since the 1980s. Hopefully with each passing decade the poems have become more succinct and precise, clear and relatable, more appealing and "universal." He has published over 20 collections, the latest being Bouncy House, edited by Larry Fagin (Green Zone Editions, 2014).

Michael Griffith

Michael A. Griffith resides in Somerset County, NJ. He began writing poetry as a way to stay mentally and emotionally fit as he recovered from a disability-causing injury.

Michael Hammerle

Michael Hammerle is pursuing his MFA at Bennington College. He holds a BA in English, cum laude, from the University of Florida. His fiction has been published in *The Best Small Fictions 2017* selected by Amy Hempel. His prose and poetry has been published in, or forthcoming from, *New World Writing*, *Chicago Literati*, *After the Pause*, *the Sandy River Review*, *the Matador Review* and many more magazines. He lives and writes in Gainesville, FL.

Jack D. Harvey

The author has been writing poetry since he was sixteen and lives in a small town near Albany, N.Y. He was born and worked in upstate New York. He is retired from doing whatever he was doing before he retired. He once owned a cat that could whistle “Sweet Adeline,” use a knife and fork and killed a postman.

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 of mine have appeared in numerous online and print literary journals and a second book of prose, *The Tenth Inning*, was released independently in 2015

Charles Kell

Charles Kell is a PhD student at The University of Rhode Island and editor of *The Ocean State Review*. His poetry and fiction have appeared in *The New Orleans Review*, *The Saint Ann's Review*, *Kestrel*, *The Pinch*, and elsewhere. He teaches in Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Michel Krug

I've written poems since I was 14 or that I'm a lawyer, because I'm a romantic, passionate about everything, including jazz, poetry, fiction, and particularly words, individual ones, quartets, bands, symphonies of language because meaning, texture and context can explain ambiguous world. That's why I write.

Courtney LeBlanc

Courtney LeBlanc is the author of the chapbooks All in the Family (Bottlecap Press) and The Violence Within (Flutter Press) and is an MFA candidate at Queens University of Charlotte. Her poetry is published or forthcoming in Public Pool, Rising Phoenix Review, The Legendary, Germ Magazine, Quail Bell Magazine, Brain Mill Press, Haunted Waters Press, and others. She loves nail polish, wine, and tattoos. Read her blog at www.wordperv.com, follow her on twitter: @wordperv, or find her on facebook: facebook.com/poetry.CourtneyLeBlanc.

Christina Legler

Christina Legler is a student in California State University, Fresno's MFA Fiction Program. She loves writing and reading the whimsical, which is probably due to her lifelong love for video games. She also loves Cajun food, though she knows she doesn't know real Cajun food until she eventually visits New Orleans.

Teresa Loesch

Teresa Loesch has a BA in Creative Writing from SFSU. She moved east and discovered that a "California" anything is just the same food with avocado. Her work has appeared on stage at Ukiah Players Theater, and in Transfer Magazine and Cauldron Anthology. She tweets @flashinthepanic

Emily Lonie

I am a Canadian archivist and an aspiring writer of fiction, seeking my first publication. I am originally from Ottawa but now lovingly call Vancouver home. Canada's stunning west coast and the tiny oasis of Savary Island inspired this story.

Thomas M. McDade

Thomas M. McDade resides in Fredericksburg, VA, previously CT & RI. He is a graduate of Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT. McDade is twice a U.S. Navy Veteran serving ashore at the Fleet Anti-Air Warfare Training Center, Virginia Beach, VA. At sea aboard the USS Mullinnix (DD-944) and USS Miller (DE/FF 1091).

Gary Mesick

A Seattle native, Gary Mesick graduated from West Point and Harvard. He spent some time as an infantry officer, and he now works in aerospace analytics, leading a data management organization. His poetry has recently appeared (or will soon appear) in New American Writing, North American Review, Café Review, Atlanta Review, Sugar House Review, and elsewhere.

Jennifer Moore

I am Jennifer Moore, currently a freshman at the University of Massachusetts at Boston pursuing a Bachelor's degree in English, with a concentration in creative writing.

Keith Moul

Keith Moul's poems and photos are published widely. In August, 2017, Aldrich Press released *Not on Any Map*, a collection of earlier poems.

Janice Northerns

Janice Northerns enjoys spotting monodegreens as she grades freshman comp essays. A recent favorite: "I had to wear hammy downs." She loves wandering through used bookstores and once spotted Larry McMurtry at Booked Up,

the store he owns in his hometown of Archer City, Texas. Read more of her poetry at www.janicenorthernns.com or follow her on twitter: @JaniceNortherns.

Alec Prevett

Alec Prevett is a senior undergraduate at Georgia State University and the editor-in-chief of *Underground*, an undergraduate literary journal. His work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *gutwrench. journal*, *Riggwelter Press*, and *NEON journal*. He lives in Atlanta with a chubby calico cat named Patches.

Claire Scott

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *New Ohio 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*.

Nora Seilheimer

Nora Seilheimer is a Michigander and nonfiction MFA candidate at University of New Orleans. She lives in New Orleans with her husband, two cats, and dog where she is the Associate Editor of *Bayou Magazine* and teaches a weekly yoga class to female inmates at Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office. She taught Special Education and English in Chicago Public Schools for six years. Her work is published or forthcoming in *Midwestern Gothic*, *Longleaf Review*, *Memoir Mixtapes* and *Longridge Review*. You can also find her on Twitter @nslhmr

Katherine L. E. White

I am a fiction writer of several series, and have previously published in several poetry journals, including *Thrift Poetry Journal*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, and *Voices Literary Collection*.

Submission Guidelines

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Our publication steers away from academic writing and publishes short, conversational works that use familiar language. 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. Our entry guards stand firm against academic jigsaw puzzles.

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

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 a fun 5-sentence bio. (We're not as interested in how many degrees you have, or how widely you've been published. Instead, we want to hear

about the real you. We want to know about the little things that spur you along.)

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