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Columbia Poetry Review

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no. 26

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Columbia Poetry Review is published in the spring of each year by the Department of English, Columbia College Chicago, 600 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60605.

SUBMISSIONS

Our reading period extends from August 1 to November 30. Please send up to 5 pages of poetry (one poem per page) during our reading period to the above address. We do not accept e-mail submissions. We respond by February. Please supply a SASE for reply only. Submissions will not be returned.

PURCHASE INFORMATION

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What We Have Lost

We left them in little silver factories, our breathings, and continued on as things unliving and for a short while, as trees.

And when we gathered
on the church steps we knew we'd be human again, as confirmed by our drinkings, but missed the wrapped leaves and so swerved
toward the bathtub

and were, for a day, droplings of bath water and tiny blond hairs. Imagine it harder, our hybrid selves: both dirty and divine. Everything is
a question of

belief: we began as bone bits and once we tired, we began again as a two-lover herd. That time I was a real woman I yearned for your square
back of wanting, your yellowsun gut.

We are a thousand different shapes before we are the shapes we die in. If there is a map for grief, it has already lost its world. Soon it will be a shower curtain
or blueprint. Soon we'll be burning

it for warmth. I could love you more easily as a pale bird, circling you with air. I would love you a lot more if you weren't so alive. We will always need
things to teach us leaving;

there are a million kinds of loss. Each one has to do with breathing
and not breathing.

At Least There Are Windmills

Torso of sand

Birdglow blue dress

The morning is unpolished and dizzy

Blooming into a face

We give ourselves no refuge from ourselves

At least there is rice milk

At least there are windmills

Asleep on the sea

There is a chance to hold bravery in my mouth

I pass through white corridors of music

I ride trains to and from airports

Bill Clinton emails me pretending to ask for help

It is a total human thing

To try

To make constellations on each other's bodies

We must discover each other's bodies

I imagine there is hope

Intangible and trembling

I'm going to go lay on the beach

Try to make some kind of difference

With my sovereign dreams

I want you to touch me first

Folklore

I once walked
on the town's periphery looking in
like a matchstick girl
a girl made of sticks

I walked the edge of our suburb
to find a warm window

was it there
it wasn't

I'm still looking
plush as hunger

Stopgap Sex Act

Into someone else's struggle

No one's a suffragette It's an obsolete technology

Intent on tape delay If you don't have a hard drive

That's ok

Pass around source notes like a joint

Beautiful and fulfilled

Obviously high

Down with the contemporary dimension

An adult doesn't court on an empty stomach

An adult doesn't facefuck on an empty stomach

What do you call that game

You flinched

Snow bank

Delivery room

A place the mind can go alone

Cover up gaps in memory with a joke

Adults have relationships

Nice work

Blank or just muted

My name

I don't entertain

If you came here for a story

Put this in your mouth

Count backward from a hundred

Fashion Blast Quarter

Young film comes again

Color the image away

It mutes love

This color gets thought

It mentions hours

Absent the sapphire

All the wet birds and webs

Blackout anomaly

Away tundra, away marble

Her conversation foregrounded

It's private

She found your drawing

Next spring the supplicants can

learn to tell time

Practice on her

Clothes communicate themselves

The gum of a shell

What is that

Get selection

Get lungs

A small example

Returns are growing

You mentioned *aspire*

Bring me

sparkling wishes

the Playboy jet

a whole universal and hovering body

from Ok, Apollinarius

+++

Say that the body is a pink bonnet trampled by gulls on the rocks above the Adriatic. That a moth flies into it & is blown where the bonnet is blown. That a pilgrim hears the silence inside the bonnet, & it is the silence of the plastic solar system that hung above his crib as an infant. He tastes a ripe pear for the first time, & the juice runs through his beard. He goes out with the multitudes huddled before the frozen temples to Apollo & there, under the vacancies between the worlds, plays his half-sized guitar. Elsewhere, another man lays his head on the soft breast of a woman he can't even pretend to love, & she whispers to him: when you look through the emptiness inside an atom, you see the body & the soul as two well-dressed men, seated, staring blankly, hands folded under their arms, & a gun on the desk between them.

The Death of Nikola Tesla

When Nikola Tesla died, a little light went out from his groin. Sparrows pulled apart from his dead belly to reveal nomadic paths of bees, all alight with the northern lights repeating themselves on journeys from Namibia to Brazil. Telegrams poured in from the four corners of grief: Buffalo Bill proclaimed from his grave that this is what happens when you kill the cow before the bull; César Vallejo copied *Tesla* over and over again into the skin of five notebooks, in the script of three different hands; Admiral Peary and roustabout Cook said the feud was finally over, that there never really was a North Pole to dispute anyway; and Edison wept near his recorder, nearly electrocuting himself on the magnetic pull of the frayed cord. The good people of Colorado Springs, where Tesla had lived, gathered in black on a rare day of rain and feared the light might one day even go out of their religion. The indigenous tribes of Cheyenne Mountain journeyed to Pikes Peak to try to capture afternoon lightning, though they knew the Peak by names less certain of posterity. Nocturnal animals shifted from *possums* to *opossums*, *stink-badgers* to *skunks*, blaming rogue sparks of moonlight in the not-yet-buried sun for their confused callings. *Tesla had died as he had died*, the barn owl hooted all light long. *He will live, now, also as he has died*. Nikolai and Pavlo and Yuri left the saloon and wondered why lamps in their mining hats had dimmed. Why their words were somehow stuck in their throats, even after shots of whiskey and a beer back. The poets spoke in the strange way poets speak: Karl Marx proclaimed, *Death is the opiate of the people*; John Bradley responded, *Rain pours through rain even when it rains*; Joe Gastiger guarded the grave and kept calling everyone *Darling* in the most adorable way; and Vallejo—Vallejo said nothing, fingering, instead, the outline of his skeleton through a suit coat that had grown too large, a skeleton he had washed every day, that somehow in Tesla's death glowed in Paris or Peru with the auroras boreales of a life well-deathed.

Amnesia of the Hardboiled Detective Novel

for James Crumley, 1939–2008

*Crumley was long gone when I got there. Only the alcohol fumes remained, and the stories. I knew John must be right. I could smell kerosene on my red flannel plaid. Later that afternoon, the redhead strolled into my office with a pair of legs. I was not her elder and she was not my dream. Honestly, if it hadn't been for the autopsy, I would never have looked in the mirror. I kept searching for lost parts of myself I'd implanted, through thousands of fantasies, into the bodies of women I barely knew. I much preferred Celtic sea salt to sprinkling my food with sea lice. They'd leave a trail of too much desire for the oceanic carvings of the flesh. Crumley's characters answer the wrong milk of life. I kept trying to write myself out of my past. Sure, I adored breasts. Yes, my parents' divorce bit my wrist. So that afternoon when the redhead wore that tight white top and crossed her mysterious hose, I gravitated toward the gray of her blazer. It was neither black nor white. It was not something to be solved. Nothing would be the death of me. I knew danger when I saw my face in the mirror. In those days everything was a window. I was like one of those starlings battling myself in the freshly watered glass. *I was long gone when I got to the world. Only their perfume from former lives remained, and the glory.* I knew John must be right. That's the way it is with karma. We drag our past back through the future we hope to make alert. I knew I must be wrong. I could count on it as surely as I could bleed. I could smell owl resin on my wrist. I'd flown too many missions across the cloud-embittered moon. Sliced this life away and that. I'd searched for mice in all the wrong novels. I was convinced that crushed bone might make me wrong if I ate the nervous twitch. So I went to the other office where the clients came with crime. I carried a .38 that was really a book and wore a hat. I started not to drink, thought better of it, and returned to cranberries and cane syrup. Some sweetness in life had been missing fifty-six years. Some poem. I'd too long left it in the bush, with the burning bees and entrails of musk-ox. I'd too long left it in the gorgeous forest between her thighs. Crumley's characters were Montana-hard. Often on the lam on the Yellowstone River or North Boulder. I kept allying myself with Indiana and Colorado. I believed the border of everything offered the possibility of retreat. So much more of me kept sinking into the left side of everything.*

So many times my left hand wrote with my right. Like when I took to lying on the sidewalk crack to seek balance, measure whether my back was in perfect sway. Yes, I adored her breasts. So for seventeen minutes that afternoon, I was not her father and she was not my horse. *Crumley was long gone when I got there? No, Crumley was long wrong when I arrived. Only desire remained, and the horny.* John told me so when he spoke of fumes. Of the kerosene rag stuffed in my chest. Of the hole that had once been my heart. Smoke lingering off the cigarette of Bogie or Bacall. The grainy reach of my black and white 114-minute past. *I'd say Crumley is the heir apparent to Raymond Chandler.* The review was true. How all things resolve, though originally confuse. How the actors remain beautiful youth. How we wake from the big sleep of our past into who we do.

Because you loved her too, told me
 so
 as you kissed me goodbye
 kissed my lip
 as I held her to say so long to you
 that last time
 You touched her hair,
 petted her black beagle body, her sweet beagle ear
 held it in your hand the last you said the time
 saying, *Barney's a good girl* such a good
dog That name
 the gift the gender bend the signature of love
 the halo hunt of my secret glorious hound self
 through which my breathing
 bends and blurs and breathes still and always
 will
 and begs to
 be
 a word started a word broken but begun into three

Sundial

& scattered in the sleep past dreamt am seen in wind oh that same again
sun under earth slick spill comes toward
fishes & birds
can be listed
past sleep & put asunder in the nesting season

Out the window it looks fine Yahara River is a river
meeting up with Lake Mendota
men & bicycles women & boats hello leigh hunt and leif and laynie
in a century with may in it 2010

May not intend it
to be out of joint and oh again that again earth under earth
altering
One toad pops up in the shade—fat toad—cools down

*

the yellow and purple lupine & paintbrush mt. st. helens
cousin helena solar nostril for the left breath or vice versa
in the workshop on breathing the workshop on resting the workshop on yoking
Yolanda's mother had a book called *The Sensuous Woman* on licking
we didn't have a lot to say

If A builds a strawbale house it will be round and
Mary and I were fastest in the three-legged race now move along desire
out of that sound
pattern as parents as parts

toward midnight not sleeping what's the house called in your brain
remember house theater dial of sun the ground's a bed for
plain way the shadow indicates calendaric
a present!
from aunt ruth in san francisco california why golden
what day

89

The term *decorative* to denote what is not useful or essential: the under driver's seat decorated by empty plastic bottle. "The sky takes the attributes of what fills it": raindrops, planes, misquotes, mosquitos, fireworks. These are not sky. "The sky takes the attributes of what fills it": O_2 , N_2 , scattered 460 nm light, condensed water vapor—we choose to see the sky with particular cones sensitive to light we call *visible*. This is not the sky.

Suppose we trade a pair of funhouse glasses for another: your decorative chest affixed to a jacket, your decorative hips to a skirt; your decorative dresser affixed by one of its eight vertices to your panties, laundered and unworn. What do we gain by changing reference frames? If I apprehend you only via implements dumbly fashioned for the purpose of heating my food, I want to be aware of the irregularities in the lenses used.

Movies in Childhood

Through my drugged blur, post-op,
at eleven years old,
I thought Ben-Hur's
horses literally wept.
A nurse punctured my thigh
with three needles
in the middle of the night.
Most of the pain
was new. From the hospital
bed, I saw, too, an abandoned
teenager living behind walls
while another family
moved in. One spoke
of sunlight painted
a bedroom's wood floor
as the season turned.
Then his eye poured
through, darkened
his carved peephole
as a girl dressed.
In another, bells
attached to jacket lapels
hung still as the villain,
unblinking, practiced
picking a wallet.
Siphoned billfolds
passed between newspaper
tubes by the team,
theft which started
with an elbow, a sharp bump

on a bright, busy city street.
In *Papillon*, McQueen
jumped from Devil's Island,
a leap that should have killed him.
He ate roaches in solitary,
the insect clicking just beyond
his twitching fingertips.
How did you know
I wasn't contagious?
the leper asked, after McQueen
accepted his pipe. Puffing,
he said, I didn't. I almost
forgot my own sutures
until the needle bit
into his chest over
and over to paint
the butterfly. In the fire's
red light, the man's face
appeared to crack and melt.
Underneath his eyes, small holes
rotted out. A fellow prisoner ran
into a trap, spikes tore
clean through, out his back
as he seemed to pray,
eyes exploding skyward.

You Dumb Fuck

An Elegy

We might think you held two .45
calibers and wore your own Stetson,

except your empty hands lost
aim and your hair, held in handkerchief,

dangles like grass the cardinal
flies with to its shaded nook.

We didn't clear the misery for you,
and this arrives as all language,

afterwards and postscript, nothing
letters could touch. Maybe

you knew some of us would love
your ghost—your arms swimming

inside your shirt and your mind
nearly tethered to the future

until 4 pm shadows darkened
one final comfort, a beaded sling
that held all of you up, hunted.

from The Blank Target

[XXVIII]

How Long Do I Have to Lick You Until You Feel Like Cuddling

You'll never untaste the salt with all that water in your lungs

I should have told you nothing tastes like you

Don't forget a return address label when mailing anything to heaven or hell

What can god hear if I pray with my eyes open

Your bruises would be perfect without me & my bruises would still linger blues &
yellows in your eyes

Convince me that I deserve the meaning of any word

When I gave you a kite I was the one who flew it

Maybe I am a sex toy but I still deserve a heartbeat

I wish I had left your hair & bones & eyes exactly where I could find them

[XXXI]

Sometimes I Think I Hear Hoofsteps on the Roof

Though I never hear anything that sounds like a horse except horses

That's when I get dirty & you get even dirtier

This is not a confessional poem mother fucker

it's a collection of facts

I don't prefer laces or straps

or water in lungs

I have a fear that reading out loud will change me

I'll start tasting salt when I breathe

The best part about me is that I don't have to see you naked to see me naked

& if I had a bigger mouth I would hide both our tongues

Our Suits Lack Microphones

A shark rips my father
from his casket

and swims to Missouri.
The doctors turn him on.

We find buttons
that make his legs

twitch. We clip
barrettes in his hair

and complain about
his DVD selection.

Everyone sees God
in his face but me.

Mother detaches tubes.
I gunfire the machines.

Head

1

You just feel wrong
so you convert

one neutron
to a proton,

emit beta radiation.

2

You try
not to squirm,

to cancel
yourself out,

still, in dreams
you narrate

each discharge
in the first person.

3

As if you were
banging your head

on every beach
in frustration

End User

What do I have to say
to myself?

My user-name
is invalid.

*

Pain concentrates:

a continuous signal
that consumes
the receiver.

*

The belief that nature
is God's speech:

small tomato
cysts

appear

on shingle twigs
under bow-tie leaves.

*

So when water
or shadows

are going over
“the same ground?”

*

“Made any money though?”
one asks

and both
laugh loudly.

Houses

What's lacking
in the film version?

Worry bead lists,
descriptions

of imaginary feudal
sigils.

*

Someone says it's an ugly
universe with its

37 families
of sub-atomic particles.

Sums should be evenly
divisible.

*

Platonic forms:

floors and hallways
built of living

ants

Episodes

1

Two children travel to Australia
in an instant
with the aid of a magical dog,
really a witch,
and a book on the animals
of the outback
which race past—
as soon as the kids appear—
followed by predators
that the boy and girl
can name.

2

Hot comedy: *God of Carnage*.

Having trouble viewing this?

3

In the opener,
a ramified tube

speaks
of itself, to itself,

saying, "Not bad."

The New Zombie

1

I stare at a faint
spinning disc

in the black
endlessly

ready to pounce.

2

I actually say,

"I'm so sick
of zombies!"

3

Viral relics
in the genome?

Genes that switch
themselves off

and on,

unthinking
but coordinated?

4

Zombie surfeit.

Half-off zombie

The best zombie
imitation.

Invisible zombie
hand

Airport Poem (twitter sonnet)

A man felt me up and then I got into a silver tube.
I'm reading a book where people fall elaborately in love and everybody dies.
On a plane once I read *Cannery Row*, one of the few books I've read twice.
I've read *Jesus' Son* tens of times but never on a plane.
It's too good for that.
A book about land, being on it, and trying not to get erased from it.
At an art show the artist did a presentation on the Third Throne.
The artwork not the book.
He should have left well enough alone, but did a pseudo-religious performance anyway.
His videos were good, though.
I read *East of Eden* on a plane.
I prefer science fiction now because I'm worried about what's going to happen to us.
At the counter we got breakfast and the total was twenty thirteen.
The year we'll have a baby, I said.

When it's her turn

she tells me what to do with her body.

They say parenthood means we must do this
and get it on paper, and have it notarized
and maybe a lawyer should be involved.

We're looking into it. She breezes through

life support, DNR, feeding tubes, stresses
that they should take anything useful—
Even eyes? Even eyes.—and sew her shut.
Her flannel pajamas are crazy with tiny umbrellas.
I picture sutures beneath them, running up

like a zipper, teeth caught on the skin
between her breasts. I confess, it was her body
in a bar that drew me to this breakfast nook,
the mortgage that has us underwater, the baby
daughter who swam inside her, whose skin,

they've told us, insists on her touch.

That she doesn't want a church, she admits,
will be a bone in the throat of the family.

Not for her mother, maybe, but her father.

She asks that I care for her here, wants

sufficient medication for pain. Her words
are an ax behind glass, the water we've stashed
for disaster. I picture myself with her body
in a strange room without her. Ashes, she says,
and people should pray if they want to.

Overcoding Class, Version 2

I never wanted to always divide things—the idea

not to be frightened. I mean that she is you

because I imagine her silk as pink, something I would never—inside that desire

wrong touch, impending—

and so she attempted to steer me clear, wear as good as possible clothes and cover your—

even though the living room, contracting.

How she runs to be more—she runs to be more—if I am she, I am saying good-bye—

in light yellow.

That every neglected space is a—

Barracks? Or apartment, with concrete upon which veins might look nice

but not good for stability. I meant vines. Which factory?

A feeling that there is nothing wrong. All might certainly blow away.

Cotton. History. Tools. This photo of her hands.

Restated: how I want to be with my mother, so basic—full paycheck—so no moment
stands exactly right.

I was saying—

Light yellow living then—living the then now

and when—light yellow seven times, unfolds, puts trying on and off

and she made eight, quiet. Some pennies, glossy.

Full trees—grey rock—three geese above, their movement across creates

a composition to remember

but I always go back inside, again to the pale of different lives and the snap

of surgical gloves. Paid for.

Having—between large pines. An experience, a conference. Read: pins.

Leftover smokestack. The prick of care. How would it taste? A tower yard?

My poverty broadcasts, so vertical, not in this beauty way.

I begin to count:

Who do not have branches.

Worry: what are you doing with words and how much will it cost—

“Take that and I did.”

It starts and starts. How lily pads. Sweetness. Compare.

A brother starts and stops a sister. While you have never been underneath

such a relationship, to gate the occasional fear which has no object.

I will not. Vacation

property.

At the steps of a church. Go up—

knees angled difficultly.

A life is not to simplify,

to delete your grandmother. She said you might, because after all, who makes a project

about where they are from?

Answer: whoever makes daily such a claim against neutral.

I walked into an unfinished waiting room.

I remembered its furniture but did not call it missing.

Inside its empty, poverty, I expand: there is more than one way to not care

about local education, redlining, or a soldier's duty. Spackle it. As permanent.

The honor. Past many tries. The past is many tired

as I go

forward. Then I felt luxury and no focus, being sponsored.

Followed by the roll of a joke to lift the weather, to lift the question: what can you do?

I am this conversation.

Vectors forward. But you loved him last night. His rolling handsome. His, the same
so never looked at your lack—

A top cloud makes a gentle slope. Top grass hides hard work, to string out
the clothes or secret. Duck under what cover. We. She said

“I hope your trip south goes well.”

I hope your trip goes south well.

Sobresaturada

Here we go
again

the clouds

are rolling

in

*

You say you
are overwhelmed

and repeat it
in Spanish.

Some things
can't be said

enough.

*

"In the month of April,
one thousand waters,"

or so

they say

in Spanish

and in Catalan.

*

We mistook a moto
for the wind

continuing
to tremble

in the sheets

of rain

in the storm.

Lines Composed in a Crater

I

You cradle the meteorites
that fall beside your feet.

I wonder why
the sky would throw such things.

My bones rattle cold
when we count wrinkles in the moon.

II

I am floating farther away
from your warmth.

When I orbit you,
I no longer scorch at the edges.

They will say of you:
She once contained life.

They will say of me:
Data inconclusive.

Earth, Pshh.

I close my eyes and imagine sunset,
painted tangerine and plum
rotting into night.

The sky nothing
but miles of asphalt, we don't need
pedestrian things

like dusk or dawn.
Here, we are earth's
beacon, we rise

the tides, we are mother
nature, gravity
locked-in. Here,

great lakes are filled
with basalts, lava leftovers,
fancier than freshwater

and fish. We can swim
in space if we
really want to.

We are closer
to the sun
sometimes.

Room

I will not let light slant
over my unmeasured
corners, abandoned by
butchers who spare

not one single lamb;
nor will the bookshelves
presume, will I call upon
Pound, Pepys, Margaret

Atwood or Homer, the
wide jars of words, wet
seed pods of pleasure—
not while time ticks

its perfume, whiter
than blue, and there's
air here, and room,
night prompting

these haphazard
glimpses of you.

Iris, Christmas Eve

I watch the DVD delivery boy bump away down my cobblestone street until I can no longer see the particular outline of his broad, sad shoulders, warm with tenderness for all shoulders and shoulder muscles, my favorite part of the body to watch in motion—that simple action of reaching, which begins, as I tell my students, *as an act of the imagination, at least according to Aristotle, Air is what, Aristotle, a philosopher, someone who thinks a lot, and uses his imagination even more.* I imagine Iris waiting for me inside with a pot of Lady Grey, the ceramic mugs we made at the pottery place. I can see clearly the gully around her clavicles, her strong shoulders, the long line of her graceful neck and that navy blue Adidas tee she wears around the house, vintage like everything she owns, the white logo large on her back, the rest of the shirt verging toward transparent, indecent, and I wish I could see her in it now, feel her holding me holding onto her, the assurance of her strength rising up and settling around us both. I turn to face my empty home, quiet and dark but for the twinkling tree and Christmas candles in the windows, the embers of my fading fire, and I remember last time she was in town, Thanksgiving, and how we hardly slept that weekend. It was raining and the waves were roaring,

we had the windows cracked to hear, fat drops splattered loud and hard on the porch boards. Early Sunday morning, lying on a shaggy rug together on the floor in front of the fire, in thick wool socks and our robes, we pretended we were young again and watched *WALL-E*. I made blueberry oatmeal waffles, my favorite rainy morning food, served with strawberries and clotted cream, the crisp crunch of the oatmeal in each chewy mouthful, the way the blueberries pop in the heat of cooking and nearly caramelize, the smoothness of the clotted cream and the perfect tart and cold of fresh-washed strawberries at the finish. Mango mimosas in our mismatched juice glasses, black coffee for Iris and with cream for me in tiny gold-rimmed tea cups, the French press and a cow-shaped creamer and our dirty plates on a tray on the hearth at our feet, the darkness of that early morning in the rain and the silly sounds from the talking robots on TV. After Iris ate, she slept, her head in my lap, my fingers in her hair. I wrapped us in blankets and watched that movie straight through to the end, and when Iris left me again, her white silk robe hanging from my bathroom door as a keepsake, my own blue flannel tucked into her duffel in exchange, I walked to our only video store here in Fenwick and bought a copy of that movie of my own to keep at home. I got into the habit of watching it to help me sleep at night, the robots' voices some small company in the lasting dark.

HELP WANTED

First there was the battle to name it:
the TV anchors rose from tanning
bed coffins like the Great Criswell

delivering the horror to a swirl of graphics,
sound effects, half-brained slogans
and animations of the reanimated.

Beat reporters flocked to the scene
taking (becoming) eyewitness accounts.
The whole country was contagious.

The Falwells called it a plague
sent from on high, society's free-fall
into fagotry, bestiality, incest.

Historians—those half-assed punsters—
called it *The Great Un-Awakening*,
declared from over-stuffed recliners

that the outbreak, though “quite alarming,”
was but a blip on the radar of Battles
Science Will One Day Have Won.

But everyone was afraid of the Zed-word,
that night of the living dead word,
which staggered, moaning with the kinetic

restraint of a compulsive jogger
on a transcontinental flight. Then—
for lack of a better word—the plague

died down. The Falwells returned
to their flock to plot. The Historians
sat vindicated from the labor of inactivity.

The TV anchors scanned hand
mirrors for stray tooth-spinach.
That's when the towers arrived

glowing white with their clear resin coats
like Apple stores with erections
and we found ourselves on the bottom

dying to get in. At the base was
an old-fashioned HELP WANTED sign
with its white rectangular border

red background, and all-caps white block
lettering, projected onto a curved screen
that circled completely around the lower tier.

It was the kind of thing where people
would walk by and feign interest
by saying "Hey, that's neat," or

"Ooh, shiny," and continue on
their merry way, sucking the last bits
of flavor out of the crushed ice

that was once an Orange Julius.

Who Will Be America's Next Top Mannequin?

in the commercial
women and men audition
to become mannequins
for a chain of stores
that sells casual party clothes

it's easier to work in the "Service Industry"
with a perpetual smile, hands frozen
in a greeting that broadcasts happiness
with professional grace

once people begged to be awakened from their roles
now they must prove
that they can sell in their sleep

there's an elegance to their somnambulism
a courage and a confidence:
that it's possible to achieve warmth with a blank stare

one that never bumps into the wall
of a customer's personality

one that reflects all interpersonal affection
back onto the clothes at hand

The Enterprise

waddled across the frontlines of knowledge
searching for undiscovered fields to reap on the cheap
staking claim to data mines where algorithms search like police dogs made of
math
for veins rich in young, wealthy or friendly personalities
who match the profiles drawn with precision
on the grids at the list management company.
It's like a dating service that guarantees you will meet
archetypes who not only fit but pay the bill
for a small corner of the cornucopia made available each utopian day.
And as those days proceed, with each grind of its temporal wheels
history cooperates with industry, like labor once did with management,
by throwing off niche markets, ephemeral sparks in a wild, rainbow profusion
each with the tantalizing promise of treasure for those who crack desire's code
or for those brands who offer identity's tastiest emulsifiers.

Settlement

Sweet capitol of misdemeanors, great skylit penitentiary
where appetites/credit/daylilies run riot

where windows and lunch breaks
are exit and sentence

I want to call an intersecting ardor
or else a blistering legislation
what marries these banks/chop shops/civic sycamores
to our private insurrections on the downtown bus

where someone's dear thief has just been paroled
but not the extravagantly yellow forsythia

and no one invites us to notice the surplus
of tent-towns behind the diamond district

and only the antelope obeys the storm warning
while all along the boarded up boulevard

empties stray into brilliant assemblies.

Literal Sidewalk Situation

Distant roads brought together in a way described
as anything but pliant. Instead it seems

normalcy might suggest a stifled inspiration
destined to exist as a hallway exists:

hidden between the rooms, the lowa of a house,
the Tuesday in a week with no Wednesdays.

Somewhere a truck does not turn over. It seems
there are no middles anywhere—there are only

logical lists in a sensible place. Perhaps calling
my view of the world *palindromic* suggested

you wanted a window to work both ways, that you
wanted coffee to put you into a deep sleep. Disregard

the snow-banks in your mind. Remember
that ice expands as it freezes; its memory doesn't

defer to urgency or to what we desire. Snow
and legs keep moving through the world

listlessly. So much for floorboards. So much for
absence that I once admired or even desired as if

the world was in my shirt pocket waiting to unfold
and scatter into the space between the two of us. You

suggested that a shadow could be musical
or that the neck of a giraffe mimics the way some trees

stretch towards the sky, free of knots and free of
the mark of history upon them. It's easier to say

the word *quaint* than to be that way. Was your
attempt at sensibility a worthy attempt? I don't know.

I don't know how to place the weight of a breath
behind the eyes. Money is a strange sort of memory:

remember the market with nothing for sale?
Remember how we corresponded for a month straight

and how words became corrupted from their meanings?
An ashtray wasn't anymore. Arbitration became

so apparent that suddenly knowledge (even a thought)
ceased to be incredible. Take the words apart

and determine what a grin really is. I'm not suggesting
that grace deserves a particular place in the world. I'm

suggesting that limitations are rarely deserved by those
that impose them. Absence deserves more. You said

water lilies when I'm pretty sure you meant something else,
perhaps something more distant. The sky was tinged

the color of a hangover that day, and I knew better
how to talk to myself than to you. And then somehow

it's Tuesday again and a school bus speeds down
our street between the rows of cars like some kind

of generous distraction from whatever mundane thing
hanging over everything else. Maybe that word

was *empire*? Perhaps you were hoping or desiring
a bottle to place this house (like a ship) into? I'm

hearing one thing and speaking another. My
shirts aren't pressed. Hell, they aren't even clean

and their colors have run all over everything else. In
my mind, I see them bounce on the laundry line

like only a quotidian spectacle could. Why must
clarity be so deserved? I didn't understand what you meant

at the time, but it made sense when I found the skull
of a bird in the woods. The climate changed overnight

and you couldn't have been more disinterested.
A squelched fire hangs in the air and in the memory

for years to come. It's a terrible thing when we stop
and consider how having enough means something

different from even a year ago. Think of a swallow flying
from one tree to the next and think of something from your own

life that runs parallel to the experience of the first tree. There's
nothing. It's afternoon all of a sudden. It's afternoon? If so,

it's a weird one, a place unfit for a poet but not a place
unfit for other people who calmly disregard

everything but winter in a terrifying way. An idea
along the edge of a season means much more. An idea

is one born from nothing and often destined to tunnel
its way into a hole meant for a creature or for air seeking

out a place as only air does. Overwhelmed? That's only half
of it. You can replace me if you like. You can look

straight into a mirror and feel frantic all without me.
Perhaps when I say *idea*, I mean *content*. If you thought

this was both the ending and beginning of things,
you were wrong. It's all up in the air. It's all past, future,

and present at once. One thing is certain: we can't see past
speaking. If we could, it would only be a thread.

Unmark

The serpent. There is, distilled
in the dirt-trap, cranberry
scale, slick separated crust.
Repent, sweet participle.
The snake approaches sharp-lipped,
slip the mock on, the hornet
pent in it. Protein the shot.

from The I of Emma

Scene II. *The Rotting Scroll*³

DR. F

So we had done her an injustice; she was not at all abnormal, a piece of iodoform gauze had gotten torn off as I was removing it and stayed in for fourteen days . . .

* * *

Pull the scroll from her body. Untwine it from the blood; scrape the clots off the gauze. Clean the scroll. No matter, she has stained it, tainted his memory, caused him trauma.

Poor Dr. F passively watched the half-meter be removed.

The gauze that infected her nasal passage, caused her hemorrhages, disfigured her face, and inflicted him with distress. (S)he never recovered.

He writes upon her scroll
creating a palimpsest
rewriting *l'intervention* over her blood.
She conceives the specimen dream.

DR. F

The dream that requited me of responsibility . . .

³ Once the scroll had been removed from Emma's nasal passage, Dr. F quickly realized she had written lines upon the gauze. However, due to the violence endured within the body, only fragments of the original remain. See *also*, Epilogue.

Pietà

Virgin Mary no longer a Mary, you are
afraid to bathe. The body held isn't the body
pictured. Fresco will be victim to form.

You stand fully-dressed in the mirror, covered
with the shoulders of brothers. You remove
the sweatshirt and asylum, votives ticking

into the wallpaper. Your last layer is ribbon.
Unbound, your breasts, bruised to jasper,
grow larger of breath. There is scarring,

the red faze of masking tape burned into
the collage of body. When you were young
and your mouth was washed out with soap,

you grew to like it. Learned not to choke
on lavender seeds and the scent until every
bar in the house was bitten. You squeezed

the bell inside of you. Everything wrong,
but at least quietly. You count stinging
Hail Marys on the beads of your ribs, grit

your teeth against touch. Their sensitivity
makes them seem someone else's. You trace
the depression etched under your arms

from tightness. Nude as magnetic north,
you hold you over the water, and submerge
the pockets of your body full of stones.

All the Miles to Akron

Let's drive into the lake
like we did last year.
I am not sure how we learned
to swim this wrong.
One and a half miles to burning
and the place in my lungs begins
to float. No edge lines, soft shoulder.
Numbers that tell us keep going.
When the fire extinguishes
we'll find it and wish ourselves
out of state. Pump the brakes
and swallow our swollen belts.
We pack ourselves a picnic
for the occasion. A pomegranate
waters itself. A dream sequence
in which I am the bear and we know
this is wrong. Between the two of us
we should be able to pitch the tent.
Discover the maps didn't know as much
and we were right. We start a polite
exit from the road and end in
a wheelbarrow of limbs. Keep me
floating. I am not this dry. I am not
this caution of tongues.

Softness Bats

Evening
television
a political event
isn't the softness
of so

long ago
that television
softness
bats against
this apparent version

I have a surge
when my wave
sees the peep
of a wall
it's like

a teenage hand
with a ring lost
sweats
as though there were more
homework

or the future
came early
I lived much of my life
as if
to commemorate

a misperception
a little
filled in
or spread
as in water

The Orb

I say anytime you see a light in the sky, check it out.

—Betty Hill

I'm not ashamed to say I wanted a sighting.
I drove north into the White Mountains
for research. Nothing bookish: the kind
where an orange light grows plump, pulsates,
follows me down a deserted wilderness road.
I'm on the lookout for stories with more
complications, witnesses, three lacquered
disks in formation, or maybe they looked
like porcelain in starlight, their impossible
evasive gymnastics when a passenger jet
heads their way. I wanted to do a double-take—
a cigar shape drifting in front of the moon.

* * *

I imagine first contact to be like the time
I saw a deer running from police on my
overpopulated street in Chicago: a creature
so formidable you want to freeze the moment,
study every flickering pigment. Lucky for me
this deer who could've cracked open an SUV
between its haunches was running on the other
side of the street, too scared to know
I was watching. A perfect alien encounter.

* * *

More rain. On the third day a slant
of light, visions of October leafage
swabbed in outlandish color—my favorite,

the brute plum-tomato reds gushing
on the maples across the street from
my hotel like washes of electric guitar.

* * *

The day I tried another drive to the Hills'
abduction site, Felix Baumgartner bunny-
hopped out of a balloon sponsored by
an energy-drink company and flew through
the stratosphere above Roswell, New Mexico.
Edward Archbold died after winning
a cockroach-eating contest in Miami.

* * *

Chased back again by rain and fog on twisty
roads in the White Mountains. A few miles
from Durham, on Route 108, during a clearing
lull in the rainstorm, I saw a bright dollop
of light in the sky, a white orb, and nearly
drove myself off the road (now I know why
Barney Hill pulled their car into a picnic area).
Probably a helicopter, even though I saw
no tail outline or taillight. In my rearview
mirror, I glimpsed the ditch I could've crashed
into—and I lost my nerve. Kept driving.

* * *

Betty never questioned *her* nerve.
She chided her captors for performing
medical tests on her nerves—such nerve,
she said, kidnapping people right off
the highway. Her first sighting,
mid-1950s: the craft exploded in midair,
the Air Force explained it was a meteor.
She collected heavy fragments of wreckage
but couldn't find anyone willing
to analyze their chemical composition.
Three weeks before her abduction,
she scattered the pieces in her backyard
during a gravel delivery. They're buried
where the stones are spread.

Dr. Simon put Barney Hill under hypnosis. Barney described the humanoids. David Baker drew them.

Gas-fogged cat eyes clamped
over mine. He never blinked.

A swampy glow wrapped around
each side of the creature's face.

You'd have to run your finger
from front to back of the head

just to trace his cheek bones.
So ordinary, so round, a head

cavity large enough to contain
those eye balls, hold a brain

our size. A ferocious mumbling,
a membrane over the mouth, maybe

sheathing the body of the entity.

Wide cheeked, weak chinned.
The plume of those eyes—

if there's a membrane, it kept out
irritants and he didn't need to blink

to lubricate his autocratic orbs.
No spoken words, only grunts,

prowling hums. Mouth a slit
knifed into wood. A dusty

blue light radiated from the walls—
I could've been soaking in a tub

of water. They might be any color
but didn't seem to have faces

different from white men.
He sucked air into piggish

nostrils, rocking back his head.
I saw no bone or nose cartilage.

No hair. No ears, just holes.
A sea wind made me shudder.

The Reverend

Because I had no past I invented one behind my ear. Other than that small piece, my arms and legs are really all I have to offer. While I spent hours memorizing the details of this chair and wondering why the color doesn't leak out through the pores, you told me that everything written down was a lie, so I said SING: for the friends who aren't there, for the parts of our bodies that don't have hair, for the cross-legged ghosts on the floor and the skin that will never be thick enough to stop this blood, until we're left chanting these hands, these hands, and neither of us can tell which belongs to the other. I am moved by these pictures of your daughters; some day I will build a fence of my own just to see how I hold up in the sun.

Since

Today is the day I let my hair grow and blow my brains out. You roll your sleeve up to your shoulder to show me the colors I've been missing out on; it's mostly reds and black. I've seen this kind of ink before—you tell me it's a scene from before you were born. Everything is something I've never known. A mess of inexperience; you've had 16 days to answer this question and 24 years to live alone, and it's precisely because I've never had a man passed out in his own sick on my living room floor that when I flashbulb back to this day all I can see is your blue-streaked hair in front of the lens, and me standing in the background, holding something silver.

The good old days

While wrist-deep in my ex-boyfriend's asshole
I sometimes paused

to think of what I would have for breakfast,
where I could go, maybe
the Cuban place that serves steak and egg sandwiches,

because I had a small cut taking a while to heal
(having barked my shin on a table corner)
some meat might have helped the process (due to the iron),
perhaps broccoli or kale would have helped too.

Killer Whales

The throat of the eye wants to swallow SPAM
 white out black out back up and *drown*
 in the bacterial reservoir e-server system where the drinking water is gathered
 for the town. Just as pig hormones gather
 for a denial-of-services
 attack: face down. This invasive
 species wants to thrust a jingle bell into the pink nylon
 gunny sack party favor novelty in which the kitty sinks when it can no longer drink but
 must needs
 RING RING you've just won a laser lightning whitening
 device one-stop-shop and monthly deduction a cornucopia of conspicuous
 induction a deluxe luxury spa treatment complete with Bulletine attendance
 a bullet embroidery to paralyze the nerves of the forehead
 along its wrinkle lines: STOP. Credit check! Now running from the spa
 in smocks and scrubs, every one a green-masked celebrity. We called them
 Gang Green, the gang of three, the mother, the son and the holy
 shit who let that gunman in without an appt. who left that caller on the line
 HOLLER! going white white whiter all the time time time O FORTUNA won't you
 operate the electron scanning device won't you
 open a dry cleaner bag and ding-a-ling along the dotted
 line the Mylar balloon keeps emitting sincere emotion to the crowded
 garbage patch flotation device seat cushion rank drowned ocean
 enshowgirl'd birds disrobing krill who can't breathe in the
 memory foam videocassette vasoconstrictase because my face can no longer expand
 to express
 THIS satellite tracking device hurrumphs hump-whales &
 sings through its transcendental tracheostomy utterance device (black box):
O Beluga Bellona the green bell drips for thee
the green ball droops in courts of green
inside white lines below white lights in pharmaceutical

*fertilization dream convection concurrent titration
vinyl tight or title bout these things are
waiting at the station these things are
manifestations these things are
rank combinations—
bio-accumulative plastique palliative compounding ullulative uvular
arrangements—ineradicable particulate
inorganic substrations—enfulminate
baleen enshredded biocidal supra-
pernicious defoliate formulations—culminations—*

from The Tranquilized Tongue

The Phonetic Projector

The sound pushed through the mirror in the sparrow's eyes. The view opened vertically. The center of the statue murmured. The letters bled from the sleeping bird's chest. The tone formed an ant with incendiary skin. The name on the lips of the drone spit out pictures.

The Drone's Orbit

The flock spotted the scalpel suspended behind the magi's back. The moths dubbed over the moon. The sisters spilled out. The vultures dissected the scarlet cathedral. The snow was bleached with sod.

The Moss Vulture

The gloss the egg left inside the lantern entered the moth glands slowly. The bricks suspended above the trees. The blood of the panorama repaired the rain. The soot hooted. The hidden sisters killed the clouds.

The Creature's Eclipse

The desiccated roots of invisible squids suspended the illusion of false animism. The immature minutes infused in a tree created the vestige of a wolf asleep in the pupa's husk. The seed's scared feelers etched spiders on its borders. The penned mane inflated.

The Alluvial Tomb

The translucent quail egg dissolved the word quail. The blue scales on the pigeon's tongue predicted the sea's circuitous prayers. The torn monologues injured the orange lining in the open casket of a sturgeon trapped at the bottom of a deep well.

When Our Tunnel Is Built

*

When our tunnel is built it will be the time for our escape and I will chain myself to your leg so that when your arms punch out of the dirt and into the sun again I will be there too, watching your face gleaming, seeing clouds on your teeth. My eyes will be there to be the eyes that are left watching you spin in the sun, swirling on the earth, spooling out in threads that are my veins, in wires that are my neurons, in words that are the words I used before when speaking with you. The dirt under your fingernails from the digging and the re-surfacing a model of the clods under my fingernails, the brown crevices of my prints, my arms folded on my chest and a smile laden on our face.

*

When our tunnel is built it won't seem like it has been so long since we sat at the kitchen table and watched the house burn. The smoke coming up and out of the toaster and the air beginning to haze. That morning that we were so engrossed in talks and plans that we had no time to tend the fire, to stave off the flames. That day, that morning, with the sunrise coming in through the window and the curtains blazing up around us and our hands gesturing like arms beneath a film soundtrack, wildly gesticulating to the sky, to our ceiling, the moments of our adventure. You recommending that we tunnel with spoons and me my face smiling at your ideas and the arm you raise when your mouth is saying I have an idea. And you were the one who thought to reinforce our structure with straws and you were the one who decided to strap water bottles to our ankles so that we could replenish ourselves deep inside the tunnel, when we were halfway in and could see how it was all going to go. When we were tunneling.

*

When our tunnel is built we won't invite anyone in it except your mother, my wife, dragging her down into it like we drug her into our cushion castles and the imaginary bows we

pulled back to sling invisible flaming arrows into the heart of our tree. She came willingly, the smile of her face like a distinction between you and me, the dividing line of her eyes which you have sometimes when you don't have mine. The light curve of her smile on your face and her seeing you and me digging down into the world and she is so proud of us and our tunnel. She wants to take the tunnel we have finished digging and post it on the fridge with a magnet, every time she opens the door then to reach for milk or bread seeing our tunnel hanging there and you and me inside of it smiling out at her, the notion of digging as something we cannot avoid and have done wantonly, stretching ourselves long in its corridors, inviting her in a day among days we loved.

*

When our tunnel is built we will pull our world down into it some nights so that the darkness outside is the same as the darkness inside and our nightlights plugged into the mud wall will keep us company. I will read a book to you and you will read a book to me and we will fall asleep in the dim light of our tunnel, making up night as we go. You dreams will be of flying and my dreams will be of drowning and in between yours and mine we will find a shatter of something we share and will dream together of all the rocks we have broken tunneling this tunnel from underneath our usual lives. We will live in this tunnel sometimes pretending that it is the world because here we are safe from the screaming that sometimes comes out of our mouth. We will wake up in the darkness here with feelings that we must go back, to the light, to the sun, to the way it was before, to the repeat, so that when you look at me with your mother's eyes and mine mixed, I will know what you want to say even without you saying it. I will follow your lead back to the tunnel's mouth. I will hear the bells of sky ringing as you step out and into the sun again.

*

When our tunnel is built we will adjust to its existence and the dragons that we once faced on the outside will burrow down with us and come out playing games, tugging at

our tug-of-war and hopping through our scotch. We will make balloon animals together and imagine that a clown with red nose and gawky feet is facing us with his music blaring comedy in our background. This tunnel the carnival of us, as we play it out, all the time we have left before the walls collapse and the surround is only worms and no more wiffle balls or badminton. The inevitable fall will be in our minds but we will blink it away and put the dragon between us, playing keep away, monkey in the middle, his fire-breathing roasting our eyes and drying up the water that grows there, the tunnel dimming and the chunks starting to fall. We will keep watch half-heartedly, knowing. We will play.

*

When our tunnel is built we will walk it hands in hands and marvel at all the things we have done. Will watch out its windows and see the grass growing into us, the forest pending. We will take polaroids of our adventures, the stretching we did before the marathon, the faces we used once and then never again, and we will pin them to the wall and see them museum down our walk, the time of us traveling by our eyes as we go, smiling and holding our hands into our hands. I made you and you are me and when we travel the length of this tunnel we have dug together it means we both know it. It will mean that I am you and you are me and the walk we are walking is our own and will never change here in this tunnel, not as it does in the light.

*

When our tunnel is built is when our tunnel will begin to fall. When our tunnel is built the walls will tumble. When our tunnel is built the world will do as it does, we will go, me and you, to our separate mouths.

*

When our tunnel is built we will feel so lucky to have walked its edges and run our hands on the mud of its walls. Our palms coated in brown and we put them together to make more mud, the mud of us, the rhythm of our breathing is the same except my lungs are bigger and so I can breathe half as often as you. Our hands held together and I am listening to the double of your breath and you smile and we are always us smiling in this tunnel. We have strapped flashlights to our heads. We look exotic. We are wearing boots, me my moon boots and you your cowboy boots and when we run through our tunnel we make two noises, a cushioning and a slickness. You wear a crown on your head that means you rule the world of this tunnel and it means too that I am your servant. I carve your name into its sides, down the long portions of this tunneled hall, marking the height at which you raised your scepter, handing down the orders that demand I love even when I already was and would have always regardless of the gold.

*

When our tunnel is built I will meet you at one end and leave you there, to soak in the sun, and our fingers will cease touching as I go back down its depths and you stand in the beams raising your hand to shield a brow that looks like mine but different or varied. I layer my forgiveness going back down the hole and you slough it off watching footprints waltz in the sky. Before someone sees us you say and I understand what you mean even though I have never heard those words before. I keep growing dark as I recede, moving back and through our tunnel again, a division. We are the cells that divide as they grow. If you still want me I will be here, in this tunnel, waiting in the dark for any signs of your sun.

Reassuring Ommatidia¹

for Catalina

we needed these treelines,
cogs, running waters,
hives, suns and nots,
between us
to fill in the missing bones
of ourselves

both our soft eyesockets
are nostalgic thick swarms
communicating—persevering
through all of these spaces

you don't understand

if we'd stayed in the hive any longer
they would have murderkilled us
we were surviving
ourselves or/
and we were surviving
each other

¹ Each of the conical structural elements of a compound eye of an invertebrate.

[the house with the red door]

the house with the red door—exists—it is the onion of the knee

does Florida connect space?

