

A cityscape at sunset, featuring various buildings and a prominent dome. The sky is a warm, golden color, and the buildings are silhouetted against it. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

Gyroscope Review

fine poetry to turn your world around

Issue 17-4
Fall 2017



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Constance Brewer & Kathleen Cassen Mickelson
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FROM THE EDITORS

Poets who respond to the authors' proof we send out for every single issue always thank us. From our point of view, a poet's name and body of work is everything. If we don't get that right, we aren't fulfilling our commitment. I hear from poets that many other small poetry publications don't do that step. A long time ago, I worked as a publications manager for a foster care agency and we published a biannual journal on foster care. Production always included a proof copy to authors before the final run. There were a lot of little nits caught during that phase which made a difference. That step makes perfect sense to use here, where every word, every punctuation mark, makes a difference in how the poem is read.

As a poet myself, I'm constantly thinking about how I would take whatever I say to the poets we publish here. I think about other places where I've been on staff and how the work there was handled. When Constance and I conceived of this journal three years ago (wow, that went by fast), we were pretty clear what we did and didn't want. That doesn't mean we haven't learned a thing or two as we've shaped *Gyroscope Review* into a quarterly digital and print journal. Our contributors are our number one priority. They are the reason we exist.

And what a selection we can offer you this issue. We welcome back some poets who have been published with us several times, such as James Graham, Oonah V Joslin, Lyndi Bell O'Laughlin. These poets never disappoint in their observations of life's complexities and its beauty. We have work that deals with issues not often visited in poetry, as in Deborah L. Davitt's piece, Candy-Colored Dreams. We have timely, biting current event pieces from poets such as Janaya Martin (Philando, a Follow Up), Debra Stone (Don't Wanna Be) and Adam Szetela (Why I Don't Write Poems About the South). And we have 18-year-old Daniel Kuriakose's piece, Poem Teacher. Daniel, we hope you aced your class.

We think this issue is pretty good. Maybe damn good. Maybe our best yet.

-Kathleen Cassen Mickelson, Editor

One of the things I love about editing *Gyroscope Review* is the diversity—the diversity of poets, of thought, of poems. We see poems that tell us a story from a different point of view, poems that are raw with fury or longing, poems that shout for justice. This is a good thing. Poets should lead the charge, be the first to tell people about the unfairness of the world, about the state of love and lust, about the day to day things we might miss in our rush to be elsewhere. I love that our poets come from a diversity of countries, whose perspective is different enough from America that we notice. Poets are the flag carriers, the drum beaters. Please keep at it. The world needs more poet rabble rousers, more dreamers, more social justice warriors. If not us, then who?

Constance Brewer, Editor

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Poems

Section One

CLEMENTINE

BY AJE BJÖRKMAN

This morning I woke up to a clementine peel
resting on the bed stand. A curve and a scent
a citrus folding fan — orange as autumn's lip.

TOWARD AN AUTOPSY OF THE HEART LINE

BY S.R. AICHINGER

you chase dopamine epinephrine your best friend
 (what does that make me?)

 your palm is a sketch eraser smudge graphite stain
tender (appalling)

at night you slip out (i slept) you huffed slicked silent
 morning door ajar

 (a heart in creases) aluminum foil crumple
matte side out disposed

find a coroner (chiromancer) ridge reader
 splay me what's inside?

 new word on the street your dose not accidental
(i still think you'll call)

CHARACTER OF STRESSES BY INSPECTION

BY JOANNIE STANGELAND

In the house of paper
dolls change outfits,
tabs creased
across flat shoulders.

Around their thin frames,
garlands of afternoons
with lemonade
and gravity.

On the way down
the rows, a program
in each hymnal,
verses shades of carmine,

which is to say blood,
or forgiveness,
the deepest blue,
the softest cloth

a field, sheep knee deep
in grasses combed
by the wind's younger brother.
In the deepest blue,

could the mother
forget the soldiers,
a sword thrust,
the sun scorching?

The sun a stone,
lonely. In the news,
daily windows
to the houses built

on sand, homes made
of glass, made of paper,
talk rustling,
the click of scissors.

WHY I DON'T WRITE POEMS ABOUT THE SOUTH

BY ADAM SZETELA

A bronze neck can't
feel a noose slide tight
around its throat, snapping
the spine and crushing the
bony cartilage wrapped
around its larynx.

Last night I dreamed of
white faces laughing
around the elm tree
where a student from my
class hung like a date
smothered in flames.

When I was a boy in Charlottesville, my parents only said mean acts happened. I picture my father's red cap turn into a white cone with the eyes hallowed it. He tells me we need to protect our beautiful monuments.

I have made a nest in Boston from
the twigs of Southern shame, from
the receipts of shopping mall
multiculturalism. I lean into
the headlines. I am gone.

PHILANDO, A FOLLOW UP

BY JANAYA MARTIN

I have not forgotten about you,
it's just sometimes my throat
is tired of screaming.
Sometimes justice is so far
off that I can't seem to bear
the weight of its distance.

Putting this to paper now,
I see that I am just like them.
I can decide when and how to
be of use, this choice is in my blood.

When I was young I was more
eager to practice bloodletting,
always pushing to come out
from under the hammer,
the hook, the tooth, the nail.

HYSTERECTOMY

BY BETH BOYLAN

Management chopped down another one of the large trees,
I notice on my morning walk,
leaving just a stump and shavings in the grass,
strands of vines still climbing the brick wall,
clinging wildly in a prayer for sustenance

like the renegade tendrils and blood vessels
that grew outside of my uterus,
suffocating my organs
and a tumor the size of a plum;
 they did not perish easily either
 as my doctor snipped and cut
 to clean out my withering womb

On some of these summer nights I think of them
as I lie awake and finger the silverfishy scars on my sweaty skin:
did they weep as they were sliced off and discarded in the bin labeled *Waste*
did they try to creep back as I craved a newborn to suck at my breast

I wonder

did the tree howl as the first ax-blow tore open her gut
did she keen for a tiny sapling to cleave to her roots?

NOTE FROM MY DEAD RELATIVE

BY MICAH BRADLEY

Nothing is written on my skull.
Not an imprint of a thought, a gasp of a desire.
My tibia holds no thoughts of greatness,
My femur recollects no fantasies,
My ribs have forgotten the gentle lift of breath.

At the end of the day, all that is left of me is a white bowl, dangling a jawbone, that once held my universe.

Maybe, if you wanted to, you could scoop out my thoughts, my feelings, my loves.

But I know that you have your own bowl to take care of, one still filled with that indefinable spark.

I am not bitter. There is nothing left of me to feel bitter.

Please, continue about your day.

Please, let that beautiful, working skeleton carry you wherever you want to go.

Think whatever thoughts you like.

I will never know the difference--

but maybe, maybe, maybe, think of my once whispered name, my fizzled spark.

I live beneath the crust of the earth, beneath the crust of your thoughts.

NOW LET'S

BY MATT ZAMBITO

This breath. Now
this one. And now
you forget to keep on believing
in oxygen. Just going on. (Now

there's a myth for ya.)
And now new molecules
connect in your lungs
like galaxies in one another's

gravitational grip. Here: Hold
my hand—oh, please!—
will you? Half the prayer will be
mine. Half yours. Now

let's together start whispering—
in the direction of
whatever's left of Heaven—
to put the kibosh on movement—

blinking, and everything, and wind—
so this moment of supplication
never has a need to jump ship
and just become a memory.

cussing everyone out
cameras rolling for the
6 & 10 pm news on tv
me forgetting all of my
bougie civility.

LIKE TIME

BY MARK A. FISHER

clouds drifting
 like the voices of women from the next room
while the hills sleep
 like old men on a Sunday afternoon
dreaming of when
 they were once mountains
 reaching for the sky
 while the rain
 loved them
 and ground them down to
 comfortable hills
 snoring out the epochs
as they become sand

ATONEMENT

BY JAMES GRAHAM

The silent kitchen was full of cries.

The working spoons were happy,
the enlisted knives, forks, ladle, spatula
content. But the old drab tablespoon
that my mother and my mother's mother
used to use, slept fitfully, awoke at dawn,
began to cry, 'Oh! Use me! Use me!', its pitch
almost too high for the human ear, 'Oh! Let me
tingle in the great hot wash-box! I am dull,
but polish me!' Cries too

from the heart of my once-untroubled
pineapple corer-peeler-slicer, now abandoned
since I had lazily and cruelly succumbed
to snacksize ready-cored-peeled-sliced:
'Oh! Use me! Use me! I am sharp!'

And then one morning at first light
I daydreamed hooded Death, thought
I am not ready, sent him on his way

but gave my old dull spoon a duty,
and that same day brought home the armoured fruit.

ANIMA

BY M.P. POWERS

She'd turn up just enough
so you couldn't forget she existed
and disappear as quickly as she came.
And then you'd look for her
with helicopter searchlights, with Hindu prayer
beads, high in the Rwenzori Mountains,
by midsummer fire, along opulent murmuring shores,
in abandoned old insane asylums.
"Where'd you go?" you'd mutter to yourself.
And just when you were about to give up
you'd see her elegant shadow in a hallway
of Veronese marble;
or she'd become the taste of strawberry milk,
or the flashing fingers of a pickpocket,
or ripples on an ocean glittering
like dragon scales. "Come over here
and stay with me," you'd say, your voice cracked
with desperation.
But then she'd be gone again,
and you'd be left again
to your vagaries,
or whatever you spend all your life chasing,
knowing but never admitting to yourself
the chase was all there was.

IN THE HEYDAY OF LOVE

BY SERGIO A. ORTIZ

Today I speak to you about affection
and everything I say I share with the flame.
I'll talk about lifelong friends
—When a man loves he cannot be compared
to an extinguished fire

and his silent language never ceases—

I'm cursed with the sayings of dusk.
It's like talking about a redundant path
and dining under the moon
inside a lifeless rose bush garden.
I remember the memories
that danced in the wine.

DANGEROUS SKIES

BY CARL BOON

The birds know first,
they hear the happening
before the happening,
and the terrible instinct
guides them away.
It could be a weighted branch
crackling, thunder
a county over, or a man
ripe with grime and explosives.
Perhaps he cracked a knuckle
or swallowed his ring
and it rattled
in his throat. Perhaps
he held his telephone
and stuttered. The birds'
flutter is the moment
we must decide: Elysium
or this insubstantial air
that usually sustains us.

IT WAS US

BY BILL GARTEN

Four boys who drove you to it -
Shooing us out of your kitchen

None of us ever learned to cook
All leaving for college knowing only

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as chefs
It was your way of showing us

You needed validation for not
Working and barely getting your GED.

Years later, I bought your Victorian home
From your estate and my three older brothers

Its single tower where at the turn
Of the century they had ball room

Dances and where there are two
Known ghosts. One, a four-year old girl,

Who drown in the bathtub on the fourth
Floor and the other, the son of the original

Owner, who died in World War II.
He appeared one night in the foyer

In full uniform - until he rolled up like a venetian blind,
Only to disappear. We never saw the four-year old girl

Only heard from neighbors about the lights in certain rooms
Turning on and off after midnight right before dawn

One morning I saw you in your brown slip,
Cooking us all eggs, grits, bacon and biscuits

The gravy of your silhouette running like water
Out of the rusty old pipes. You moaned, but I was unsure

If it was at me or just that you were still in pain

- Not over my successes with money
But my failures with love.

POEM TEACHER

BY DANIEL KURIAKOSE

Hey Bruce.

I was under the impression I'd already brought my
non-vital organs to the workshop.

I swallowed so many seeds at six or so,
my mother'd run her work-worn, paperweighted fingers
down the back of my neck as if
it'd stop the throat pain.

So many seeds, Bruce,
how am I supposed to know which trees
grow through my ribs like around a metal fence?

Apologies never seem intense enough in writing.
They flatten like a rain drop you expect to bounce.

I'd peel off my work-in-progress beard,
and the ghosts that climb my fingers like a rock wall.
I'd sell the chapstick I use on my life,

if it would show I'm sorry.
I'm aware of the flecks that keep
falling off me.

I'm sorry I stuff them
so deeply
and disfigured,
in the sand jars I bring to class.

EBB TIDE

BY M. STONE

The slate gray Atlantic laps my ankles
while farther down the beach,
a man takes advantage of the sunset
and drops to one knee,

offering a ring to a young woman.
Their grins are contagious even as I weigh
the pros and cons of going on living.

The ocean is no temptress;
I carry the epigenetic burden
of my grandmother, so afraid of water
she never showered, only bathed,
and washed her hair in the sink.

I cannot load my pockets with stones
and surrender to whatever abyss
waits beyond the second sandbar.

Instead I study broken shells at my feet
and spot a piece of sea glass, milky white.
Between my fingers, it is a tooth extracted,
with edges eroded like weak enamel—
a harmless bite held in my fist.

Section Two

I WATCH THE CRANES

BY OONAH V JOSLIN

on
one
long
leg
precisely
balanced
balletic
strain their long necks again and again, across the sky
lower lift pause lower
in this, their daily ritual
building
a future
invisible
beyond
my reach
for Dublin

PLAYING HOOKY FROM WORK ON THE FIRST SUNNY DAY IN MONTHS

BY CATHERINE BULL

I went to Golden Gardens beach with a lunch bag
which remained unshared to the disappointment of several
interested avian parties but other than that everyone was happy for half an hour,
the bicycle guy taking a break with his squeeze water bottle,
the group of Japanese tourists, the little kids in fleece jackets
and bare sandy feet. The boats, they were happy for that half hour
to be bobbing in glitter, the ducks, the heron loping above them,
the couple with a couple wiener dogs and an orange Vanagon,
the woman in the wheelchair and her push-alonger.

I want everyone everywhere to have been happy
for that same half an hour of the first sunny day after months of rain.

Not all-out movie-ending happy or new-love happy just
hooky-from-work-for-half-an-hour-in-the-sun-by-the-water happy,
all the unpaid staffers in congressional offices fielding a million phone calls,
all the tired politicians bringing their dull knives to a gun lobby,
all the overworking activists, all the immigrants in airplanes
not sure where they'll be let down, all the worried people
with bodies that might break or stop bending and be unfixable,
everyone getting a divorce, everyone who has to be in a wedding,
everyone with a Vanagon and dachshunds and everyone without a van
or a hot dog dinner, just that level of happy, just for half an hour.

IT'S LIKE THERE'S A MUSHROOM CLOUD TATTOOED ON MY ASS

BY LYNDI BELL O'LAUGHLIN

It might be time to blow the whistle
on the sense of myself
as having some place to go,
somewhere important to be
where a disaster is imminent,
and I'm the only one who can
tackle the imaginary guy in my head,
who is leaning across the rail
of an overpass in Loveland.
A cinderblock rests between his hands.
He waits for my sons to drive by below,
on their way from Wyoming to Dallas
with a load of bucking horses.

Just in: Tornado warnings.
They're all over the place.
I better blow and blow hard
if I'm to stop myself
from heading out afoot because
my car is in the shop,
and who else is going to dig
a hole to the center of the earth
and throw those boys in it
before they are lifted off their feet
and carried to a small town
in South Dakota, where no one
appreciates them and
phone reception is iffy?

Now that they have wives and kids,
and receding hairlines,
I'm thinking maybe I should
slack off a little.
They've asked, in so many words.
That's why I bought this whistle,
the one hanging around my neck
that I keep forgetting is there.

REVOLT

BY MARK J. MITCHELL

We asterisks ask
to be counted
just like the notes
privileged enough
to be numbered.

We are not askew—
no different than
the averages or
zeniths of your
oh, so perfect graphs.

Asterisks one day
will rise to the top
of your always
pristine white page
and put your ass at risk.

SISTER

BY BETH BOYLAN

What do I know of love
but long-distance and suicide

my heart is just a hunk of blood and gristle

less than a pound of sinew and tissue,

beating faster working harder than others its size just to keep up

We used to play detectives in the dusk of summer,
sneaking stealthily as cats around the cars
in the boardwalk parking garage
doing our best *Hart to Hart*

eons before you caught his eye, before he tossed you aside,

else I would have signaled to you,
snuck up on him
pointed my loaded cap gun at his heart
and pulled.

THE CYMBALS IN THE LENINGRAD SYMPHONY

BY JUDITH TAYLOR

We
want to be major-key
marching-band
optimism.

Can't help
our natures.
We associate
with the fife and drum.

When everyone's playing
fear
despair
destruction, we

clang and suddenly
everything sounds
wrong beside us
- can't help

our natures -
like the whole
sorrowful symphony is
mistaken.

Like they're all
out of step but us.

REWIND

BY JAMES CROAL JACKSON

I agreed to have coffee with my ex then she bailed
which is a good thing, a great thing, a g-rated thing

unlike our love in which we consecrated tongues with holy
water on the bed, on the swings, in a forest green as eternity

meaning as far as an eye can see because in any ship
you only look forward at the lush and when it's over

watch it rewind, rush into what was a dream
of lilies turned a desecrated winter wither.

LOVE POEM DESPITE THE UGLINESS AND FUTURE END OF THE WORLD
BY MATT ZAMBITO

So that people will generally keep the hell away
and not distract me from us,
I want an absolute *legion* of FCC censors
to march three paces behind me
and bleep my every declaration more often than necessary—
which is *never*,
but let's not get political
about language and freedom
and hope and joy and poetry and purpose
yet. What's disgusting is that we live
in a culture in Spokane, America,
wherein there's time I can't be in your presence
as if you weren't the only proof
this planet has of a hope in a meaning
for me. What's obscene is that our children
will die one day as if
they're lives don't matter more than everyone else's
to us and thus
any decent God should have the wherewithal
to do what we need
and save them all three eternally yes straightaway and always
since we're the ones reinventing It.
We were children, and we will always be children,
and I want to die
when it's best for you
if and only if
I can find the least insulting words
as the final ones
I say to you for infinity.

WHEN I MET WILLIAM C. WILLIAMS

BY ADAM SZETELA

the first time i met William C. Williams
i licked his chalk-dust bones
off the side of a paper plate.
the keys of
God's air piano hung above
my head. i skated them
with pursed lips.
the sky exhaled as
i opened my hostel
window.

in my diary i wrote:

*so much depends
upon*

*a bumblebee
in a striped dress*

*buzzed off
nectar*

the first time i died reading poetry
is after i met a taxi driver who asked me if i
wanted a prostitute,
a necklace with a hollowed-out tooth,
or a copy of *Spring and All*.

SEISMOGRAPH

BY JOANNIE STANGELAND

Some days hellfire
 & brimstone
up to the rim
 of the cup
& runneth
 over spilling
mock prophecies,
 chilling apostasies,
cake & fake news
 wake me hard,
head voice yelling,
 railing tailspin,
trembling—on the fault
 dreading temblors—
this the nature
 of heartbreak,
shimmer & rip,
 the muscle
chambers split,
 riven, the house
 divided falling.

COCA COLA JOHNNY & THE LOST CAUSE

BY LAURA HOFFMAN

the iconic kiss
spills
dark
down
my pink
esophagus
& I am
waitin' on
a hurricane
inside
The First Coast
Coin Laundry
I thumb
Tennessee
Williams

the steam
ascends
& I wish
I had
milk tea
& a blonde liar
riding
on his
dad's Harley

but my life
stands still
like the headless
statue
downtown
whose boots face
the South

without him:
I am forever
sipping warm
Coca Cola
& waiting

for the final rinse
of tides
unturned
against
bedsheets

CANDY-COLORED DREAMS

BY DEBORAH L. DAVITT

Don't talk to me about your notions of
children with carousels in their minds
who prefer to listen to animal voices,
rather than their unpalatable human family.
It's not a special power; they're not
superhuman creatures being fed
a daily diet of kryptonite in the form of
candy-colored pills—

you've never been their mother,
they've never slammed their heads into your breasts,
never bitten you till they've left bruises,
screamed that they hate you,
that you're the worst mother in the world,
that you could die, and they wouldn't care;

they've never done any of that to you,
as you struggle to keep their flailing limbs
from hurting themselves, or you, or others.

You've never felt your heart die inside you
as they hurl every toy they own at you,
break what you've made together.

You have no idea of the demons that a disease
can vomit up out of your own child's mouth,
adult curses piping in a childish voice;
you have no idea how much it hurts
to endure abuse that you cannot turn your back on.

If your child were a spouse,
you'd have divorced them long ago,
but you can't leave,
couldn't live with yourself if you did.

Don't spin me fairy tales of how
he has special qualities that will let him
walk through mirrors or dance among the stars,
if I just don't give him the pills;
you haven't walked his road, or mine—
you haven't heard the other kids,
laughing at him, calling him names:
angry boy, idiot, and worse.

By all means, keep your candy-colored fantasies
of how you're right and I'm wrong;
I'll be over here, doing for him the best I can,
this day and every other one, hoping against hope
that this combination of medication
will still the snakes slipping out of his mouth,
keep him from the paranoia that makes him
lash out at terrors both perceived and real.

He doesn't dream of carousels or of magic powers;
he's Pinocchio, and all he wants
is to be a normal boy.

If you as adults choose to go off your meds,
because you feel too dull and normal,
and think it's far more thrilling
to ride a roller-coaster in your minds?
By all means, do so, but if you do,
you're not allowed to whine
when no one wants to play with you.

TWENTY-FOUR WEEKS, WORRIED

BY AJ OXENFORD

Branches scuttle against the bedroom window; I watch their jagged movements, hold tight to you in my expanding stomach, listen to your father snore, the covers he stole cocooned around his body. I hoist myself up, walk the hallway by my phone's dim light.

In the nursery readied with diapers, bedtime stories, and little boy blue, I stand over the crib meant for our first child, the one that never came. I rub my growing stomach, wonder if you'll arrive in sixteen weeks or if we'll lose you, too.

Months ago,
I dreamt of you both as toddlers,
chased you through a pumpkin briar
full of thistles, crimson sunflowers,
vines thick as Copperhead snakes.
You held hands, skipped through
the vines—I was ripped by thorns.
Your laughter echoed; I fell behind.
Vines wrapped up my legs
and when I tried to yell, bubbles
hiccupped from my mouth.
The earth swallowed me whole.
Grass sprouted from my stomach—
I was a seed planted only as a canvas
for the roses and lilies to grow on.

BENDING MOMENT

BY JOANNIE STANGELAND

Cut, the tulips bow
down over the verge

of the vase, later
serif up, look

dayward, winter sun
wavering, lake lapping,

the air's curve luring
us higher—Lauds,

give us this world
on loan, our morning

loaves and fishes,
ladder leaning

to the eaves, this
looming apparatus,

this loss, this love.

ENDING SEPTEMBER
BY BETH MCDONOUGH

The month's cusp releases held moons,
masses in ground swollen gourds
at neck-sever fullness.
October struts by to rub scents
on doorsteps, finds what similes bide,
afraid of metaphor, before
next month leaves
presents in death.

Section Three

SCRIBAL ERROR

BY DEBORAH L. DAVITT

Words used to have physical weight
packed on a monk's back
or carried by his mule
along a frozen Alpine pass,
sheaves of parchment
instead of grain,
as he made the journey
from one monastery to the next.

Candlelight reflects off silver
and gold mirrors embossed on each page,
illuminates his face as he reads
the words out loud to the novices—
reading wasn't silent or private,
the words didn't jump and skip
and glide straight through the eyes
dangerously into the brain; they had weight
on the lips and tongue
like bread torn and soaked in wine,
like the flesh of the divine.

But as he works to copy
WORDSALLINORNATECAPITALS
because miniscules haven't yet been invented
and spaces between words
are a newfangled innovation,
his tongue stumbles over Latin words
that he barely understands;
his eyes skip from one similar phrase
to another, and his hand, obedient,
elides what lies between;

glosses from older scribes
in the margin, jostle in from the edges,
take prime position (and the fishmen
will be rained with arrows, and
knights will ride cats into battle)
in the body of the text, give ideas
of nameless scribes all the weight of authority.

Content that he's done his job
after weeks of dull toil,
he packs his sheaves of parchment
back on the mule's back
and returns to his home monastery,
where the words will be read out loud,
heavy on every tongue,
and found to taste mildly of vinegar—
or, perhaps heresy.

ON CREATIVITY

BY LYNDI BELL O'LAUGHLIN

She runs amok
without even asking.
Joyrides through nights
in the driver's seat of a
stolen tortilla van with
no working headlights.
During the day she floats
on her back, kicks her feet atop
the squinting eye of a still pond.

There is the temptation
to bridle her blinking purple head,
but some say, best to let her go.
Follow her to that place
between skin and soul,
where the edges begin to blur,
and nothing looks familiar.

Keep going, on into the reeds,
and don't flinch
when a covey of quail
flush and brush your arm.
Don't stop, even when
your hair lights up like the
business end of a firefly,
and the silhouettes of buildings
fall from sight.

Don't cry when
monkeys with big heads
and strange faces, begin to
crouch in the white space
around your poems,
and splashes of blood congeal
beneath the severed leg of Frieda Kahlo.
Even if Frieda looks up—asks for
a Bandaid and a bowl of grapes.

VOICE MAIL

BY TERRY JUDE MILLER

weeks after your death
I called to hear
your recorded message

the low thunder of your voice
asked me to leave words
that you would never receive

but I left them anyway
the way a dog leaves a dead bird
at his owner's doorstep

paying tribute

HERE IN TURKEY'S EAST

BY CARL BOON

Here in Turkey's East, the past is myriad stones carried by birds, and comes to us when we try to sleep. My husband lies diagonally across the bed. I sit by his side, certain our walls have been sketched upon, erased, then sketched upon again. Words in Kurdish, Armenian, Ottoman script from a peasant's child. If I close my eyes and take my husband's hand, the past clarifies. The words become stories; the script a warning: jagged heroines, the line at the Breadbox Mosque to curve and disappear behind a girl's shoulders, a Ferda. We live in a place called One Thousand Lakes, each weeping, each in denial. My husband awakes, thirsty.

I stoop to gather water from the clay jug that was his grandmother's. It, too, is sketched upon, is mapped. Cracks and fingerprints, the past alive in the worry of skin, hours spent where the Erzurum road twists into the mountains into other clay, pink and foreboding. I study diaries all day, but this is real, this sense that comes of all that came before me, all who drank and all who were turned away. Outside the window locusts burst into laughter, a name for panic, a name that means we can never be still. But morning will be beautiful—I shall slice herbed cheese and tomatoes. We shall eat to remember.

WHEN I GOT THE NEWS

BY JACQUELINE JULES

I was on a beach
in North Carolina,
watching the waves
crest and curl,
with the tears
I knew she would not cry,
not yet, when the riptide
was still too swift to feel
anything beyond the terror.

But I imagined
paddling out to her
with a big black inner tube,
made of heavy duty rubber.

Imagined her arms
dangling inside the ring
as we floated together
in a sea I didn't want to share,
especially not with her,
the one who came first
to my house with casseroles
less than two years before.

Nothing stops the tide
or the currents beneath it.

No platitudes
calm the sea or bring
a safe coast closer.

All I can do
is offer an inner tube
and hang on beside her.

MY EXAMPLE

BY MICAH BRADLEY

Look at the way she dances barefoot
And the way she swings her hips.
She smiles with her toes.

Smell her—the scent of flour,
The cloudy aroma of sweet potatoes
Dipped in semi-sweet chocolate.

She is who I want to be,
Spine straighter than a book's,
Shoulders with only a memory of tension.

She told me that she lost herself,
And found herself,
Until she knew herself—

She stamps biscuits and hearts
Without even thinking.

MR. FONG GOES TO LUNCH

BY MARK J. MITCHELL

Homage to Nerval

and leaves a lobster roaming on his desk
under unfiled enemies lists. He knows
it can breathe evil schemes until the snows
return to San Francisco and that the next
fall's expected after an eclipse. No
sooner and not later. He will propose
to his crustacean friend and that will wreck
almost everything—his new snakeskin shoe—
he only has one—and, of course, his lunch,
which is over now. He climbs the long block
of Jackson Street seeking analog clocks
to ignore. This day is like no other
and it must be extended, massaged, touched—
gently as a lobster strokes its mother.

SINCE *ELVIS BELIEVED HE COULD MOVE CLOUDS WITH HIS MIND*—

BY MATT ZAMBITO

—*I* look skyward hoping to morph the heavens,
but while focusing, I get lost in the thought
of dying in fifty years and working
as a rock star up above. I open for myself,
tell hack jokes about angels I've heard
getting high, then hit the stage with my band,
Big A and the Postles, play *all*
the fan favorites—hey, we have forever,
man. I'm soloing in G while Courtney Love
cranks out power chords in time
with Bonzo behind the kit, when suddenly
I rip a cherubic riff, rattle
and roll sweat off my haloed hair
into the crowd, and catch a glimpse of
my godmother, who died at ninety-three,
kissing Madonna, then Lisa Marie, love
overflowing, no heartbreak
in this hotel, no Elvis either—he's still alive
and well earthbound or stuck
in Hell, shaking hips in all that heat.
But as we finish up The Guess Who's
"No Time," and just as 200 billion hands begin
to clap, my mind fogs like Hendrix's,
my neuro-nebula overwhelmed
by the universe, and those clouds
up above dance the Mashed Potato out of
my control. I walk down to end
of this boring street, slowly give myself up
to what seems lost, then start
to hum "Return to Sender," feeling slightly
rockabilly, adoring my mere possibility.

MARILYN MONROE

BY JAMES CROAL JACKSON

& part of her phrase of course is
if you can't handle me at my worst
but there's a left turn into darkness

no one wants to take &
the signal's jammed so no one knows
the direction anywhere anymore

just a mirror of the night
reflecting night, a ninety
degree warming sadness glued

onto a body. one silhouette
low into evening, a heat repenting
unknown sin, a snake slithering

out from its hole into you

I CAN'T SMELL EASTER ANYMORE

BY FLETCH FLETCHER

Worn hardwood floors and chipping linoleum
every grease
 bacon hitting the griddle
 engine in hands
 wood paneled corners
 bones of the tired couches
mixing dander and decades
 a litany of long dead dogs that
 every one
 loved the motor oil hand that fed it
vinegar and hardboiled eggs and
 blue
 I swear it had a scent in the yard
 under the shrub that took swatches of skin
 repayment for the years of holding
 nothing in return for these
blossoming trees
 oak over the deck and pine
 Douglas Fir from the one Christmas in the 70s
 it refused to die

SKETCHES OF MY MOTHER

BY SAMUEL SALERNO

I.

ICEFALL

The rivulets of water
run down the crevasse
the hole into the abyss
spirals to blinding light

Arms of a galaxy
spin tendrils
as they move toward darkness
the center is a fire pit.

I imagine the sick falling
weightless, sky divers
adrift on thermal seas
the ice is salt on the tongue.

I cross an icefall,
my eyes look down
and I can see glaciers moving
my hand holding hers in May.

II.

OPALS

It's the water from your eyes
the dazzling, opaque colors
swimming from your smile

It is October and rainbows
are everywhere—the rain
touches stained glass and I am singing.

A child feels safe in the forest
invisible to wolves and nightmares
He finds a stepping stone in the river.

III.
MOTHER'S DAY

You ask me what I'll do
when you've gone, and I say
I'll move to Ireland and stare at the ocean
till it drowns me. So we
take a drive and watch the
cauldron of the Monterey coastline,
an incandescent fire of life and death
and you tell me that God is a terrible engineer
and that you wouldn't have designed
so much suffering.
And this is why I love you so,
that you remained uncertain enough
to have a better plan.

STILL

BY VIRGINIA BOUDREAU

A blue heron stands motionless in the eel grass
his tufted crown bent, peering intent

he could be studying the morning headlines,
an architectural blueprint, or trigonometry

I like to think it's a map
evacuation routes clearly highlighted

I wait for him to gather it up,
fill his slate feathered wings,
extend his graceful neck,
tuck his spindled legs beneath, and
lift

I want him
floating, untethered,
in the still air,
warm as breath
calm as dawn
before he drops it,

upon the flowing ground
at my shrivelled feet, stuck fast
here in the mire.

SHELLS

BY M.P. POWERS

Men that I have known who once had the strength
of the mighty Pacific in them, with backbones made
of molten organ pipes, and minds in torrid wakefulness;
to see them now reduced to the echo of an empty shell,
to husks of long-departed insects, thinning, dried-up, cracked.

Men that I have known who once were brimming with wild
stories and undiscovered ferocities, washed-up now,
longing for long-gone days, trying to subsist off songs
and culture they'd long since drawn the blood out of.

Maybe you've seen one standing in line at the supermarket,
or mowing his lawn, or driving in the car next to you,
this angry, decomposing, pot-scraping infertility,
a dryness hollering out for death, a stone-gray shadow.

With nothing left to say. With nothing left to be.
With nothing left to give. With nothing to look
forward to but death. Men that I have known.

EXPEDITION
BY PIGPEN MADIGAN

the
poles of

the world once
s
t
a
n
d
i
n
g

firm, once

brimming with c

onfidence,

w e l l

they were found lopsided and

b

e

n t

in the afore

mentioned snow,

the pale light (he thought) looked like

her eyes.

the wind

stung like her

too.

THE SCHOOLYARD BRAWL TO END THEM ALL?

BY CLYDE ALWAYS

The sunniest playground is where it all started
between all those mischievous boys
who each to the gatherin' happily carted
a wagon of dangerous toys;
they boasted their blasters were bigger and meaner
and showed off their boom-banger-bombs
then each to another said 'wussie!' or 'wiener!'
or 'eat it!' or 'choke!' or 'yer Mom's--!'

Big Jakob the bully was powerful brawny
and savage to all of his foes,
but Boris, his neighbor, was sneaky and scrawny
and suckered 'im right in the nose.
So, Jakob he shouted, all steamin' and sweaty,
li'l Boris he threatened to hit,
but Ivan, the brother of Boris was ready
to sock 'im back lickety-split.

Well, Jakob's pal Otto, already disdainful
of Ivan and Boris, the pair;
he promised 'em punches so terribly painful
it gave the two brothers a scare.
Pierre was a buddy of Ivan's forever
and Otto was causin' 'im grief
so, up went his dukes in the noble endeavor
to come to dear Ivan's relief.

Another boy, Lukas was just a bit lazy,
and said he'd stay out of the fight
but Otto was throwin' his knuckles like crazy
and clobbered poor Lukas on sight.
This really got Reginald angry and huffin'
so, added himself to the brawl;
he swore then-and-there that he'd knock out the stuffin'
from Otto for-once-and-for-all!

Then other boys jumped to get in on the action
like Omar and Marco and Sam;
they walloped each other with gruff satisfaction
and gave not a shit nor a damn.
They fought 'til the playground was tarnished and muddy.
They fought in the gravel and dirt.
They fought 'til their fists and their faces were bloody.
They fought 'til their gall-bladders hurt.

At last they grew tired of punchin' and bruisin',
then entered the somber adult,
and all of those boys pointed fingers, accusin'
that Otto was solely at fault.
So, Otto was punished in all of his sorrow
and into detention was hurled,
but, brooding, said Otto, he'd conquer tomorrow
the playground and later...the world.

CONTRIBUTORS

S.R. Aichinger recently earned an MFA in creative writing from Creighton University. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *|tap| lit mag*, *Into the Void Magazine*, *Alternating Current Press*, and *Marathon Literary Review*, and his work was named a finalist for *Tethered By Letters's* Spring Poetry Contest. He lives in Omaha, Nebraska.

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James Graham was born in 1939 in Ayrshire, Scotland, in a rural cottage lit by oil lamps and surrounded with meadows and woodland. He was a teacher for thirty years, but would rather have been a celebrated journalist and best-selling author. Most of his published work has been poetry, which has appeared in print magazines including *The Dark Horse* and *The Linnet's Wings*, and several anthologies including *Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh University Press), and the first and second Every Day Poets anthologies. His second collection, *Becoming a Tree*, published by Troubador Press, is currently available.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

We will accept submissions for our Winter 2018 issue from October 1, 2017, through December 15, 2017.

All submissions must come to us through Submittable (www.gyroscopereview.submittable.com/submit). We do not accept submissions via email, social media, snail mail, or any other channel.

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