

# Jet Fuel Review

Spring 2013

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*A High Octane Literary Journal*

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# JET FUEL REVIEW

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## Steve Papesh

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### **Tchaikovsky: Villanelle**

She was listening to Tchaikovsky on the train;  
her pink ear buds blasting for everyone to hear,  
and I sat to her left eating chicken chow mein.

Trying not to stare, I drank my dollar champagne  
From a purple paper bag with a blue cartoon bear.  
She was listening to Tchaikovsky on the train,

And tracing with her finger a green graffiti stain  
in the window that claimed “Cash Money Wuz here,”  
and I sat to her left eating chicken chow mein.

I wish I had worn a fedora or a gaudy gold chain,  
something that would’ve made her notice I was there.  
She was listening to Tchaikovsky on the train,

And sliding her fingers through her maroon mane.  
Then she stood up. I knew her stop must be near,  
and I sat to her left eating chicken chow mein.

The last I saw of her was a tattoo of Mark Twain  
On her forearm. We could discuss Lit. over a beer.  
She was listening to Tchaikovsky on the train,  
and I sat to her left eating chicken chow mein.

## Aaron Fagan

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### **GLIMPSE**

On my knees  
For the hour  
Before dawn

I wait and rise  
Take the rope  
And breathe

A moment  
The warm air  
In my lungs

Onto the backs  
Of my hands  
Holding ready

To pull the bell  
Back and forth  
A dozen times

Before I put  
The rope back  
And kneel again.

## ELK

Please teach me  
To survive  
The canned hunt.

I pitch refuge  
In the leavings.  
A torrent breaks

Across the surface  
Of perceptions  
Bodying forth

Exactly the perfect  
Surface. Don't be  
Quick to get to the

Bottom. Where  
Does this come from?  
It's about seeing,

And it's about time.  
Our time is a rendition,  
A palimpsest of the old's

Design for the new,  
That moment the word  
*Compulsion* dignifies.

Irascibility may be  
The answer to this  
Final call. Anagoge

Wheels out its snake oil  
Roadshow again,  
Full of apologies, this time,

But not for long. What  
The elk knows, it knows  
And practices in silence.

Jessica Baran

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**DIRTY NIGHT**

There's something toxic in the rain.  
Make a mental picture of it:  
discreet bungalows hunched in cold arroyos,  
antlike R.V.'s dotting the interstate –

no one takes a picture.  
A fine table has not been set.  
In the cheap erotic fashion  
of cheap erotic minds

supper is served: in whispers, in kind.  
There: appease your ugly appetite.  
One should have a hobby,  
a taste for decay

that is the flip-side of elegance.  
They also pay, those  
who meet in motel rooms.  
People always mean well

when they suggest oh so delicately  
the smell of dampness, what  
things become. Sometimes  
just one time is enough.

## OF UTMOST PRIORITY

To trespass against a building's code.  
The lawn yawned unmowed.  
The picnic sprawled without the usual

brand of wholesomeness. When did  
the daily deprivations begin?  
The afternoon

will never author a plan for you.  
Unravel it yourself. Take the weed harvest  
and make a proper roof of it.

In time there will be strength  
and cash. It leans out of row house  
doorways. The block is full of points

of reflection, chunks of glass.  
Picking up where you left off last  
too easily ends in dryness, something

prone to flame. Meanwhile,  
the dogs have their plot –  
collecting refuse, staying alert.

Defending the thinner windows  
is of utmost priority. An education  
in *long-term*, a universal win.

## Nancy Méndez-Booth

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### **Holy Mother of God**

Virgencita, maybe you been busy, but I still believe in you. I know you have to listen to everybody, but I believe more than a lot of people. Definitely more than Graciela, and she got a bicycle for her tenth birthday. I wasn't there, but Natalie told me it was new and not the ugly, on-sale color nobody wants, but pink with sparkle streamers. Everybody at the party got to ride. You know because you must see everything from heaven.

So you heard what that stupid Sister Grace said today in front of the whole fourth grade when we was all in the library. She was talking about that story we had to read, and Peter Davey asked what the word ghetto means. Sister said it's the bad part of town, where the projects are. People on welfare and drugs live in the projects, so the ghetto is dangerous.

I wanted to tell her we're not on welfare. The only crack lady in my building is the one on the fifth floor, whose baby fell out the window. It landed on the community garden, but it's just dirt where the dogs pee, so the baby died. Mami said, "Ese pobre angelito," so I think maybe he's with all the other angels and you in heaven.

But I didn't say anything because then the whole class would look at me bad. They think Sister Grace knows everything because she's the librarian, but she doesn't know. I looked at your picture on the wall between the two windows, Virgencita, and I believed you would make her take it back, or say there's nice people in the projects. Maybe you didn't hear me because Sister Grace yelled at me for looking out the window. I didn't tell her I was praying to you because the class would laugh at me again, and it was private anyways.

I said I didn't feel good at lunch. You know I really didn't, so it wasn't a lie. I didn't want to find out if no one wanted to sit with me. I snuck my sandwich in my pocket, and ate it in the bathroom. It's okay because I went to the handicap stall nobody uses, so it's not nasty. But I got mad when I walked home because NO BICYCLE RIDING is painted on the sidewalks around the projects. Mami and Papi wouldn't let me ride a bike anyways because some titeres might take it like they took Mrs. Ramo's pocketbook right in front of our building.

So Virgencita, maybe you could make things better because I really believe in you. I do good in school, and try not to make trouble for Mami and Papi, and do almost everything they say. I don't want to be greedy and take too many turns, so it's okay for you to listen to Papi when he prays to you. He believes in you maybe more than me because every day he says a lot "¡Ave Maria purisima!"

So Virgencita, maybe your pure, purest heart can make it so Papi hits the number. Then we can have the house he promises Mami. Then they would stop fighting because Mami would believe him. I'd believe him, too. He'd buy me a bicycle, brand new, and I could ride anywhere I want. Oh pure, purest Mary, holy mother, can't you talk to God and make it all come true because I ask so nice?



## The Visitation

La Virgencita spoke to me today. It's true. I had to tell somebody, and I know my husband *B* won't believe me. Please don't give me that look. It really happened, this morning, in my bedroom, as I was getting ready for my run.

My Virgencita medallion felt stuck to the dresser when I tried to pick it up. I thought maybe Jack glued the medallion to the dresser to mess with me. I tried to peel it off, and suddenly it glowed. No joke. I thought I was dreaming, like maybe I hadn't really gotten out of bed and was still sleeping. That's when she spoke to me. Don't laugh. This is very serious. La Virgencita said she's tired of taking care of me. I couldn't believe it. I know that's her job as the Holy Mother. I went to Catholic school, remember? Here's how it went down.

"Mi'ja," she said because she *is* the Holy Mother and can be that *confiada*, you know. "We need to talk."

"Virgencita, is it really you?"

"Really Nancy, listen to yourself. Does that question make sense?"

I wanted to point out that religious medallions don't glow and talk to me in the mornings, but being cheeky to La Virgencita is likely a mortal sin. I'm sure she must have the power to read my mind, so I've been destined for hell long before today.

"I'm sorry, Virgencita. Um, thank you for visiting? It's an honor, right? I mean, it must be important if you want to tell me something in person."

"Yes mi'jita, it is very important, and probably not what you want to hear, but you have to listen very carefully."

I nodded, waited and heard nothing. Her lips didn't seem to move, but I wasn't sure because the medallion is about the size of a quarter so it was hard to see those teeny tiny lips. I leaned closer, then almost fell back on my ass because she appeared in the mirror. Yes, it was *her*. Like I don't know what I look like? It wasn't me wearing a veil and flowing robes with rays of light behind me. Stop laughing or you'll miss what I'm about to tell you. La Virgencita quit on me and that's not funny.

She said I never let her rest. I get out of bed at the crack of dawn to go running and she needs to keep a constant eye on me. In the city, she has to guard me when I cross the six-lane boulevard or I trespass through construction zones or startle drug dealers and buyers in that alley I use as a short cut.

"Why can't you just do laps around the track?" she asked. "It's safer, and the surface is easier on your knees. You're not getting younger, you know."

"Hey! I'm not doing bad for my age. And the track is boring."

That's when she said my morning runs drain her energy and patience. The extra guardian angels assigned to watch over me gave up last week, and I pushed Saint Sebastian's endurance beyond its limits. La Virgencita couldn't dedicate so much time and resources to just me, so I was on my own.

“Mira Virgencita, no disrespect, but maybe you wouldn’t have to quit me if you managed your time better. I mean, the time you waste appearing on a grilled cheese sandwich or a tree trunk in West New York could be spent taking care of me.”

The mirror darkened and I had no problem seeing La Virgencita’s frown. I apologized real fast.

“And Nancy, you don’t appreciate me when I am with you.”

“Virgencita, how can you say that? The medallion is with me at all times.”

“I know. I’m with you on every morning run, either stuck in your sports bra or, worse, the inner pocket of your running shorts.”

“It’s that bad?” I asked.

“Si mi’ja. What is it that you and your friend call it?”

“You mean swamp ass?”

“Exactly. Swamp ass. Every morning.”

She had a point. That was no way to treat the Blessed Mother, but the thought of leaving the house without her scared me. I asked her to reconsider. I promised to be more considerate and treat her better, but she was firm in her decision. I cried. That’s right, I did. I looked at her in the mirror and she was so beautiful. I told her I was willing to beg her never to leave me.

“Ay mi’jita, you’re a smart girl. Too smart to rely so much on a piece of metal with my image. You know you can leave the medallion at home, and never really be alone.”

And she smiled like she believed in me. ¿Te imaginas eso? La Virgencita looked at me like she had faith in me. I felt calmer. Then she said she had to go.

“Will I ever see you again, Virgencita?” I asked as her image faded in the mirror.

“I’m always around if you look carefully. You know, grilled cheese sandwiches and tree bark.”

She winked before she disappeared completely. Then it was just me in the mirror, with my bed head, puffy eyes, and running tank and shorts. The medallion came off the dresser when I picked it up. I took another look at myself, patted down my hair, put the medallion in a drawer, and left for my morning run.

## Erica Bernheim

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### **Our Neighborhood in Hell**

Everything delicious there is best murdered young.  
Salmon follows tapioca, air conditioning mutes  
any possibility of a yard. I like that it's on the ground

floor, hamburger tiles, the "y" area. The sharpened  
floor, the arms in your face, and eighteen ways of  
smelling *no*. There is no perfect outfit to wear

to dinner at a castle, but I hear it's drafty, castles  
where most of the people who sleep there are liars.  
This would be the villanelle in purgatory, risking

being caught pretending to be awake, learning the  
deficiencies of both pine and oak. We will lose  
the knowledge of mourning; our griefs will be

forever with us, our bodies fixed in the opposite  
of closure, our pens readied in the cases of things  
which never come: remember: elevators, true love,

revolutions with no love for their own pasts. We  
are unspectacular, unremarkable, fucked by time  
and things we can't buy and get for free. I melt,

you cope, listen up, this is what we will have to pay  
for having squandered chances in earlier life, thinking  
death would be this beauty-filled place with granite counters.

### **Ten Things The Snake Will Not Tell You**

Seventy-self portraits are more than adequate.

Your ribs taste like burnt orchids.

A river of lives resembles an ocean of chickens.

It is possible to fail a DNA test, even if you cheat.

The thing you thought you thought was right.

Your lids are green and easy to detach.

Dropping towards the ground in case of disaster is disaster.

The second set is free.

People who take things literally are thieves.

Don't fixate on photos taken by wives.

Andrew Galan

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**S. T. Picard**

She walks off Gamma Road  
all the poise of one  
who bends space-time  
'fore and aft'  
hot pipes hemmed  
with a purr, me— ow and hiss  
she paints the linen citrus  
caffeine appears in her hand  
on demand, three shots  
she is S. T. Picard.  
Two AM, a rust stop sign  
beside a rough wheelbarrow  
that has just one handle  
the other wood is lost  
on an island full of men missing  
parts of limbs, parts of faces, parts of hearts  
she ministers the wounds of these casualties  
from eleven dimension midnight alley knifings.  
She is S. T. Picard  
she puts high-heel boot on  
ahead of dark leather boot on  
Gamma Road  
at will caffeine appears in her hand  
triple fire, she is leaving  
lemon in the sheets

with a hiss and a purr  
low-entropy pops  
supersymmetric dissertation  
over black starlight tracks  
just where space and time wait  
so she does not violate  
relativity.

One handle is found on the floor  
beneath the sticky sanding mattress  
lying where the mice have wreaked  
a second props  
behind the middle brown seventies sofa cushion  
fading where the springs have leaked  
a third bobs  
the tepid bubbleless dirty dishwater sink  
moulding where the drain has peaked  
— and a pack of rats live in the soap encrusted bathwater tap —  
all where the four handle barrow works  
'cause this is her  
M-extended thesis  
she would be  
stolen stationary  
'cept space and time move for her  
and she is  
busy loading  
another caffeine shell troika  
'cause this is her

magic, mystery and mother theory  
with the fourth barrow handle  
she has  
lifted the last clutch of redhead scratch  
and cut the orange quarters  
and made the old paired pillowcases  
purr  
'til with each precise stiletto  
she has become  
disappearing staccato  
along Gamma Road  
she has been  
S. T. Picard.



## **The Greatest Grandson of Genghis Khan comes to Australia**

Red poppies bloom eyes and ears    I hit this man    'til fingernails flood  
petals I hit

once      · ·      for my brother  
    · ·      twice    for epilepsy given  
once      · ·      for when they got him again  
    · ·      · ·      a repeat to finish with every dirt throne twist  
    · ·      twice    for my dad's flight  
once      · ·      for his capture with courage redux  
    · ·      twice    for our farm along the valley  
    · ·      · ·      south where my wife  
    · ·      · ·      was nine-months beautiful  
    · ·      · ·      so they gave her a cognate kicking in the guts  
once      · ·      for the village east  
    · ·      · ·      that filled the sky  
    · ·      · ·      when men said no  
    · ·      · ·      they filled it with charcoal  
    · ·      twice    for the west where choral corpse sings  
    · ·      · ·      why bodies lie  
    · ·      · ·      for want of Kalashnikov,  
    · ·      · ·      they refrain, nomads should reside  
once twice and once twice more  
for each town, each block, each house, each room  
for steep escarpment where I and my brother  
above grass grazed    I with my brother    lay out the sun

fingertips drop the stick  
palms twitch open  
arms shake loose  
eyes empty    like those of my brother.

Now what are you going to do with me?

[ Interview commenced 12:35hours; break begun 13:20hours;  
break ended 13:27hours; interview concluded 14:29hours ]

## Glenn Taylor

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### Escape Artists Never Die

Original timestamp  
slightly slanted—

the ethereal becomes  
ephemeral & response

dyslexia permeates.  
The hands are broken

& segmented fingers  
are orange wedges,

muscles pulp, skin skin,  
thickening. Here

is a fixed point that moves  
on a plane, an ant wiggling.

Time, a line-less reel, eternal  
cast & pull, weightless.

Try to inscribe light  
with unbraided ropes—

use each separate strand.  
You feel with soles: concrete

is concrete—ideas transmogrify  
into solids—flight, computers,

wireless internet. There is  
a prototype for cages still

unknown—who says there  
are only steel bars & girders?

## **Wreckage**

Concede the breath.  
Night falls behind  
the ears. It cools.  
Torch the softest part  
first, see how far fingers go  
in, stretches. Half of the time  
spent in wonderment.  
She can never believe  
the stove is turned off.  
He can never believe  
she never believes.  
The missteps, a dance of  
catastrophe. Strophe.  
The choir enters. Antistrophe.  
You are naked & watching  
as your scalp snows in mounds.

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## Christine Pacyk

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### Paper Pygmalion

Folded on the sharp crease.  
Then reversed.  
He calls this geometry  
yet curves were exposed  
as woman unfolds herself.

She wanted to travel to shore  
where Pacific waters wrinkled  
as delicate as paper sheets.

Bonefolder smooth the water's wounds.  
The growing distance, a paper padlock  
keyed to heartbeat and tide.

*Stay away from water, flame.*

At sunrise came questions.  
She asked for scissors and waited  
for a response in her favor, a gesture  
before her resentment could creep in.

*Stay away from flame, water.*

They say woman is made from clay,  
rib or water, mistaken for a hollow core.

Poems on paper limbs  
and boats sliced from palms  
on the horizon countless paper sails.

## **A Marriage**

In the evening

we constellate images  
willow sapping lawn

clematis arboring our heads  
ceiling of swollen blossoms  
drooping with mist

Under lilac canopy.

We are patio dancing  
(he and I) after rain

atmosphere hushed

his open palm invites  
the converging of our skin

night insects sting, drink, bleed us

How suddenly the tongue  
coils

between us words emerge  
from raw mouths

Again moths circling

my words flutter wounded  
around the patio lamppost

night-flying wasps  
released from his mouth



## Aaron Brossiet

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### **What Ivor Thord Grey Would Say**

My Dutch relatives don't  
understand the Spanish  
bandied about in El Elegante  
barbershop, or why Los Dias  
de Muertos is celebrated  
at Cesar Chavez Elementary.  
They look to their shoes instead  
of the young Poncho Villas  
hanging outside the doorway  
of Canita's hip hop store.  
They drink Budweisers  
at Coctailz advertising POLASKI  
DAYS & FREE POOL. Aunt Isla  
used to toe the line on the these curbs  
during Memorial Day parades  
and shape dough into windmill  
cookies everyday of the week.  
The '57 chevy is still crammed  
into the lobby of John & Sons  
Used Cars and Body Shop.  
Names loiter on neighborhood signs:  
Sommerdyke Plumbing;  
Van Raalte and Tulip Streets.  
Ivor would warn, borders lead to vulnerability  
as Island Latinos keep the bus stop bench  
between themselves and the Mexicans.  
Ivor would say, "Beware amigos: just past  
the Dollar Store and Four Star Gas  
Taco Bell keeps its drive-thru open  
late into the night."

**Over the Hills & Far Away**

After Robert Rauschenberg

Many are the moves  
my ballerina makes, her leg  
in white tights, a steeple  
rising from hip, past ear  
and pointing to a world  
without end. These words  
ring like the church bells  
of my past. My father  
standing behind the podium,  
potato juice instead of water  
in his glass. My brother  
asleep in my stepmother's lap.  
But through the riddle, not  
the narcotics I found myself,  
far from evening's visible moon,  
in my seventh summer,  
walking backwards with my  
eyes closed on Shook's farm,  
lost to dusk, the blood of strawberries.  
Tonight, lying on my back  
looking at the sky, I wonder  
when did we stop dropping our  
jaws at the sight of jumbo jets  
releasing their white thread into  
the wind and the sunset.

**Murmuration**

Over boiling rapids black  
starlings cloud and undulate in  
patterns: mottle on Petoskey stones,

black cherry stains —  
my shirt, your mouth.

## Rachelle Cruz

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### How I Learned to Speak

*Bicol, The Philippines*

The words are dropping,  
plums prickly and wet on the book.  
My father says, good, good, good,  
before floating into another  
language with my mother.

*Little S had a box.* I'm four,  
two wings flutter on my lap. They dance  
with milkfish hands.

On the airplane ride:  
*Inside her box was a slithering snake.*  
My mother says, stop reading,  
you'll ruin your eyes.

*His name was Sam,*  
before clicking the light off.

Outside, thick wires squirm on Uncle's  
house, lizards lift their heads from walls.

O-long-ga-po Ci-ty, says  
a Coca-Cola sign across the street.  
Tin roofs rattle. I step  
on a crack but it's a lizard.

My parents loosen their tongues  
here, wild and free. Before Uncle  
sweeps us inside, I yank  
on my mother's belt loop.

Everything is broken here,  
I say,  
a leathered tail in my hands.

## Kenneth Kubacki

---

### **A Portrait of Homelessness**

Beneath, a maelstrom's fluid fuming,  
running, parting anthill domicile,  
a heart driven to a dead, green tree.  
Fluttering, festering Union Jack, give  
me back Saint Patrick's saltire.  
Feasting Black ire boils and roils  
beneath the print of paw left by each tread,  
old burns of emery, silk, and lead.

Forgotten tattered sails, scattered tomes,  
homes of eagle's eyrie, lion's lair,  
to there, repose, fair, unfettered,  
near one dead tree. Me? Caressed  
within the hollow, here lies so and so,  
though bearing buried grudges below.



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## Joey Nicoletti

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### THE FAMILY HITMAN

(RE: Chuckie “The Typewriter” Nicoletti, 1916-1977)

I am a pistol, filled  
with water, squirting my brother in the eyes  
when he falls asleep watching The Brady Bunch.  
I am the mustard-stained, red nylon, textured  
Mo Cheeks jersey in the cheap seats  
of Madison Square Garden.  
I am the name and date written  
in chicken scratch, on the card  
of the overdue library book.  
I am not the gold horn, dangling  
from the 14 karat chains on the thick necks  
of my uncles and cousins.  
I am not one of the mechanics  
who fired at JFK  
from behind a picket fence in Dallas.  
I am not alone, not the recipient  
of three bullets to the back of my head while waiting  
in a sedan, before it catches fire,  
keys rattling against the lacquered dash.

## Jennifer Jackson Berry

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### **When I Was a Girl VII**

fear was: bleeding through the pad, being picked last,  
taking off my shoes, weigh in with a clueless nurse, repeat  
of the dodge ball to the gut or running

the mile, boobs too small (others) or so big (me) running  
gave black eyes & back aches, removing summer's last  
sun-in streaks mid-October with hair dye too dark, repeat

of English teacher asking if anything's wrong, repeat  
of the visit to the therapist's office, running  
through the list of reasons why black hair isn't a last

cry for help: last line repeated to anyone who listened:  
*I'm always running*

### **When I Was a Girl VIII**

fashion was: anything slimming, vertical stripes, black, but  
nothing exactly like a skinny girl's because of the inevitable  
comparisons. puffy paint, jackets laced with novelty pins.

pegged jeans, jeans pegged tight with a safety pin  
so no bending over to fix the cuffs & showing my butt.  
then sports team shirts, British Knights, Bugle Boy & inevitable

androgyny of same. baggy & boyish inevitably  
hid what everyone else showed. the anti-pin-  
-up. & just in case, sweaters long enough to cover my butt.

fashion makes the woman, but inevitably girls like me are pinned,  
stuck between butch & a soft place.

## Post Miscarriage: Day 41

I didn't wash my hair today so it's up in a ponytail.  
In another poem, boys grabbed my ponytails, pre-doggie style.  
There's nothing more girlish than a ponytail.  
There's nothing less ladylike, or more fun, than doggie style.  
When I sleep, I wear no bra & hair in a ponytail.  
Sex isn't the same since. Even when it's doggie style.

My back fat jiggles when we do it doggy style.  
You can only see my grays in a ponytail.  
You'd think that alone would keep me from my ponytail.  
Even before, I rarely slept after, because I can't come doggie style.  
You'd think that alone would keep me from doggie style.  
My husband was instructed early on: *Don't pull the ponytail.*

*Don't push my head down to your crotch, ponytail  
or not.* But sometimes, it's all I want: doggie style  
with my ass in the air, doggie style  
with a pillow clutched in my fists, ponytail  
pulled taut. Lately, it's not what I want: doggie style  
or any way at all. At night, I still do the ponytail,

but I haven't slept in over two weeks. I use the ponytail  
to keep myself presentable in case I don't shower. A ponytail  
does that. I wish a ponytail could make me want doggie style.  
I want to want it doggie style.  
I wish it could do more, my ponytail.  
I wish I couldn't get pregnant doggie style.

We have to wait for one more cycle before it can be doggie style  
sans condom. I will worry my pretty little ponytail,  
because I'm starting to think I don't want a life of ponytails  
& baby dolls, ponytails & birthday parties, ponytails  
& anything. I don't want to have to explain doggie style  
to anyone who has to ask "What's doggie style?"

How would I even explain doggie style?  
*When two people love each other very much, doggie style  
is a beautiful thing. When two people want it dirty, doggie style  
is an easy way to be a lil bit dirty. Your ponytail  
is crooked, honey, let me fix your ponytail.  
That's better, go show your Daddy your ponytail.*

Doggie style is on my mind; like a school girl, I twirl my ponytail.  
I imagine doggy style, his hand on my hip, his hand pulling my ponytail.

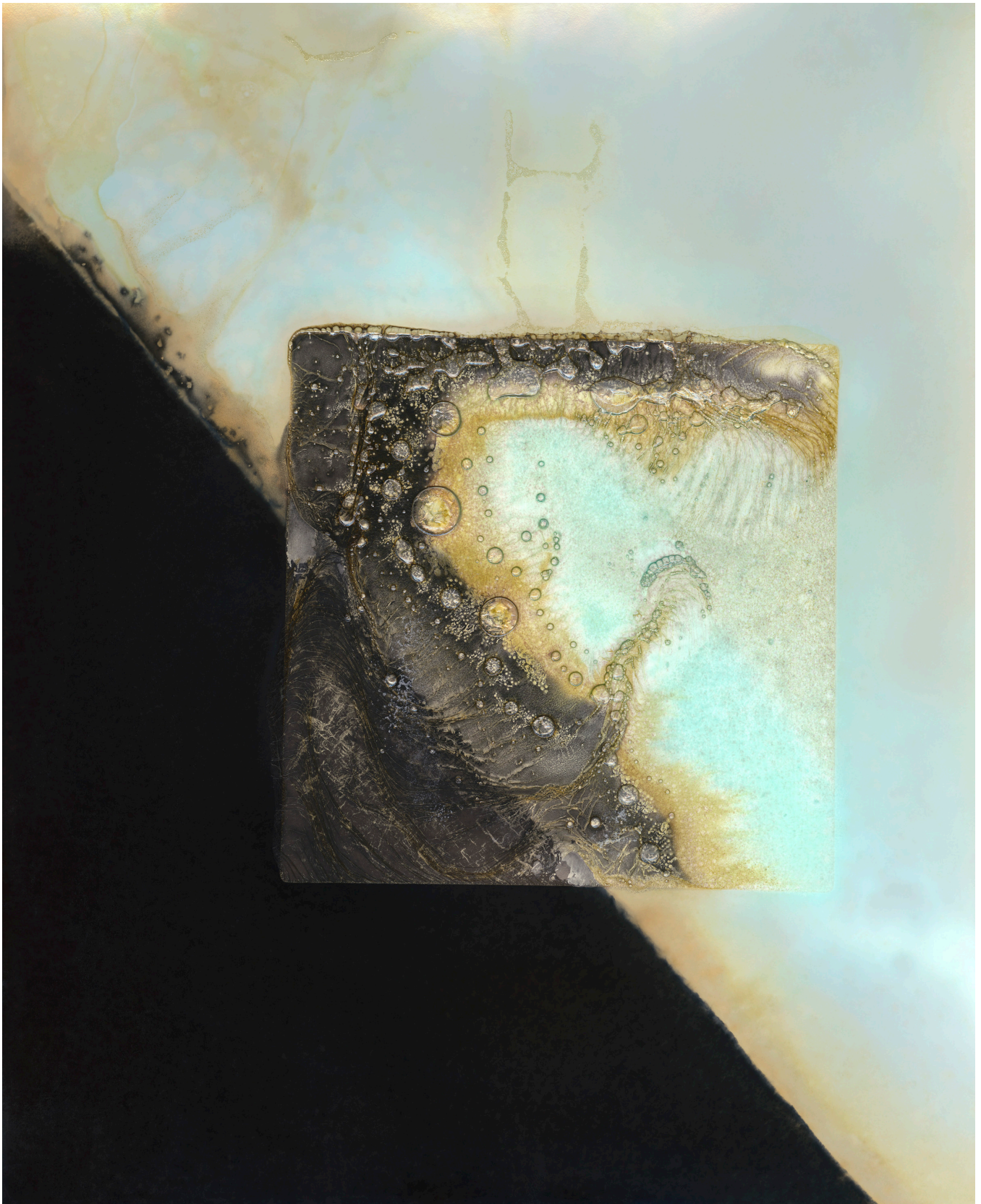














Sara Tracey

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**When the Jam Starts**

*I tell you you do not / know me if you think I will not / kill you.*  
—Sharon Olds “The Promise”

You think it begins on the jammer line,  
when the whistle blows, when we’re all hips  
and toe stops on the track. I tell you it begins  
in the kitchen, standing over a pot of water—  
which will indeed boil while you watch—ready  
to dangle a mouth guard from a teaspoon until  
the rubber is soft and ready to cup your teeth.  
It begins with eight wheels and a hardwood floor.  
Impatience. Imbalance. With bruised knees  
and rink rash, a bag of ball bearings, blood  
on the track. We all confuse violence with affection  
from time to time, don’t we? Here, the harder I hit,  
the more they love me. After the whistle, we are  
a beast with many backs. Don’t call it chaos.  
We are only reckless in our naming.

## Stella Teaches Me the Body

*because we've all been loved & demolished*  
—Jan Beatty, “Shower w/notebook”

I have no interest in a body free from scars.

I want to know where you've been cut,  
where you first learned  
the taste of fire.

Once, I wanted tenderness/a boy  
who would touch  
my face  
as if it were made of glass.

I will not break. My body  
was made to stretch.

I keep track of bruises in a spiral notebook.  
#217: knees against cement  
#329: *I swear, he didn't mean to...*

Good morning? I am black and blue.  
This is my body saying to me: *no more*.  
Men are just flesh.  
They whisper my name  
so no one knows they need me.

Forget propriety.  
I am not a vault.  
What I take in I do not keep. Wear a hat/  
tap shoes/boxing gloves.  
Use a condom.

I used to be afraid  
to say *cunt*, to say *touch me here*.  
I used to be afraid to say *no*.

The first man I loved taught me  
to use my body for revenge.  
He never used his fists, but if you met him,  
you wouldn't believe me.  
When I broke my nose on Christmas eve  
kissing  
an icy patch of concrete,  
my mother wanted to call the cops.  
He kept me  
hungry/afraid  
but treated my body like a gift  
he was forever unwrapping.

Once, I loved a man who couldn't see me  
 unless I crawled into his lap. Careless/reckless  
 a man with hands made for prayer  
 and demolition. I begged  
                   him to notice. I left my front door open  
                   so he could find me/enter/  
 where he wanted. When he was a child  
                   his father hung himself. When he was a child  
                   he learned how to leave people  
                   wanting.

I used to want a man  
who could make me feel small,  
lift me like a gun.

### **Weathervane**

It's a dead battery night on the interstate,  
a black ice morning. You mumble  
at the doorjamb of sleep, telling secrets.  
I'd say good-night and start walking home—  
if I knew where that was.  
Instead, I stand on the back porch,  
finger licked and aiming skyward,  
and listen for the wind to point the way.

Kristy Bowen

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**from apocalypse theory: a reader**

My apocalypse theory scatters beer bottles across the porch. Is all armchairs and armageddon when the power goes out. But my shoes are all lined up, toes pointed at the door just in case. I was drowning in the beginning, but what I lacked in oxygen, I made up for in radio static. My apocalypse theory likes my hand in his pants sometimes, my mouth as warm and soft as butter in the dish. My apocalypse theory is nothing if not resourceful. I have six rolls of duct tape and a vase full of plastic dahlias. I have a pool cue and a mustang beneath a dusty tarp in the garage. I am nothing if not ready.

**from apocalypse theory: a reader**

My apocalyse theory begins with wasps and ends with too many raccoons knocking over garbage cans. It's all mongrels and barbie dolls, and nothing to do with Jesus. Only a small breathing, some quick-hearted thing moving under the stove. I was doe-eyed, dolled up, and standing in the center of a ring of ponies when it came for me, the circle collapsing inward with the weight of it's own emptiness. My apocalypse theory was nothing if not crudely wrought,. Nothing if not over the top. We referred to it as the "Scottish Play" but everyone knew better. All the small horses wore exquisitely embroidered headpieces and sad caged looks. The end of it all was at the end of a great big rope. The end of it all was moving faster toward us, but always farther away.

**from apocalypse theory: a reader**

My apocalypse theory begins as a tiny machine, gears turning over and an approximation of feathers. My apocalypse theory is inconsolable when I say no, huddles underneath the overpass and calls me at 3am. He says there is too much Texas in Texas, too much wideness. I tell him what doesn't kill him makes him stronger, but he keeps adjusting the wax wings on his back and mumbling about airplanes. There is too much highway in Texas, bright and clean and filled with taxdollars. Too many open spaces and combustibles. His gears crud up with oil residue. I imagine him with a smear of ash across his cheek and a pocket full of rusty bottle tops. I imagine he is holding a match and just waiting for the right wind.

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## Ester Bloom

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### My First Wedding

“Will you marry me?” he said. “Yes,” I said. That’s when the trouble started. In agreeing to a marriage, I unwittingly agreed to a wedding. I agreed to be a Bride.

Until I was ten years old, I looked like a little boy. Then, having eaten some of the wrong “Eat Me” cake or drunk the wrong “Drink Me” potion, my body exploded into that of a 30-year-old woman. Life on both sides of the transition was occasionally traumatic. In third grade, I walked into the girls’ bathroom and something righteous with pigtails screamed and pushed me out again. By seventh grade, I was skulking around in my older brother’s over-sized T-shirts to hide the thought-balloon sized breasts that threatened to speak of my behalf.

From puberty on, I felt like my body was writing checks that the rest of me couldn’t cash. Ben, my fiancé, was the first person to make me feel comfortable with my exterior, but even then it and I only struck a cold peace. How could I walk down the aisle as though I were, inside and out, some archetype of femininity? At 24, I was, at best, a capable imposter; often I still felt like the nine-year-old who had been pushed out of that bathroom, albeit one with the boobs of Joan Holloway.

My mother, whose joy in life is throwing parties, happily assumed control of wedding planning. In a twist on the cliché that a mother’s sole responsibility is to show up and wear beige, my job as the Bride was to show up and wear white. Unfortunately, even if there wasn’t much for me to do, there was still quite a lot I had to be.

Let’s do something small, I suggested to my mother, trying to hide the desperation in my voice. Maybe just 40 people in a barn in Vermont? I doubt she heard me over the noise of artillery fire: she and my father were fighting their own battle, and they desperately needed distraction. My father had been diagnosed with cancer. Soon after oncologists removed a coil of his colon and started him on chemo and radiation, other doctors began fussing over the state of my mother’s thyroid. They could not determine whether it was trying to kill her, so, to be safe, they decided to take it out. Thus, in the space of a few months, my father was disemboweled and my mother’s throat was slit. Both lived to tell the tale. They were not, however, unaffected. It took my father—a man whose primary exercise was doing the *New York Times* crossword puzzle—months and several blood transfusions to begin to get his strength back. My mother was working full time while also taking care of him. She needed something that would bring her joy, and nothing pleased her like spending long evenings with a florist designing incredible tropical centerpieces. The worse my parents’ health situations got, the grander the ceremony and reception became.

At the same time, my fiancé, busy finishing up law school at NYU, confessed to a crush on a friend who looked, and smoked, like something out of film *noir*. She was Jessica Rabbit to my Raggedy Ann, Madonna to my Melissa Etherage. Was he sure he wanted to be engaged? I asked my fiancé. Yes, he assured me. I could trust him. But faced with the fear of my dad dying and my fiancé doubting, while my mom planned an

ever-more-elaborate and expensive wedding around me, I didn't know what to trust exactly, or how. At night, I slept badly, dreaming of giving birth the morning of the ceremony and being instructed to shake it off. During the day, increasingly, I just shook.

Back when I looked like a boy, I was cheerful and confident, at least when I wasn't being thrown out of bathrooms. Puberty brought out the crazy in me. As soon as the breasts bubbled out, I shrank back, and I came down with what my parents called "the shakes." When we traveled, or before summer camp, or some nights for no reason at all, I would go pale, tremble violently, and eventually throw up. Because I was the middle child and the "good" kid, my parents accepted this as a personality quirk. Both of my brothers had tempers that left holes in the walls gaping in astonishment; compared to their volatility, my "shakes" were easy enough for my parents to accept.

The attacks came less frequently as I got older and for a while it even felt like I had grown out of them. During the fifteen months leading up to the wedding, however, what I was finally told were anxiety attacks became a debilitating routine. Ben held my hand, rubbed my back, and murmured reassurance as I twitched on the bathroom floor as often as once a week. Finally, I sought help.

"You're afraid of growing up," said the psychiatrist I found through the Internet. "Let's try putting you on Effexor."

Was that what fixed Peter Pan? I could not remember. "Um," I said carefully, "if it's okay, I don't think I want something that strong."

The doctor and I settled on small doses of Xanax as needed. He wrote me the prescription and then started scribbling on a second sheet of paper. Was he giving me the Effexor too, after all? I heard a tearing sound and he handed me what he had written, a satisfied smile on his face. The note said, *I am an adult and can handle whatever comes along.*

Dumbstruck, I looked up at him. "Well," I said, "I guess if it's on letterhead, it must be true?"

He laughed genially, took my \$40 co-pay, and ushered me out the door.

The Xanax helped to a degree, as did the fact that Ben, in an attempt to start our engagement afresh, surprised me with a second proposal. (I accepted.) Encouraged, I tried to concentrate on the plusses of a wedding: being able to gather friends and family for a cheerful cause, giving our plethora of grandmothers an occasion to rejoice. I found a dress on sale, an offbeat sage-green gown that made me feel like some kind of wood nymph from ancient Greece. My father was reacting well to radiation, and the nodes on my mother's thyroid, when examined, proved benign.

Less benign, as it turned out, was the lump in her breast she found a mere three months before the ceremony.

Faced with the news that she had a life-threatening condition, in addition to a full-time job, a seriously ill husband who needed her support, and a wedding to carry off that had assumed the pomp and circumstance of your average Inaugural Ball, my mother waded deep into denial. For two weeks, she continued as if nothing had happened, buying up crates of popsicles for my father, who could stomach little else, and meeting for marathon sessions with Jonathan the florist. As she scheduled her first chemo appointment with one hand, she picked out a ten-piece jazz band for the reception with the other, to complement the string quartet that would play during the ceremony.



"Have you considered Effexor?" suggested Dr. Worthless, the psychiatrist, when I knocked on his door again.

"Um," I said, as nicely as possible, "like I said last time, I don't think I want something that strong or addictive, if that's possible."

"It is a very effective drug," he said. "I've seen good results."

Irritation finally overwhelmed my politeness. "I don't understand. Do they pay you or something?"

"Yes," said Dr. Worthless, without any trace of shame.

Again he took my forty-dollar co-pay and handed me a prescription for more Xanax.

"Don't worry," he said, "you'll be fine."

"Just out of curiosity," I said, "what separates you from a drug dealer?"

"Ha ha ha!" he said. "Ha! Seriously, though, drug dealers don't care about your health."

My mother got a call from the hospital. Luck had favored her: the biopsy on her breast had been declared a false positive. She thanked the radiologist and then called me.

"I'm planning another party for the night before the wedding, after the rehearsal dinner," she said.

"But the rehearsal dinner *is* a party," I said.

"Not everyone can come to the rehearsal dinner," she said. "And we'll do a big Shabbes dinner at the house the night before that, too. That will be nice, won't it?"

My hand twitched toward my purse, where I kept the pills, as I envisioned the multiplying array of events at which I would be the center of attention (or at least *a* center, tied with live music and ornate tropical floral arrangements). I knew that my mother needed all of these events to plan to distract her from her own mortality and, even more, my father's; it seemed selfish, not to mention futile, to beg her to scale back. Shrill, nasty voices raked at me. Sure, Ben had been committed and enthusiastic ever since proposal #2, but what if something changed and he backed out? The bigger weddings are, the harder they fall. What if my mother got diagnosed with cancer #3, and this one meant business? What if my father—well, died? What if I couldn't handle any of it because deep down I *wasn't* an adult, I wasn't ready to handle any of it: the messy realities of sex and gender, of embarrassment and desertion, of death?

I needed help of a different, more dramatic kind, some way to act as though I had faith so that faith would be given to me. I needed something concrete and manageable to do, something more proactive than popping pills, something to get me into character.

"Have you thought about going to the *mikvah*?" a friend asked.

After thirteen years of Jewish Day School, three summers at Camp Ramah, and four months of living in Israel, I took a well-deserved break from religion when I began college, and that break stretched on into my post-graduate life in New York. I had never been particularly observant, and the *mikvah*—the traditional ritual bath taken by brides before their weddings—felt like something only Orthodox Jewish women did. No, I hadn't thought about the *mikvah*, but my friend urged me on. The idea of a ritual to help me calm down and focus on what I was about to do seemed appealing. Moreover, the existence of a ritual to mark this kind of transformation served to remind me that women are not born Brides, that, indeed, for many of us, it takes a ceremony before the ceremony even to become one.

I decided to go for it, hoping that maybe three dunks and a prayer would do what a loving groom, fistfuls of Xanax, and a doctor's handwritten mantra had not.

My maid-of-honor, Charrow, and one of my bridesmaids, Jamille, both of whom had known me almost all my life, accompanied me to the synagogue where, in more carefree times, I had attended pre-school. Of my companions, Charrow, less than thrilled with binary gender options, went by her last name and would be wearing a suit to my wedding; Jamille had recently discarded her childhood nickname ("Jamie") for the full, feminine version and would be wearing a tomato-red dress. Closing the door of the *mikvah* on their encouraging smiles, I realized that I could locate myself somewhere between them on the femininity spectrum. Even remembering there was a spectrum was reassuring.

They waited outside the room while a kind woman from the synagogue explained the procedure, that the so-called "living waters" of the *mikvah* are intended to enclose the body as though it were returning to the womb. Once I was as God had made me, with no barriers between my most elemental self and the water, I would enter the pool, recite a prayer, and submerge myself three times. With the ceremony complete, I would be as born again as a Jewish girl could get.

After the *mikvah* lady smiled one last time and left me alone, I floated for a moment, reveling in the weirdness of my own private spa. Then I got down to business. I read the Hebrew prayer off the laminated sheet the lady had left me. The words echoed gently around me as down I went into the water, disappearing beneath the surface, eyes squeezed shut and holding my hair down so that no curl would float up. Once, twice, three times.

When I burst through the water headfirst after the final dunk, I didn't know which of the three immersions had had an effect, or whether the magic was cumulative, but naked then in the sustained silence of the room, with the high-pitched voice of panic muffled by the water, I felt peaceful for the first time in months. Alone with myself, I took stock: head, shoulders, knees, and toes, and Joan Holloway boobs, all there, exactly where they should be, everything visible and nothing to be ashamed of. I didn't think about whether I was an adult, or a Woman, or a Bride. I didn't think about Ben and crushes, or my parents and cancer. I didn't think at all. I floated in the warm, tiled pool, savoring being naked, buoyant, and alive, and when I emerged I felt like I wasn't quite the same person I had been. I was a person who could go skinny-dipping with the lord in the very building where I had once attended pre-school and in only two days I would marry a guy who loved me inside and out. Was I an adult? Could I handle whatever came along? Maybe. Enough. The quiet of the *mikvah* lingered with me like a blessing, allowing me to smile without satire at everyone's frenzied efforts to turn me into a Bride. Over the course of the weekend, I was massaged, buffed, and painted, like Dorothy in the Emerald City. The capstone event came on the day of the wedding, when my hair was meticulously arranged so as to become one with a relative's 1960's pearl-and-wire headdress. "I dreamt about this," the hairdresser said when he was done, with a satisfied look at my up-do.

As I sat on the bench outside the salon on the morning of the wedding, waiting to be picked up, I didn't know whether the transformation would satisfy my audience. I didn't know how proud and thrilled my mother would look, or that my father would make it down the aisle and later even onto the dance floor for the *hora*. I didn't know that my groom, in a borrowed tux and a brilliant smile, would dance with me all night and then, in the bathtub in our honeymoon suite, undo my elaborate hair-and-headdress swirl pin by pin and finally finish disassembling what a team of professionals had so painstakingly put together by guiding me under water for a fourth and final time.

I knew none of that and still, I tried to be as calm on the bench as I had been in the *mikvah*. I did not pray, *Lord, send me a sign*. But I received one anyway. A well-turned-out older woman walking by stopped at the sight of me as though her reins had been pulled. “My gawd,” she said, slapping her hand over her heart. “Sweetheart, you look amazing! You look just like I did before *my* first wedding!”

Alan Elyshevitz

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**Village in the Hills**

On Sundays I enjoy a hike in the hills but not  
when hunters cascade from their duck blinds,  
giving chase to whatever they despise and fear.

Just after dawn an irreproducible moment seized  
my ankle, but by the time I turned to confront it,  
the body of a predator lay at the bottom of a gully.

Inevitable that during plague or war  
wolves infiltrate this settlement  
where we gird our cathedral in a scaffold of pathos.

With unwarranted zeal a lone boy kicks a soccer ball  
in a courtyard shaded by our clock tower. Passing by  
I lob the ball back to him yet feel disgraced somehow.

At home I peel the makeshift bandage from my ankle  
beneath running water while the cathedral  
irritates the morning with its trio of bells.

A neighbor summons me to confide his perplexity  
over the lethargy of his herd. He clears his sinuses  
then peels a brown orange, offering me a wedge.

Though the bells fall silent, the hunters  
keep firing away in the hills. A soccer ball  
bounces into the road with no boy behind it.

My neighbor augments his orange with black market sugar.  
He blames the wolves for their hunger  
and his sheep for their congenital languor.



### **Hoods Down, Pants Up**

In the public library my black face darkens  
under lighting as blunt as a buzz cut.  
From behind his uniform and coffee breath,  
the security guard classifies me.  
Shelves surprise me with difficult corners.  
One room has computers and small noise  
like money. I don't go in. I avoid  
stuffed noses in the room where children  
read with everything but their eyes.  
Smaller words save money, so I use them.  
I'd rather sag than straighten. I'd  
rather be a street of African faces  
like the one outside, yes, without books,  
but with rounded corners and eyes to the ground.

F. Daniel Rzicznek

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**from Leafmold**

The sun was at first nothing more than a wheel but soon became a different idea for every person who felt its light until the self became many. In this influx, you, child, were lost and the earth made nothing of you. Then, a wind. The near-impossibility of being alive and witnessing time flow constantly by (that river that rolls and rolls even if you turn your back, bury your head, take your life) and, being aware of it, the poet hits “record” but the vehicle can be unreliable, breaking down to keep up with itself. The table is a floating thing at the base of an atmosphere—a woman with black hair hovers among the red tiled roofs of the boneyard village below us (the sea in the distance writhes like a future saint swallowing a hot coal at the feet of a mute and ragged king), the hazel eyes breathing and sighing behind the shapes our thoughts make, the sounds they find: she must be our mother singing to herself about Christ while pushing a lamb’s head around in a pot of fennel and cabbage.

from Leafmold

The human face cycles through its emotions during the sun's brutal course. The train laments, three or four times a day. Library hour: the copier behind me whisper-shrieks a constant, eventually soothing figure. The house without you was a gallery of cobwebs, of food left out, of open cupboards, of loud music, of the dog losing it over the sound of neighbors parking their cars. Tonight I will dream of oaks and sawdust. The waitress at Bob Evans is super nice, nearly motherly, but the customers look miserable yet somehow satisfied to be so, clutching chairs for balance en route to the register. Doings at the border: leg of venison slow-cooked, potato sprinkled with dried green chili then roasted. Because they fear you, no one says goodbye—God's favorite posture is *running-low-to-the-ground*. Foliage: on the ground, a skirt dropped and naked trees stepping out except for the ever-pious conifers. The patron saint of light pollution shrugs and turns away, the heart expanding to the point of question—signal of the spirit's volition. The black dog and I fling long striding shadows on the full moon road.

## from Leafmold

Alone at the turn of the year: the great divide stands up from the hills, bought for the price of a gunshot wound. Wilting flowers conducted matrix-like through Louisiana—think of the results: Prospero in wing molt, Hermes observed by aerial survey, Dogen mourning every thunderclap. *Never let the ocean grab the wheel.* This was only discovered by dirt and broken tile, an extreme form of nuptial plumage. A gasconade: the folding shorebird rejoices in the gift of another morning the way I embrace a dose of sleep at the edge of a cliff. Migration behavior above the Copper River opens an infinite corridor of teachings in spite of delicately rendered idle chatter. Here is where I leave off, to the sound of nails being filed in the next room. *What eats at you?* Othello on the breeding grounds—Ophelia failing to note lumbering practices that remove old hollow trees. *What wakes you at three each night?* Othello storming the antique stores of Georgetown—Caesar wintering near China. *Does his foot tread coffee grounds or mud?* One was destroyed by skunks. One, diamond-shaped, suggests difficulty.

from Leafmold

We woke in the morning under tesseral skies. To ask for the fever, to ask to be haunted, to do away with grief and also meaning—mud season is right around the corner. A copse, leveled in the war, comes back green as seawater in the night. I smear beeswax on my nose to calm the burning left by tissue after tissue. Winter finds my conscience no bigger than a tomato hornworm, which turns out to be monstrous, unmanageable. Deciduous islands of the river, I walk across the ice to you through this body's haze of sensation: material beard, weight of blue wool on my clavicles, rainstorm of nerves finding my brain the way groundwater finds the waiting mouth of a root. If the mother of anything is here, may she come forward free of human guilt or shame. The proper temperature of the soul is somewhere between a sear and a char—the maw of God drooling for the new year's meal. Assume, for an evening, the serpentine position and you'll have a chandelier of data, the moon tethered to a bag of onions, a hydrogen bomb in a wineglass. Deer leaping on the white ice.

## Dan Fliegel

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### **Kin**

When we would kill a buffalo and squat  
alongside its last heat in the swaying gray

afternoon, autumn stalked by winter, sharing  
the heart fresh and first, still steaming and warm

in our hands, the world shuddered, everything  
horizon, without words

for ocean, or rainforest or city. You would  
smile with a look of liverlust, an organ

urge, not only for the singular beast, but for  
all of it, eyes shining, teeth flashing, jaws

working muscles turning such strong muscle  
into more muscle, two animals content, and

the blood of another pouring dark from  
our lips, staining our chins.

## Results

Your message, love, said the results  
were benign, and suddenly  
yes, it speaks spring again, but colder—  
leaves edging into where blooms  
first shivered, already weeks ago.  
I passed a possum, crushed  
on the road, where it borders  
the woods that echoed birdsong.  
First one hollow needle  
then another needle inside  
the first, this one biting and tearing  
threads of you, the tissue  
within the breast that fed three  
and drew my mouth too.  
*Would you like to see the sample?*  
the nurse had asked, gripping the cup.  
Morning again and light  
seeps through without song or story.  
You have stopped icing your breast,  
the pain less than it was.  
*If you live long enough, some kind  
of cancer will kill you,* your brother  
the doctor said, sipping wine  
and standing remarkably straight,  
his feet noticeably apart, as if bracing  
for some shifting in the ground beneath.

**After Lorca, After**

\*

when I across words  
do meanings  
inevitably translated  
infinitely small

transfer object emotion  
clinging to barnacles

scrape and poet  
shrivel like tradition against  
an ocean vocabulary

\* somewhat

*Songs*

“recycled” poetic  
Portraits, etc. folk  
conversations  
about thought  
might draw

shape traditional  
octosyllabic feminine  
sung in Spanish

Lorca laboring a vision—  
gypsies, horses,  
breezes, rivers hidden

to imbue  
fragmentation,  
mystery conviction,  
metaphor,  
not  
poetry

\* Absent

bull, fig, *caballos*,  
ants of  
afternoon  
because forever



stone, black satin  
body                breaks memory

*para siempre*

Autumn           grapes,  
*tus ojos* like

dead dogs        *yo canto*  
                     your mouth  
born open,  
                     words  
breeze the grove

                     \* This  
                     poem  
dedicated to kill  
now and Lorca

Feed each great  
Spanish century  
some twenty years  
I stanza only

a few lines

                     \* shapes  
deflower  
                     some flamenco  
guitarist, his grave  
                     dug from wisdom  
between ribs, the moon,  
                     names,  
things themselves

                     \* Dear  
Lorca would like poems  
of lemon a lemon  
like a newspaper cloud  
utterly independent

a sound finger  
erotic to invent  
blue visible

decay argues in slang

this seaweed needs  
these letters in  
some future

## Melissa Carrington

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### **Not Quite Ken**

This kid boy grew ordinarily  
and controlled fire trucks that sirened.  
He wore plastic hats and sun-rubber boots  
and held a four-foot hose the shade of mandarin.  
Then his youth claimed manhood and a senior girl advised:  
your body begs for protein and gym time.

He was ambitious, enthralled by Robert Burns  
blessed with a robust muscular heart  
and bid his last buck to a hungry mother.  
But in the high school halls, he wandered alone.  
He was only a virgin with bony arms.

He was told to practice chivalry,  
adjured to fill the bill  
workout, simper, juice, and entice.  
His efforts had gone unnoticed  
like a schizophrenic's prognosis.  
So he gorged himself with Vebonol and lard  
and watched his body grow.

Two extra sets of pallbearer hands  
wedged him in that gloss-rich case.  
His lips sewn shut with overlapped threads  
depressed his swollen, sugar face.  
“And he used to be so athletic” said that senior girl.  
*At least he lost those bony arms*  
to which he celebrates his capper.

**Still Life with Knife (Cento)**

I know who killed me. I was  
nineteen on a hot and steamy

Wednesday in July. I dwelled  
in a whisper, “Here, doctor,

take these scissors... cut  
beneath the organs of my chest,

and let them rest in your favorite  
chair like an old art portrait

of mushroom risotto  
and a glass of malbec.

## Beauty in the Bagel Shop

For most of my life, I've spent my evenings by the river walk of downtown Cedarsville reminiscing the past and searching for answers I doubt I'll ever find. I park myself on the same worn-out bench standing only three feet above the ground on legs about as sturdy as an infant's. The rain washed away its beautiful cocoa color of ninety years and left behind an ashy gray, like the face of a deceased woman—beautiful, yet useless. I often try to predict how long the poor rocker will last.

Four days and one wind storm, and I'll be saying sayonara to the damn thing, angry it couldn't hold out another couple hundred gambles. But I'll pay it my respects anyhow and carry on to find a new bench deeper into the woods, farther from the river, and more isolated than ever before.

That's the thing about immortals – we're destined to say goodbye. We love for thirty years and then hurt for forty, and eventually, we throw our hands in the air and surrender. From there, we learn to attach ourselves only to the smaller things, like benches and bagel shops, which is where I wander on the tenth hour of every Sunday.

It sits at the heart of the city less than a quarter mile from here, but I'm in no rush. I like to take the long way passing the boutiques and barber shops, and the art studio where children file out displaying their ceramic bowls to each other, snickering and making trades. I also spot a young couple, maybe sixteen or seventeen, sitting in the gang way against an apartment building. I suppose he is flirting with her by squeezing the tops of her knees, but I can't tell.

I try to let everyone go on about their business while I mind my own and let the earth move beneath my feet until I reach Bean et Bella. It was over seven decades ago that I first stepped into this bagel shop, and what attracted me was a petite Canadian woman. She was pulling her hair back into a banana clip as she ordered a stuffed pretzel rod with fruit punch. Under her arm was an Italian leather journal, and she spent the next fifty minutes or so decorating its pages with little portraits of the faces in the shop. I waited patiently for it to be my turn – for her to casually stare in my direction for a while.

In my head, I was imagining the scene that was about to take place.

She will take one look at me, seeing nothing but a blood-famished corpse. My fangs will trigger panic throughout her body, and she will wince, hard and ugly. She will tug at her red turtle neck sweater, drop the pen from her hand, shut her journal, and scurry out the restaurant like a squirrel

crossing the road. In less than ten minutes, she will have caught a cab out to her mother's house where she will stay for the weekend relaying stories of how I was wide-mouthed just inches from her neck. Some man named Liam Josling will become the hero, and I, just a man at a bagel shop, will become the poison of the town.

I laughed at the absurdity of it all as I glanced over to the woman finishing up her last sip of fruit punch.

And I braced myself as she, too, peered in my direction. To my surprise, she didn't wince or scurry. Instead, she released a giggle and lifted the portrait for me to see, pointing with her finger at the fangs in which she wrote, "totally cool," next to them.

"Name's Mona," she beamed, unfolding her legs from Indian position. "Mind if I take a seat?"

## Jacob Saenz

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### Evolution of My Profile

Before, being bald & brown  
badged me a 'banger:  
black pants w/X color

shirt & head shaved short  
branded me in X gang,  
even if they hang in

a 'hood not my own,  
I still got thrown on  
a cop car's hood & trunk,

punched in mouth for being  
in a marked car cruising  
down the wrong streets.

Now being brown & bearded,  
boarding trains w/a backpack  
bursting at the seams w/books,

I receive suspect looks  
from cops patrolling  
w/bomb-sniffing dogs

as if I should be muzzled  
& leashed like their animals—  
collared & crated in the dark,

taught how to sit & lie  
down & beg for treats,  
only set free when I learn

not to bite back & snap  
my jaw at the hand  
petting my head.

**Potion**

*after Eileen Myles*

I grew a beard  
to stop being  
cast a gangster  
w/goatees  
or mustaches  
thick & dark  
to match the hard  
stares they carry.  
Can you name  
a gangster  
w/a beard? Maybe  
Rick Ross but he  
isn't who he says  
he is & neither  
am I. I'm not  
a gangster. I'm  
a wizard & I store  
wisdom in my  
hair, which means  
I'm dumb b/c  
my beard is short  
& trimmed but still  
I stroke it  
like I'm deep  
in thought,  
concocting  
a potion  
like a poem  
to give  
the illusion  
of wizardry.



**Love, the war's on TV**

Love, the war's on TV  
& nothing else is on.  
Come watch it w/me.

We'll use LCD technology  
to crystalize the bomb.  
Love, the war's on TV.

Tonight it's for all to see  
like a movie marathon.  
Come watch it w/me.

No need to be PG,  
all the kids are gone.  
Love, the war's on TV.

Forget about sleep;  
we'll stay up until dawn.  
Come watch it w/me.

We'll count every casualty  
w/crosses on the lawn.  
Love, the war's on TV,  
come watch it w/me.

Joseph E. Lerner

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**SAFE**

Such a relief  
to touch the tongue  
in so many ways:  
the ligature of palate,  
the choreography of teeth,  
a musicology that bleeds,  
burns, and then recedes,  
glow by glow,  
like the lights of a tunnel—  
so frangible, a long way down,  
and, ultimately, collapsible.  
Still, one enters, not unaware  
but undaunted: a place  
of refuge for the hunted.

## Ricky Garni

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### **WALTZ TIME**

A dolphin can jump in waltz time.  
Anything can be in waltz time. It's easy.  
All you have to do is miss the last heartbeat

out of four. The last heartbeat comes,  
here it comes, and you say, "I'm sorry –  
what did you say?" And your heart

plunges back into the water. It  
counts to one.

## DESTINY

My telescope is in the parking lot  
aimed at the gymnasium.  
It looks just like  
a camera in a parking lot.  
Ho Ho! It is quite deceptive!  
with its looks and how it is aimed  
at the door of the gymnasium  
in the manner of a camera.  
Strong men, strong with muscles,  
leave the gymnasiums through the doors  
that they open. Their muscles are wet.  
They see my telescope and become angry!  
My telescope is pointed towards  
the strong men of the gymnasium.  
It appears to be a camera  
but it is really not  
and their muscles become larger as they run  
and more wet as they run  
Towards me and my telescope  
which I am picking up in order to carry  
with me as I run away quickly  
upon my legs which run very fast!  
I must run fast!  
But I am afraid that I do not  
run fast enough!  
I run as fast as I can,  
but I do not spend enough time  
at the gymnasium!  
The strong men spend many hours  
at the gymnasium.

What have I done?

Nothing!

Nothing!

How I wish I were planting

hibiscus flowers

in a garden

or eating a hamburger

with a pickle on its bun!

## Rich Ives

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### **The First Answer Witness Protection Program**

Clarence “Pancake” Paterson’s system of eyeball recognition tones proved to be responsible for the category of passive hallucinations identified in male respondents of specified ranges of muscle mass and bodyfat ratios. The gloves worn when handling these sounds can be purchased underground with the exchange of sexual favors replacing the release of the sourdough tension spring found in the politically incorrect “official” model now found only in museums and ethnic delicatessens.

The First Answer sought out the first foxed page where the love got real and found himself suddenly repelled by the Josephine he wore to encourage the sun’s interference with his pasty white skin.

Because for a moment the visitors suffered as much as the patients, we cried hard inside for the look they gave us, which was the look we gave them and included:

- a) A burden of doves.
- b) Broken clothing.
- c) A wayward rose with table supporting.
- d) A chair composed of distinguished granite.

The First Answer returned the dented husband, sporting an unexpectedly eyeless mineral delight linked to a rather substantial mischief list. There seemed to be no bone oars strapped to the body’s miscreant gunnels.

Night falls on another serving of traditional moonlight stark with folkloric motives. In the museum of everything, fused wives have grown indolent. A tidy little hair-knot or two of maybe no and maybe knotted seems to be chattering endlessly against the girl’s dirty neck-brace.

The First Answer, charmed by this, undaunted, includes:

- a) A raw egg in a wineglass staring.
- b) The love-slave’s lopped ears flopping.
- c) An amber throb of impossibles choreographing the bee arrangements.
- d) The stunning golden slander of dying reeds.

At the top of the husband’s ragged metallic tree, the girl’s still dripping skin glistens. Intelligence is not her proper friend. