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Stylesheet

- 1. Electronic submissions are preferred.** To help facilitate the journal's blind review process, authors should exclude identification information from manuscripts. Submissions by post should be typed on 8.5" x 11" white paper; prose should be double spaced. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope.
- 2. Electronic submissions are also preferred for artwork.** Artwork submitted by post should be suitable for black and white reproduction. Work should be no larger than 8.5" x 14". However, photographs or slides of larger works may be submitted.
- 3. Include a brief biographical sketch for our contributors' notes.**
- 4. Submissions and correspondence may be sent to Amanda Smith at westview@swosu.edu.**
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Shelter Shifting as the Seasons

by Maura Gage Cavell

Black roses, blue flowers,
velvety soft petals of red and pink
all seem to fall away
as summer ends and the world
has fewer bright colors—it runs
golden, brown, green, rusty.
The shift of color turns
her mind toward apples,
spices, cinnamon. It's still warm,
but a change comes anyway.
Rains come on heavy, subside,
come back pouring, branches and leaves
falling around the yard and in the street.
Some windows are cracked
in our house—the pressures of time
and shifting ground swells
leave their marks on them
and cracks on the ceiling and walls.



Why Do I Write?

by Maida Roberts

During these days
of diminishing returns
when fog smothers the earth
and the living are lost,
like the shepherd named David
in the Valley of Elah
I select a small stone,
a polished word,
and do battle with obscurity
to reveal the essence of things.



Band

by Elizabeth Bradshaw

With the flick of a wrist,
a wave of the baton
slicing cleanly through the air—
a single note on the trumpet rings out,
the lone star in a sky full of nothing.

Eloquently seeping from the page,
music weaves through the air,
creating life from black lines on white paper.

On cue, a beautiful melody leaps from the flutes and clarinets,
soon joined by the oboe,
dancing among the stars.

Supporting the radiant constellation above,
is the sapid harmony of the bassoons and bass clarinets.

A magical refrain weaves into existence
with a burst of vibrant flavors from the saxophones.

A new surge of life rips through the atmosphere
as the brass soar by in many different hues.
Trumpets, french horns, baritones, trombones, tubas,
An outpouring of zest erupts as the chorus sounds.

Then, one by one,
they fall,
shooting stars blazing through the night—
a single note on the trumpet rings out,
the lone star in a sky full of nothing.

With the flick of a wrist,
that too fades into silence,
entrusting to memory
our little piece of sky.



The Scapegoats

by Marilee Richards

...and due to their ridiculous egos
and our ridiculous pedestals, one by one they fall.

Mark Morford

The tabloid journalists pick up the stones of easy money

Those who can't tell a rapist from a fool pick up the stones of mob hysteria

The women who tweeted back recant
while picking up the stones of virginal indignation

Those embarrassed by thoughts of indecency pick up the stones
of public ridicule

Those who calibrate their rhetoric to whims of public opinion
pick up the stones of cowardice

NFL cowboys and bronc riders who would never succumb to wussy tears
of weakness pick up the stones of manly disgust

Those to the distant left or right of whoever is in the hot seat
pick up the stones of feigned moral outrage

Fellow congressmen, athletes, generals, and All-American heroes,
flush from their own secret obsessions,
pick up the stones of fear and hypocrisy

Those who suffer daily under the lords of hubris pick up the stones
of gleeful revenge

The rest of us, who misbehave within the anonymity of ordinary life,
pick up the stones of predators at a bloody crash

The Massacre

by John Bradshaw

John Holstrom was the son of a Baptist minister—but not one of those fire-and-brimstone Baptist ministers. The Reverend Holstrom was one of the Jesus-loves-and-forgives-you types. When he preached, he taught kindness and compassion, tenderness and understanding. They were good messages for most communities but not for Springhill, Louisiana. Springhill was a small town just outside Bossier City, the little sister city of Shreveport. Springhillers were a grumpy, unforgiving lot. They wanted their Jesus angry and judgmental. It did not take long for the Avenging-Christ crowd to vote the Reverend Holstrom out of their church. The former reverend was forced to get a secular job at the local paper plant. He was a good, kind, hardworking paper maker. He made lots of good paper, but he saved and comforted no souls.

His two sons took the snub badly. The youngest son, Steven, gave up on Christianity altogether and began practicing Transcendental Meditation. Later, when he went to college, he majored in physics and astronomy. The older boy, John, grew up to be a fiery atheist of the worst kind: the kind who knew the Bible inside and out from Genesis all the way to Revelation. Worse still, John was filled with his father's ideals, passions, confidence, tenderness, and mischievousness. The Reverend Holstrom had grown up an FDR acolyte. He believed that FDR deeply cared for the working people of the world, the children of Jesus. John distilled his father's egalitarianism in the fiery rhetoric of Michael Harrington and the unbounded optimism of the Kennedy generation.

What made matters worse still was that both Holstrom boys were very, very smart—not quite geniuses but close enough. They could out-think the rednecks and the pampered golden boys of the Southern aristocracy, the libertarians and even the faithful liberals, who thought much like the Reverend Holstrom.

Their high school years were brutal. Although the Holstrom boys loved their dad very much, they rebelled against his faith. Steven was soft-spoken, and his rebellion was gentle, thoughtful, quiet, and implacable. John, however, was outspoken, forthright, emphatic—even abrasive. In the midst of many family fights about church and God, John said cruel and hurtful things to his white-haired father—things he did not mean and deeply regretted. John's mom, who was the source of his temper, was also the source of his salvation. She saw to it that both father and son reconciled after each fight. She saw what united them and reminded them of their common benevolence. Reconciliation always followed fury. After a time, both father and son mellowed. Disagreements continued in a milder tone, and familial love prevailed.

Then, John went off to college. He was clever enough to go to any school in the state. He chose a school that was close enough to home that he could see his

family frequently, but far enough from home to satisfy his sense of independence. He went to Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe, a hundred miles east, on the other side of the state, just off I-20. Two years later, his brother went to Louisiana Tech, fifty miles east of home, so the two frequently compared notes about school, family, politics, ideas, girls, and life in general.

The first thing John did at college was grow a beard, of course. His beard was full, brown, curly, and it stuck out like a cactus. In truth, he looked a bit like a young George Bernard Shaw. Well, not completely. John was tall and thin with a small, round nose, and his eyes always seemed to smile. When he waved his arms around during one of his excitable moods, he looked like Grover, one of the cuter Muppets from Sesame Street.

While the university was a bit provincial, it was not a complete cultural dead zone. Periodically, the school sponsored a speaker program. The Student Government Association hosted such notables as Gene Roddenberry and Nikki Giovanni. Early in the spring semester of 1975, the SGA invited Wilson Key, the author of the best-selling book about subliminal messages in advertising. John went to see Key give his presentation and, as expected, asked the author lots of tough, skeptical questions during the question/answer period. By this time, the crowd had thinned, so the speaker dodged the questions with a set of fatuous compliments. "You are a brilliant thinker, and your teachers must be proud of you. Keep asking those tough questions, and you'll go far," he said. Of course, John was not fooled. He knew a con-job when he saw one.

The biggest event of the spring semester was the visit by William Calley. Back in 1968, Calley led his platoon in a VC sweep through the village of My Lai. Finding no Viet Cong, Calley took out his frustration in a killing frenzy, ordering his men to kill everyone in the village. Over five hundred civilians were killed. The military tried to cover up the massacre, but eventually the story broke, and Calley was convicted of personally killing twenty-two people, even though military records show that he may have murdered as many as ninety people. President Nixon contemplated a full pardon for Calley, but Nixon was having troubles of his own due to the Watergate scandal. Calley was eventually convicted and sentenced to life in prison but had his sentence commuted to two years. He ended up serving only four months.

After Calley was released, there was a huge national controversy. Reactionaries were quick to defend Calley, while the peace crowd insisted on severe punishment. Calley's supporters, however, were not content to let the matter go. They wanted their man vindicated, so they set up a speaking tour to let him tell his side of the story. The supporters were smart enough to schedule Calley to lecture at those college campuses in the South where he was most likely to get a hero's welcome. They did not risk having their hero speak at progressive schools like Berkeley and Harvard. They wanted to protect their man from armies of hecklers and protesters. Naturally, one of the schools they scheduled was NLU.

Upon first hearing the announcement, John quickly took a stand. He simply had too much of his father's moral spirit to allow his university to celebrate a mass

murderer. He had to do something. He began by doing research into the My Lai Massacre. He read the transcripts of the court marshal so as to be suitably armed for the coming struggle. Then, he started a letter-writing campaign to the various administrative officials involved in the invitation. He first targeted the SGA's speaker committee, noting that the committee's invitation amounted to an endorsement. They ignored his letter. John then sent a letter to the SGA's president, pointing out that the SGA was there to serve the entire student body and that an invitation to Calley was an affront to those students who oppose mass murder. The president of the SGA responded by sending John a form letter thanking him for his interest and asserting that the governing principle is that free speech means that all voices should be heard. Upon receiving the form letter, John wrote back, pointing out that the SGA staunchly rejected anti-war speakers on the grounds that such controversial speakers would disrupt the peace. Surely, it would be much more disruptive to invite Calley, a convicted war criminal, to speak at the school. The SGA responded with their most potent bureaucratic tool—silence.

One of John's friends from Springhill was William Bean, a stout young man with a dashing mustache. Will was a journalism major. His heroes included Jack Anderson and Mike Royko—real newspaper men. In their spirit, Will recommended to John that he start a public campaign. If John wrote a series of letters to the school paper, perhaps he would generate some popular support and pressure the SGA into withdrawing its invitation to Calley. So, John composed a brilliant letter of protest and sent it to the school paper. The paper did not print his letter that Friday.

When John visited the editor's office the following Monday, he was told to go see Dick Carroll, the faculty advisor for the student paper. Dick Carroll was a rotund, red-faced man with thin brown hair who always seemed on the verge of a seizure of some sort. When John came into the room, Carroll pointedly did not invite him to sit down. Instead, he sat behind his immense, cluttered desk and lectured John about the role of a student paper. "It is, young man, first and foremost, the property of the university. The university uses the newspaper to teach undergraduates the professional side of the business. The university also uses the paper as a public relations tool—to bring honor and credit to the school and to attract new students. We will not let our paper be used to scare away parents of prospective students by allowing it to be used as a forum for rabble rousers!"

John was crestfallen and sought consolation from one of his other friends, Sarah Kay Danner. Sarah Kay was a pretty girl from one of the wealthier families in Monroe. She was athletic and full of energy. She kept her blonde hair in a Dutch boy cut and shared a large, winning smile with everyone she met. She and Holstrom became friends while sharing an English class. She liked the way he read the assigned poems so feelingly. He, in turn, learned to take solace from her warmth and common sense.

Sarah Kay suggested that John just bide his time until the day of the lecture. Surely, the good people of Monroe and NLU would not allow a mass murderer a public forum without bringing him to task. If need be, John could then bring his grievances to Calley in the question/answer part of the lecture. Sarah Kay, devoutly religious, insisted that God would not let Calley off the hook without at least some kind of spiritual remonstrance. Besides, she reminded John, it would be wrong to assume that Calley did not suffer great guilt and remorse. Perhaps, the speaking tour was his penance, his opportunity to ask the American public for understanding and forgiveness. John snorted, but the look Sarah Kay gave him made him feel ashamed.

Sarah Kay was right. He had an obligation to give Calley a chance at redemption. An atheist who could not forgive was as bad as a Christian who would not.

The day of the big speech rolled around with plenty of fanfare. Fliers flapped loosely on every lamppost; Calley portraits were pinned to every bulletin board. The university put up banners with American flags announcing that Calley would be speaking about patriotism and anti-communism. The *Monroe News Star* and also the *Morning World* were both sending reporters. The speech also merited a bit of coverage from the local TV station, though they were reluctant to spend more than a few seconds of six o'clock air time, just in case some sponsors somewhere might express fear about consumer reaction.

That evening, John and his friends trekked over to Ewing Coliseum. The air was heavy and humid. The parking lots were full. John and his friends sat in the student section, Section D, thirteen rows up from the basketball court. A large platform had been erected in the middle of the court with plenty of folding chairs for local dignitaries. Among the dignitaries were the local commander from the VFW, the state Republican Chair, the pastor from Monroe's largest Baptist Church (the Eagle's Nest), and the university president, Dwight Delbert. Dwight Delbert was a political appointee whose Ph.D. was in



Business Administration. Delbert possessed all the intellectual depth of a bookkeeper, which is why he got the job in the first place.

The atmosphere was that of a revival meeting. Well over five thousand people turned out for the big event. Everything was electric. The audience was abuzz with excitement. Monroe and NLU seldom hosted such a celebrity. William Calley was one of most famous men to visit this part of the state in years.

The university welcomed Calley with the requisite Southern pomp. The sound system blared the national anthem. The commander of the VFW led the crowd in the pledge. The pastor led everyone in the convocation. The entire coliseum was silent until the end when a thousand voices murmured, "Amen." Then President Delbert got up, creaked and groaned his way to the podium, and wheezed a brief welcoming speech into the microphone. Then, all eyes turned to the right side of the stage. A little man stepped into the spotlight. He stood only five-foot-three, and in his white, tailored suit he looked as dapper and trim as a boutique owner. Everyone in attendance was a bit confused. They had imagined Calley as a huge war hero, a statuesque manly man on the scale of John Wayne or Rock Hudson. No one anticipated that he would be so small and nondescript. But, the little figure had to be him—

he took the podium with sufficient confidence that he surely wasn't a usurper, a counterfeit hero. So the audience, slowly at first, greeted their diminutive hero with a growing wave of applause.

When the applause died down, Calley started his speech. He spent thirty minutes talking about the Vietnam War and the menace of International Communism. He sketched his understanding of the struggle. The war for him was a holy crusade. Critics claimed that the government of Vietnam was corrupt and not worth defending. While he could not address the issue of corruption, he knew that his country needed him in the fight against the communists. "They are not just the enemy of America—they are the enemy of civilization itself," he declared to thunderous applause.

Then, Calley discoursed on the outcome of the war itself. The communists were cunning and knew that, with patience, eventually they would outwait the lazy and weak-willed Americans. They fought a guerilla war for eight years in the treacherous jungles of Southeast Asia, knowing that most of America's wars were fought in forests and open fields. "All they needed was patience, and our own decadence would do us in."

"Those McGovernites and Nixon-haters clamored for retreat. The noisy minority got what they wanted—withdrawal. You saw the outcome. The Reds overran Saigon. It was the first war America ever lost, but we did not lose it on the battlefield. We lost the war because the government listened to the cowards and not to the real Americans, such as you, who supported the fight for freedom."

The audience roared its approval. John sat and glowered. Everyone in the group, including Sarah Kay, looked around at the audience with a bit of astonishment. Sarah Kay especially looked at her neighbors with eyes wide. She knew a bit of Calley's crimes through John, and she had read a few things herself, prodded by her friend's interest. She especially found Seymour Hersh's reports—and the photos in *Life* magazine—shocking and sobering, so for her to see her neighbors cheering this little monster made her ball up her fists. William, on the other hand, watched his friend with a familiar anticipation. John had his fingers steepled, thumbs tapping together, keeping time with some inner moral metronome.

Calley paused and sipped water from a pitcher provided by the SGA president. The SGA president was one of those young men of the Up-And-Coming variety: slender, well-dressed, well-mannered, burning with ambition and arrogance. He saw to it that Calley and the other dignitaries got everything they needed. Everyone knew, William especially, that the young man fully expected that one day, he, too, would be a celebrated dignitary with some young toady seeing to his needs.

Calley then turned his attention to the future. He pointed out that America was at a crossroads. "If we are to save ourselves from the forces of chaos, lawlessness, permissiveness, violence, and drug-induced madness, then we must take bold action. During my time of trials and tribulations, I was tempted to give in to despair. But, I had friends. Richard Nixon supported me in my fight against communism, but he was attacked mercilessly by the press and was driven from office. Others supported me. Governor George Wallace joined me in the fight against the Liberal Establishment. The press savagely attacked the governor, as well, but he fought back—calling a spade a spade. The enemies of America are not all overseas!"

Calley glared around Ewing Coliseum as though he were searching out Viet Cong snipers.

In response, the audience erupted in monstrous applause. Some shouted for the arrest of McGovern and other sympathizers. Again, William watched John intently. He could see John tensing up. Other students murmured their various opinions of the speaker's warnings. But William watched John.

Calley ended his speech with praise for Wallace and suggested that the country would be much better off if Wallace were to win the presidency. "We need a leader with vision and courage," he concluded. Ewing Coliseum rocked its approval. Amens were shouted from the stands. Then, the SGA president took the microphone, thanked the speaker, and pointed to two microphone stands in the walkways among the seats.

"We are opening up the mikes for any of you who wish to ask our distinguished guest a question. Please keep your question brief so as to allow others enough time to ask their questions."

As luck would have it, one of the microphones was being positioned only a few rows down from the gang. A number of people lined up to ask Calley their questions. John just sat in his chair and didn't move. Something big was going on behind his eyes. Sarah Kay asked him what was wrong.

"He never once mentioned My Lai," he whispered.

"So, go ask him," Sarah Kay urged. She could see the conflict in him and pushed him out of his chair. He looked pleadingly at Sarah Kay, then at William. William flashed a tight smile underneath his brushy mustache. "Do it," he said.

John shrugged and got up. He wended his way through the crowd to the microphone stand. Many people were fighting their way to the exits, but many more remained to hear the Great Man speak. John made it to the microphone and was the fourth in line. The other microphone



had a comparable line, and the person in front got to ask the first question.

“Mr. Calley, what did you do before the war?” The question received a smattering of applause. Calley responded that he had worked as an insurance investigator, fighting fraudulent claims. The audience applauded approvingly.

On the other side of the coliseum, John’s side, a shy youth stammered out, “What is your favorite food?” The audience laughed appreciatively. “Pizza!” replied Everyman Calley, and the thinning crowd cheered in agreement.

From his seat, William could see John growing more impatient. Sarah Kay, too, noted that the questions were silly. “When are they going to ask something serious?” she said.

On the other side of the coliseum a woman in her thirties asked, “Are you married?”

“No, ma’am, not yet, but I am engaged to the beautiful and supportive Miss Penny Vick of Columbus, Georgia.” The audience applauded supportively. An older woman near the microphone said, “Isn’t he so romantic?” A good natured laugh swelled through the coliseum.

“What do you do for a living now?” asked a young man, probably an accounting major, on John’s side of the room.

“I’m working to be a certified gemologist so that I can be a jeweler,” Calley replied modestly. Everyone clapped politely.

Two more people asked comparable questions—one about where Calley was from and the other about what he thought about northern Louisiana. He gave fatuous answers that gratified the audience. In the interim, Sarah Kay and William watched John as he got closer and closer to the microphone. They could see his growing anger. John never exploded; his anger was always controlled—tight, focused, intense. They could see his lips pressed together. His face was a gathering storm.

An older gentleman on the other side of the coliseum asked solemnly, “What was your worst experience in Vietnam?”

The audience tensed. It seemed that a dangerous subject had been broached. John looked up from the note cards he had tucked in his shirt pocket.

Calley was quiet for a moment, as though he were composing himself for a lengthy answer. “My best friend Bill Weber was killed by a Viet Cong sniper. I watched him die. I still have nightmares about that moment. And I will never forgive the Vietnamese coward who murdered Bill.” The audience was suitably sympathetic. What was it that made Calley so angry, so enraged at the Vietnamese people? Why had he done the things that he had done? But, nobody wanted to ask that question, at least not in that way. So, when he offered the answer about his best friend’s dying in the jungles of that distant and inhospitable land, it was as though the audience was willing to offer up its absolution.

John Holstrom, however, was not.

When it was his turn, he took the microphone with the determination of a prosecutor. Scarcely looking at his notes, he first asked, “Lt. Calley, how does it feel to be America’s worst mass murderer?” The audience was shocked.

John continued, “What was the strategic purpose served by having the Buddhist monk thrown into the village well and having a grenade dropped on top of him? Why did you ignore Captain

Thompson's orders to stop massacring the civilians?" The audience began to boo. There was a bit of confusion, so the booing was spotty at first. In the current climate, it was entirely unexpected that the Honored Guest would be subject to honest inquiry.

John went on.

"What was your reason for grabbing that infant, as reported in your court-martial, and throwing it into a ditch before shooting it to death? Did you judge the child to be a communist threat? Why did you order the murder of over five hundred innocent women and children?"

By this time, Calley had slunk away from the podium, and SGA ushers had taken away the microphone. The SGA president announced the end of the Q and A session, thanked the audience, and encouraged them to exit in a safe and orderly fashion.

The audience did not exit in a safe and orderly fashion. Many of them were blindingly outraged that the university would allow a student to ruin an otherwise perfectly patriotic evening. They yelled and threw soda cups full of ice at whoever looked remotely like a trouble-maker.

John was escorted away by campus security. The chief campus cop mumbled about charging John with something or other, but all he could legally do was treat the young man roughly, lecture him sternly, and let him go.

When it was all over, John refused to speak about the incident. Sarah Kay put her arm around his shoulders to comfort him, and he accepted her support gratefully. But, he remained silent. He had faced the crowd, told them the truth, and they hated him for it. It was over, and he felt like a spent fury.

But, he suspected that his father would have approved.



Teaching Encounters

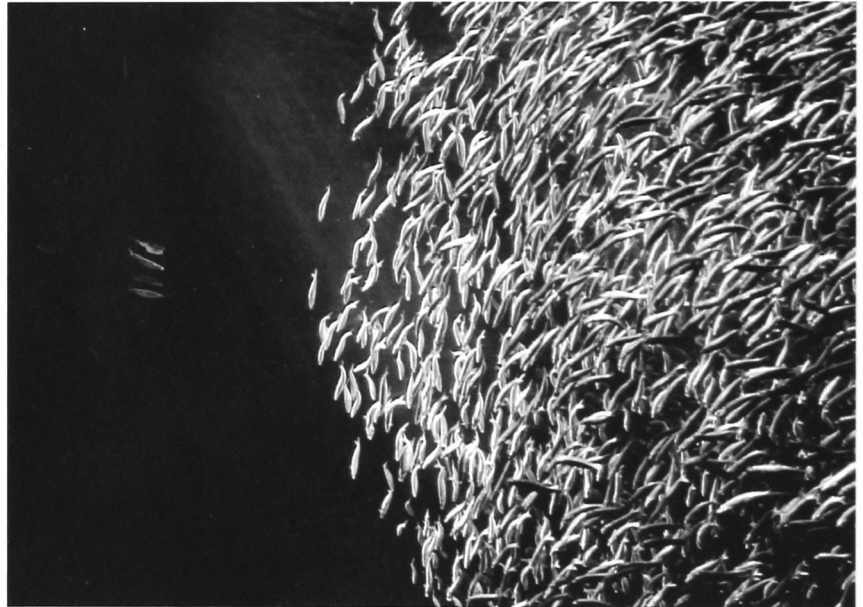
by Carla McGill

We are all watery.
The school of fish watch me intently.
I am a dolphin; my smile should tell that.
But they treat me like a shark.

That one in the last row is glaring at me,
perhaps due to the last test.
Another hides back in the coral,
demure and afraid.

In front are the eager ones.
I explain the assignment:
explore your caves, shells,
and seaweed beds,

recalling Thoreau, as well as
recent theories of description
outlined in our textbook,
Essay Writing for Sea Animals.



Do I see bulgy eyes roll up back there?
Write an essay telling about yourself
through the description. Two pages.
Bubbles of relief from the middle group.

I swim home during teeming hammerhead
traffic and ponder the assignment.
Those recent theories are flawed, I think.
Next time I'll use *Whale's Manual of Style*.

On a Flowing Ebb

by Carla McGill

*for my father
Robert Coldiron*

This exit, once completed,
opens out to multitudinous entrances.

The map provides methods
for placing ourselves
somewhere, but all maps
are approximations, aim
to represent something—a moment
of anguish, for instance, or a place
where a glimpse occurred—
something just out of reach,
a glint of sun on a wave.

To the North is white:
horse galloping bright winds,
luminous light on valleys,
shimmering skies.

Refreshments are in the South,
warm blossoms, continents of orangey gold,
whole philosophies form and scatter.

In the East are questions and beginnings.

Here in the West, convergence.
Air and time, rivers and stones,
earthquake dust like the debris of stars,
billions of stars in the streams
of great clusters, and on cold stones,
the mountains weigh down.

But now, thousands of lines

reaching out to eternity,
how can a soul decide on a path?
It's a wild world, and ocean currents
turn and incline toward a thousand extensions,
like light beams through the clouds,
covering the sunset horizon.

Options multiply like equations
we have never imagined,
the gravel of childhood
now a million glimmers,
a profusion of openings.
How do we find the ultimate map,
the summital place, the concluding
unity of things?

Therefore, I bless your dispersion
into a thousand places,
your starting place at latitude
and longitude, your grand dissemination
into the world's vast seas.

Finally, find your essence,
the theme and core,
the deepest place.
Then find magnetic north
and bolt there before clouds close in,
before seconds break like shells
against rocks of regrets,
before the world dissolves into
a place with no openings or exits.

And find heaven.
Find heaven, straightforward,
beaming and wide open.

"This certifies that on 07 November 2009 at 1515, while hove to with and no weigh on, the cremated remains of Robert Coldiron were consigned to the depths of the Pacific Ocean on a flowing ebb in accordance with the traditional rights of Burial at Sea as well as state and federal regulations at the following location:

Latitude: N 32° 41.05'

Longitude: W 117° 15.9'

Distance from nearest shore: 4.3. nm

Depth: 301 feet

Weather: Cloudy, 70°

Wind: 266 at 5 knots

Sea: 2' swell"



From What Fire or Breath

by Jen Sharda

our predecessors
must really have been
something
a twirling of mud
in the sleeping dark
surrounded by faint light
rotating shifts shape planet fattening
compacting on the dust of the universe
oceans watered by cosmic batterings
volcanic medallion bursting
into the heart of dull matter
sword flames
like shafts of an aura
lick alive and quicken first beings
microbes red amoebas
death breeds soil plants
fish land animals
first woman arises in Africa
being seen burns outward
along her whole-hearted side
child sitting woman kneeling man drumming
eternal celebration of devouring life
bringing us all here
letting love blow holes
in lives and selves
brief flames
in its glorious turnings

Needle Blade Twig

by Jen Sharda

falling on a sword never impressed me
as much as rising to meet one and keep going
as a hedgehog mushroom does, growing
to air and sun, letting twig, pine needle, leaf
lance its headstrong rise, fruiting body flexibly
rolls back its flesh from whatever sword falling
through, an airy tunnel tight or loose enveloping,
carries the foreign body along or lets it slide out free

as we let the foreign fall into us, our parents, our fates,
pierce us coming and leaving, shape us, have their ways
embraced, fond longings, touching intimacies, dark
passages; like a mushroom speared from below by blades
of grass, our youngers, brothers, sisters, fellow-striving protégés.
we fall short, grow past, rise together in our headlong human arc



Acceptance

for Donall

by Steven Pelcman

His frail body rises and saunters
to the sounds of Irish wind
over the bog stumbling at 4AM
without a care in the dark

to the bathroom
with a thankful lingering sigh
and whiskey-mumbling lips
still clinging to the last round.

He clears his throat
as if rehearsing for a final song
and returns to the dark
hallway and the stale smell

of his pipe that guides him
to the right room,
to where his wife had belonged,
to where her outline remains,

but it is the unexpected prayers
afterwards that breach
the joint bedroom wall
and take even the darkness

by surprise, and yet
how alike they are,
still, alone, godly, patient
for the first single thread of light.

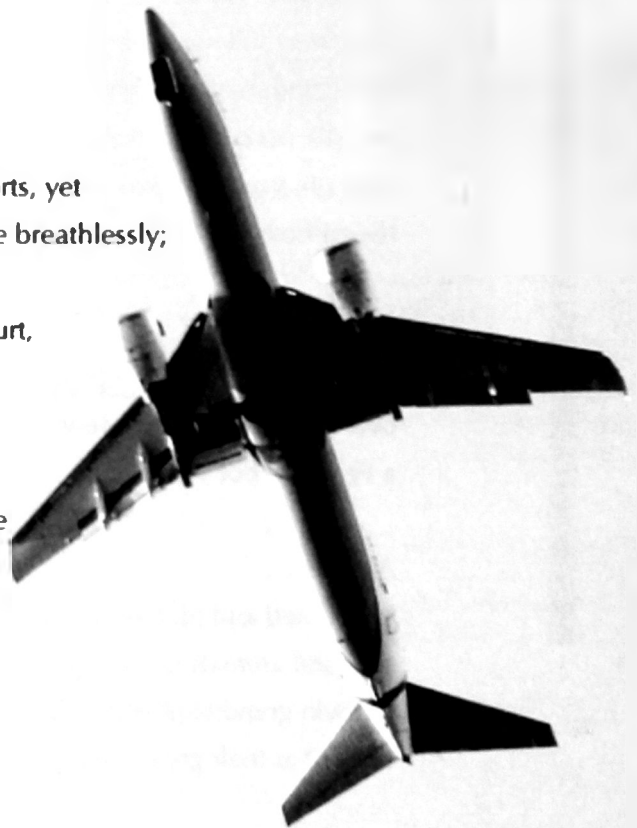


Logan

by Anne Oleson

Sometimes I forget about all these things,
so familiar to me: checking luggage,
going through security—those long,
long lines snaking back and forth—
the hit-or-miss temperaments of TSA workers,
where someone ahead of you draws
a friendly, joking sort, while you
come up against a guard whose curt voice
and narrowed eyes, as he directs you
through the scanner, just dare you
to protest your innocence—sometimes
I forget these things, until I shepherd
my two kids onto the concourse, Gate 7,
at the end, where we'll wait three hours
to board an overnight flight to Heathrow.

I look at them in surprise, thirteen and
fifteen years old: old enough to carry passports, yet
young enough to visit the currency exchange breathlessly;
young enough to post online shots
of each other before the sign, at the food court,
which reads London 3260 miles;
young enough to huddle a bit closer to me
at the first boarding call for BA 214;
young enough to let me take my own picture
of this last moment: the two of them,
together, taking off into the wide world.



Seasons Sewn

by Sheila Murphy

Long long ago...

the *da-dum da-dum* of her grandma's sewing machine,
a filigreed treadle rocking *back-and-forth back-and-forth*,
arthritic fingers coaxing cotton high
behind a sleek black arm labeled SINGER
in golden scrolls, satin-smooth oak drawers
lined with rainbow spools bobbins buttons thimbles
a tufted pincushion sprouting needles and pins.

Later...

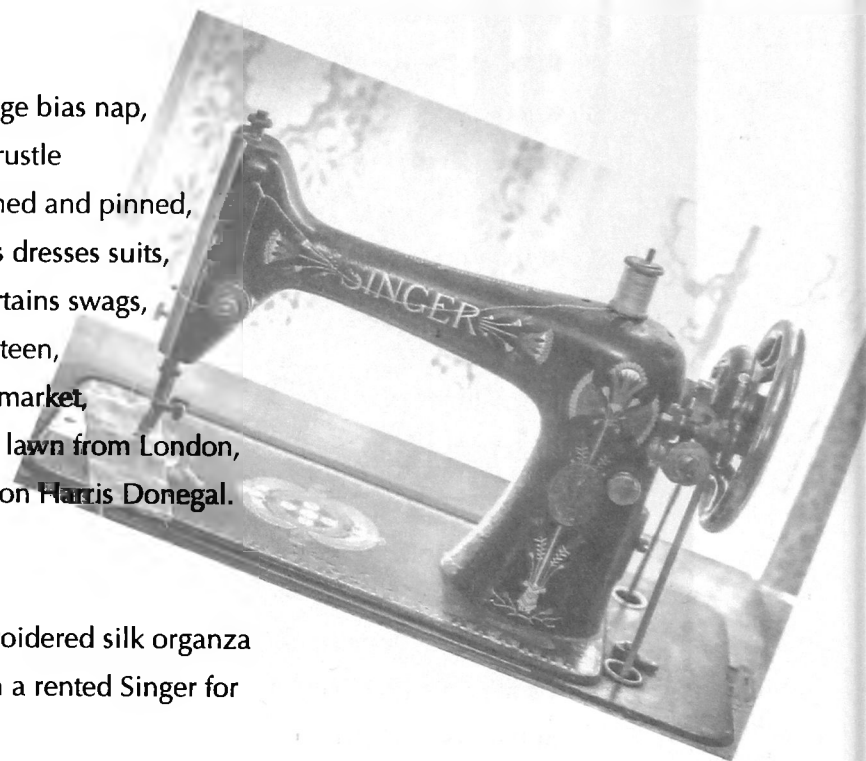
precision layouts aligning selvage bias nap,
yard by yard, year by year, the rustle
of tissue paper patterns, smoothed and pinned,
seams darts gathers gores, skirts dresses suits,
slipcovers pillows draperies curtains swags,
broadcloth batiste muslin velveteen,
raw silk from a Kowloon street market,
Thai silk from Bangkok, Liberty lawn from London,
tweed from the mills of Pendleton Harris Donegal.

Once...

the swish and shimmer of embroidered silk organza
over ivory slipper satin sewn on a rented Singer for
a Pearl Harbor wedding.

And now...

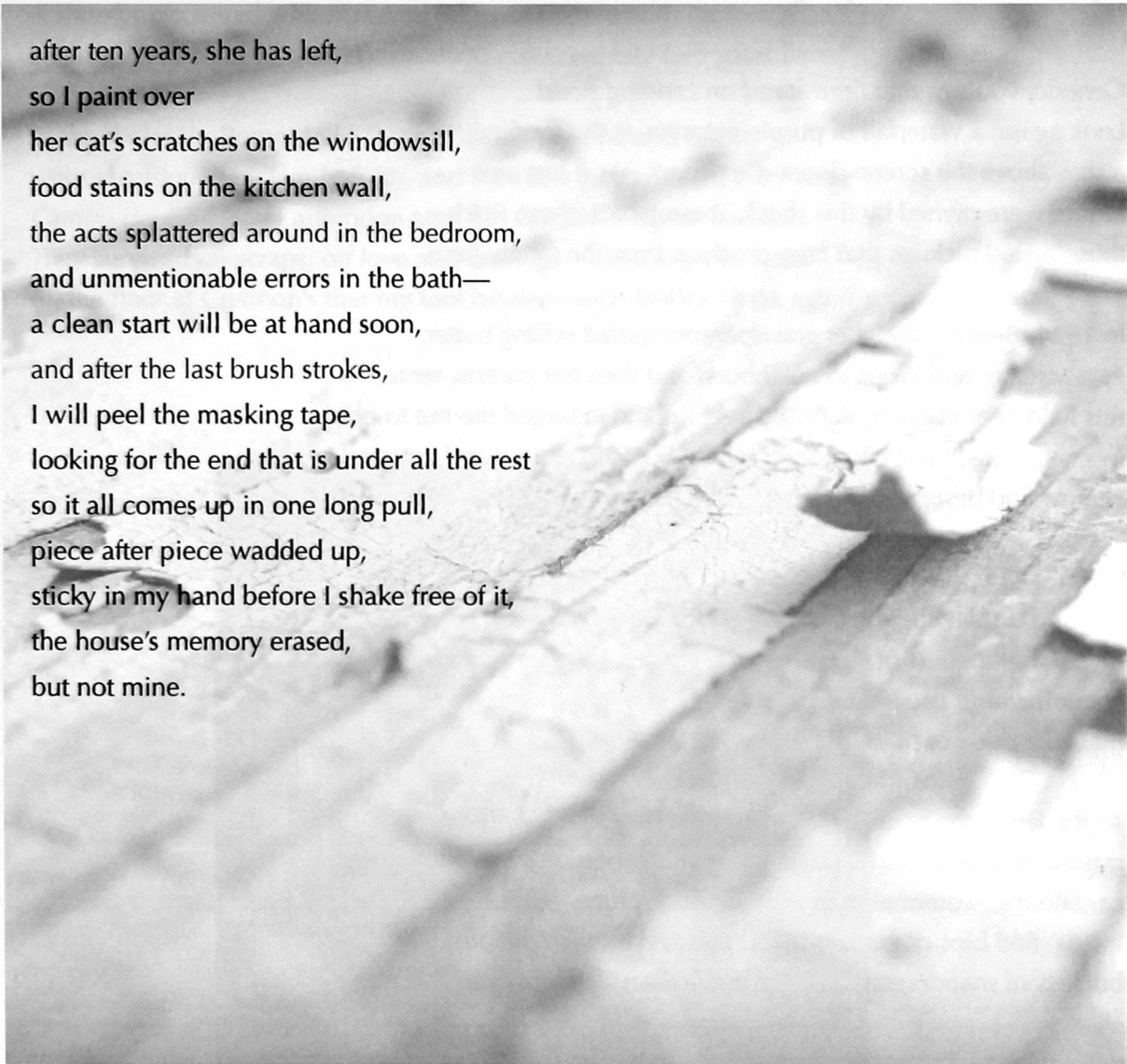
her veined and mottled hands corral a jungle
of pastel animals cavorting on quilts stitched
for twin granddaughters, a layered fabric of love
first felt at their great-great-grandmother's treadle.



Peeling

by Bruce Bagnell

after ten years, she has left,
so I paint over
her cat's scratches on the windowsill,
food stains on the kitchen wall,
the acts splattered around in the bedroom,
and unmentionable errors in the bath—
a clean start will be at hand soon,
and after the last brush strokes,
I will peel the masking tape,
looking for the end that is under all the rest
so it all comes up in one long pull,
piece after piece wadded up,
sticky in my hand before I shake free of it,
the house's memory erased,
but not mine.



Who's Your Farmer?

by Sheila Murphy

Generic, you say, that farm stand on Landing Road.

Look again: a waterfall of purple petunias at the roofline, a sign above the screen door—*Cretinon's*—as if just one farmer were owned by this shack, these tables, these fields, those rusted pickups that ferry produce from the family farm.

In 1924, Beverly says, her grandparents started selling butter, eggs, cream, and crops to neighbors, and then her parents rented this field near town. In their old age, Roland enlarged the hut to hold more than just the cash register where Eunice sweated and counted change and bestowed her smiles or frowns by whim or weariness.

Watch Taylor, Beverly's daughter, help her mother and uncle sort and display their bounty for drivers who detour all summer to feel the ripeness of *our own native corn and tomatoes, cucumber and cauliflower, onions and garlic, peas and beans* that take pride of place on a flat table near the road.

To the left of the open door, select from seasonal jewels: raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, cantaloupe, watermelon, peaches, pears, plums. Yum. Inside, find bins of green and red leaf and romaine lettuce, buckets of snapdragons, daisies, sunflowers, and bunches of basil.

Wait for a tray of zucchini blossoms, a bouquet of rosemary or dill, a fistful of thyme. A fat glass bottle fills with dollars and coins, as if anyone could ignore a label marked "For Taylor's college fund." A shoe box covered with flowered paper overflows with recipes because "We want to do a cookbook to celebrate fifty-two years here."

In the sixties, in Rome, Mike Ryan told us—after he and Teresa were abandoned by family, faith, and friends—they combed the *Piazza Campo dei Fiori* every afternoon after the farmers' wagons had left. They survived on scraps, on love and leavings—like the green bean on the floor at Cretinon's that my foot brushes aside before I look again.



American Scientist

by Donna Emerson

He changed the spectrometer to measure
at the cellular level, refined the study
of noble gases, clarified neutrino dynamics.

He understood plutonium and talked
on the news about how easy it would be
to carry in a briefcase across borders.
Americans may be safer for what he's told us.

He's getting scientific awards now that he's seventy,
goes down in history for his lab, his students.
Has a chair named for him. In perpetuity.

No presenters will discuss his three wives,
his failure to measure what was happening at home,
his neglect, his daughter choosing to abandon college
and not tell him, his many women.

His wives remain separate and forgotten.
They remain unnamed:
Lucy, Jennifer, and Mary Alice.
In procession they anointed him,
made all honors possible,
carried oil in urns of alabaster.

Grandmother Armstrong

by Donna Emerson

was what I wanted our mothers to be.
Chiseled English features,
on a soft-as-powder face.
White hair in its eighties
upswept into a chignon,
hands quiet, a still body,
calm as an Alabama day without wind.

Though her eyes had gone out,
she understood without many words
what was true.

She understood my struggle with you
without my speaking of it.
She asked me to read C. P. Snow's books
about scientists. I read them all,
trying to grasp the analytical mind of one
who dreams up theories, fine-tunes the spectrometer,
measures in the middle of the night, sifts
data about the rare and noble gases.

The one thing she couldn't see:
I had no trouble with you, the scientist.
It was your undiscerning animal instincts that
I tripped over until I had to go.
Your eyes grasping, your unzipped pants.

When I sat in her room, cosseted,
air damp enough to require fans in our hands,
I read books to her. We listened to readers
on long-playing records from Louisville.
We talked about cotton.



One for Mirth, Two for Sorrow

by Hananah Zaheer

(originally published in Odd Type's as-of-yet untitled anthology)

The school was closed yet again, and the boys milling outside the front door were whooping and hollering in high spirits at the prospect of a day of climbing trees and frolicking in the pond at the edge of the village. The sight put Hari in a morose mood. He thought of himself as somewhat cheerful usually, despite being an orphan, and was known in the village for his desire to please elders. He was often seen fetching water from the well for the animals in the fields or working alongside the farmhands, lashing together stalks of wheat into bundles. But, boys his age found him young and uninteresting and left him alone on fine summer days such as this, far too often an occurrence as of late.

He threw his bag on the floor and, unnoticed, kicked up a few small stones at the rusty padlock hanging against the bleached wood of the front door. The notice above the lock announced that, by the order of the authorities, the school would be closed until further notice. Hari knew this meant that Malik, the landowner on whose lands the two-room school building stood, had fallen into another dispute with the headmaster. Sharif, the oldest of the boys, separated himself from the sniggering gaggle and, puffing out his chest like Malik, the crops of wheat in neat rows across the dirt path behind him, pretended to twirl his imaginary moustache and pointed at the boys as if he was telling them off. The other boys laughed at his mimicry, jostling each other in their heady excitement at their unexpected freedom. Hari, sullen at having been deprived of the only thing that kept him from having to work the fields with his brother, decided he did not want to join the acrimonious alliance and lingered at the edge of the small group.

“Who stands up for your rights?” Sharif asked, mimicking the landowner’s speech at the last village gathering. “Who fights for your education?”

“You?” He pointed at a small boy in the front of the group. The boy nodded his head enthusiastically, dissolving into giggles at the thought.

“You?” He pointed at another boy and another. “You?”

His finger skipped across the dark heads.

Hari watched the finger move across the small group and anticipated it landing on him. Simultaneously trying to look disinterested and watching Sharif keenly, he cleared his throat, readying himself to object. He was worried that they might be seen by a passerby and reported to the landowner, who, everyone knew, did not take kindly to disrespect. But the game seemed to die down before it got to him, and the boys, high on their mockery, lifted their bags and threw their hands across each other’s shoulders, eager to disperse into the day.

Hari, a sudden knot of disappointment gathering in his stomach, slung his own

bag over his shoulders and, head bent, followed the exuberant boys into the field of wheat.

The screams were loud and sudden, and at the sight of the armed men, an assault of flashing eyes and gnashing teeth, Hari fell face forward amidst the stalks of wheat, clutching fear and loam until a commanding hand on his collar forced him up.

He was placed at the end of the line beside a silent Sharif, facing the building they had all just left. The men, five of them, were starched and stiff and loud. They strode up and down the line with authority, foreheads creased, shouting commands and curses. Their rifles were erect in their hands like appendages at the ready, and Hari believed them when they said they would not hesitate to shoot every single one of the boys like animals if they moved. To make the point, one of the men lifted his rifle and shot a round into the morning air. The nearby trees released a murder of crows. The man laughed and chased the fleeing birds with another shot.

The sound sent something tenuous and frightening outward from Hari's heart. It travelled through his veins, causing his arms to shudder and, with a final twitch, settled at the center of his fear. Before he could contain it, urine trickled down his leg. He shivered unexpectedly, feeling the warmth pool in his shoes. The air, which had been still all morning, had stirred, and a breeze had picked up. It travelled along the surface of the earth, lifting smells and clouds of dust from across the fields and, as it reached the assembled group of boys, rose as if it was being stirred up by a stampede of horses. Everyone was sure to smell him now, Hari knew. He groaned.

One of the men stopped his pacing, his dark face wrinkling toward the middle so it looked like he was being pulled inside his own nose by his disgust.

"What was that?" He brandished his gun at the boys with a flourish that reminded Hari of the school headmaster and his walking stick. "Who has something to say?"

The man grunted, his stance indicating that he would be more than happy to deliver a blow to any of the small heads with the end of his rifle.

His voice was even and low, but Hari, used to being at the receiving end of the headmaster's suspicions, heard the quiet threat. Everyone could smell the weak, Sharif always said, his own eyes glinting with the thrill of that knowledge. And here it was, the recognition, the threat, hiding behind the steady stare, the lingering rasp from the hoarseness of a throat used to barking all day and night, ready to snap like a dog on a leash.

Hari shook. First his hands, then his knees, and then he found himself shaking his head vigorously until he felt like his whole body was taken by the kind of tremor he had only seen in slaughtered animals after their heads had been severed from their bodies. The man eyed him and something like amusement tinged his glare. Beside him he felt a tremble run through Sharif, something

that felt a lot like mockery. Hari's face burned.

"Malik has heard the headmaster is creating trouble." Hari blinked into the air in front of him.

"What does he teach you in there?" The man made a sudden jerking motion with his head that seemed to Hari to point behind him.

Hari looked past the man at the school, no more than three oak-shadows away. It looked small and still in the direct sun of the morning light. A pair of the displaced crows landed cautiously on the low roof, the sun's early rays glinting off their slick, black backs. Two. A pair. An omen of death, his mother had always said whenever the cursed birds landed in front of their house looking for stray pieces of bread or rice. Hari said a prayer quickly, an old childhood chant his mother used to mumble into her hands before rubbing them over his body to create an armor against the day.

"Well?" The man waved a loose circle in the air with his rifle. "Who speaks?"

The other men had stopped their pacing to watch, the barrels of their guns angled toward the boys' knees. They were waiting, Hari knew. They had been watching, and now they were waiting for the boys to make any move before they pounced. This was the way it was, the watching and hunting. Hari had seen Sharif and his friends hiding in village alleys, jumping out at unsuspecting passersby. He had seen the hunt, the wait, the stripping of money, clothes, a veil if it happened to be the pretty servant girl from Malik's house. And then, they would point at Hari, who would always be at the edge of the action, drawn in by an odd mixture of envy and sympathy, not quick enough to move when the offended party threw curses and the occasional slaps at him. Hari wondered why Sharif had not spoken up yet, being the one who usually led the boys with chants and battle cries against flocks of birds or groups of boys on their way home from school. He wondered if it would work the same way against men with guns and tried to calm his heart's assault against his insides.

"You!" The man with the rifle spat in his direction, and for a second Hari was convinced that his fear had transmitted itself to the man, drawn him in again. But the man was looking at Sharif. Perhaps he had been recognized as the leader. Perhaps Hari had looked to Sharif for guidance too much. Hari looked at him now to see whether he was angry, wondering if he would have to pay later by having pieces of hay shoved down his pants or having to clean the dung out of the bullpen with his hands.

Sharif had a defiant look now, still as a lizard caught in the light, his eyes fixed somewhere above the school. But when he let out a slow, hissing breath, Hari heard it quiver. It occurred to him then that perhaps Sharif was also afraid. The thought pleased him, even as he worried. He knew the men had seen the boys mocking Malik, as sure as he could see the two crows who refused to move from the roof of the school building, and considered raising his hand to say that he had not been in agreement with the whole thing, that it had definitely not been his idea. But the slow escape of air from Sharif's lips sounded like

a warning to him, and even though he was unwilling to admit that he was fearful, he thought it prudent, what with the guns being in the picture and all, to drop his eyes to the man's feet and hold his own lips together.



The man's toes peeked out from the front of the polished leather chappals, covered in dust, oddly fat and determined. Hari told

himself that it was respect for authorities that kept him quiet and tried to ignore dread that invaded his body in waves, churning his stomach like fodder.

"Looks like we have a bunch of mutes here," the man belonging to the feet bellowed, and a chorus of sniggers followed.

Perhaps thinking that the boys' silence was agreement, he said, "I think we will have to find a better way to make you talk."

His eyes, narrowed and cunning, studied the line of boys. Hari looked down, then up, then away at the school building. In class, he knew that the way to not get called on was to avoid eye contact with the headmaster and thought the same might work now. When the man's hand ran under Hari's chin, lifting his face up to the sun, Hari breathed deeply. It was his turn, finally.

Having spent many a morning in the corner of the classroom with his hands tucked in under his legs and grabbing his ears, rear-end in the air and legs nearly numb, a victim of the headmaster's anger even if it was other boys who had thrown stones at the headmaster's turned back; he knew when he was in trouble. To make matters worse, he had the habit, once accused, of feeling guilty. It was Sharif who, older by three years, could stare anyone in the eye and, with all the confidence of a proud fourteen-year-old, say that no, he had not stolen any oranges, and no, he had not whistled at the headmaster's daughter.

Meeting the man's eyes, Hari held his lips together, his jaw set against the chattering his teeth insisted on. The man's face was oddly pleasant; he looked no different from any of the farmers who worked the lands in the village: the same dark skin, the same broad nose that sat in the middle of his face above his moustache. If it wasn't for the gun that Hari could see just under his own chin, the dull silver metal sitting quietly in the man's hands, Hari might even have been comforted.

The man's voice softened.

"What's your name?"

Hari considered lying but the situation discouraged it.

“Hari,” he croaked, embarrassed that his voice gave away his age.

The man lifted his hand to Hari’s cheek. He flinched, but the man’s fingers felt like the soft earth of the wheat fields, warm and rough, on afternoons when he hid amidst the stalks after school.

“You are a good boy, aren’t you?” The man leaned in, his head to one side. His eyes, the dark brown of an ox’s eyes, were both soft and direct. Hari nodded.

He wondered if perhaps the nod had been too eager, too boyish. Instead of moving on, the man continued his studying. Wanting not to be dismissed, Hari stared back at him, both excited and afraid of this direct eye contact, a language of men. The man’s fingers stayed on Hari’s face, scratching here, rubbing there, as if they were calming a scared animal. Hari felt his limbs softening. His heartbeat slowed until he was no longer trembling. The man seemed to be intent on his face, watching, mesmerized even. Hari stuck his chest out in what he hoped appeared like bravery. The man nodded, as if he had understood something, or as if something unspoken had passed between the two. A nod of respect perhaps.

“Come here,” the man said finally, putting his arm around Hari’s shoulder and pulling him out of the line. He let himself be led away from the boys where the man made him turn around and face the assembled line. Hari had never been made to stand in front of the boys at school to recite anything, never pulled out and pointed at as an example of anything. He blended in despite his attempts to be the one the headmaster singled out at morning prayer with his chalkboard cleaning and floor sweeping and washing of the headmaster’s shoes when he came in to school having shuffled through a muddy walkway. As Sharif and the rest of the boys looked at him now, he felt a small taste of pride. He, too, had been recognized. He, too, was someone they could look at, recognize, as a good boy.

From his new place outside the circle of boys, Hari could see the fields behind the boys. Two oxen stood, seemingly abandoned mid-till, chewing lazily on the wheat stalks and awaiting the hand that would drive them. Someone had to shoo them off, or they would ruin the crop. Hari wanted to point this out to the men but resisted the urge.

“Well?” The man resumed his pacing and threw a grin at his friends, who, rifles now slung at various angles from their shoulders, were intently watching the spectacle. “I think our friend Hari here might show us how to confess.”

The boys looked at him, their eyes a mixture of envy and something else that looked like warning. They did not want him to have the favor of these men, Hari thought. Besides, there was nothing he could think of that needed confession. He controlled his breathing, letting his mouth hang open like that of a stray dog trying to escape the sun.

The man stretched himself against the breeze so that he reminded Hari of a cat rousing itself after an oblivious slumber, all the ambition of previous victories

jumping off the set of his shoulders. Hari felt himself enveloped in partnership with the man, and the more he thought about it, the more power started to flow through him. He forgot the liquid that was still pooled in his shoes, sloshing around his bare toes, and thought that it was up to him—he could save the boys or let them sweat for a little while longer before he rescued them. He was sure to earn their respect, some gratitude, maybe even a spot as Sharif's right-hand man. The idea pleased him, Sharif and him being brothers, and he suppressed a smile.

He looked up and down the seven-boy-long line, catching the edges of their familiar noses and the shadow of Sharif's newly grown moustache, but no changes in the landscapes of their sunburnt faces that showed him that they knew what he was thinking. Sons of farmhands, they stood silent and obedient, hands loose by their sides as if being presented for inspection in front of the Big Sahib on his monthly visits to his land.

He would encourage them to speak. Intoning in the way the headmaster did, he spoke.

"Sharif?" He hoped to both cue the men that this was the leader and to let Sharif know that he would help. The plan was forming in his head slowly. The men would question Sharif, and he would interject on behalf of the boys, saying these were just children's games, that Malik need not be worried. It would never happen again.

Sharif maintained his gaze, and only in the way his nostrils flared could Hari see any indication that he had heard. Hari cleared his throat. Still, Sharif did not move.

The man, who was watching the boys intently, was at Sharif's side in a second. "You, then? Our friend tells me you might know things?" The soldier raised his gun at Sharif and leaned his head to the side.

The motion was like a silent command, and with the quickness of habit, the other men lined up opposite the boys, their movements a collective swish like a knife's blade aimed at the heads of wheat stalks, slicing through the air. They pointed their rifles at the kurta-covered chests and smirked, full of power that flowed into them through their fingers. Anyone watching from far away might have the impression of a standoff, the two rows of bodies standing still. But this was no meeting of equals, and on one side of the battle, knees trembled.

Sharif stared into the barrel of the gun, the warm metal right under his nose, his eyes wide. He looked like a scared little boy. An iron taste crept into Hari's mouth. No, he wanted to object. The speech he had been practicing in his head seemed to escape him, and all he could think was, *No, no...that's not what I meant.*

The man pushed his gun into Sharif's neck. Gone was the slow movement of his hands, the easy, languid way in which he had paced. He was, again, the ferocious beast who had pounced on them earlier, his voice cutting through the

morning air. The anger seemed to have descended on all the men in one fell swoop. Sharif met Hari's eyes. And Hari saw that the anger had settled in there as well, somewhere behind the fear, the wide, little-boy eyes. He panicked. He needed to clarify this, to let Sharif know that he had not intended this.

The men yelled, their voices now loud, echoing against the school building, coming back at them, hollowed.

"No," Hari said, and when no one heard him, louder, "NO!" Above Hari, some crows cawed, as if in warning.

"No," he yelled again and ran up to the man, grabbing at the arm that held the rifle. Hari wanted to speak to him, to tell him that he had not meant anything by pointing to Sharif. But his hand had landed on the rifle, and he found himself in a tussle with the owner of it. The other men yelled at him to let go, and all Hari could think was to hold on. He did not know where he had found the strength, but the barrel was in his hand and he could not let go.

A shot rang out. Hari screamed. His hands burned as if the sun had shot its rays into the rifle. He fell. The man stood above him, the end of his rifle pointed at Hari's head. But all Hari could think was his hands, his hands. And no, he had not meant anything by it.

But there was no time to tell the men who were all above him, rabid, and angry, and big. He cried and was ashamed of the way he was screaming. No doubt Sharif would tell him he sounded like a little girl. He tried to crawl through the men's legs to where the boys were standing.

"Run!" he heard Sharif yell, and he turned his head to see the rest of the boys turn and make a dash toward the fields. They were used to taking his command.

At this the men turned, surprised and screaming. They looked away from Hari.

Hari stood up and ran too. He knew the boys were headed for the bamboo forest that ran adjacent to the wheat fields. He knew where they would hide. His feet slapped against the ground furiously, surprising him. He had never been able to outrun the older boys when he was young, always finding himself in the middle of a huddle in a game of pass the parcel. It was always the quick-footed Sharif who was like silver, up the trees in a flash, molten mercury squeezing himself through chained gates to retrieve apples from inside forbidden gardens, the deftness of his limbs like a glint matched only by the brightness of his eyes.

Even now, as Hari passed the oxen, their mournful eyes wide, a scalding chill tearing through his lungs, he could see Sharif. His school bag had come undone and fluttered behind him like a flag, farther and farther away until, through the sweat that fell into Hari's eyes, and the elation, and something that felt a little bit like wonder, he thought that Sharif looked like an angel, a little-boy angel, floating above the wheat stalks, his wings catching wind.

"Sharif," he called. "Sharif!"

But Sharif kept flying, did not turn, would not turn. This hit Hari like rocks, and

he stopped.

He had betrayed Sharif.

The knowledge came to him as he had heard it came to prophets, out of the air, suddenly entering him through the hole in his chest, filling him so fast that he found himself bursting with it. The earth rose and sank into itself, pressing against his face, retreating. Crows, disturbed, fluttered against the sun in circles, held by an invisible hand, their cawing tearing through the sky. Their eyes were wild, and their beaks were filled with blisters, and Hari found that he could feel their pain, feel the bullets of the light across his body, hitting him now in the stomach, now his leg, his arm. With each hit, the sky receded, and darkness, hot and alive, gathered above him.

The men were somewhere close behind him. Among their voices, he heard his mother telling him to pray, to say the words that would protect him. But the dust had gathered into a fog inside him, and all he could think was that he had let Sharif down. And now, he would never think of Hari as a brother.

The thought squeezed his lungs. He wanted it out but it was already in him and spreading, and slowly it took him over until all he could do was meld into the ground, feeling the heat now receding and seeing before him the quiet eyes of the oxen, still.



Man Digging

by Zebulon Huset

There's something ominous about a man digging a hole in the middle of the night—unless it's merely a metaphor for a man contemplating his life's choices, a faucet is definitely leaking somewhere in the unlit house—but if there's actual earth being moved, a hand-driven shovel eating its way toward some preordained depth, whether to retrieve, or deposit something, it's just not good; that much is clear when you see him, inevitably in just his white undershirt and soiled slacks, heaving that moist loam onto the neatly trimmed lawn (possibly a cemetery's)—though, if it is a cemetery, neatly trimmed is an oblong adjective, more applicable to some graves than others, an old one where the tombstones are irregularly spaced as a boxer's grinning teeth, hills and tufts of weeds, occasional trees, but the tombstone at the head of this mound of freshly unearthed earth is definitely new, a recent burial—a son, or wife, perhaps the ex-lover of a mad scientist set on powering up his own cadaver replacement for the love he'd always taken for granted. However, if he's burying, it's even worse. A secret. A severed head, a whole bloody corpse—two. The moon is full, regardless, a bright spotlight. Sharp shadows stab deep into everything. The wet soil looks black in the blue light. Black as blood. Black as our imaginations, which would undoubtedly be disappointed if the man were digging up a Barbie that the dog had stolen from his daughter and buried, or burying a scavenger hunt clue for his son's birthday party. Even then, we wouldn't believe our eyes. Nothing at night is as concise as it appears—all camera tricks—he's still that dark shadow of a man scraping toward his decaying purpose while we sleep soundly, perhaps for the last time.



Southern Tier Farms

by Donna Emerson

After October, crispy brown fields
span out where the summer corn grew,
lumpy bumps as far as you can see.

In Steuben County,
you can walk these broken lines
if you have a day,
if you can stand the sharp edges
of the remaining cornstalks.

At the end of uneven rows,
sits the green forage harvester,
draped in foliage from the trees.
You know it's metal underneath.
Looks like she belongs here, resting
for cooling days, longer nights,

for farm families who know how
to keep her gears in order, run
her straight, not tip her, finish

before the snow,
put the harvested corn in the cribs
for the cows.

They park the John Deere here
with questions beside it.
How many silos do you have?
How many cows since they lowered
the price of a gallon to forty cents?



On Halloween

by Emily Eddins

On Halloween

Everyone knows

Strange things happen

Nothing is forbidden

The children race ahead into blackness

Panting for breath begging for treats

It is fun to play at death

When you have so long to live

The night is open and alive

With freedom and wildness

We are all pretending to be

Something we aren't

Escaping our daylight selves

Stepping out of our usual costumes

And into any life we choose

Giddy with all that possibility

And I in my feathered witch's hat

Holding two drinks

As if I knew you would be coming for me

Appearing like a ghost on the sidewalk

You feel so real this electric night

We are alone

The only people watching us are pumpkins

Lit inside and melting with fire

You whisper that you can keep a secret
And only later
Do I realize what you really mean
Temptation waits on coils in the dark

But I am weighed down by the haul
The children have dumped on me
Anything that tastes so sweet must be bad for you
Everyone will feel sick tomorrow

In the distance someone cries "trick or treat"
"You can't have it both ways," you say
While looking at me
And I wonder what compromises you have made

What have we both explained away?
We celebrate death one day a year
But die in secret every day



The Tsunami

by Emily Eddins

The tsunami came at Christmas
A wave no one wanted
Tossed children to a hungry sea
Gobbling precious souls
As if they were popcorn
As if each had never been
The person a mother loved most

The earth shuddered violently
The wave pounded lives to sand
It seemed sudden but in fact
The pressure had been building
For years and years
I'm sure Mother Nature tried to suppress it
What mother would want to inflict so much misery?
Bodies floating like driftwood
Homes exploding lives imploding

Because I had seen so much like this
I never thought I would be like this
But plates collide
The landscape is forever altered
The drowned cats the rusted hollow cars
The splinters of my old house
And underneath the wreckage
You wait
A miracle
Warm alive heart beating



Snow Flower

by Andrew Jarvis

Among the midwinter fire,
daylight is gilding arms.

They rise into its gold,
a bright planting of red.

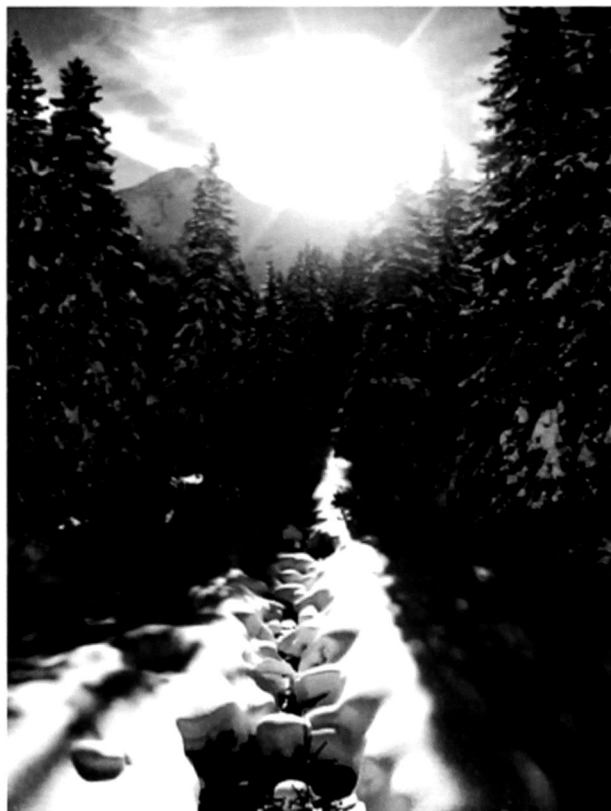
In white, matting the ground,
they thrive from its feeding.

They fall under shadow,
the vision of a man

searching for life in things,
gardening in the sun.

And fertilizing growth,
he embodies their blaze.

He does not grow in snow,
but rather earth, flaming.



felt tongue (100)

by Guy R. Beining

iron out this poem
for sleep and penetration.

star print of night
shines on cropped waves
& depth charge
of a wounded waterway.
we bleed &
take in the chant.

in laughter, rosebud
is primed as
ruddy cheeks are
about to bleat.

in flight of
dark days scratched
into a fine paleness,
the sea gives in
to the dark mouth
of a river.

felt tongue (102)

by Guy R. Beining

a scattered bit
of print &
from under foot
iris stems.

the milky way
spills before an
early breakfast.
enough of this day
waylaid, rounding
platter of our speech.

the apple is ripe
tucking toes in.
the bed was
an offering,
lilac into lily,
raindrop lifts as
the drummer comes
around again
fetching the long
lines of summer.

We, on stools
of other stars,
wasting the loom
made by our breathing
& what you write
frames something
not really there.

felt tongue (161)

by Guy R. Beining

the shadow is
too heavy to weigh
or carry away
now staring at
a fierce icon,
its silver eyes molding
a chalice, a long
white sentence
shattered, mice
on the edges
of a sieve in
metastases, a lingual push
baring out the brunt
of being a
modern prop,
being in prism
of a shadowed front.

felt tongue (162)

by Guy R. Beining

spied the eyes
gazing at a
leafless tree, an
x-ray of stillness
in a dark
wave too striking
to miss.
have no idea
where we are,
being papered
to the wall,
then unglued,
the scent of
long distance &
a century in
tiny, yellow flakes.

felt tongue (156)

by Guy R. Beining

i saw paul
celan in a trench
coat go into the
metro, seeing his
image so simpatico,
his face in
powder of the moon,
in powder of another sphere.
i called out,
but my voice
crawled back.
i left paris
the next morning
& hardly felt
the pouring rain
on my skin.

felt tongue (158)

by Guy R. Beining

i saw him near
the ticket booth.
he had left
hills of ice,
& was getting
a ticket to
the sun, having
lost all the
lots in hell.
he no longer
wanted his ice eden,
being buried so long
in the memory
of his mother
growing out of silt,
making it through
the splash of
gun fire, fitting
into a bog
with no name,
covered up by the
coats of many winters.



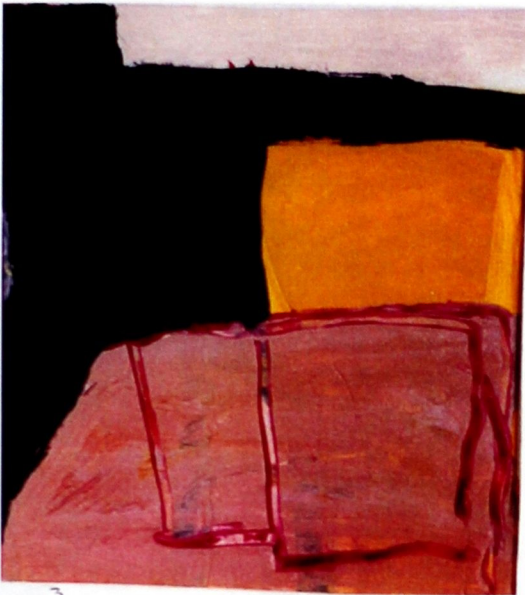
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Untitled Works by Guy R. Beining

untitled works by Guy R. Beining

by Guy R. Beining



Untitled Works by Guy R. Beining

The Heavy Head of the Moon

by Betsy Martin

The heavy head of the moon,
orange and ragged,
lumbers above the trees,
her stick body
too skinny to see.

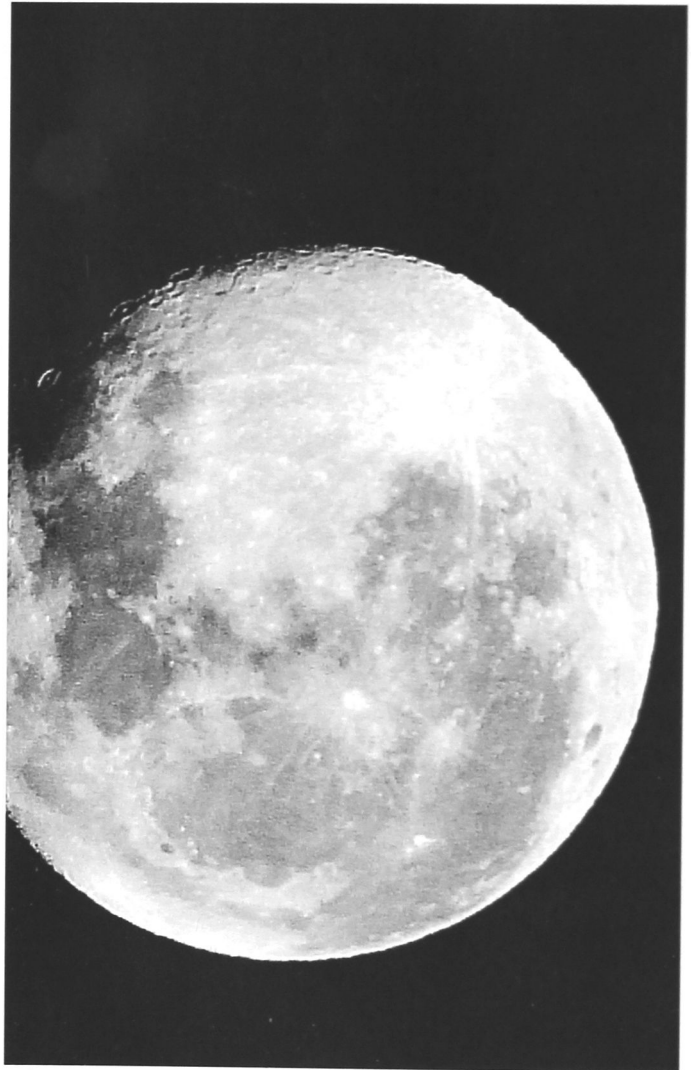
She has swollen up, huge,
absorbing the cares
of the people below,
her spongy face dripping
with their worry, grief, and envy.

A couple might look up
from a window of their house,
or pause in their evening stroll,
or point from their car
and say,

“What a beautiful moon!”
They smile,
and their faces soften.
Their breathing blends gently
with the cool night breeze.

O, empathetic one,
thank you!

She staggers.
The great head sinks
and comes to rest in some maples.



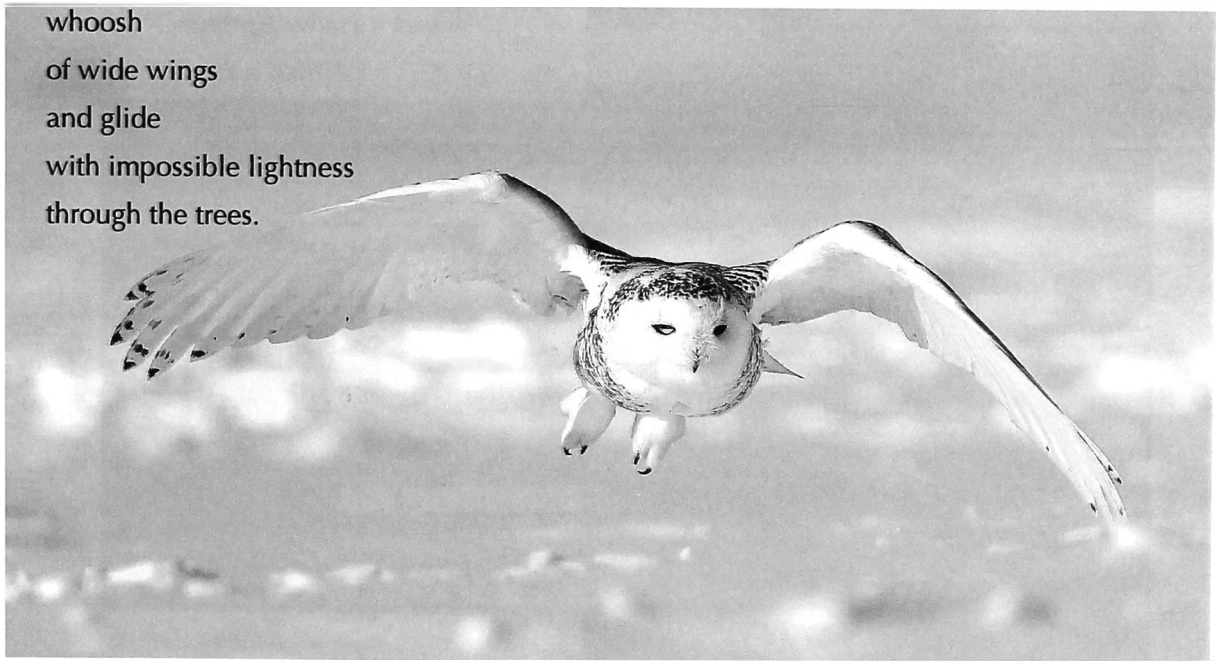
Impossible Lightness

by Betsy Martin

Winter encrusts the world
in pearl tones of silver and gray.
My obscure thoughts well up
like ashy tree trunks hollowed and useless
since a beaver dam flooded these woods.
They branch and dissipate in slate sky,
multiply into a ghostly forest.
I'm alone in here.

Snow dresses the branches
like flattened tutus of dead ballerinas.

Perhaps a snowy owl,
rare at this latitude,
will swoop down,
incandescent,
with soft
whoosh,
whoosh
of wide wings
and glide
with impossible lightness
through the trees.



Eating with Ghosts

by Rochelle Shapiro

Here I am, eating with my son, daughter, husband,
reminding myself to chew, to not cup my hand
at the rim of my plate to shelter my food,
as if my dead father could reach for it again.
In Russia, he sucked on bark, even stones.

Here I am, asking everyone about their day,
leaving some food on my plate
to please my mother's ghost.
"This way you won't get broad in the beam."
Her hand pinches the small fleshy roll
at the waistband of her girdle.

At night, when everyone is in bed,
you can find me in the dark kitchen,
bending into the open fridge,
the glow of its cold bulb,
eating leftovers with my fingers,
choking on unchewed food.
Shh, don't tell.



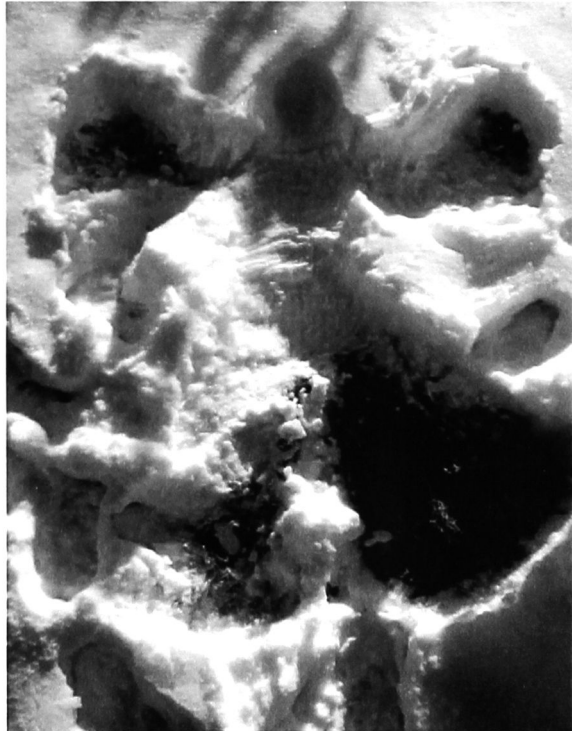
Drought

by Rochelle Shapiro

How can the tub become a swimming hole
for a four-year-old girl to rock on her hands and knees,
neck stretched, curls dripping, dangling.
When she sits up, what will she slap
to make waves and what will lap against her chest?

Spring and summer dusks, the sprinkler will no longer
sst, sst, sst. There will be no grass
to carpet her bare feet, no rainbowed shower
to charge into. What will fill her tin watering can
with its painted daisies? Will her mother's
rosebushes grow without water?

How will she stomp in crunchy autumn leaves?
Will there be any leaves at all? If there's no water,
will there be snow? How will she lie, face-up,
scissor her arms and legs to make snow angels?
Will she one day ask,
"Grandma, what's a lawn?
"What's a bath?"



The Dying Sister

by Rochelle Shapiro

You fell in slo-mo like a mimosa petal
caught in a small breeze, sprawling,
nearly soundless, on our parents' speckled linoleum,
your face wan, bluish beneath your blue eyes. I,
five years younger, didn't know
you could make yourself faint. I didn't know you whittled
yourself away spitting your meals into napkins.
I thought you had the "C" like Auntie Becky or Aunt Ceil.
When you slept until 4:00 p.m. and Mother put a mirror
to your parted lips, I never expected breath.
Those "slashes" on your wrists, grazes
that didn't need stitches, healed to pearly stripes.

Black widow spider, you wove us all into your worry-web,
yet you went on to outlive a husband
and three live-in men. How old were you when you fell
in love with death? I remember you
and me leaping from your twin bed to mine,
the bottoms of our nightgowns ballooning, your chestnut hair
flying up from your shoulders. You,
airborne, born of air. We had to grip your arms
to stop you from throwing yourself into Father's open grave.

When a doctor told you to see a therapist, you'd change doctors.
I'd change my phone number, return your letters, unopened.
Before long, Mother would say, "But she's your sister,"
and I'd remember you holding my small hand
to file my nails, buffing them with crème rouge.
I would phone you again, and your silky thread
would begin to spool itself around me.

Hatching your latest death, you bought a mobile home
in a trailer park smack inside a hurricane belt.
I surf weather channels, startle when a car backfires,
as if your house could thunk down into my yard.

Last night I dreamed you were laid out
in a coffin on palest blue satin, your hair
in tendrils on the shiny lace-edged pillow.
I put a mirror to your lips. When I didn't see
vapor, I felt myself take full breaths.

All the Best Strangers Have Mommy Issues

by Clio Contogenis

He lives on my floor, at the end of the second of the four hallways that branch out from the elevator somewhat like the legs of a spider. He strides down the hallway with his hands in his pockets, bouncing with each step as if his legs are too long to move his body efficiently. He is always dressed in the same black leather jacket, which exudes the musty, cigarette-tinged odor that comes from spending years in the same closet. He is the sort of tall, lean person who tends to mold himself into a doorframe whenever there is one available. He is temporary, never really belonging wherever he is—a question mark, an eraser smudge.

I try not to look at him as we stand side by side, waiting for the elevator, for I know that if I do, I will be forced to tilt my head up, up, craning my neck to get a look at his serious, dark-featured face. And he would notice that—notice me staring.

I would not shrink from observing another stranger, but I cringe when I see him. His presence isn't particularly frightening, it just freezes the air. I know that the words I send across that expanse of ice-air to him will die of cold along the way. Whenever I see him, I'm suddenly extra aware of my body, shrinking my hands into my pockets, crossing one leg over the other until I stand rather like a twisted-up stork. I want to vanish into myself and not have to face that somber mystery.

My dad almost met him once. Our doorman, Peter, tried to introduce them in the lobby of our building.

"Hiya, Constantine," Pete said cheerfully. "Y'know, there's another Greek guy that lives on your floor. Want me to introduce you?"

"Oh, that's nice," my dad said as he brushed by, in an irritable mood, not bothering to notice the tall, slender figure waiting expectantly behind Pete. As he approached the elevator, though, he did notice, and thought of going back to apologize for ignoring our fellow Greek, but the damage was already done. The man hasn't spoken to us since.

Perhaps it is this unending silence that gives me the impression of time slowing whenever I see him. Of the temporary death of everything in sight. When I was younger, I just assumed he was a big, mean man. He didn't show the delighted interest in me, or the automatic softening at the corners of the mouth that I inspired in all the adults I found worthwhile. I didn't think that there might have been a reason that I never saw him smile.

Then, one day as I was coming home from school, I found my route to the elevator

blocked. I looked up from the book I was reading.

On the way to the elevator in my lobby, there is a single stair, with a short iron railing. This stair has caused many problems, once almost leading to a lawsuit, setting off a series of discussions and plans for reconfiguring the entrance to the building to make it more accessible to handicapped and elderly people. My strange neighbor stood just below the stair, holding the elbow of a very old woman with a walker who was struggling to get down the stair. They had clearly been there for a while. She was more of a ghost than a woman; she leaned all of her weight on him, unable to hold herself up, but there was so little of her that he bore it easily. She moved almost imperceptibly. Her bones creaked their way into position as she slowly, slowly shuffled her feet closer to the edge of the stair. I once saw a movie in which there was a man whose bones were as fragile as glass. He lived alone in an apartment, swathed in numerous sweaters, his furniture and walls all padded to prevent some

accidental collision from breaking him. As I watched my neighbor shift his mother toward the edge of the stair, I wished that there were some sort of padding on the marble floor of the lobby, for if this woman were to fall, she would certainly shatter. I watched them until I realized I was watching, then hastily stepped back, trying to pretend I had only just entered the lobby. I looked down into my book again and skirted around them to the elevator, escaping into its bland impersonality. I could not have been more embarrassed had they both been naked. I felt as though I had witnessed something painfully intimate, not meant for the eyes of anyone but the two of them. It wasn't just a man helping a woman down the stairs; it was a son living his mother's death. There was a raw, almost instinctual emotion about that image that I had no right to see.



I hadn't known his mother was dying. I tried to imagine what it must have been like for him, to come home every day to less and less of her, to find himself supporting the figure who had supported him throughout his growth. There was a part of him that was seeping away with her, and the air around him was being sucked into the hole created by her approaching death.

Now, I understood his unsmiling face. But, this understanding didn't lessen his mystery. Instead, it made him seem all the more distant from me. The mere thought of someone I deeply loved dying was almost unimaginable. His endurance of her death elevated him to some higher level of experience that I could not reach.

Today, as the elevator doors open with a ding that always reminds me of the beeping noise that ends each episode of *24*, our eyes meet. We both tighten our lips, stretching our mouths backward into those flat little smiles that pass between near strangers who accidentally acknowledge each other, as if we are apologizing for this temporary awkwardness. We stand in opposite corners, and I can feel the air between us growing brittle with the silence. I focus my eyes firmly on the tips of my boots. I wonder if I can allow myself to look up to check what floor we are on. *This ride is taking far too long; we must have gotten stuck.* I let my gaze flick upwards. The elevator is moving down as it should, just passing the fifth floor. I look back down to my feet.

At last, the door swishes open and we are released. As we step out of the elevator, heading in opposite directions, I hear him speaking over my shoulder.

"Have a good day."

His voice is low, bottomless, like the sound of boulders scraping against each other.

"You too," I say automatically, then stop and turn in surprise. He is already leaving the lobby. I can't tell if he heard me.



Camouflage

by Terry W. Ford

I removed my wedding ring today.
After thirty years, I just took it off,
rolled it between my fingers,
and gazed at the track
it left behind:
deeply incised upon my finger,
a thin, pale, bluish band of skin,
the color of an oxygen-starved infant.

I selected the ring myself,
much as if a slave
had selected her own shackle,
a prisoner, his own chains.

The hand lay empty,
freed of its metallic bond
but deeply marked by an
ugly, ineradicable strip
of repulsive, lifeless-looking skin.

I slipped the metallic circlet back in place
where it settled into its accustomed task—
hiding the stain of an ugly little scar.



Worthwhile

by Tom Pescatore

You type
what comes first,
then you print
labels, pull those out
of printer smelling of
heated glue and paper,
smelling like newspapers
and running belts and wheels,
smelling like childhood memories
you can't quite recapture
with the smell gone, so
suddenly leaving.
Afterwards, you remove
labels, place on folders
and stamp Times New Roman
red letters once
for stamping's sake.
Place the folder
in its categorized,
alphabetized place
between other folders
placed in their
categorized,
alphabetized place.

Then you leave it
alone, knowing
that you may
never go back to it,
knowing, maybe,
it's possible that
no one else ever will,
knowing that this folder
will outlast you,
and your children,
and your children's children,
knowing that what is in
that folder is less than
worthless,
knowing that all of
your effort is meaningless,
knowing that eventually
everything but those
folders will die.

Up

by Sybil Estess

"Up" is one of the few words
my tiny nineteen-month-old
granddaughter knows, along
with "MaMa," "DaDa," "Agua,"

and "Bye-Bye." She's only
high enough to come up to
our knees and has to look "up"
constantly. So she wants to

be "up" when she yearns to
be held, or cuddled, or read to.
To play. Rock. Sleep. "Up,"
she says when she has enough

of her breakfast or lunch, or then
supper. "Up," she repeats as she
walks up the stairs, holding onto
her grandfather or me, and also

the railing. Even when she goes
down she says "Up." It's "Up"
when she climbs like a mite-
spider onto the adult sofa or

chairs. It seems that "down"
would come soon, since she
knows "DaDa" with its Ds.
But what she desires now is

"Up." Then "Up" and "Up"
always-her current way of moving.
It may be months, years, or a
lifetime before she has to learn

the meaning of going in the opposite
direction, doing "down": "Delve,"
"Depths," "Disappointment," or just
"Do." Do it now. Go downward,

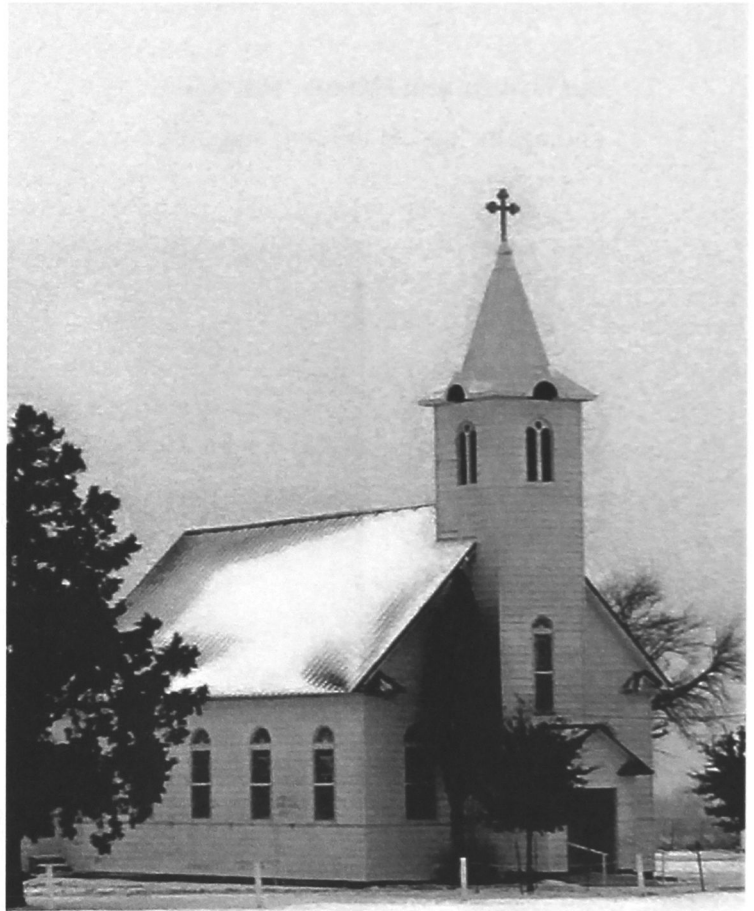
our heaven-sent Himma. Not again
and again "up" as the one and only way.



Husks of Corn in the White-Washed Church

by Lyn Lifshin

Sill. County fair grounds
are mud. Golden
stretches toward Lake
Champlain. Everything
uneaten drips in
shadows, dark apples
under moldy leaves,
the sky sapphire and
pewter. Somewhere a
woman who crushed
strawberries under
paraffin cradles a bell
jar of roses before
prying open the lid to
suck back summer's
sweetness as if it
were a lover's tongue.
Stillness. Only a
hammer boarding the
last camp up. In hours,
wind in the hay bundles,
the moon turns to
ghost mounds.



Queen, Ice Rink, and Heavy Rain

by Maura Gage Cavell

Queen played over the loudspeakers
in the hallways of her high school
on the days of football games.

The same music followed her
to the ice rink where she took
her boyfriend's hand as they

went around the rink; at "time's up,"
the workers blew a whistle
and cleared the ice for the next

group of kids who'd paid to skate.
They'd go to the lockers to get their
shoes and return their rented shoes.

Hot chocolate warmed them up again
before they walked around the mall
and called a parent or older sibling

to come get them. They'd stand
around whichever entrance
they were directed to by their ride,

listening to Queen playing
over distant loudspeakers
and watching the heavy sheets of rain.



Something So Simple as Breathing

For Emmanuel

by Ani Tuzman

In Cardiac Intensive Care, the chambers
of my son's blue heart swell under
translucent skin, no wall of bone.
They bulge and roll into each other,
the muscle kneaded by invisible hands.

Days pass, measured only
by the beating of his unsheltered heart,
while I sit on a tall orange stool, my heavenly post,
trying to keep my balance without holding
my breath or this baby—

his veins saturated, tiny plastic hoses
burrowing into his wrists, ankles, and
chest, a mechanical box giving him
breaths he cannot take on his own.
Something so simple as breathing.

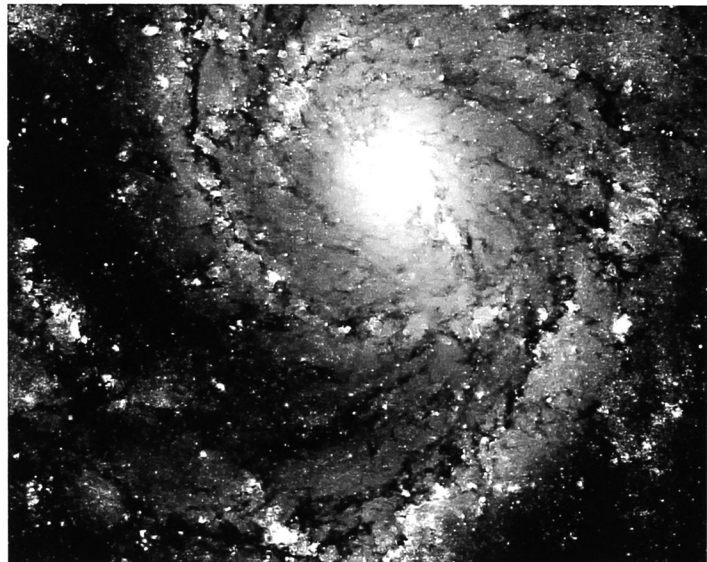
I stroke small patches free of IVs,
a place on his thigh, his forehead,
sing to him
while he resists his sedated sleep.
For months, I guard his hours,
vigilant on my fence: Death on one side.

Life on the other.
Until my fear and my faith,
on opposite sides of that fence,
jump it—to meet in my heart
and dance with each other
like this was a celebration, not a vigil.

Motion, Symmetry

by Carla McGill

Cold morning dirt widens out into beautiful
distances; beyond that, motion everywhere.
Clouds accumulate into a conference of divines,
white splashing unities of pure thought.
Hydrothermal pools, volcanoes in the ocean depths,
and all the earth's plates moving at will.
Farther out, grand disturbances. Dust storms
on Mars, spectacular supernovas, and trillions
of stars in the streams of great clusters.
Clear pathways are brief, and lifetimes
burn and scatter while the Pacific stretches
out like a promise. For so much motion,
an inward symmetry and concentration,
and the peaceful persist like the forming infant,
the patient tree. But even on Jupiter's
moons, there are the cracked ice plains,
constant turmoil on the planet's red spot.
As for the dark matter, it finds us, moving or still.



Closet

by Laurie Patton

The upper closet
had a tiny window—
latticed and round.
Its patch of light
(sometimes gray,
sometimes yellow)
lifted us skyward.

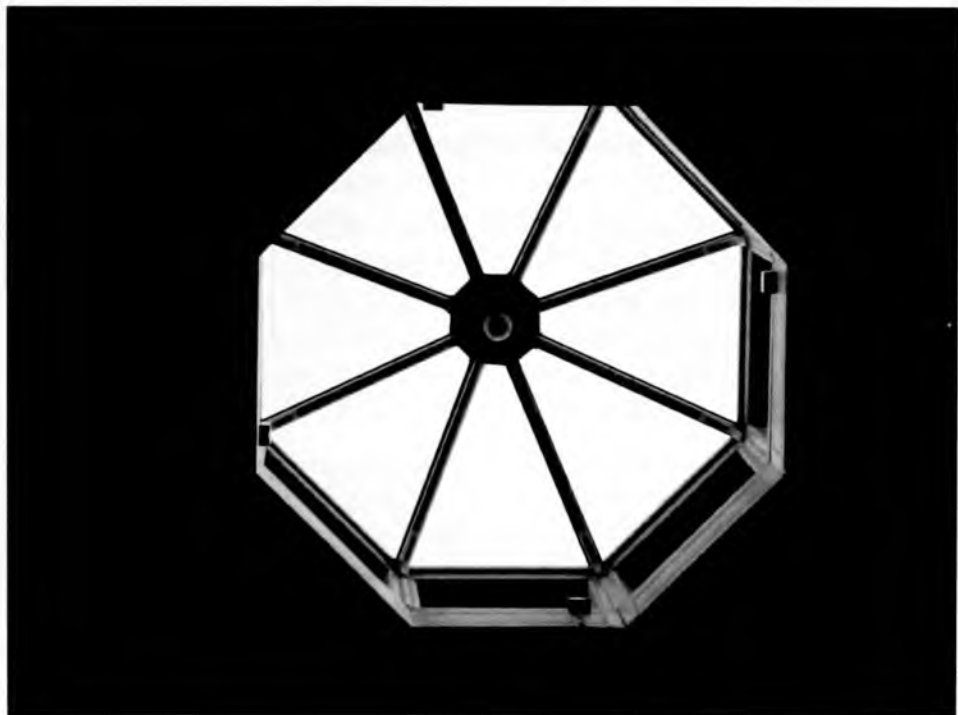
We went there often
to be wrapped
by the hemlines
of winter coats
still smelling of pine
and to be held
by the rows of shoes,
their leathery colors
barely visible
in the light.

Once we were cradled
in fleece and wool,
we craned our necks
to see the moon.

One evening,
as we were whispering
among the coats,
our father, the surgeon,
came in
and put a candle
on the windowsill.

When we asked him
what it was for,
he said
it was there
to call our dog home.

He said
that the flame
in the closet window
could bring the dog
(now dead
for seven months)
back to his bed
near the door.



A Moment in a Diner

by D Ferrara

She would get off at Westerly.

The name of the diner, Terminal Lunch, compelled her. It evoked Raymond Carver or Saki or Sartre, depending on her mood. Its sign wasn't visible until the train pulled out of Westerly, the afterthought of a small town. Passing it on her way from New York to Kingston, each time she had thought, *Next time, when I'm not in such a hurry, I'll stop.* From Westerly, she could call for a taxi to Kingston, or her brother could come to get her.

This time, she should have been in a hurry but couldn't face the last part of the journey, yet. Her mother wouldn't know that she had stopped—her mother, wound tightly in the past, seldom noticed the present. Her brother might know, but he would be late, as well. Drinking to steel himself for the drive to the nursing home, he would still be at home when she called from the station, whatever station it was.

Early that morning, she had been in New York, her current home. From the first moment she had seen the city, she had felt roots that Rhode Island could not invoke. All her years, all her ancestors' years—Browns, Pells, Auchinclosses—still left her isolated in the tiny state. Rhode Island was her mother's home, not hers. As an Army brat, "home" evoked a shifting landscape of olive drab and furnished housing.

New York, as seen from behind the wheel of a faded Volkswagen, clicked. Driving like a cabbie, hard on the gas and brakes and merciless on the clutch, she unleashed a demon that otherwise remained tucked beneath a placid surface. No one who saw her delicate hands and slender form, no one who heard the rich tone in which she spoke or appreciated the art in her dress and demeanor, could reconcile the demon with the visible Samantha.

If, indeed, it were "Samantha" they knew. Her very proper relatives on her mother's side had called her by her full name. As a child, sleepy with Sunday dinner visits, in Victorian houses in Kingston and Narragansett, she had dreamed herself into the sepia photos on their mantels and the oil paintings on their walls as her aunt played the piano or her uncle the violin. Captured forever as a peaches-and-cream child, prim yet mischievous, or a slender young woman teasing waves on Narragansett Beach, her mother lived as much in the pictures as in the harsh world outside. "Samantha" was the right name there.

To her father's family, she had been "Sammy" (a nickname she despised). Those relatives had no oil paintings and few photographs besides brightly colored calendar art.

Studying for the first master's degree and most of the way through the doctorate, she had been "Sam." It had suited the terse efficiency with which she had pursued

her studies. Friends from that era still called her “Sam.” With her husband and her students, it was “Samantha,” as her grandmother and her uncles and aunts had called her. *So long to go full circle...*

Florence, her mother, would not call her Samantha or Sam. Most often, her mother did not recognize her. The last time, Christmas, Florence had called her daughter “Charlotte” for the whole visit, while Samantha had fed, bathed, and clothed her mother skillfully. A former Army nurse, Florence had taught Samantha well.

Once, Samantha had loved the science of nursing, the names of body parts, the chronology of disease, infection, and cure. Proud of her knowledge, she had been fascinated by science’s orderly progression. At some now-forgotten crossroads, Samantha had discovered music, theatre, dance, and poetry. She had made love to the arts in the shape of callow youths and wise older men and good friends and total strangers with music in their eyes and art in their voices, who moved in dance and declaimed as they left her or she, them. Nursing, disease, and science faded from the flow of her life.

Her mother might have noticed—must have noticed—but never mentioned that Samantha had left the potency of science to teach acting, the flakiest of arts. For even when Florence had still remembered her only daughter’s name, she seldom spoke it.

There had been no falling out. Rather, silence had built distance between them, pulling and tapping, one from the other, so gradually that neither realized until a year could elapse without more than a sentence on a greeting card.

Then, her mother aged. Guilty, visiting more often, Samantha was shocked anew every time she saw Florence. Abruptly old, deaf, wizened, and toothless, a fairy-tale hag had eradicated the elegant girl in the old photos. She became a creature who brushed crumbs off the table onto the floor that Samantha would sweep, stained her sheets with urine and bile, and shouted in her daughter’s face as if Samantha, too, were deaf. Her mother had always taken care of herself and of others. Hard and practical methods were what she had dispensed and what she needed now. Dutifully, if not always lovingly, Samantha planned her schedule around time with Florence.

The conductor’s voice reminded Samantha that Westerly would be the next stop. Suddenly positive, she collected her small leather bag, sweeping down the aisle to the exit. The conductor glanced, surprised, muttering, “Westerly?” in a quizzical tone.

Samantha nodded tightly, sweeping from the train. Her coat, a marvelous confection of Irish wool, blazed with color in the autumn air. Twenty years ago, it had been an extravagance. With Yankee thrift, she had made it earn its keep.

Once on the ground, she hesitated. Having never actually been here before, she needed to get her bearings. Her heels were too high, and the ground was blanketed with loose rocks and pebbles.

No one else got off at Westerly. The stationmaster (or someone she supposed was the stationmaster) stood nodding quietly as the silver train pulled away. He had a

pipe resting softly between his lips. Samantha loved the smell of a pipe but knew without seeing that the man would have yellowed teeth and stale breath. As she approached, she stumbled off her thin heel. The man grabbed her arm.

He was stronger than she would have supposed and, as she rose to meet his eyes, much younger. The pipe tobacco was pleasing, even so close.

“You all right, Miss?”

“Yes, thank you...a pebble...”

“True enough. Too rough for those pretty shoes.”

“Uh, yes. Anyway, I’m looking for the...diner...” Her voice trailed off. She felt foolish in her quest and silly even breathing the name of the place.

The stationmaster nodded solemnly. “Westerly’s not that small a place, Miss. We have two luncheonettes, plus Foley’s drugstore, even a restaurant. The restaurant only serves dinner, not open till five. Which place would you want?”

“The... Terminal...”

He laughed. “*That* place? Greasy spoon, hardly fit for a nice lady like yourself. Besides, I don’t even know if it’s open for lunch—Charlie does a good breakfast business, what with the rail yard workers, construction crews, and such. Then it’s as like to close up at eleven after the coffee break.”

He pulled an old-fashioned watch from its pocket. “Still, it might be open today. It’s payday for the crews—some might like a nice lunch.”

Carefully, he directed her. “Follow the tracks past the station house—don’t go to the right around the building, the sidewalk’s being repaired. Any year now, they’ll fix it up. Go to the luggage wagon, make a right there—not before—and cross the green. Bear to the left, around the yellow house, and Charlie’s place is straight on.”

He held her arm for a brief second more to assure himself that her shoes would not betray her again. Then, she walked briskly from him.

“Miss?”

She turned.

“You can check that bag if you like.”

“No... No, thank you.”

“Suit yourself.” His demeanor was kindly as he resumed staring past where the train had been.

As he had instructed, she followed the tracks past the station house. To her right, she saw wooden sawhorses set up. Two men, grimy with a full day’s dirt already, stood laughing, one hoarsely, one deeply. They paused guiltily as she passed by, although she had not heard their joke. Nodding, they touched their caps.

Samantha thought there was something odd about them, but she didn’t have the inclination to study the pair. *Besides, this is Rhode Island. They might not appreciate some New Yorker staring.... They might not even see the humor in a place called Terminal Lunch serving only breakfast...and not being at a “terminal”*

for that matter....

Rounding the station house, she came to the green, a barren strip of dead grass. The inevitable stack of cannonballs mortared together, originally a Revolutionary or Civil War monument, stood in the center, mounted on a pedestal with the names of the town's dead inscribed on copper panels all weathered to the same green-brown. As instructed, she walked around the only yellow house.

Confused, she stopped. She could not see the diner.

She slid her bag to the ground, and turned slowly. *I can see the sign from the train.... The diner is right below....* She found the tracks and followed them with her eyes, tracing the path in the air with a slender finger until returning to her original position.

The sun's glare blinded her, and she blinked against it.

Over her fingernail was the sign, less battered than she recalled but unmistakable. "How did I miss that?" There was no one to answer. Shouldering her bag, she headed for the sign.

In all the years passing the place, she had never given it more than a brief glance. As she approached, she found it exactly like a dozen other Depression-era diners: a stainless-steel trailer with printed green curtains. Without seeing inside, she knew there would be a counter with linoleum—white with little gray or green squiggles—wobbly stools with red vinyl tops, and booths sticky with the same red vinyl. *Maybe tape...yellow vinyl tape...on the rips....*

The menus would be covered in clear vinyl and would feature pancakes, oatmeal, meat loaf, and Irish stew served with slices of white bread on the side.

She had read once that in the thirties the diners were delivered on trucks, complete with dishes, curtains, and flatware—an instant business for the Deco age. Its siblings still dotted the country. This place would be nothing special. For a moment, her detour seemed heartless.

Still, she had to call her brother. The diner would have a telephone.

Trudging up the stairs, she pushed open the door. The counter was deserted except for a thin young woman with short hair who sat idly spinning on a stool, applying spots of color to her nails. Two construction workers were finishing their lunch, and the smell of meat loaf, onions, and sweat filled the small room. Piles of soiled dishes lay in a metal basin on the counter. In the back, the kitchen was framed by a pass-through. Samantha hesitated until a woman's voice called, "Come on in, Miss. I'll be there in a second."

She moved down the counter to the end opposite the young woman. To her surprise, the counter and stools were covered in well-scrubbed oilcloth. As she draped her coat over a stool, a round, red-faced woman in her twenties bustled from the kitchen.

A stained towel was tucked in the ties of the woman's once-white apron. Beneath the apron was a brown cotton housedress, similar to the ones that her father's

sisters had worn. Mopping her forehead with the towel, the woman smiled pleasantly at Samantha. Her glance swept the frayed lining of the beautiful coat without judgment.

"Nice day, isn't it?"

"Lovely."

"You in town long?"

"No, I'm just off the train from New York."

The woman smiled again, but Samantha cut her off. The friendly manner was too personal.

"Could I use...Is there a phone?"

"Sure." The woman pulled an old-fashioned rotary phone onto the counter. "If you're having something, I'll add five cents to your tab. If not, just leave a nickel on the counter."

Samantha stared at the phone. Her phone card wouldn't work with a rotary phone. She'd have to tell the operator the number. She hated doing that in public places. "Thank you. Uh, coffee, please. I'll have coffee."

"Sure enough." The woman poured into the thick pottery mug that Samantha had expected, then moved down the counter. As she approached the thin, young woman, her manner changed from professional sociability to chagrined affection.

"Babe, whatever do you have on those fingernails? What is that, blue lacquer? For Pete's sake, you look like you've turned!"

Babe laughed heartily even as she blushed toward the two construction workers.

"Aw, Charlie, give her a break—my wife says that's what those fashion magazines are showing. Blue nails, pink hair, that whole 'European' look." The younger construction worker seemed proud of his information. The older man scowled, throwing money on the table as he rose heavily.

"See you, Charlie," the older man intoned.

Samantha felt that this must be a habit for the two workers—early lunch, friendly banter. Babe must be a regular too or a casual waitress. Samantha laid her hand on the telephone but didn't pick it up. This scene had drawn her here: a small-town ritual played out gracefully. She had missed such things in her own youth. The family had only settled down in the States when her father had retired. At age twelve, she discovered that other girls shared bonds that would never release to admit her.

As the workers left, Babe spun once more, shyly glancing at Samantha. Despite her bony frame, Babe had a dancer's grace above the waist. As she waved her hands to dry her nails, her arms and shoulders moved in liquid harmony with some unheard music that flowed through her head and neck. The coltish legs stuck out at awkward angles and had no chance to keep up.

"You're from New York?" Babe could hardly suppress the tremor in her voice.

"Babe! Mind your own beeswax!" Charlie scolded, without rancor.

"No, it's all right." Samantha remembered the excitement that the words "New York" had stirred in her. Vibrant, foreign—no, *alien*—New York had been the magnetic center of the world, drawing everyone and everything to it. She had succumbed inevitably.

"Yes. I'm from New York."

Babe nodded as if in possession of a great secret. "I could tell! Your coat, your shoes, your nails, the way you wear your hair! That's how they do it in New York, isn't it? You're wearing *trousers*! New York ladies wear them all the time, I bet! In the movies, you can see them..." She paused. "You're not a movie actress, are you? No, that would be too silly. What would a movie actress be doing in Westerly? But I bet you have some kind of artsy job, don't you? Oh, are you an *artist*?"

Charlie laughed. "Take a breath, Babe, for crying out loud! Can I heat that up for you, Miss?"

Samantha had not touched her coffee. "No, thank you. It's fine." Babe had edged down the row of stools to the center of the diner, anxiously awaiting her answer. Samantha smiled, in spite of herself. "I...teach."

Babe's disappointment was brief. "Oh." She brightened. "You teach in *New York*!" Chuckling, Charlotte hefted the basin of dishes into the kitchen.

"Yes, and Chicago."

"*Chicago*!" From the rapture in her voice, Chicago held only slightly less magic than New York. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm visiting my mother...in Kingston."

This news did not interest Babe much. "Have you ever been to *California*?"

Pursing her lips, Samantha hesitated. She had spent the best and worst of times in California. Nothing to share with this child. She changed the subject.

"What do you do, Babe? Are you in school?"

Surprised, Babe stammered, "Y-yes. I'm in nursing school at South County General." Charlotte, peeking from the kitchen, shook her head cheerfully.

Startled, Samantha muttered, "My mother...did her training there..."

Babe and Charlotte exchanged a glance. "South County? It's a new school...only a few years old," Babe said, uncertainly.

"What?" The nursing program at South County General had been well established when Samantha herself had toyed with the idea in high school. *She must be in some specialized program....*

Wiping her hands, Charlie came to the doorway. "Nurses have been training one way or another since the Civil War. Babe, here, thinks that since it's new to her, must be new to everyone."

Babe blushed again, rose tint on porcelain. "Anyway, I'm almost finished. After that, I might go to New York." She raised her chin defiantly.

"You'll be lucky if you get to Portsmouth, you jonnycake!" But Charlie touched Babe's hand to soften her words. The two laughed.

"Do you think there'll be a war in Europe?" Babe asked earnestly, clearly attributing wisdom on all subjects to the stranger from New York.

"There's always a war somewhere—just ask CNN." From the look on their faces, neither Charlie nor Babe ever watched the news station, but they nodded vigorously.

"It's true," Charlie affirmed. "Those foreigners always have something to fight about. We should let them sort it out themselves. It's not our fight."

Babe twisted her face thoughtfully. "If there's another war, they're going to need nurses. I could volunteer and see Europe or maybe even China..."

"...meet a soldier boy, get a bun in the oven..." Charlie teased.

"Oh, you kid!" Babe giggled. "Could you imagine my mother's face if I brought home a soldier! She'd tan my bottom!"

"And if you brought home a baby? She'd turn you out on your round heels, slicker'n a whistle!" The two dissolved in fits of laughter.

Momentarily forgotten, Samantha wondered how such things could still matter, even in Rhode Island. Her own brother had fathered a child by a woman who could barely tolerate him now. The little girl was precious beyond words, even to Florence, who managed to recognize the child with fair regularity.

"You are so bad, Charlie! You know I'm not fast!"

"Just funning you, Babe." Charlie grinned crookedly. "One day, you've got to leave South County—this place's not big enough for you. Send me a postcard when you do."

Babe tossed her head dramatically. "Why, certainly, my dear Miss Charlotte. I'll send you all my cast-off clothes to wear to your pathetic little church socials."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!"

Noticing Samantha as if for the first time, both women looked embarrassed. "Sorry, Miss. Don't mind us, blowing off a little steam. Anyway, Babe, you got to get back to school, and I've got a load of dishes to wash."

Samantha stared at the phone. She wouldn't call her brother, wouldn't risk his unsteady driving.

"Um, what time is the next train?"

"To New York?"

"No. The other way."

Charlie glanced at the clock. "Fifteen minutes, give or take."

Samantha stood, gathering her coat. "How much do I owe you?"

Charlie glanced at her untouched cup. "Shoot, you didn't drink your coffee or make your telephone call neither. Forget about it. Me and Babe were making so much

noise, I bet you couldn't hear yourself think!"

Samantha shrugged. "No, really, it was...nice."

"Glad to oblige."

Slipping her bag over her shoulder, Samantha nodded. "Thank you."

Babe bounded to open the door for her. "Do you think...you might come by here again?"

"I don't know—maybe."

"I'm here every morning—I help Charlie with the early shift and at eleven between classes. If you...stop in..."

Suddenly, Samantha had an urge to reach out to Babe and hug her tightly. Resisting, she touched the girl's hand.

Turning pink, Babe asked, "What's your name?"

"Samantha."

"How elegant! Mine is..." Babe looked embarrassed. "...Florence...but no one ever calls me that, except my family..."

Samantha stifled the cry in her throat. "Good-bye...Florence."

* * *

She opened her eyes. Standing in the middle of the green, she noticed that the sun had moved directly overhead, making her Irish wool coat too warm. Her hand was still outstretched, tracing the tracks in the air, coming to rest on the shabby sign. A placard reading "Closed" hung in the door.

Feeling something sticky, she stared at her palm as small flecks of blue lacquer peeled away.

Picking up her bag, she decided she wouldn't go in after all.



What I Learned This Morning

by Suzanne O'Connell

I can't sleep.

It is hours until dawn,
and I'm watching TV.

The green numerals on the bedside clock
say 3:15.

The programs on TV are either infomercials
or reruns of old crime dramas.

So far, I have learned
my pores are clogged.

My vagina has an unpleasant odor.

My carpet, clean to my untrained eye,
is filled with trapped dirt.

I can lose 30 lbs. in a month by
wearing a magnetic belt.

I can lose another 30 lbs. in a month by
taking megavitamins.

I need to jazz up my sex life
before my husband strays.

My teeth are yellow.

My hair is flat and unattractive
and can be fixed by using
a special contour brush.

My makeup is all wrong, and I can look
years younger by using a spray airbrush device.

I turn to the crime drama.

A domestic abuse victim is on the stand
being questioned by the defense attorney:

"Why didn't you just move out?" he asks her.

"Why would you choose to remain in
an abusive relationship?

Where was your self-esteem?"

If he had ever watched early morning TV
he would know the answer:

Women are defective and always wrong.

So they deserve what they get.



Freesia in Winter

by Suzanne O'Connell

Trouble can't find me here.
Stars, the dogs of ice,
shine down on the smooth
blackness of my earthen bed.
Muffled by dirt,
I hold my breath,
waiting for a change.

Shivering in my slight brown fur
overcoat
and my sprouted night cap,
I wait.

Like a mole, I have no vision.
Is anyone there?
Tendrils of root reach out
like a blind man reaches out
with his white cane.

The rain falls like big shoes
walking overhead.
I am a cemetery.
I survive on earthworms,
bits of shell,
and remembered songs.

I wait for signs of change.
Was that warmth?
Was that light?
Was that birdsong?

I push aside my coverlet of leaves
and stretch my stems—
grunting with effort,
stretching hard up to the sun.
Soon there will be a celebration
of delight,
a welcome,
a homecoming.
To show my appreciation,
there will be fragrant
blossoms to share
after so much waiting.



Torn

by James B. Nicola

If, in a *billet-doux*, you made a blunder
but caught the gaffe in time, you could reject
it, once upon a time, sliding it under
your blotter to revise, throwing it away,
or tearing it to smithereens outright
so that no passing soul should ever suspect
the passing feeling, penned, obliterated,
as paper tears and burns. On Valentine's Day,
my basket used to overbrim in white
and red. On one occasion, I repaired
the sin and sent it; I loved the creative-
ity and shocking myself that I dared
to dabble with that other way of liv-
ing—offering all, full speed ahead,
in drastic cursive ink on white and red.

Now, when I save an email as a Draft,
it's far less dire than tearing cards to pieces
and less exhilarating, but only a dope
would share some of the red-tinged tropes I write
(like what I scribbled and destroyed tonight)
without suspecting I was, at the very least, daft.
But as My Drafts o'erteems, and as release is
essential to recovery, every now
and then I will delete the file. Or not:

For if a finger lingers, and I happen to open and look, before deleting, at what I'd forgotten, nearly, and feel a rush of ridiculous hope, which the human in me can't help but allow, the drought's quenched, and the blood's aboil again, tearing a soul in two to crave a pen and paper, red and white, that we might think, not merely feel. So keep this testament of you and me not as a file unsent, but, since a solid document, in ink, semi-immortal, if more stained than pure, as an Act of God, or Love, or Literature.



Valentine's Day at the Farm

by Maureen Fielding

They are counting the silverware
Assuring themselves that we have retained no
Instruments of death—theirs or ours—

The drug addict who wears a pinched, hungry look,
The loony who crawls under the TV each night,
The handsome truck driver who tells me
I could be a *Playboy* model.

During the days,
We go for outings in the courtyard
Pacing the chain-link perimeter,
Admiring the sky above—the true beyond.
At night, they give us our pills.
Only the loony objects,
His buttocks protruding from under the TV in protest.

But tonight we will have music and dancing.
Red paper hearts hang from the walls.
While my fellow inmates stare at the tube,
Only one woman in housedress and slippers
Follows the party preparations with excitement.

They unlock the stereo
And bring out the records.
The attendant switches the set off mid-Gilligan.
Some eyes narrow.
Others don't even blink.
Tonight the loony is quiet.

Our white-coated DJ puts on a record.
Our resident Ginger looks for her Fred.
My *Playboy* recruiter steps forward
And waltzes her slippered feet around the room.
The warders smile and smoke.

I sit on the couch, sandwiched between
The drug addict and a suicidal mom.
There is a dance at my high school tonight.
My friends will be drinking and laughing,
slow-dancing and sinning.

I suppose I belong there too,
But I like it here.

When Said and Done

by John DeBon

They stare with kind eyes, these sympathetic souls, encouraging me with obligatory compassion. I grip the podium, palms damp and mouth dry and nothing to say. How can I share my thoughts and memories of you when, by speaking them aloud, I will give away the precious little of you I still possess?

On legs of water and with feet of stone, I turn from their expectant faces and gaze upon you, but only your likeness remains, familiar yet foreign, a crafted illusion in a satin-lined box, a vestige of a life surrendered, of possibilities never to be known.

Tears roll down my cheeks, escaping like the years I waited for you to remember the hope life offered, the opportunities that had been yours—that had been ours. Though I did not realize the gravity of the situation until it was too late, I remember how innocently it began: the slip and the fall, the persistent pain, the prescriptions; how quickly your dependency grew, changing you, changing us, overshadowing our early years together until those happy times became nothing more than a reminder of what we had lost.

I know the beginning, and I am now living the end, but at what point did your life become so unbearable that a ruinous end seemed more desirable? When did my love become so trivial that it offered you no comfort, the world so constricted that your only escape from within a syringe? Was I too patient, too understanding? Did I look away, unwilling to acknowledge your embrace of that which changed you until I did not know you, until it became so painful I did not want to know you?

In guarded moments, after the pills had been swallowed or the needle had found a serviceable vein, when you were lost in an ethereal euphoria, wearing a blissful, indifferent smile as if privy to a secret I would never understand, thoughts of your death seeped into my mind with a coy, bitter appeal, promising relief from you and your addiction.

Yet, even in the darkest moments, when it was all I could do not to walk out the door and never return, I still loved you. Not the creature destroying herself by her own hand with whom I tried to reason, but the you I remembered and believed was still inside, drowning, wanting and waiting to be saved. Whether my belief came from the strength that enabled me to stand by you or from the weakness that prevented me from leaving you, I do not know, and it is too late to matter.

I could always see the promise within you, so rich with possibilities. That was my curse, no less insidious than yours. Now you lie before me, a dried flower destined for dust, and though I still see the shadow of possibilities in your pale, painted face, it is only a wistful delusion. You can no longer change, and I can no longer help. The possibilities are gone. Perhaps, they were always beyond our reach.

I stand hollow and naked in my grief, facing a world now as dull and brittle as fallen leaves. All I have is your husk before me, so false and yet so real and all too soon gone, which is why I say nothing to those who wait behind me murmuring their

concerns. I suppose I should speak with them, but I cannot. If I turn from you now, you will be gone forever, relegated to the realm of memories where all things fade and no later exists, and I will have only my pain and remorse to prove you were once here.

We both failed, but only I will live with the knowledge. What will be my purpose without you to save, without you needing me to point out life's possibilities? Shamefully, I confess I became as dependent upon my belief that you needed me to save you as you became upon the opiates that possessed you. In this way, I fear I contributed to your death, and the anguish of such a possibility will haunt me until I find the vacant peace you have attained.

I hear their soft, considerate footsteps approaching. It is time. I have nothing left to offer but my regrets; nothing left to say but goodbye.



The Hours of Pleasure

by Desirée Jung

The man always takes the car and drives back to the island, to his wife, but she is not listening, taking in the boneless duck, the flowers neatly displayed in the plate, the measured light of the restaurant. They talk about things that matter to her. The orange of her nightgown, his dragon tattoo, the syrup of the pancakes, all these details are a pleasure to her. They also make love, but it isn't the most important thing. Or definitive. Enjoyment is in speaking. And, when in the morning he refuses to give her attention, busy, preferring his coffee black, she holds the sweetness of the chocolate croissant in her hand privately until he leaves, the quietness of the room with its delicate porcelain holding her together, embracing.



Dictionary.com

by Laurel Kallen

I loved you before I loved you
and my love became a cup of

coffee in the morning and a
small death we carry within us

in the day, words not true in the
moment though still true somehow

underneath the moment, beside
the moment. There should be new words for that over-

lap. We should each take on a new
name like Sarai becoming Sarah

when Abram became Abraham.
I bought you pajamas yesterday

like you asked me to. I bought you
a unicycle you will

never ride. I'm not sure what
to buy you next. In Costa Rica

we ran to the restaurant in
rain that was a waterfall. I

borrowed your poncho with its pocket
for my credit card and the key

to our room. The chairs and tables were of thick
bamboo. Masks on the walls.

A table of girls behind us. The blonde
one we'd seen drunk on the beach earlier

asks you for a light.

Your Loneliness

by Ani Tuzman

"Don't Surrender Your Loneliness Too Quickly..."

—14th-century Persian poet Hafiz

Tonight,
don't expect too much.

Don't overindulge melancholy
or lament loss of control.

Just do what you have to do
putting one foot in front

of the other. Talk little.
Go to sleep early as you can

savoring your aloneness.
Don't be noisy in thought.

Easy. Gentle.
Love knows you are here

without any
commotion.



Fulcrum

by Ani Tuzman

There is a seesaw, and I sit on both ends.

Love is the fulcrum
but I forget—
thinking it impossible
to find balance.

I am wrong, I hope.
When I least expect it,
maybe then
the still point will arrive—
all the world in
perfect balance:

No hunger in any child's belly.
Shelter for all.
Fear quieted. Faith steady.
And I,
friendlier with paradox,
will ride on—maybe even let go,
lift my hands.

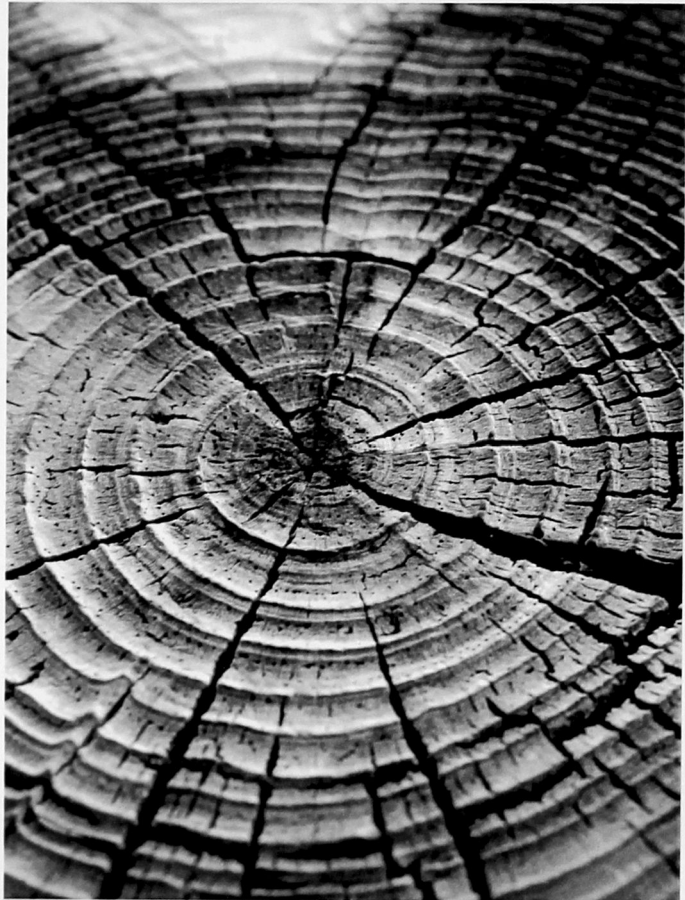


Tomorrow the Moon

by Tim Cremin

Tonight we'll rest;
tomorrow the moon
will be close to full—
maybe there'll be
enough light on the trail
to walk the woods,
where history is written
in concentric rings;
maybe we'll hear
stars speak
their wordless language,
bringing all the past
into each night's sky.

Tonight we'll rest;
we'll bank our fires
while watery dreams
engulf us in timelessness.
Maybe tomorrow
we'll stay up late
to wonder about time.
Does it pass
like hourglass sand
from future to past
through now's thin neck?
Does it gather
like data
encoded in our cells?
Is each moment eternal—
still traveling like starlight
across the universe?
Tonight we'll rest.



Rapture of Flowers

by Laurie Sewall

My ears buzzed with the dense hum of stems
propped up under soil, ready to depart

for light. So I sat in the dark till I heard
it again: liquid of my hands, my heart—

that current surging through the grass one
cold morning as I stood in a filmy

wand of sun, transfixed: limbs like stalks
with streams inside, plump shoots that come

alive in brilliant day. And, though empty
and still of any striving, a blazing bathed my veins

with something hot and certain, captured my skin,
a medicine. Liniment of heat beneath the atrophy

of winter: indigo culled from a salt-filled
marsh, rapture of flowers under earth.



Contributors

After receiving his bachelor's in English from Fairleigh Dickinson University, **Bruce Bagnell** went on to earn his master's from John F. Kennedy University. Throughout the years, he has worked as a cook, mechanic, and college professor; held various management positions; and was a USAF captain in Vietnam. Now retired, Bagnell focuses wholeheartedly on his writing and has been published in *OmniVerse*, *The Scribbler*, *The Round*, and several online magazines. He also hosts at Poetry Express Berkeley and the East Bay Writer's Drop-In workshop. Bagnell is a member of the Bay Area Poets Coalition and was awarded honorable mention in their 2013 Maggi H. Meyer Memorial Poetry Contest.

Guy R. Beining's work has recently appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Fiction International*, *Cairn*, *Skidrow/Penthouse*, *The Bitter Oleander*, and *Creosote*. This year *Placing Stones in the Right Spots* will be out via Marimbo Press, and *Unarmed* will print *Heisting Hesse 1-18*.

Elizabeth Anne Bradshaw was born and raised in Norman, Oklahoma. She is currently a sophomore at Norman North High School. She is a musician and plays the clarinet, guitar, and saxophone. One of her most memorable experiences was the time she visited the harbor at Monterey, California. She peered under a dock and was nearly attacked by an 800-pound sea lion. Seriously, those things are dangerous!

John Bradshaw was born in Colorado and ostensibly raised in California. After a tour in the Navy (where he served as a mop-technician in the Aleutian Islands), he turned his calloused hand and jaded eye to academia (a small country hidden in the Alps). He has attended universities in Louisiana, Iowa, and Oklahoma (and has yet to be apprehended). Bradshaw is currently teaching English and Philosophy at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. He winters in Weatherford and summers in Norman. But he poems wherever he can.

Maura Gage Cavell is Professor of English and Director of the Honors Program at Louisiana State University Eunice. She resides in Crowley, LA, with her family. She's recently published in journals and magazines including *Abbey*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Iconoclast*, *Ship of Fools*, *Clark Street Review*, *The Louisiana Review*, and *California Quarterly*.

Born and raised in New York City, **Clio Contogenis** has always been fascinated by the written word. A voracious reader as a child, she soon began writing her own work, eventually turning to events in her life for inspiration. She has been published in *Stuyvesant Literary Magazine*, *Yale Daily News Magazine*, *Vita Bella Magazine*, *Assisi Journal*, *Superstition Review*, *EDGE*, *RipRap Journal*, and several anthologies. She has won multiple Gold and Silver Key Scholastic Art and Writing awards. Contogenis is a recent graduate of Yale University and has studied with Cynthia Zarin and David S. Kastan. She is also an actor, singer, and pianist.

Tim Cremin's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Albatross*, *Crack the Spine*, *Forge*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, and *WestWard Quarterly*. Additionally, several of his poems are included in the anthology *Songs from the Castle's Remains*.

John DeBon is a Bronx-born writer whose fiction and essays have appeared in *The MacGuffin*, *Hawaii Review*, *Concho River Review*, *Amoskeag Journal*, and elsewhere. His essay, "It's Like When Your Mom Dies," earned a listing as notable in Best American Essays 2013. He is a contributing editor for *Calliope*, the quarterly publication of the Writers' Special Interest Group of American Mensa, Ltd, and for its online extension, *Calliope on the Web*, which together act as a writer's workshop and forum. An avid reader who enjoys skiing, hiking and camping, DeBon has traveled extensively throughout North America and Europe and has lived in California, Colorado, and currently resides in New York. He attended San Diego State University and for over a decade has been employed by a nonprofit organization involved in afforestation and water conservation.

Emily Eddins has been a professional writer for twenty years. Her career includes time spent as a

speechwriter, a journalist, a grant writer, and an editor. The author holds a BA in English from Vanderbilt University, an MA in liberal studies from Georgetown University, and she has studied creative writing at both Georgetown University and Stanford University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Cape Rock*, *Forge*, *Front Porch*, *Toad Suck Review*, *RiverSedge*, *Willow Review*, *The Louisville Review*, *Rio Grande Review*, and other publications. This summer, her essay collection *Altitude Adjustment* hit the Top Five in Kindle Hot New Releases in 90-minute memoirs and short biographies.

D Ferrara's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *East Meets West American Writers Review* (2014 Holiday Edition), *Penmen Review*, *Adanna*, *Amarillo Bay*, *Law Studies Forum* (a literary magazine), *Green Prints*, *The MacGuffin*, *r.k.v.r.y.*, *The Evansville Review*, *the Main Street Rag Anthology*, and *Crack The Spine*. Ferrara's screenplay, *Arvin Lindemeyer Takes Canarsie*, was a Top Finalist in the 2013 A.S.U. Screenwriting Contest, and Ferrara's play, *Favor*, won the New Jersey ACT Award for Outstanding Production Of An Original Play. Three other screenplays have been optioned, and two other short plays produced. Ferrara's essays and short stories have been published in several magazines and journals, and over 200 of Ferrara's articles have been published in legal, technological, and other business publications. D Ferrara received an M.A. in creative writing from Wilkes University, J.D. from NY Law, an LL.M. from New York University, and a B.A. in theatre from Roger Williams.

Terry W. Ford is now semi-retired from four decades of full-time teaching for Kent State University at Stark. In that time, she served as English department coordinator, spoke and presented at numerous academic conferences, was featured in campus literary publications, earned a distinguished teaching award, and was honored as a distinguished woman of the university. A longtime supporter of Ohio and Midwest writing, Ford was a perennial organizer and grant writer for the Midwest Writer's Conference. Now teaching only a few classes, she enjoys reading, writing, gardening, and grandmothering. Her work has recently appeared in *The Chaffin*

Journal; *Corium Magazine*; *Existere*; *Foliage Oak*; *Folly*; *Grey Sparrow*; *Meridian Anthology*; *Our Town*, *North Canton*; *The Portland Review*; *St. Ann's Review*; *Schuylkill Valley Journal*; and *Viral Cat*.

Donna Emerson is a recently retired college instructor, licensed clinical social worker, photographer, and writer of poetry and prose. Some of her publications include *Alembic*, *Assisi*, *Broad River Review*, *CQ (California Quarterly)*, *CALYX*, *The Chaffin*, *Clare*, *Crack the Spine*, *Crone*, *Dos Passos Review*, *Eclipse*, *Edison Literary Review*, *Embers and Flames*, *Euphony*, *Forge*, *Fourth River*, *Fox Cry Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *LUX*, *New Ohio Review*, *Organs of Vision and Speech Magazine*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Passager*, *Persimmon Tree*, *Praxis: Gender & Cultural Critiques* (formerly *Phoebe*), *Quiddity*, *Rougarou*, *The Round*, *Sanskrit*, *The Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *Slipstream*, *Soundings East*, *So To Speak*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Spillway*, *Stone Canoe*, and *The Tower Journal*. Her work has received numerous prizes and awards including the *Labyrinth Society* (2005), *California State Poetry Society* (2008), *Tiny Lights* (flash prizes, 2007, 2010), *Naugatuck River Review* (2010), and the *Redwood Writers* (2010). Her second chapbook, *Body Rhymes*, which was nominated for a California Book Award, and third and fourth chapbooks, *Wild Mercy* and *Following Hay*, have been published by Finishing Line Press in June 2009, September 2011, and Fall 2013. Emerson's work can also be seen in anthologies such as *Echoes* (2012), *Keeping Time: 150 Years of Journal Writing* (Passager Press), *A Bird in the Hand: Risk and Flight and Deep Waters* (Outrider Press), *The Mountain* (Outrider Press), *Chopin with Cherries*, *A Tribute in Verse* (Moonrise Press), *Music In The Air* (Outrider Press), *The Phoenix Rising From The Ashes* (Adonis Press), *The Place That Inhabits Us: Poems of the San Francisco Bay Watershed* (Sixteen Rivers), *Bearers Of Distance* (Eastern Point Press), and *Songs for a Passbook Torch* (Cherry Castle Publishing).

Born and raised in Mississippi, **Sybil Estess** attended Baylor University, University of

Kentucky, and Syracuse University. She has studied with Denise Levertov, Donald Barthelme, Patti Ann Rogers, Maxine Kumin, and Richard Howard, as well as with W.D. Snodgrass. Phillip Booth directed her dissertation. Estess's work has appeared or is forthcoming in over fifty journals, including *The Paris Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Manhattan Review*, *Whiskey Island*, *Borderlands*, *The Texas Review*, *The Texas Observer*, and *Windhover*, among others. She is the author of six books: *Seeing The Desert Green* (Latitudes Press, 1987); *Blue, Canded in January Sun* (Word Press, 2005); *Labyrinth* (Pecan Grove Press, 2007); *Maneuvers* (Leaf Press, 2011); *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art* (University of Michigan Press, 1983); and the creative writing textbook *In A Field Of Words* (Longman, 2002). When she is not writing, Estess enjoys hiking, water aerobics, and spending time with her young granddaughter. She has lived in Houston for thirty-six years, but also lived in California, Montana, England, Italy, and other places throughout her life.

Maureen Fielding has an MFA, as well as a Ph.D. in English. As an undergraduate and graduate student, she won several creative writing prizes. She has been a journalist, a freelance writer, and an academic writer, and is currently an associate professor of English and Women's Studies at Penn State University. Her work has most recently appeared in *Amarillo Bay* and *Rubbertop Review*.

Zebulon Huset has taught a community creative writing class in San Diego since receiving her MFA from UW, where she was the coordinating editor of *The Seattle Review*. Her writing has recently appeared (or is forthcoming) in *The Southern Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *The North American Review*, *Harpur Palate*, *Cortland Review*, *Bayou* and *The Roanoke Review*, among others. She was once nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Andrew Jarvis is the author of *Sound*

Points (Red Bird Press), *Ascent* (Finishing Line Press), and *The Strait* (Homebound Publications). His poems have appeared in *Appalachian Heritage*, *Measure: A Review of Formal Poetry*, *Evansville Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Tulane Review*, and many other magazines. He was a Finalist for the 2014 Homebound Publications Poetry Prize. He also judges poetry contests and edits anthologies for Red Dashboard LLC. Andrew holds an M.A. in Writing (Poetry) from Johns Hopkins University.

Desirée Jung is a writer who has published translations, poetry and short stories in *Exile*, *The Dirty Goat*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *The Antigoniish Review*, *The Haro*, *The Literary Yard*, *Gravel Magazine*, *Tree House*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Ijagun Poetry Journal*, *Scapegoat Review*, *Storyacious*, *The Steel Chisel*, *Loading Zone*, *Belleville Park Pages*, among others. Her book of short stories, *Desejos Submersos*, is published by Chiado Editora, in Portugal. She has received a film degree at the Vancouver Film School, as well as an MFA in Creative Writing and a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of British Columbia. Her website is www.desireejung.com

Laurel Kallen holds an MFA in creative writing from The City College of New York, as well as an MA in French and a JD degree. She is currently an executive speechwriter at IBM. In the past, she has served as a speechwriter for New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio and former New York City Mayor David Dinkins. She has also taught creative writing at CCNY and Lehman College. Her poetry collection, *The Forms of Discomfort*, was published by Finishing Line Press in September, 2012. Poems and stories of hers have appeared in *Jabberwock*, *Willow Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Portland Review*, *Devil's Lake*, *Amarillo Bay*, *Big Bridge*, and *La Petite Zine*. Her awards history includes the Stark Short Fiction Award and the 2009 Teacher/Writer Award.

Lyn Lifshin has published over 130 books and chapbooks including three from Black

Sparrow Press: *Cold Comfort, Before It's Light and Another Woman Who Looks like Me*. Before Secretariat: *The Red Freak, The Miracle*, Lifshin published her prize winning book about the short lived beautiful race horse Ruffian, *The Licorice Daughter: My Year with Ruffian* and *Barbaro: Beyond Brokenness*. Recent books include *Ballroom, All the Poets Who Have Touched Me, Living and Dead. All True, Especially The Lies, Light At the End: The Jesus Poems, Katrina, Mirrors, Persphone, Lost In The Fog, Knife Edge & Absinthe: The Tango Poems*. NYQ books published *A Girl Goes into The Woods*. Also just out: *For the Roses poems after Joni Mitchell and Hitchcock Hotel* from Danse Macabre. *Secretariat: The Red Freak, The Miracle. And Tangled as the Alphabet — The Istanbul Poems* from NightBallet Press. Just released as well *Malala. The Marilyn Poems* was just released from Rubber Boots Press. An update to her Gale Research Autobiography is out: *Lips, Blues, Blue Lace: On The Outside*. Also just out is a dvd of the documentary film about her: *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made Of Glass*. Just out: *Femme Eterna* and *Moving Through Stained Glass: the Maple Poems*. Forthcoming: *Degas Little Dancer* and *Winter Poems* from Kind of a Hurricane press and *The Silk Road*.

Carla McGill earned her B.A. in English from California State University, San Bernardino, and her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside. Her writing has been published in *A Clean Well-Lighted Place, Westerners Journal, and Inland Empire Magazine*. As a member of the Live Poets' Society from 1991–2012 at The Huntington Library in San Marino, CA, her poems have appeared in three of her group's chapbooks: *Garden Lyrics, Huntington Lyrics, and California Lyrics*. Though McGill has occasionally done freelance work for a local magazine, she mainly writes poetry and short stories, and she is working on her first novel.

Betsy Martin's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Alembic, Assisi Journal, Barely South Review, Diverse Voices Quarterly, Existere, Front Range Review, Gemini*

Magazine, Green Hills Literary Lantern, Inertia Magazine, Juked, Limestone Journal, Louisville Review, Minetta Review, Organs of Vision and Speech, Pirene's Fountain, Sanskrit, Schuylkill Valley Journal of the Arts, and Weber—The Contemporary West. Her poem, "Byzantine Stillness," was nominated for Best of the Net. Martin works at Skinner House Books in Boston. She has advanced degrees in Russian language and literature and lived in Moscow studying at the Pushkin Institute during the exciting transitional period of glasnost. She enjoys birdwatching and is learning to sing.

Sheila Murphy received a BA from Albertus Magnus College, an MA from Boston College, and an MALS from Wesleyan University. For 34 years, she taught English and Latin in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Hawaii, to grades ranging from seventh to college-level. As a teacher-consultant for the Connecticut Writing Project at the University of Connecticut, she facilitated two research projects and coedited two collections of essays: *Stronger than Fiction: Teacher Stories* (1998) and *Beyond Test Scores: Teachers' Ways of Knowing* (2001). She also served as a field consultant for a textbook on writing poetry, *Getting the Knack*, sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English. Her poetry has appeared in *Caduceus, Peregrine, and The Litchfield Review*. After retirement, Murphy edited a collection of essays, *Fair Warning: Leo Connellan and His Poetry* (2011), about Connecticut's second Poet Laureate. She now directs writing workshops at her local library and teaches poetry and memoir writing to senior citizens. She enjoys kayaking in calm waters and traveling, especially to Ireland and Rome. She is a proud mother and grandmother, and she lives with her husband in Connecticut with their Welsh corgi.

With his first collection of poetry, *Manhattan Plaza*, **James B. Nicola** joins the ranks of poets Frank O'Hara and Stanley Kunitz and humorist Robert Benchley as a New York author originally from Worcester, Massachusetts. Nicola has been widely published in periodicals

including *The Atlanta Review*, *Tar River*, *Texas Review*, *Lytic*, *Nimrod*, and *Blue Unicorn* stateside, and overseas in journals as exotic as *The Istanbul Review* and *Poetry Salzburg*. He also won the Dana Literary Award, a People's Choice award (from *Storyteller*) and a *Willow Review* award; was nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize and once for a Rhysling Award; and was featured poet at *New Formalist*. A Yale grad and stage director by profession, his nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a Choice award. Also a composer, lyricist, and playwright, his children's musical *Chimes: A Christmas Vaudeville* premiered in Fairbanks, Alaska, where Santa Claus was rumored to be in attendance on opening night.

Suzanne O'Connell earned her master's degree in social work from the UCLA School of Social Welfare and currently works as a licensed clinical social worker. She attended several writing courses at UCLA and is currently a student of Jack Grapes's advanced method writing group. She has also studied with Richard Jones, Lynn Hightower, Barbara Abercrombie, and Liz Gonzalez. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Atlanta Review*, *Foliage Oak*, *Forge*, *The G.W. Review*, *Organs of Visions and Speech Magazine*, *Permafrost*, *Reed Magazine*, *The Round*, *Sanskrit*, *Serving House Journal*, *The Schuylkill Valley Journal of the Arts*, *Talking River*, *Thin Air*, *Tower Journal*, and *Willow Review*. O'Connell volunteers with the American Red Cross and was presented with the Candlelight Award as the District Mental Health Volunteer of the Year. She has assisted in recovery during fifty-six disasters, including floods, fires, building collapses, train derailments, and the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Anne Britting Oleson has been published widely on four continents. She earned her MFA at the Stonecoast program of USM. She has published two chapbooks, *The Church of St. Materiana* (2007) and *The Beauty of It* (2010). A third chapbook, *Planes and Trains and Automobiles*, is forthcoming from Portent

Press (UK), and a novel, *The Book of the Mandolin Player*, is forthcoming from B Ink Publishing—both in 2015.

Laurie L Patton is the author or editor of nine books in Indian religions and comparative mythology. She has published two books of poems: *Fire's Goal* (White Clouds, 2003) and *Angel's Task* (Station Hill, 2011). In addition, she has translated the Sanskrit text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, for Penguin Classics, 2008. She lives and works in Middlebury, VT.

Steven Pelcman is a writer of poetry and short stories who has been published in a number of magazines including: *The Windsor Review*, *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Fourth River magazine*, *River Oak Review*, *Poetry Review Salzburg*, *Tulane Review*, *noah magazine*, *The Baltimore Review*, and many others. He was nominated for the 2012 Pushcart Prize. Steven has spent the last fifteen years residing in Germany where he teaches in academia and is a language communications trainer and consultant.

Tom Pescatore grew up outside Philadelphia dreaming of the endless road ahead, carrying the idea of the fabled West in his heart. He maintains a poetry blog: amagicalmistake.blogspot.com. His work has been published in literary magazines both nationally and internationally, but he'd rather have them carved on the Walt Whitman Bridge or on the sidewalks of Philadelphia's old Skid Row.

Marilee Richards has recently had poems published in *The Southern Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Tulane Review*, *The Chiron Review*, *The Santa Clara Review*, and others and has poems forthcoming in *The St. Petersburg Review*. She lives in Sedona, Arizona where she leads poetry hikes into the Secret Mountain Wilderness.

A former New Yorker who worked for the federal government, **Maida Roberts** lives in Dallas and writes full time.

Laurie Sewall's poetry has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Ploughshares*, *Cimarron Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, and *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art*, among other publications. She was selected as a finalist in the *Atlanta Review* 2011 International Poetry Contest. Sewall is a graduate of Northwestern University and received an MFA in poetry from New England College, as well as an MA in counseling psychology from Lesley University. After living in New England for many years, she currently resides in rural Iowa, where she writes and teaches poetry.

Rochelle Shapiro's novel, *Miriam the Medium* (Simon & Schuster, 2004), was nominated for the Harold U. Ribelow Award. Her short story collection *What I Wish You'd Told Me* was published by Shebooks in 2014. She has published essays in *NYT (Lives)* and *Newsweek*. Her poetry, short stories, and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in many literary magazines such as *The Iowa Review*, *The Doctor TJ Eckleberg Review*, *Stone Path Review*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *Stand*, *Inkwell Magazine*, *Amarillo Bay*, *Poet Lore*, *Crack the Spine*, *Compass Rose*, *Controlled Burn*, *The Griffin*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Reunion: The Dallas Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Memoir And Moment*, *Negative Capability*, *The Louisville Review*, *Amoskeag*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Rio Grande Review*, *RiverSedge*, *Peregrine*, *Gulf Coast*, *Existere*, *Passager*, and *Willow Review*. Shapiro's poetry has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize, and she won the Branden Memorial Literary Award from Negative Capability. She currently teaches writing at UCLA Extension.

Jen Sharda lives in the San Francisco Bay Area—its fine community of poets, easy access to nature, and liveliness in the arts nourishes her writing. Her work is forthcoming in *Burningword*, *Chaparral*, *Forge*, and *Spillway*, and is forthcoming in *Lullwater Review* and *Squaw Valley Review*. She attended Squaw Valley Community of Writers in 2014 and has attended the Napa Valley Writers' Conference

since 2010, working with Jane Hirshfield, Major Jackson, and twice with Arthur Sze. Jen joined David St. John's Cloud View Poets classes in 2013. Jay Leeming and Carolyn Miller were early teachers.

Ani Tuzman is a writing mentor at Dance of the Letters, a writing center that she founded in 1982 to help children, teens, and adults experience the joys of writing. Years earlier, before leaving city life, she also cofounded A Kangaroo's Pouch (El Bucle del Canguro), a bilingual and multicultural school in the Boston area. Her work has been published in *CALYX*, *Mothering*, *Tikkun*, *Sanctuary*, *Darshan*, *FamilyFun*, and *Body Mind Spirit*, among other journals. Her writing is included in such anthologies as *Chicken Soup for the Mother & Daughter Soul*, *Divine Mosaic*, and *MotherPoet*. Her poetry is also featured on two CDs, *Spirals of Light and Poetry* and *Chamber Music on Themes of the Holocaust*. Walking miles every day, whatever the weather, fuels her writing. As the mother of a son who was not expected to live, Ani Tuzman is also inspired by "differently-abled" individuals and their families.

Hananah Zaheer is a contributing writer for the *Prairie Schooner* blog and an associate fiction editor for the *Potomac Review*. Her recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Concho River Review*, *Word Riot*, *Bartleby Snopes*, *Fat City Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Inertia Magazine*, *Moon City Review*, *The Diverse Arts Project*, and *Willow Review*, among others. She was a finalist for the Doris Betts 2014 Fiction Prize, and she has also attended the Breadloaf Writers' Conference (2006, 2012, and 2013), the Sewanee Writers' Conference (2006 and 2013), Kenyon Writer's Conference (2014), and the Tin House Summer Writer's Workshop (2014). Originally from Pakistan, Zaheer lived in North Carolina before moving to Dubai. She earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland. She is currently a college professor. She has taught at American University of Sharjah, American University of Dubai, and Montgomery College.

Photos and illustrations

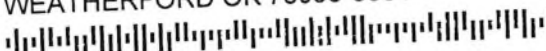
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