I have been seven—spaces of Florida had meanings

something networks drunk in my stomach, and
that Florida might be that is—broken potatoes

that speaks inside the window between two spaces

hinge

people built this place where people only go to get somewhere else—

I consider the ways this city crosses—that tarnishes

hinge

hallways, elevators, airports, churches, train stations

from Haute Surveillance

There are many reasons why the expresident's antibody was brought here on a bier. He thinks it is because the children burned inside buildings. Bombed buildings. Art. Sand. Femur-strands. The looted museum of his memory. All of it continues to burn.

He thinks it's on account of his wife, who wants me to teach Art to the shellshocked soldiers.

*

I think it's because of the economy.

What are you talking about, says the president.

A bunch of shit, I admit. Whenever someone says it's the economy, they're talking about Art.

You were brought here for Art, I tell him.

*

The expresident entered the White House on a bone-white Horse, tooting a silver trumpet, but he will not personify death in this tale for he is not yet ridiculous enough. I will try to make him more ridiculous but I will fail and fail because only by constantly losing can we have the kind of beauty that will be sufficiently flimsy. Like death. Or soundtracks. Only by suffering in an exhaustion of flowers and bodily discolorations can we have a cashed beauty equal to the saturation that surrounds us.

Nor will the corporate grinners with their wigs and blue shirts personify death.

My Starlet will personify death.

She will personify death as she sits in her pool chair wearing a blue bikini, her body starved and her eyes beautiful. She will personify death as she lazily handles my penis in the

remake of catastrophes with sloppy camera work. In the waning days of the deadly administration, the Starlet will personify death and I will be represented by pop songs about cocaine.

*

Culture is a taxidermy museum but the horses are beautiful and the letter openers disinfected.

The cum on my face tickles as I type these pages out.

*

The Foreigner Body: Must be entered into the pageant as objects to be classified and quantified. And it must be banged up. Banged. Bang. That was the sound of a door. The foreigner's body must be a door. It must be shot with the finest surveillance equipment. It must be shot. It must be numb with cum.

*

I love Kleist.

*

When the guards asked me all those questions (Is your body a faggot? Do you speak radio? Why are your spasms so infantile? What would happen if we pulled this plastic bag off your head? How is your wham-blam-dunk?) I could barely make out what they said. I denied everything, not because I liked hearing my voice underwater, but I knew that was what the kidnappers wanted me to say. They loved the way I said No. They could listen to me say No all day long and far into the night. This was a test. They knew I was up to the task at hand. They even removed the bag from my head.

Flammable Matter

I pluck their ripe names.
Hold them on my tongue 'til they redden.

How many fires can I fit in my mouth
before I burn, too?

Last week my father told me
spontaneous combustion.

*A body's bones can become
sets of stones rubbing against each other in sparks.*

I didn't believe him.

Is this how reporters feel?

I don't know what a man on fire looks like
sprinting down the street or standing calmly

as his t-shirt melts with skin.

Richard Pryor once set himself ablaze
freebasing cocaine and drinking 151-proof rum.

Dressed in a bright red suit
in front of a microphone and an audience of thousands

he lit a match inches from his face
bounced it back and forth, and joked:

What's that? Richard Pryor running down the street.

Richard Pryor

You live around white people in this country and anything can happen. I'm talking a year later I'm drawn up fucked up and out of my mind. I never thought I'd rise through a loophole of fire in a skin streaming with light. He had too much to live for, that's what they said. You find God quick when they find your ass dead. Fire is inspirational. They should use it in the Olympics. I did the hundred-yard dash in 4.3. I didn't have anything else, figured I might as well have some sun on my face. You don't feel shit for three days 'til your nerves wake up. Most people say you've been punished by God. Pipe would say, come on in the room, Rich. It took me three times to catch. They said I burnt fifty percent of my body. He had given me all this and what did I do with it? Maybe I did have a heart attack screwing one of the most attractive white women ever; shoot up my wife's car when she tried to leave. On stage, I had more humanity than a Sunday school teacher. Who else spun gold from such a scarred life? They said I died on June 9, 1980. It's hard enough just being a human being.

Estate

The Nazi flag;
the panzer marches;
the transcribed trills,
and his drum;
the guns he had no room for in his gun-locker;
the clips of ammo on the dinner table;
the *Marlan* in the kitchen;
its shadow on the floor;
the stars in the black
bullseye of his targets;
a white attic-window;
the books in the back;
the thousands he hid in their pages—
the rest of the fund
somewhere in the yard;
his library divided:
the apocalypse, the bankers,
and *Leaves of Grass*;
The Sexuality of Socrates;
the clinical video on how to tease an orgasm;
Deep Throat on VHS;
a copy of *Harmonium*;
the *Kaddish* and the album
of his ebony cat, George Wallace,
dead from feline AIDS;
an outline he drafted
for the polemic he gave
on the inanity of faith
to the bedside priest at the hospice;
the Rothko print he worshiped

on the bathroom wall;
the stains in the toilet;
the blood in the vomit;
the half-roll of *Tums*
I felt in a pocket
of his bombardier jacket
when I wore it at the sale
and watched those rats
scurry through his garbage.

Fish Bones

My friend says

*We shake our words until
they forget what they
are saying.*

My father—
dandelions a skeleton
of white heads—taps
his cane in a vapor trail.

We collect a birthplace
of our bodies, morning's
entrails reading us

primitive and dying,
a scrim of sky

emptied finally of flesh.

life/rite

for Ruth

I

Her lilies died
on Wednesday.
I can't seem to
let them go.

II

Hours are spent
watching the paint
peel in my room,

peach to white to gray.

III

The taste of coffee
hasn't changed.
Only shifted,
with more honey
in the cup.

IV

Her t-shirt said:
I solemnly swear
I'm up to no good.
Folie à deux.
Follow me down.

V

Teach me to live
inside minutes.
Everything now
feels slippery
underneath my hands.

Speech

This is about the body opening up, Hawthorne, garage doors. This is about the American morning I have lost, D. H. Lawrence's Mexican border, and Olson's slumber into the afternoon. This is about the Popol Vuh, the spaces between houses, and the suburban hieroglyphics. This is about the American list, the countdown, the top five, and the absorption by the body of everything. This is the body on the table and light overhead. This is about knowing what you're doing and going forth. This is about speaking out, holding court. This here is being with, only now having known what I've done. This here is against space; these words, I imagine, are jammed between houses and small grassy areas we look out to print the magical fire of the afternoon. This is the black outlines of the missing players of the orchestra. This is the size of one neighborhood and one radio station.

This is held up by Gene Kelly's feet. This is held up by wispy blonde hair and blonde eye brows at six in the morning, "Indian style" under a tree, prying open an orange. This is held up by the thinking of aggression then staggering blinded through the hallway to the day. This is held up by what happens, the mouth opening a spoon. This the open mouth is really just a dark, shadowy swoon tipping at the back of the neck, where we can only vaguely imagine. This is held up by dust's explosion of letters, the hollow footsteps climbing down the attic stairs in a house I lived in ten years ago on a sunny May morning at eleven. This is held up by looking, seeing the panorama this time not in a frame. This is held up by the body, but is more than a body, nighttime hovering above us in sleep. This is held up by looking at other mouths and seeing signs of opening. This is a square box, a holding, a letter to you, this is a gesture quite simply, forward, one leg always touching the ground and the other a gerund, the spring as the body rises upward, a move to you, the desire to paint while saying or say while painting, and dancing with perfect breath the while, and this is just the desire, because these are words.

from The Depression

A man opened the newspaper & the headlines fell out. They covered him in an inky pile. With soap & rubbing alcohol he got most of them off, but some snuck into him through open wounds & laid low & multiplied. Soon his blood squirmed tiny headlines, spouting derision & fear. They clotted in his liver & they clotted in his brain, they filled the tubes to his heart & at night he coughed up mouthfuls that blackened his lips. He went to the doctor to have the clots removed & the doctor sucked out all his blood & replaced it with iodine. He went home that night, feeling limber & light. He sat on his favorite chair with the TV on & set a carton of ice cream on the coffee table & let the ice cream slowly melt. Drops of sweat fell from his face. The man laid down on his bed & folded his hands to say his prayers, but when he tried to move his lips he found them fused together. He licked inside his lips, but there was no seam. He put his hands to his head & found his hair burnt off, his skin slipping off the scalp like a shoebox full of zip discs.

Something is making the museum sick. Its eyes are red & it's gone through a whole box of tissues in one day. Its glass doors are blurred by handprints. The jets overhead shake the floor. But anyone can see a landscape with livid salmon clouds. Anyone can stuff the zebra skin. A guy with product crusting his curly hair, guiding his son with a gentle hand on his shoulder, turns his head almost imperceptibly to watch a woman's ass fructify as she bends over. At the Alhambra I took so many photos, trying to confine something inside me. Now online I watch a gif of a man in a panda costume knocking over a shopping cart held by a Latino man & his son—then the panda kicks at the spilled groceries as the father & son watch dispassionately. I watch this gif for about three minutes. I was born with this attempting to rain. I am running out of machines. There are so many things in the museum, animal, vegetable & mineral, it is difficult to even speculate on what it means to be sick, much less lacking. Nothing is happening on the internet today.

A statue cannot tell what he was a statue of. He knows he feels no shame. And he seems to have two limby things stretching out to either side of him. But beyond that it's a bit confusing. In the morning his shadow swings in front of him & it looks like he might be a prisoner & then an enormous radio. All day the statue & his shadow try to turn faith into fact by mutual libido. There's a face in a cloud. There's an eternity in the beloved's eyes. When the statue & his shadow sculpt they sculpt eternity & all they ever make is eyes, is night. At 7-11 they buy Super Big Gulps full of toward-eternity. Night, the sublime clock-face, sees beauty as the smallest eye. The statue reaches his spot in the sculpture garden. He says good-bye to his shadow after a lingering hug, steps back onto his podium & becomes whatever it is he is. And me? I'm just looking, just standing directly on the white boundary line. I look at all these people doing their thing. I cut my belly open & there they are again, all these people, doing their thing.

Floating World

Hello to the marimbas of mimicry and high-heels!

The blowsy décolletage of elegy I won't display.

Raise your perfumed umbrella. Cloudmood's such a slut.

Sip rock gut as deer nibble the blooms away.

Damages will be deducted from the bill of silence.

Shaped

The rectangle of a dollar.

The rectangle of a house drawn by crayon,
a wagonhouse drawn by horse, by small hands.

Trace a smallhand into horse, thumbheaded.

Trace a red way down the sidewalk—a wagon.

Pull me. Push me. Dirt.

A wheelbarrow—trapezoidal.

A trapezius is triangular, angrier.

Hearts are not fistshaped.

Dreams are not spiral, but do
spiral. Last night you making
love to me were not you—you were

another man who made love
once from behind me I think
this is important how I did not

see your face in the dream.

How I close my eyes from you, but
it's still you. Me, I change shape
with shutting. Eyedoors. Years.

In the dream I went back to hurt
myself with wanting other things but what
shape is that wanting? Only

not rectangular. It is that there is
a box here, confining me, corners
counseling me how I am bad

to stand in them as I do
wishing else. Cave. River.
Years steep like money. Dirtspent.

A hand pulls at its traces. There is
a bit. A pencil. In this way
my life is communicated to me.

You say she is a whore

I disagree: zero is a joke

walking into a bar, she is no longer
able to contain herself:

∅

also, she wants you to know she
was not invented
or was, but in the manner
of chocolate, a cooking-up of
existence into something more palatable

she says to lie in-lieu is hardly
an unworthy and possibly the oldest
profession: before something
there was its place

tent of disrepute
un-knotted cord

she is cipher is not cipher
not west wind, west wind
a rose, a rose: zeroes (with rings around
and pocketsful to petal death)

her too-large heart, being all
of her, serves no function

her blood, shot through
the universe, tinges
things as they can be known

with loss—its red-shift

indicating limit: how thin
the tent-scarves spread, how
tenuous all

entanglement

At Morris Arboretum

The trees were where the trees were
managing to be, managed—dreamt up
from other countries and implanted

like lies in the ear. “A tree museum,”
I thought, and thought zoo, as my animals
gazed at the weeping ones and ones

for forts and envisaged all the wars
they could plan (gingko bomb, chestnut
shot, sumac trap) beneath such

excellent protection. We ended
on a ramp into the canopy. A sculptor
had there fabricated a nest

for bird-watchers and inside it three eggs
large enough to hatch children. Mine
sat like mother pterodactyls. Mine—

fiercely brothered—at any threat will fly
into a thing barbarous, keen, like me. I end
wishing there were more trees and time

beneath to retreat, to walk back wound
and worry of infiltration, of what is
natural, what grafted—in these contorted

knots of mine.

Hollow

Apologies are in order
I suppose. Books
have piled up, bulbs
need burying, antlers
lie unarranged in heaps.
Hailstones busted in
the kitchen window
but the baby never
woke up. How am I
to choose a piece
of earth? Anyplace
I want to stay has a house
already there. A patch
of field, a fox afoot, violets
shadowing the corn,
thunderheads spinning
threads of light. How I
wished that death would find
him kneeling in the dirt.
They'll burn this place
to the last acre now.
Pale walls, bleached sheets
and my own unseemly calm.
What I wished I'd said is
I'll take care of everything.
It's what I meant, of course,
but what isn't mine to do.

I'm so into you, Anthony Madrid

Just this once
I want you to understand why
I don't want to talk to those people
that you want me to talk to
and become fast friends with
You pompous ass
you make me feel important
and I don't want to work
any harder than I have to to
as you would say
bloom and flourish

I'm so into you, Nick Sturm

By now you've figured out
what I wrote in your book
that I almost love you
but in a *we can never be vegan together*
sort of way and honestly
I would rather feel ill
for the rest of my days
than give up fresh goat cheese
and steak

A Fine Line Between Sitting Down to Dinner and Mooching

One day I was given movie tickets, a hammer, reassurance. The next brought food: cucumber soup, tabouleh, bread and cheese. My table filled so I took to decorating: gruyere dripping off lampshades, pumpkin scones nestled in the couch, sage roasted plums atop coasters. With each dish, I said, “ .”

a man addresses the train: I have been in prison, I have been in pain. I refuse to steal, rob, or take. If you could help with nickels & dimes, nickels & dimes, out of the kindness of your heart.

later, a woman stands: I have two children, I have a marriage. I just want someone to look at me like they'd devour/straight up fuck me. Just one sexy look, out of the kindness of your heart,

is your heart kind? What I needed was a line to curl around. What I needed was for your house to blow up. If I am a deer, I am too gentle. If I hold your hand, I am not saying enough. Love and appetite return quickly. Thank god the lemons are complimentary.

Gifts We Can't Afford

In a city that hates us both, you are the first to spill, the first I spill to. We part deflated, which wasn't what I was going for. At breakfast, Abraham Lincoln received the whole of Savannah, Georgia, simply by reading his mail. He'd counted his men lost. *Should be* is what I believe in when I am bent. I would like to sleep as easy, write a letter to the day, written neatly as etiquette demands ("Your letters will not be welcome if a trial to the eyes," *A Ladies Guide to Writing*). Muddy Waters welcomed every note. Alone with worry and a bass, he came out "*different*, I gave the people what they *thirsted* for," which I am still trying to find—the thirst and the gift. In the land of the wealthy: high windows, a second morning, something caught then released.

Rite for Unmaking

At 80, Clyde Davenport's
fingers

cramped in clawhammer
so he retired

the banjo, returned to fiddle
his hand curled

around bow, his wrist
oiled young.

*

Some say it's impossible to return
to the beginning

but take an avocado in hand,
measure the g've

of skin, each leathered ridge
slide the knife

in around the pit 'til halves
open and

there is seed and flesh
and waste

*

Tonight there's no order
nor music:

the whole erased
with ease

the night palmed in sex
then silence

snow that colors us
darker.

Match Point

Since when are my hands coarse like hands that are
 not mine? Enough of rackets that resemble other rackets & certain
 parabolas of our flesh. Enough with the net of proud squares, a
 penumbral barrier. We take
 sides, so do geese, whose left-winged feathers make the best bad-
 minton shuttles. We hit one back & forth (despite deuce), back & further
 to where wafts of sweat refuse our bodies to dry like IKEA glassware.
 Same-sex
 sportsmanship is promiscuous: each flick serve
 flings a curve to *love-*
all, one-love or *love(d)-one*. A topspin sometimes under-
 spins, the shuttle falls outside the sideline. A linesman opens his arms,
 but don't take it as an invitation to bed. He's not
 me, not an allegorist. He makes space
 to mean loss.

City of the Vulnerable

Dandelions dispense Chinese fortunes

things like “In less than a decade
no one will remember what cottage cheese is,”
or “Each man is a half-open door
leading to a room for everyone.”

You carry a sharpened melon baller
and portion small pieces of yourself
for every stranger.

You watch 8mm films of the rain
on your bedroom walls.

Every car’s dome light
stays on ’til dusk.

Satellites
keep getting caught in trees
and continually need
to be poked out with broom handles.

In the corner
styrofoam peanuts have gathered.

Every picture is of you
bitten by sheeps.

Four Experiments with an Entrance

Scarves coming out of
or going in to
a toaster.

Sock doves
in coin operated weather.

Throat as a verb.

The void hello believes.

Insert Banter Here

for the other Amie G.

There is an opening here. The bone the meat falls off of. A moment of the most amateur kind of dentistry ends with me puking thru a paper mask into my open mouth. The blender shut off as the margarita reaches ideal slushiness & the other stay-at-home dads of the 21st century descend, leave behind them *The New York Times'* Style Section, fruit in-hand.

The eternal motion machine of childhood swings on.

Or as Rilke says in the *Elegies*, "Neither childhood nor future . . ." Oh, fuck Rilke. The original hipster battle cry, the pop of the well-struck bongo, dead, replaced by Appalachian 5-string plink. A joke no longer a joke. I said that. A joke by any other name. Real news comes off online message-boards, the overfilled beer-foam sliding down the outside of a still-hot-from-the-dish-washer glass. Here's a close-up shot with a video phone to be made into extra footage for a remake of *The Blob*. I will be the one in the love-car with Steve McQueen. I imagine this will lead to some problems.

Pragmatism

To kill a mockingbird is flat out
wrong not to mention it is vulgar

churlish and insensitive
and also requires an extreme

amount of concentration if you do though.
Instead stick to what works and

there's no guilt for like
dropping bombs from 40 miles up

on some place degenerate and fetid
where faces are computerized dots on an 8" screen and

The Terrorist has a teenage daughter
burdened by some barb-wired and boyfriended drama

and accuracy doesn't mean anything
so long as you make it home

for dinner and a re-run of *Seinfeld*.
Obviously I'm exaggerating.

How to Become Awesome at Skateboarding

You must first know something about ethics of surface. *See also*: edifice of form and etiquette of pavement can be redundant. Cross-cut the callisthenic

arpeggio of space-time. Totally nitrous oxide the slow glide recumbent jelly, good for teeth to put stars on. Limb the rental nimbus malady of ground.

Please excuse my dear Aunt Sally while you postulate a preamble for buoyancy. Pete and repeat sat on a log. Kitty comes the Afterbang.

Haunted House Moves Have Been Around Since the Dawn of Time

I am walking into a subdivision, and I pass a large delivery truck. Its sides are corrugated and rusting. When I turn the corner, there are three white wolves. They all have these large black beaks, and their faces are covered in blood. I detour. (I'm not an idiot.) After a certain amount of time has passed, I get home, and the same wolves are upstairs. But now I have turned into my father, and I am excited because I know I will kill the wolves. It is late at night, because I have to switch on the light in the dining room when I am looking for something to kill them with. I can feel the thick shag carpet of the stairway under my feet as I make my way back upstairs with the cheese grater. And then I wonder, if I am my father, then who is he, and how will we explain to Mom when she gets home that Dad is not the man we thought he was.

The following haiku, written by Columbia College Chicago undergraduate and graduate poetry students, were selected to be installed as part of a Harrison Redline Station art exhibit sponsored by Columbia College Chicago and the Chicago Transit Authority.

Even past the end
of the Mayan calendar,
I'll txt u my luv.

—Daniel Scott Parker

*

Christopher Walken
in a loose Hawaiian shirt
orders a hot dog.

—Daniel Scott Parker

*

A small child
dressed as Yoda smiles.
Be careful you must.

—Alyssa Davis

*

The highway cuts through
summer cornfields like a snake
in tall yellow grass

—Brett Slezak

*

A pigeon
slaloms
the sidewalk.
—Matthew Sharos

*

5,
seven, &
five.
—Sheila M. Gagne

*

When I am around
you, my heart is a fat guy
in a little coat.
—Jacob Victorine

*

This man always picks
lint off his suit going home.
Who inspects him there?
—AmyJo Arehart

*

I am being judged,
so I take off all my clothes
and wash them, dry them.

—James Eidson

*

The difference in
the dog laying at your feet
and on top of them

—Chris Neely

*

The way the whole house
smells of shea butter and limes
long after you leave

—Chris Neely

*

Teach me, stranger ahead,
to step between the puddles
gathered on the stairs.

—Davee Craine

*

I hear the hacking
cough of my neighbor above:
I don't know his name.
—Davee Craine

*

This floor
is mine. I scrub it on hands
and knees. Kiss it. Sigh.
—Amy Lipman

*

I ate your blackberries.
Juice ran down my full, white cheeks.
The bitterness was a surprise.
—Abigail Wood

*

Counting on one hand
the number of people told
of my father's death.
—Tyler Cain Lacy

*

Remember our house
with the red-orange kitchen? We
were never happy.

—Abigail Zimmer

*

I have been waiting
My day has been long, dear train
Come and take me home

—Donnell Anthony McLachlan

*

Out on the front porch
In the shoes I left last night:
Pristine spider's web

—Elena Ballará

*

I woke up sneezing
Outside the insects
Were still awake

—Elena Ballará

*

At night I look for
the tiny bones in my hand
but one is missing.
—Laura Elizabeth Miller

*

nomad in the blood
death sentence written somewhere
in the inner ear
—Victoria A. Sanz

*

News of a death,
for the first time, I see stars
in the city.
—Andrew Ruzkowski

*

In the night's orange dark
red runs glowing and sparking
along the lakeshore.
—John Kenneth Bishop

*

A soul in transit:
when are you not moving on
to another place?

—Brian Miles

Memo Addressed to Self

My mothers may have been obsessed with old-fashioned looms and cats and stained glass; and our fathers most likely never ate manna in the desert. Regardless, now is the time for skinny girls in bikinis firing .50s, shooting down dysfunctional satellites.

And as Muttley waterboards a messenger pigeon live on Dasterdly State Television, I suppose one can't help but feel that there is something within the language of stained glass that turns me into a pussy-assed jack off:

“Stained-glass windows allow for only the blood of light.

Stained Glass is purity, dimmed.

Stained glass is the universe, collapsed.

A stained-glass lamp shade—forgotten, forbidden film . . .”

To this an equation: cry an infection, an ocean of clap.

Like circuses, churches don't exist as they used to,
Not even in Mexico.

To this a solution:

Grab the leather valise, a straw pork pie hat,
Steal a shiny yacht from the nearest harbor,

Set sail for the cloudless skies—

Of Mogadishu.

Miró

In the beginning, there is the sun.
Then the eye of a mule. These are
followed by a tree, which looks so much
like a guitar that the Spaniard, also in the scene,

believes that the tree *is* a guitar, & yet it
surprises him that the tree, on which he plays, is not
terrified of stroke, as he is, & more so
because beguiled.

The mule stamps its feet; this is what mules
do when mules think they are going some-
where.

[the geese had lost their minds]

the geese had lost their minds
and spent our awful winters

perched on sunken shopping
carts in Silver Creek

hissing children
from the playground

so the city organized
a hunt

I held a sign
These Monsters

Are Lovely To The Lord
in the other hand

my slingshot
and pouch of stones

Broken

Afraid there's something vital to your art broken?
Don't worry, Eric, it's just your personal heart broken.

so many, and you would have saved them all

I wish I could tell you the damage is minimal,
but here's the MRI: every part broken.

the hurt birds: nerved high, avid, smart, broken

Some of these lesions have been here a very long time:
it begins to appear that you were from the start broken.

but like the rest, you saw and wanted and took

But the early-start differential fades with time.
By now, you're like the rest. We all depart broken,

all the good you thought you could impart, broken

but we depart. From here, there's just one road.
You drive yourself. Get in. *horse lame, cart broken*

Why I Am Not a Panther

Somewhere it's a Friday,
and in Vermont
it is always beautiful weather
whether anybody notices or not.
People are clapping
their little hands at a lecture,
both before it begins and later
also after. They are squirrels
in the distance. I am not a panther,
because I don't have a tale
to tell you or anyone
about the jungle, but
if I did, I would drink and pass out
on the lawn. We would drink
and pass out on the lawn.
The days would go by
and the days would go on
with a greenness.
I would tell you just how
scared things really are.
But right now I am a creature
of unnameable distance,
the goats singing songs
of interminable swans.
I go home to a wonderful place,
but it's only with a phone call.
The people I talk to, the best
in my life. One of them tells me,
she is having so much fun
watching a man making a crepe.

“I am watching a man making a crepe,”
she reports, and hearing this I am sure
of the fun on her face.

“Is that interesting,” I ask,
but she is already drifting
and hangs up without me.
Have a drink, I think. Okay.

I drink. We drink.

It is still Friday.

Vermont is still Vermont,
and whether anyone notices
or not, I am not a panther.

I am a father
missing everything.

Radiant Action

It wasn't a year like any other.
And we weren't the same people
we had always been. At some point
in the past—no one could remember
exactly when—a cumuliform gray weirdness
had settled over everything. Sometimes
it felt like warm snow falling, but at others
it was more like the clank of a giant's
dust rattling through the pine needles
turning all of us brownish red
against each other. It had been a long time
since we had shaken hands or pressed
our lips together. All the songs
on the radio were ambulances—not as much
sad, as alarming for no good reason,
the sound of babies crying
and the whole town looking for a wolf
in the margins, but only finding
an oddly shaped three-legged shadow
and some teeth, some fur, an indescribable
train whistle blowing in from the sea.
Everything was mean and low to the earth.
No one was happy, so a meeting was convened.
We all had the sense that something
needed fixing, but it wasn't clear what.
Clem thought we needed a new mother-maker,
and that seemed like a good idea until
none of us could figure out how to pay for it,
nor how to support all the scraggly, unwanted
seeds she'd produce. Lurvy suggested

more target practice, but everyone had already been shot before the great strangeness, and given their experiences the first time around no one was willing to shell out the money for more permits. A few people, Earl and Alice among them, objected to the meeting altogether, claiming that they had been less miserable beforehand, and that the green apple harvest was going just fine—that is, it had been before we'd freed the slaves and gave up bathing as a way to blend into the dumpster. Finally, someone—was it Wilbur?—got the bright idea to fill a baby rabbit full of gold glitter and truth serum, so that every time it coughed the air became temporarily more nostalgic, if not also metallic. No one could say for sure why this improved our moods, but it did, and we weren't complaining. We all went outside and stood around looking at the stars for the first time in a long time. Some of us went home dazzled, but those of us who stayed passed out in the wild, which was clever, and when we woke up the rabbit was the size of a small cooling tower. What this meant wasn't easy to say. Adelaide thought it might be a symbolic gesture, and Horace felt certain that it had to be a saint. These interpretations went on for several days, a big long list of opinions and voices,

but ultimately since no one was certain
what to make of it, we decided to end it,
and end it definitively—end it with a quickness.
So Charlotte went and fetched the blade.
Once more we all gathered to show that we had spirit,
but when we opened up the rabbit, the sun barreled out—
and now with even more new radiant action!
So that's when we cut off the head
of the sun, held it high for all to see,
and ever since then we've been taking our turns,
hoisting it aloft and wearing it
over our own heads. Pools of blood
have formed all over town,
but now when things are weird
we don't notice.

Maternal Red Blossoms Petalled

Blossoms where your wrists were—
An epigraph, and then another slated with cement
I did not watch, I didn't, but I dream about it.
Mother, this is the fourth line, the one that won't be repeated.

An epigraph with numbers bleeding in topiaries,
Should I confess that I wanted to be there?
Mother, what was the fourth line, is now the third line of this stanza.
Cut the sign of the cross into your wrists, and if not, kneel.

Should I confess to your wrists that I have nothing to say?
I have nothing to say, and yet I keep writing, and bleeding, and calling you mother.
And you cross yourself with your wrists, treading on obsession.
Mother, this voice of mine is foreign and bleeding.

I am tired of calling to you in my poems
And death is a topiary obsession of you dying over and over.
But my mother is dying on the hardwood floor,
The repetition of incisions frantic, fading, and through your fingers.

Here—in this line, I give you the death of me not knowing.
I slipped through your veins, the ones that nourish, yours.
My repetitions are not the same, and you didn't have to tell me,
But that's a lie, like my blue veins within the deepest of colors hiding.

Slipping implicates depth, and the gravity within your skin is related,
But what happened? And I am repeating myself, which I sometimes do
Lying to tell only myself and "She didn't mean to, she didn't mean to, etc."
But she did, and I thought about it, and it's so sad that you lived.

What happened was there was too much lineage and you spilled choices.
In our kitchen, this voice is a foreign thing, and my atoms carry the same weight
So I haven't changed in mass or quantity, but depth? You did (how sad).
And I witnessed the depth of your red's repetitions.

from Bloodletting in Minor Scales

Act 12: I can't give this a name.

[*Justin* is placed in an oven where he is greeted by two chairs. *Chair 1* is comprised of oyster shells, *Chair 2* vomits nacre. The remainder of the scene is unscripted. *Chair 1* swallows *Justin* to a place outside of the oven. *Chair 2* is dying, choking on pearls.¹ *Chair 1* is an exoskeleton of questions. Angry, *Chair 2* grabs a member of the audience, cracks the wrists, and swallows the marrow (More pearls). *Justin* vomits the oven. *Chair 1* grows impatient and vomits the characters to where the scene is birthed: the stage. He gives the characters time to nourish. *Chair 1* crosses his legs and waits [Engulfed in the mouth of *Chair 2*.]

Chair 1: In what room do you imagine yourself as a dream?

Justin: What a stupid question. I am a room of dreams. I dream of rooms. Why? Do I look like I dream? I tend not to imagine myself in any form other than in the present. Who dreams anyway? Dreams are commemorations of the non-present.

Chair 1: When was the last time you thought about death?

Justin: I died when I thought about dreams. I can't hold on to this death though. There is copper in it. There is water within the copper. But within that, there is metal and me dreaming within a small room with a campfire dangling in the middle of my chest. But within my chest there is me dreaming. I sometimes count the breaths of my father.

¹ Note to Chair 2: Death is the potential of pearls.

Chair 1: How many breaths does your father hold?

Justin: I don't imagine this. I think of my mother a lot; not my father. My mother is a dream. I am thinking in terms of my mother, the geography of her, the circumference of her bleeding. My father breathes, and grows older, but he is not a safe place. His breaths are acknowledgments of my mother. He grows in breaths. He grows, and I am left as my father. We switch places, but my mother is still killing herself. How many breaths in a breath? How many more can I blame? When should I stop counting?

Chair 1: When was the last time you felt yourself adding tenses?

Justin: I fold myself in tenses, trying to contort the blood. I know this is wrong, but the blood I can expel is my father, and I felt along the tenses of myself. My wrists express pulse tenses, and I don't know how to tell you this.

Chair 1: How do you consume?

Justin: I consume using the pronoun "I" and the present tense of "consume," but secretly, there is mourning in my consumption. I consume through tubes, dilators, and stitching. In my chest you will find consumption. When I was a child, I grew through consumption. The sun consumes, and it too is mourning. It will die by consumption. I will consume and become the sun. I will consume the sun. I will mourn over my consumption.

Chair 1: Was there a purpose in your mother's suffering?

Justin: *[Plummets into a calloused veil]* Was there a purpose in your mother's suffering?

Chair 1: *[Holds Justin's lingering]* Was there a purpose in your mother's suffering?

Justin: [*Dissolves everything that led up to this moment*] Was there a purpose in your mother's suffering?

Chair 1: [*Lies on top of the decayed audience*] Was there a purpose in your mother's suffering?

Justin: [*Discovers no footing*] Was there a purpose in your mother's suffering?

Chair 1: [*Embodies the question*] Was there a purpose in your mother's suffering?

Justin: [*Embodies the response*] She broke me into decimals.

[*Stage nods and leaves.*]

If the Monster Wants You, It Will Have You

Depression comes from underneath,
not from outside.

It bubbles up like butter on a hot skillet.

Don't tangle your mind considering

what is the butter and what is the skillet
or you will become depressed.

Like that, unexpectedly, it bubbles up!

It is the cycle in the dishwasher when the machine
makes its most noise, but the dishes are not yet clean.

We are built for this, this sadness.

Like a screen is built for watching

our souls are crafted by large hands
for suffering through these alleyways of experience.

Desire is not the cause. The causes

are those large hands, and the aloneness of the soul,
and not getting enough sleep or exercise.

Wherein All the Action Is That of the Cat

the day prefers our continuing
we have to assume
still being
and doing it here
in the space
I bring to coincide with this
a cat just passed through
w/ a limp mouse
hanging from her mouth

like almost a joke
about a cigar

and where
do you hide your living head, friend

which darkness is it you prefer

Subtotal

in the place I'm trying not
to understand
 I am endlessly
touching the planet
I'm in its way
 where I live
& got my own clothes on
& with luck I will get
your clothes off

what you see is what
you get left with
 no
please forget what
out loud I have said

I'm outside this building on fire
touching the sign with myself
ROOM FOR LET

The Artist

immolation
drips from a finger
finding
rocks in guts
and stripes on stars
sits blow-drying a story
and learning to breathe through a sponge
whispers
warnings from trees
and secrets to a fish

Spines

You fetch me water and
break the dreams over your knee;
termite bites. Pewter morning.
My skeleton compressing or

collapsing and we make a lot
of red sewing our fingers together.
And you say that rains are coming.
I make lace out of my hands

and everything will be alright.
It was my footsteps or yours
staggering down the hall last night
and in the moonlight, weeping prophetic—

the hieroglyph we make,
my bird body folded into you.

An Incomplete Memory of the Body

I knew the rumors but sang the song anyway.

Sure enough, he came to me naked
with a dimple in his chin, one eye hooked

by a fisherman hair still wet from the river.

He may or may not have cried the whole time
we made love with the same kind of puzzlement

I felt when I saw a girl in the streets of Manaus

carrying her own leash and a bowl for coins.
He smiled and one eye wept as he took

my fingers in his mouth. His spit made them itch

to touch his earlobes, his triceps, his elbows.
I can't recall a navel. There were or were not

scars on his back from boat propellers. I heard

my name shouted in the jungle, but none
of my cries were for help. I may or may not have felt

the fin start to rise from his spine before he ran

to the river. All the suspicious fires coming
toward me through the trees brightened.

Puerperal Fever

Don't believe what she says about me.

I bathed her breasts in rosewater and milk,
seawater and clay, whatever she did and did not

ask for, but never once put her in my mouth
to ease her. Why would I? I already knew
too much of the body's wet holiness. I hid her child

and waited for my second death to seek me.
I gave her the doll instead of her daughter
to see how she sorrowed, watched her rock

its bound lips to her left nipple. I wanted
to warn her, but I knew we must each live
according to our hungers. You can believe her

when she sings about the black heat of paradise.
I've been. Death found me in a rubber plantation
six days ago. I rode to heaven on a burning horse

but came back to tell you every miracle wants
something in return. Take your own breast
in your mouth, let the steep light lead you on.

The Mainland Recedes

When the boat
pulls away

stay focused
on the water

and remember
you're moving.

Motion favors
those who have it.

The trick is to not
get angry

or distracted
by your legs.

City of Men

I walk on a burning road into a city where men live
inside of men, breaking their homes into wild sobs
and friction. Their feet are black, their faces twisted
from wondering the difference between hunger
and appetite. After the Advent of Intrusion and the Fall
of Desire, the men disguise themselves as livewire
and pistol. Their breaths lag five paces back knowing
if they're caught by the inhale then the prison cell lungs
will hold them forever. I want to cradle man's heart
in my mouth but the jackal guarding his aortic door
demands a payment of a penis on my tongue, flattened
like a coin. A New Moon guides men to alleys slick
with angel blood after one fell on a phalanx of bones
left behind from some five-minute war. What's left
of his gown the wind wears. What's left of his wings
the men tear off and fashion small gods in their hands.
I dropped my god in a pile of doubt. I have misplaced
my hunger. My mouth is full of keys. If men say open wide,
I startle with skeletons. Reckless, they pray to nothing.

Cocoon*

*I want who did this off the street, and I want the rest of
my child.*

—Ms. Brazell-Jones, *The New York Times*

When Rashawn Brazell went missing, his story was frozen
in the mouths of inanimate objects: the subway tracks
spat no sparks for him; the stairway light to the train
flickered no S.O.S.; the recycling plant uncoiled no ribbon
of six-pack plastic to offer evidence, condolence.
The first trash bag of his body parts hadn't seen his head,
didn't know where it could be. Workers at the recycling plant
found limbs in two separate trash bags. Still no head
to say a name, to claim the body scattered like false clues
across Brooklyn. A shovel holds memory better
than any mourner, funereal mud and footprints
from the preacher, rain carrying the sweet sting of pine
in its translucent purse, bird shit from a nearby headstone
washed by a storm to the ground; the shovel blade mouths
it all—the tears and the grass and the rain's borrowed scent—
and covers the dead with a choir of things to hold. Sweet song
in the mother mourning her son, mourning what was left
to hold, holding her one long note, her single note a hymn
afraid of its own death, holding on to its impossible fermata,
to the throat's quaking acreage, to the diaphragm's bellow;
it holds on and won't let go, is pleased by this holding, and is
changed by the woman it enters and changes. Song is changed.
She is changed. And the city is lightless, O God so still.

* In memory of Rashawn Brazell, a Black, bisexual man murdered in New York, NY. He was nineteen years old at the time of his death. According to *America's Most Wanted*, "Around 3:00 a.m. on February 17, 2005, New York City transit workers found two suspicious bags alongside the track at the Nostrand Avenue station in Brooklyn. One of the bags was a black trash bag. Inside it was a blue trash bag, and inside that were the body parts of a young black male." The other two garbage bags of body parts were found by workers at the Humboldt Street recycling plant.

I Need to Count on All My Fingers

Scrappy I'm not in the morning. The light
turns me into a full-body flinch, afraid of itself.
I rehearse in my brain such extravagant stretches
then perform them for you with both my arms.
Look, the stretch says, *I've been still, now I want so badly
to wiggle*. The empty stomach's wants are mountains
of food. Tell me again about developing character,
the way the girl is built to want to keep us with her.
Tell me more about the one that wants to die,
the one that wants a sandwich. Sometimes
I'm impatient and perfect for quick bad sandwiches.
Sometimes I plan to make a mess of demands.
Under my breath I say *give me*, then write it.
All the eggs. The bread in the world. A little more
warmth in this bed. There are words I don't say,
a mouth full of its thinking of breakfast prevents me.
When I'm all by myself I toast bread on the stove
to tell you about it. To tell you about them I invent
things I like. Peas in a blender with salt but not onions.
Driving with music. Bridges. I think. Like is a word
that fills me with winces, it's so close to wanting.
With or without breakfast the day breaks into its parts
I take without asking. The only decent wants
are chopped up or made to look smaller, as from
a helicopter, blustery machine that comes to rest
on what it likes, rehearsing none of its bigness.
Everything below it shifting scatters. I want to ask
you now to stay with me when I say it's like this way—
it's all like—sometimes I let myself turn on the light
to find the roaches still with me and they're gone.

O, Ogallala,

My thought of creating a whole thing out of the driving through Nebraska thing seemed smart. It seemed smart, the color eggplant for two weeks one summer. No one got that message in Nebraska because it's insulated from those kinds of tragic trends and that's why the light's empty, like a big space the country cleared for itself so it would have a place to put all of its up-and-coming rock bands. Nebraska doesn't budge when I tell it that against my better judgment I've kept a list of all the people who have ever driven through the middle of me. I'm thinking *driving empty Nebraska along the side of an eggplant* and also other things, places I've been in the middle of leaving. Here's what the coasts know of an aquifer: that underneath this state and not only there is a hardness and a moving through and a hardness. I don't know how to reconcile them. I've been in love with digging down a little at a time forever before because one sees growth everywhere. I hate growth for how it indicates itself everywhere. Growth points to its own trees as evidence like *Ha*, but up is a scheme to a flat land. My long, flat horizon ache, Nebraska. The country's biggest moving thing in you, and who has seen it.

Animals

Sometimes my name is Mabel.
Here is my house: it is old and rickety,
like the bottle
of gin; it is empty.

Here is my husband: who passes me
a placebo from his tongue to mine,
to my lactating breast.

I've given him two babies; one born a bird,
the other stillborn. We keep both on the dinner table.
He reminds me he is an animal. But I remind him,
"So are your children."

The floorboards creak beneath my feet
as I pass the bedroom where inside I'm sleeping.

I lay next to a dead dog;
his hot tongue
rests on my belly button
and I thank God the dog is dead
because I'm no good at sharing.

I'll Turn the Light On

There was this ladybug tent in the basement that Emalee and I used to have sex in. It hurt in there, our pelvises hit so hard we had bruises our moms didn't notice. We were 7 or 8 years old. We looked like each other, eyes brown, same as mine. Small deer in summer. We liked each other and we liked Madonna and her mom caught us once and dragged Emalee out by her ankle. As she was pulled her mom smacked her naked skin all over, and Emalee had purple rings around her ankle and marks in other places after that night. My mom said her mom was trailer trash and didn't believe Emalee's mom's story about the ladybugs. Emalee and I landed upon each other again and again. I took the top/it was my idea/I wanted it/I converted her because

I found a sticky magazine of a woman down the side of my dad's bed. She had cinnamon skin, dark nipples and the magazine was crunchy. Her nipples didn't look like my mom's. I went in the bathroom and locked the door and sat on the floor with grandma's silver vanity-mirror between my legs: water, flour, salt rolled and molded into shape. Weird bread. I'd sit on the toilet and talk to my mom while she was in the shower. When she got out she'd lift her leg up onto the counter and plaster lotion all over it still dripping. Milk and bread. All over the bathroom

I wrote in my Anne Geddes journal. About the sticky cinnamon woman, about Emalee and about my mom in the shower. My dad told me my mom had read it and he'd gotten in trouble for having the magazine and I'd better keep the journal at his house. That fucking bitch was gonna get him. That bitch that got the house and the car. That bitch who he hoped got cancer just like my grandma. If you're a bad person you make cancer happen to yourself.

After the divorce he'd show up drunk and coked up and angry, and he just wanted to see his kids, his kids for fucks sake. He'd bang on the door at 2 am and eventually one of my brothers would let him in because he's their dad. He'd go straight to my room, drag me out of my bed/*you just fucking wait* at my mom/my doorstep to the back of his head and the police were pretty slow. He was so helpless/useless and my brothers go on worshipping him because this is how real men are.

They have their kids blow into the breathalyzer to make the car start, wine bottle in the cup-holder. They only care about perpetuating the fake themselves. Those fruit flies filled the car and circled the rim of that wine bottle, I'd clean it and I'd clean up his puke, spit, his semen off the couch. He was molested by a priest and that's what it was he said/*you never stay where I put you/make me forget what's between my knees/my life has felt like a 3 in the morning movie on TV/I'm trying to tell you how I feel about men and women/Mom sung me to sleep in a rocking*

chair, I still had my dress-up clothes on/down the road, a car like a mirage, a blonde woman and two boys beside the car, dressed in black/let me turn the light off first/*tell me where it hurts baby, and I'll beat you there/this is how it's done/oh god I'm a killer/oh god I'm a killer/I knew how to pray with discipline, I can do it again. One on top of another, rosary beads/ladybug on a stranger's fingers/I'm praying every night, dragging words out by their ankles. This is how confession is done. The sisters kneel in the pew and pray the sisters say those prayers over and over/dad says I forgive you while he rapes me exactly as he's been taught.*

ceremonial

lavender

yellow sashes

at the temple

on Ashland, yesterday

Bowing Out at an Uptown Jazz Club

They said he'd take the stage at eleven.

Trading his beaten messenger cap
and old grey coat for
metal singing 'round midnight.

He'd leave quiet, just as he came.
Careful not to take away
from what the nightcap, Jimmy,
had coming from his
Gibson ES.

But between eleven and eleven forty seven
he was there.

Tapping his foot to the 7/8 to 4/4 to 7/8 free form,
calling on Coltrane
and Davis
and Ellington, daring anyone to speak
over what he was saying
one last time.

from Peyton Place: A Haiku Soap Opera, Season Four, 1967-1968

369

Would it have killed them
to put some pizazz in the
season opener?

370

Betty and Steven's
marriage is in big trouble—
big as Gena's hair.

371

A smart haiku scribe
can avoid rewatching this
talky offering.

372

First scene proves there are
pervs who find Victorian
bric-a-brac sexy.

373

Bet you're dying to
hear Elliot tell the Greek
myth of Callisto.

374

Sorry, Betty. Your
tribulations get trumped by
Rod's tight-fitting tee.

375

Haiku in the Modern Manner

The faces of these barflies in Ada's tavern;
Extras on a cheesy set.

376

Betty can't divorce
Steven fast enough now that
Rod's sniffin' around.

377

Well again, the real
Martin resumes his "grotesque
manipulations."

378

Rossi's medical
jargon sounds like pig Latin
to me too, Eddie.

379

If you must speak ill
of the dead, Ada, please use
fewer syllables.

380

Betty admires the
changing leaves. What does she think
this is, a haiku?

381

Duryea, Sleaze King
of Noir, taunts Rowlands, Queen of
Independent Film.

382

Don't waste precious time.
Skip right to Rod and Betty's
climactic lip-lock.

383

Martin's sanity
hearing. So few sets, I knew
we'd be back in court.

384

Rita wants a boy.
(Have I mentioned she's with child?)
Les wants Peyton dead.

385

Betty sobs because
she and Steven are splitsville.
Say that ten times fast.

386

Chauvinism or
foreplay? Rod bids "wench" Betty
to take off his boots.

387

Do we really need
to know that Mary, Peyton's
maid, has bursitis?

388

The autumn leaves are
blowing, but only in front
of the camera.

389

A biker almost
runs over old man Peyton.
Otherwise, just talk.

390

Is it pointless to
scold a killer for his bad
telephone manners?

391

Today let's simply
enjoy the way these people
torment each other.

392

I did not expect
Gena to tumble to her
death. But now you will.

393

Betty flees in the
first snowfall of the season—
Season Four, that is.

This is the continuing story of Peyton Place . . .

Shoulder

All these pamphlets of exhaustion
flanking every rest stop phone booth,
and yet daybreak, resolute, arrives.
Masons carve through pure gruff
to exhume punch cards, the monolithic clock,
then slump out of the foothill's core. Meanwhile
atop that knoll cradling the highway, a giant
scratches his face and takes a seat.
The design for the newest advertisement advances
along the fraught trail toward viable thought.
He lightly dips his paintbrush in the pail.
Gelatinous ripples bob across the taut acrylic.
The dossier demands a billboard for the new
retail outlet, Exit 214, Adult Novelties.
Phantasmagorical dildos, handcuffs, lube;
the giant was, briefly, a sex boutique fixture
post-divorce. The giant remembers a letter once sent,
and the closing line. He averts contemplation.
The sound of the highway stampedes in.
It is the most patient inferno.
The giant continues plunking his broom-sized brush.

Crowds

Panic outmoded as paisley
yet squat as a package of Tippy's

chipped ham in white wax
paper persists: two jiggers of face

astringent a pony of cold feet
plus brisk Velcro rip blender

pulse errant hair ½ cup of sex
dream weighed down by x-ray

apron whisk until thick and
don't go—steer me home please

clear of the marmalade-glazed
sandbags the felt-mouthed

unsayable, back to innocuous.

County Courthouse

Lorene is not high femme, she's religious.
So when she talks about her tulips in those country western dresses
hair stacked toward the bell tower
or sits at the counter collecting restitution payments
in completely carnation outfits
down to her nails and hose and heels,
she's totally serious. It's slow
and hot. We gnaw bubblegum and watch
the year's sole murder trial over the security monitor
like a soap opera. The defense
is extreme emotional disturbance. The victim
stole three of the loves of the defendant's
life. A question is how do you walk
for miles along the highway carrying a shotgun
without anyone noticing?
The answer is the sheriff knocks off at 10.
The clock ticks. Lorene winces at expletives
and fixes her lipstick with a compact.
Then she lowers her voice and tilts in
and says the girls and I have been meaning to ask
if you're pregnant? I can keep it secret.

Interpretation

The way a man's back arches in movie sex is proof that we are tools designed to hurt. Imagine sharing your pie with a crow and never getting a thank you. This is a modern relationship. Pop quiz: How many times will you let yourself be adored until you realize you are just rhythm and skin? The bird's nest is full of dinosaur bones which proves that time is not a straight line but junk piled on top of itself that never falls. I have memorized a cat's paw until the sun revealed its last name was Kennedy and that it will die tragically and young. Windows and tongues are meant for keeping secrets. I've gone pale waiting to hear the truth about my own nipples in comparison to a queen's. I am royally fucked if there is really a stairway to heaven. I lost my legs in a bet over whether angels are the most primitive airplanes. I mean, how can the sky understand more than one idea at a time? When I built my house on meaningless grounds, the contrails wrote sentences in an undiscovered language. When you tell me you love me all I hear is *Blah, blah, blah*.

An Essay on Virginity

You lose your virginity at 18. Or you lose it at 14 or 20 or 25—regardless, it's an odd expression, you think, *to lose one's virginity*: the implication being that virginity, in its platonic form, is some smallish object, something capable of being misplaced, like the watch passed down to you by your grandfather—the watch you leave on a hotel nightstand in Chicago years later, after you and your girlfriend decide to sleep together for the last time. You don't notice it's missing until you nervously touch your wrist as the plane descends toward SFO. When you land, the phone calls begin, first from the airport, where you try, as calmly as you can, to explain the situation to the night clerk at the Hilton; then from the taxi where you describe the watch to the housekeeping manager: silver band, white face, back engraved with your German grandfather's initials; and then from your apartment the next morning, where you learn that, yes, they've found the watch and can mail it to you right away. It arrives a week later, in a shoebox packed with week-old copies of the *Chicago Tribune*. No, your virginity is nothing like that, you decide. Your virginity just vanishes.

Try Violence

The cord around a lover's wrist
tells us to remember. The red passion, the braid
overlap of one body to another. Knot to knot,
mouth to mouth, no one doubts anymore.
She wears it rather than red the wrist otherwise.
She read there was a cord from one dream
to another, that the dreamers might meet
while walking down the twist of thread.
She has worn and worn it down. The memory
reforms from stray fibers. Symbols are easy.
Harder his mouth to her ear, the promise
of further cruelty, how her heart sang
at the mention of her own breakage.
It was one room with poor lighting,
and in it they had some measure
of their shadows. The city around them
took up her cry and echoed it in siren,
a volley of distress. He left a mark
on her wrist. She wears it to remember.

The New Old Real Fake Ones

There are no stars in the night sky but there is a calculated light
on the moss that frames the false

blonde in the act

of the slow reveal:

let us turn our loving
attention to those pearlized buttons
slipping from their holes,

the shirt slipping off her shoulders,

and the slippage

of her body against his, briefly.

Let us split up and search
separately,

walk the basement stairs alone.

There is the world we're in and the world without,
and within both
there are monsters
wearing the faces of our friends.

We were not always who we are.
She was not always a blonde.

This ritual is happening all over.

We need to see a flash of the divine—

O those breasts—

before the blunt instrument descends.

Wired Red Shoes

He grinned when he saw me roll
up my heartbeat and light it
like we were siblings, long hair
and poetry, but he sniffed his finger
to his nose at every semicolon,
every stop that wasn't ours
until more than the coast
became blue, became my car
sitting at a Hegewisch intersection
between resignation and fishnet,
wire coathangers I refuse
to keep in my closets and booyah!
I couldn't write the letter yet,
couldn't answer to sister
when the rent isn't paid in his name,
and the dirt bike trails collapse
into the river with the pill
I have the right to take
but won't because I missed
that train car I had wanted
to tell him about, missed the text
I had wanted in river dancing
with red shoes across his goddamned
gallows, and the fiddler was fierce
until she played for whisky,
and I leaned into a man I couldn't see
because my little red shoes came off
and didn't fling me into the woods,
and I could jump these roofs, or maybe
those are just my axed feet.

Rabid Texts

The pharmacy has an air show of real human
hair she can't smile through, baked
face no matter which shade of black
she wears, and they burgundize
the way to Chicago as if all the sun
dials aren't registered, aren't counting
the fifty-sixth text toward a handgun
because you must stand behind
the yellow line, man, unless you just lost
your hold on Gary steel, on mullein
still clenching November, and god,
I need to harvest torches, need to fill
the yard with concrete for the tramp
-oline and strap my .410 to my back
only it doesn't match my city
black coat except for the hairs
of the blue Burmese queen, and you can go
up there too, ya know. There are three
homeless homemakers now, and I want
their fire, their plethora of ash
coat hangers because all the tracks hail
at their door without an address,
without the need to teach three dogs
to rabid at a marriage license.

Dear Nancy,

Once, my therapist showed me a cardboard diagram
of how rational people deal with emotions,
the Triplets of Cognitive Behavior,
and, for the first time, I really felt crazy.
I've been writing to you because
you're the opposite of the birth control in my purse.
You know what it's like
to be stoned for ten days straight.
I come home to you,
you sit on the corner of my bed
and never shut up, you forget
that ghosts can't smoke cigarettes.
On your birthday,
I buy you pink tulips
because no one ever buys you flowers.
Tonight we are alone in a dark room—no Sid—
your skin fresh-looking in the afterlife,
your lips a red fireball.
The list of names you're called: *junkieslut/
groupie/insanewhore/stripper/
good-for-nothingskank/nauseating.*
A fuck from you is called *The Spungen Special.*

Maria.

Makebate: a person who causes contention or discord.

I was infidel. Your mother on her podium all machete machete

fingering me a fantast a dreamer.

Tawpie: a thoughtless young person, foolish.

She named me parlor trick.

I wanted your flat chest and crooked teeth Maria

your lisp your spanish.

At thirteen, your mother taught me to drive.

I think as a subtle hint to leave you the fuck alone.

Atelophobia: the fear of not being good enough.

She called me looseleaf. Olive branch.

She couldn't handle the slake, the quench of our millennia

how resilient and receptive we had become.

She wanted you volant and nimble Maria.

She couldn't supply you this catharsis like I could.

I'm sure your mother would have

adored our fraternity of narys and

ectopically displaced drapes.

Maria, if only this were an untold love story.

But some people limit themselves to one kind of love.

I was bottomless and perpetual and you misnamed me stupid.
You thought me colorless and I saw only your brown skin.
You named yourself righteous rise of the moon
I light scratch of bones
Knuckled in, run away, deep wrinkle, bending

Maria means galaxy, means elegance.
Your mother deems me yellow, placid
She calls me out all
parachute and conquered thumb.

If you must be Maria, I am potluck,
beastly and unqualified.

My Zombie

My
zombie shuff-
les down the hallway and breaks through
the
bedroom door. My zombie
is pushed by hunger, the desire

to
cram Twinkies
and beef jerky into his cram
hole.
He can perform simple
repetitive tasks. Good zombie.

My
zombie shuff-
les through his iPod while waiting
for
the train. He drinks a can
of Mountain Dew although he knows

the
dangers of
corn syrup. My zombie forgets
mind-
fulness. Not surprising,
my zombie has gingivitis.

My

zombie does

not know how to deal with

old

love letters. He locks them

up alone and drinks whiskey neat,

staring through the kitchen table.

In the Quiet of the Northwoods

lightning clouds strobe
on the far shore

the dim of the bonfire's last
orange gasp, breath-
ing weak heat

i ask my sister
do you believe in god?
she tells me
about rum and
various sodas

i decide that it would be best
to not tell her about the zombie
creeping in the trees along the water

so we just watch
the pop and
sizzle of pine,
hear the white
caps breaking
on the rocks

The Wreck

We approach the flipped truck—
an upturned turtle on the dark
lawn. You pull to a stop on shoulder,

grit settles into gravel surf. You say,
“Stay in the car.” I would have
driven past, but you belly-crawl

on broken glass, lay like a child
trying to lure a cat from under
the bed until the sirens take over.

I want to lie under you, test
your flame-retardant cape,
but we leave before the extraction.

Before surgeons hand off
a waxy kidney like an old
telephone still trailing a limp

cord, packed in ice and cradled
like an endzone pass. Before
a set of lungs are helicoptered,

heart still attached. Somewhere
a woman sleeps alone for the first
time in years. We wake to a mad

doe stripping the room, tracking
the scent of her salted buck,
ramming wet into the wall.

from My Book Report on the Afterlife

It's so quiet in my mind you can hear a hot dog
thaw off from its seven enemies.

Beautiful women sunbathe on their stomachs,
straps undid. Beautiful men, too.

It's so quiet in my mind waves turn in on themselves.
Bad shit goes down in the middle of the ocean,

but not in my mind, where she never comes home
with the fruit. I had my mind clear-felled.

A deer just nuzzled an electric fence but you didn't
hear it because you're in my mind,

where telephones are never invented.
Reach me via milk.

Down in Carolina I got chopped,
slow shoulders. I got the eels.
I got started with by appleheads,
wedged into the bathroom door

like a green New Testament.
Mom always said start a fight
you're grounded. Finish it we'll clog you
up with French fries. I prefer bad thoughts.

I control the goat hammer.
When it strikes I'll be in some bed with a beer
and sand in my hair, lying
like a bat laughing at the funny pages.

They won't upset my weather experiments.
I'll find the least rained on animal.

Sleep is Mourning for the Eyes

That we earn a third shoulder
to get upriver and then fall shapeless
seems a raw deal to one
who's yet to taste the aftergas.

If I don't bellow you I become 184
boxless Kleenex before a jet engine.

It's weird that an animal lives
in a tree and just sings when you can't
sleep, and trees grow weirder
in magnificence when you cut them

open and finger their paste
in your weird bean brain

where he holds a fluorescent tube
over his head, powered by a far
off radio, and turns into the woods,
lights it up and amplifies the birds.

Purple Music

I had a dream about Thelonious Monk
and in that dream I told him I missed him

I told him I miss him . . .
I missed him

the beautiful ones you always lose
the gargoyle ate them all

all of them . . .
he ate them

I threw anything
I could find
rocks, I threw rocks
I threw shoes
I threw lamps
I threw a table
brick
and mortar
and dirt
and towels
I threw my mom
I threw my mom
I threw chairs
bubble gum
tables
light bulbs
lamps
trees
big blocks of wood
small pills of aspirin

I pulled up turnips
And I threw turnips
like Princess Toadstool
I threw turnips
thoughts
and pictures
and metaphors
I jumped in the Atlantic
and picked up the Amistad
and I threw the whole fuckin Amistad
and I threw bubble gum
Gabriel helped me throw Metatron
and then I threw Gabriel
I threw purple
I took small tufts of clouds
and I threw clouds
and 33 and a thirds
and jewel cases
spit
hair
nails
caskets
crucifixes
chunks of cement
Abraham Lincoln's right eye
the bullet that shot Franz Ferdinand
Kennedy
Malcolm
Martin
Pac
Christopher

Mahatma
the one that started the revolution
which will be televised
along with the TV
I threw 1080p
and 720
and standard definition
and mayors
and hubcaps
projectors
asbestos
the football
lock combinations
and bubble gum
did I say I threw the
bubble gum
it was 1989
and I threw
bubble gum

I once threw a Bible through a plate glass window
and it went all the way to Tehran

and this guy caught it
and pissed on it
and he burned it
and he ate it
and he shit it out

all in about 15 minutes
it goes through the system fast . . .

Labyrinth 39

The boy in the labyrinth feels the calm churn. Circles of hot breath swirl and swell. There is a boy in the sky who steadies his gaze and a beast wheezing in the black. Deep in the earth the breath stirs up smells: sulfur, earth, every noxious root splitting the seams of crust. The boy in the labyrinth feels the eyes of beings. Steam against his back shifts the torch flame from side to side. The shadow of a motionless boy, there aloft in the sky. The boy in the labyrinth thinks it strange to be the center of attention. Thinks it odd, the way the geodes catch light's furtive glances. The way the pitchblende hardens the dark.

Labyrinth 41

The boy in the labyrinth shouts loud vowels at the damp mineral deposits in the walls. His voice tries to pierce through the gloom. It trebles back, thick and high, mimics the gesture of the maze's discreet geology. And so the sound of him spills its waves into a disfigured future. His voice sieved on the rebound. As if compelled to shear itself of various layers. Sound parsed into other sounds. The tremolo. The angular anguish of a throated trill. Though sweetness fills his mouth, the earth concedes its own tangled brooding sidestep. Its own quotidian.

Labyrinth 43

The boy in the labyrinth watches the shadows cast from his hands. This finger becomes an ear. These fingers looped around just so make eyeholes. The mask of who the boy wishes to be. And in the darkness, the swollen grief of being clangs out its reverb against the molten rock. The darkness is its own casual body, speaking in a language that's shaped by trickery—as when two hands form the mouth of a dog. As when two fingers rise into the light and listen to their maker's breath.

from Footnotes on the City

Longer than the boys had lived, a truck stood stuck in the riverbank
like a foot. Foot of God or foot of long lost brother
lost to the river. The boys doubledog each other to sit & honk
the last honk left in the horn. Brian, the boys mimic the truck until they're
the sound of axles. Until they are the blush of windows. All morning
is to find the right shade of lipstick rust. The city rises with the temperature
until it's engine everywhere. Smaller houses grow to the color
of a grease-been-stained. The river is sprockets
the boys try to contain in their hands. Boys, the first audience
to the first skyscraper. Rumor says it came like a storm
One night appeared as a forearm reaching. The next its marrow
spooned empty for occupants. The boys still sing the same love songs
into the river / out of the boys comes the river
The city a dog asleep on its back

Pedagogical Imperative

True, sunlight was, for a time,
nomadic, if only in our affectionate
rejection of actually having to give it
a name. The more we thought
about it, the more the thought
would recede, condensing elsewhere
and always later on. A candle doesn't care
about shadows, nor should it,
waiting to leave less of itself
in the same way. But which way was it?
All this talk of illumination and already
the under-lit hallway of self-composure
seems ready to erupt, or, more accurately,
to collapse, although they're both
insufferable stand-ins for what we were
after—non-picturesque separation,
like stepping purposefully in a puddle
to become saturated with whatever
the world's put in front of you.
And behind? We don't look that way
anymore, do we? The door faces only
ever-outward permanence, until that
too, friends, dim constellations, fades.

contributors

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Chas Hoppe pays the bills as a freelance writer and editor, and pays respect as a poet and musician. His poems have appeared in journals such *Heavy Feather Review*, *Alligator Juniper*, and *Glass*. He and poet Joshua Young recently collaborated on a collection called *The Diegesis* (Gold Wake Press, 2013).

Simon Jacobs is an angry young writer from Ohio. He curates the *Safety Pin Review*, a wearable medium for work under 30 words, and his writing has appeared in places like *Word Riot*, *PANK*, and *NANO Fiction*. He is perpetually on the verge of discovering what everyone else has known for years.

George Kalamaras is the author of six full-length books of poetry, and seven chapbooks, including *Symposium on the Body's Left Side*, *Your Own Ox-Head Mask as Proof*, *The Recumbent Galaxy* (co-authored with Alvaro Cardona-Hine), and *Kingdom of Throat-Stuck Luck*, winner of the Elixir Press Poetry Contest. He recently won the New Michigan Press/Diagram Chapbook Contest for his collection, *The Mining Camps of the Mouth*. He is Professor of English at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, where he has taught since 1990.

Kirsten Kaschock's debut novel, *Sleight*, was published by Coffee House Press in 2011. A chapbook of her poetry, *Windowboxing*, is forthcoming from Bloof Books. Other recent work can be found in *BOMB Magazine*, *Salt Hill Journal*, *Antioch Review*, and *The Collagist*. Kirsten is currently in the last throes of her doctoral dissertation in dance at Temple University.

L. S. Klatt's work has or will appear in *New Orleans Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Blackbird*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *Narrative*. In 2011, his lyric, "Andrew Wyeth, Painter, Dies at 91," was made into a ninety-second animated film by MotionPoems. He lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Tyler Cain Lacy lives in Chicago, where he is pursuing an M.F.A. at Columbia College. Recent work can be found in *Caliban*, *Barcelona Ink*, *E-ratio*, and *elima*e, among others.

Krystal Languell is the author of *Call the Catastrophists* (BlazeVox, 2011) and the chapbook *many lost cause creatures* (Dusie Kollektiv, 2011). Recent work has appeared in *la fovea*, *The Awl*, *Two Serious Ladies* and elsewhere. Founder of the feminist literary journal *Bone Bouquet*, she is part of the Belladonna Collaborative in Brooklyn and teaches writing at the Borough of Manhattan Community College and Pratt Institute.

Dolly Lemke lives and works in Chicago. Her poems have been published in *Court Green*, *Sink Review*, *Salt Hill*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook *O Town Heights* was published in 2012 by DoubleCross Press.

Justin Limoli is a second year M.F.A. Poetry candidate and teaches Writing and Rhetoric I and II at Columbia College Chicago. The poems taken are part of his current project *Bloodletting in Minor Scales*. He has been published in *Mangrove* and *Itch*.

Amy Lipman is an M.F.A. candidate at Columbia College Chicago. She received a B.F.A. in Theatre from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her work has appeared in *The Deadline* and *Cicada*.

Matt McBride's latest chapbook, *Cities Lit by the Light in Photographs*, was released last March by H_NGM_NBKS. He is an assistant poetry editor for *Memorious* and works as a senior lecturer at Ohio State University. The last lines of the second stanza of his poem are from Tomas Tranströmer's "The Half-Finished Heaven."

Donnell McLachlan is an undergraduate freshman at Columbia College Chicago and a Creative Writing Nonfiction major. His haiku, entitled "I Have Been Waiting," was selected for the Harrison Haiku project and is his first official publication.

Joyelle McSweeney is the author of five books of poetry, prose, and short plays, including the recent *Percussion Grenade* (Fence) and forthcoming *Salamandrine, 8 Gothics* (Tarpaulin Sky). She teaches at Notre Dame and edits Action Books.

Jesse Mack lives in Somerville, Massachusetts and attends the creative writing M.F.A. program at the University of New Hampshire. He teaches writing to adults and high school students in Boston and southern Maine. His poems have appeared in *Snow Monkey*, *The Alembic*, *Marco Polo*, and elsewhere.

Jill Magi is the author of four books including *SLOT* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011) and *Cadastral Map* (Shearsman Books, 2011). Her poetry/fiction/image hybrid work entitled *LABOR* is forthcoming in the fall (Nightboat Books), and recent work has been published by *Michigan Quarterly Review* and *Drunken Boat*. Jill works in text, image, and textile and has exhibited her work in galleries in New York and Chicago. She is a 2012-2013 Visiting Writer at Columbia College.

Joseph Meads hails from Peoria, Illinois and currently resides in Chicago where he studies creative writing at Columbia College. This is his first major publication.

Brian Miles lives and writes in Chicago. His poems have appeared in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Midwest Literary Magazine*, and *Everyday Other Things*.

Laura E. Miller will be receiving her Bachelor's in Creative Writing: Poetry from Columbia College Chicago in May 2013. She is from Louisville, Kentucky, and currently lives in Chicago with all of her cats. This is her first publication.

David A. Moran, born to Latino immigrants, is currently an undergraduate at Columbia College Chicago pursuing a major in creative writing. This is his first publication.

Brian Mornar lives in Chicago where he teaches in the English Department at Columbia College. *Little Red Leaves* published "Three American Letters" (an e-edition) in 2011, and recent work can be found in *American Letters & Commentary*, *VOLT*, and *Upstairs at Duroc*.

Chris Neely is originally from Orlando, Florida where he received a B.A. in English - Creative Writing from UCF. He is currently living in Chicago, working on his M.F.A. in poetry at Columbia College. This is his first publication.

Mark Neely's first book, *Beasts of the Hill*, won the FIELD Poetry Prize and was published by Oberlin College Press in 2012. His poems have appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Indiana Review*, *Boulevard*, *Barrow Street* and elsewhere. He directs the creative writing program at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

Kirk Nessel is author of *Saint X* (Stephen F. Austin State University Press, 2012). He has also published two books of short stories, *Paradise Road* (University of Pittsburgh Press) and *Mr. Agreeable* (Mammoth Books), as well as a book of translations, *Alphabet of the World* (University of Oklahoma Press), and a nonfiction study, *The Stories of Raymond Carver* (Ohio University Press). He is a recipient of the Drue Heinz Prize in Literature, a Pushcart Prize, and grants from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. His stories, poems, translations and essays have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Southern Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, *American Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. He teaches creative writing and literature at Allegheny College, and is writer-in-residence at Black Forest Writing Seminars (Freiburg, Germany).

David O'Connell's poems have appeared in *Drunken Boat*, *Juked*, *Rattle*, and *Solstice*, among other journals. His work has been awarded fellowships from the Rhode Island State Council of the Arts.

Daniel Scott Parker was the 2010 Visiting Artist for the University of Georgia's Study Abroad Art Program in Cortona, Italy, and he holds an M.A. in Literature from Georgia State University. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *RealPoetik*, *Spork Press*, *great weather for MEDIA*, *Coconut*, and *NAP*. He lives in Chicago, where he is an M.F.A. Poetry candidate at Columbia College.

Aaron Plasek's writing has appeared in *>kill author*, *DIAGRAM*, *The Collagist*, *Alice Blue*, *Requited*, and other fine publications. He curates the No Perch Reading Series and lives in New York City.

Alexis Pope is the author of the chapbook *Girl Erases Girl* (Dancing Girl Press, 2013). Her poetry has appeared in *Anti-*, *iO*, *The New Megaphone*, and elsewhere. She lives

in Ohio where she co-curates THE BIG BIG MESS READING SERIES and works as contributing editor for *Whiskey Island Magazine*.

Meghan Privitello is a poet living in New Jersey. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *NOÛ Journal*, *Sixth Finch*, *Redivider*, *Barn Owl Review*, *Bat City Review*, *Salt Hill Journal*, *Best New Poets 2012*, and elsewhere.

Doug Ramspeck is the author of four poetry collections. His most recent book, *Mechanical Fireflies* (2011), received the Barrow Street Press Poetry Prize. He teaches creative writing and directs the Writing Center at The Ohio State University at Lima.

Kenyatta Rogers is a 2012-2013 Visiting Poet at Columbia College Chicago. He's a Cave Canem fellow and his work is published or forthcoming in *Court Green*, *Reverie*, *Vinyl*, and *Cave Canem Anthology XIII*.

Montreux Rotholtz is from Seattle, lives in Iowa City, and is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her work appears most recently in *diode*, *LIT*, *The Cream City Review*, and is forthcoming in *Fence*.

Andrew Ruzkowski lives and writes in Chicago. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Willows Wept Review*, *analogpress*, *The New Writer*, *The Bakery*, *Black Tongue Review*, *The Camel Saloon*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Bone Orchard Poetry*, and *Eunoia Review*, among others. He loves Sriracha sauce.

Jerome Sala's latest book is *Look Slimmer Instantly*, from Soft Skull Press. His poems have recently appeared in *The Nation*, *Court Green*, *Plume*, *Eoagh*, *Milk Magazine*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*. He lives in New York City.

Victoria A. Sanz was born and raised in Miami, Florida. She is currently studying Creative Writing - Poetry and American Sign Language at Columbia College Chicago.

Kayla Sargeson earned an M.F.A. in Poetry at Columbia College Chicago, where she was the recipient of a Follett Fellowship. Her work has been anthologized in the national anthology, *Time You Let Me In: 25 Poets Under 25*, selected by Naomi Shihab Nye as well as *Voices from the Attic Volume XIV*, and *Dionne's Story*. Her poems also appear or are forthcoming in *5 AM*, *Chiron Review*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Prosody*: NPR-affiliate WESA's

weekly show featuring the work of national writers. Her chapbook *Mini Love Gun* is from Main Street Rag.

Samantha Schaefer is a recipient of the Follett Fellowship at Columbia College Chicago, earning her M.F.A. in Poetry. She is an editorial assistant to *Court Green* and the co-editor of *Black Tongue Review*, a collaborative literary arts magazine. Samantha is currently exploring multi-modal poetry and erasure poetics.

Matthew Sharos is a current M.F.A. candidate at Columbia College Chicago. This is his first publication.

Brett Slezak is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer and M.F.A. candidate in Creative Nonfiction Writing at Columbia College Chicago. His work has appeared in the *Blue Mesa Review Online*, *Ghost Proposal*, and *The Doctor T.J. Eckleburg Review*. He lives and writes in Chicago.

Carmen Giménez Smith is the author of the poetry collections *Odalisque in Pieces*, *The City She Was*, and *Goodbye, Flicker*. She lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where she edits *Puerto del Sol* and Noemi Press.

Nick Sturm is the author of the chapbooks *WHAT A TREMENDOUS TIME WE'RE HAVING!* (iO Books), *A Basic Guide* (Bateau), *Beautiful Out* (H_NGM_N) and, with Wendy Xu, *I Was Not Even Born* (Coconut). A full-length collection is forthcoming from H_NGM_N BKS in 2013. He lives in Tallahassee, Florida.

Benjamin Sutton lives in Louisiana. His poetry has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Quarterly West*, *Sycamore Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Salt Hill*, *Third Coast*, and *Washington Square Review*, among others.

Mathias Svalina is the author of three books, most recently *The Explosions* from Subito Books. With Alisa Heinzman and Zachary Schomburg, he co-edits Octopus Books.

Judith Taylor is a native Chicagoan and has lived in Los Angeles for eons. She's the author of three poetry collections, *Curios* (Sarabande Books, 2000), *Selected Dreams from the Animal Kingdom* (Zoo Press, 2003), and the forthcoming *Sex Libris* (What Books, 2013). She coedits *POOL: A Journal of Poetry*.

Ryan Teitman is the author of *Litany for the City* (BOA Editions, 2012), selected by Jane Hirshfield for the A. Poulin Jr. Prize. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Gulf Coast*, *Sycamore Review*, and *The Southern Review*. He was formerly a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford University and is currently the Emerging Writer Lecturer at Gettysburg College.

Michael Paul Thomas received his M.F.A. in Poetry from Syracuse University, where he was the Founding Editor of *Salt Hill*. He has been a recipient of a New Jersey State Council on the Arts Grant and has recently published poems in *The Greensboro Review*, *Slice*, and *Hotel Amerika*. He lives in Asbury Park, New Jersey, with his wife, the artist Rupa DasGupta.

Eric Torgersen, emeritus Professor of English at Central Michigan University, still lives in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. His most recent book is *Heart. Wood.* (Word Press, 2012). "Broken" is part of a collection to be called *In Which We See Our Selves: American Ghazals*; other ghazals have appeared in *Pleiades*, *New Ohio Review*, *New Letters*, *32 Poems*, *Zone 3*, *New Madrid*, *In Posse Review*, and elsewhere.

Tony Trigilio's newest book is *White Noise* (Apostrophe Books, 2013). He is a member of the core poetry faculty at Columbia College Chicago and co-edits *Court Green*.

David Trinidad's most recent book is *Dear Prudence: New and Selected Poems*, which was published in 2011 by Turtle Point Press. *Peyton Place: A Haiku Soap Opera* is forthcoming from Turtle Point in 2013. He lives in Chicago.

J. A. Tyler is the author of eight novel(la)s. He lives in Colorado and runs Mud Luscious Press.

Jacob Victorine is a performance poet and M.F.A. candidate at Columbia College Chicago, where he teaches undergraduate Writing & Rhetoric. A member of the 2011 Jersey City National Slam Team, his poetry has been featured on *IndieFeed: Performance Poetry*. His poems appear in places such as *The Bakery*, *PANK*, and *Muzzle Magazine*, for which he also writes book reviews.

Sara Wainscott has an M.F.A. in poetry from the University of Washington. She lives in Chicago and teaches writing at Columbia College Chicago. Her poems have appeared most recently in *Virtual Mentor*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Journal*, and *Required*.

Adele Frances Wegner lives in Chicago and works at the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Greater Chicago. This is her first publication.

Robert Alan Wendeborn is a composition instructor at San Juan College. His reviews, interviews, and art have been featured in *Red Lightbulbs*, *HTMLGiant*, *The Lit Pub*, and *The Collagist*. These poems are from his unpublished manuscript, *The Blank Target*. Other poems from the series can be found at *>kill author*, *Sink Review*, and in the inaugural Queer Issue of *PANK*.

Gabrielle Faith Williams is a Chicago native studying poetry at Columbia College. In the fall of 2011 she won Columbia's Fourth Annual Library Haiku Contest.

Phillip B. Williams is the author of two chapbooks: *Bruised Gospels* (Arts in Bloom Inc) and *Burn* forthcoming from YesYes Books. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Southern Review*, *West Branch*, *Callaloo*, *Tuesday: An Art Project*, *Court Green*, and others. He currently serves as poetry editor of *Vinyl Poetry* while attending Washington University in St. Louis for his M.F.A. in Creative Writing.

Nicholas YB Wong received his M.F.A. at the City University of Hong Kong and is the author of *Cities of Sameness*. He is a finalist of New Letters Poetry Award and a semi-finalist of the Saturnalia Books Poetry Prize. He is on the editorial board of *Drunken Boat* and *Mead: Magazine of Literature and Libations*.

Abigail Zimmer is an M.F.A. Poetry candidate at Columbia College Chicago. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Hoot* and *Black Tongue Review*.

NEW POEMS BY

Rae Armantrout, Heather Christle, Adam Clay, Oliver de la Paz, Lisa Fishman, Johannes Göransson, Noah Eli Gordon, Matt Hart, George Kalamaras, Kirsten Kaschock, Krystal Languell, Jill Magi, Kenyatta Rogers, Jerome Sala, Carmen Giménez Smith, Mathias Svalina, Tony Trigilio, David Trinidad, J.A. Tyler, & many more.

Columbia
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COVER ART:

Friends to keep you warm, #29

Izziyana Suhaimi, 2011

Embroidery and pen on paper, 30 x 40 cm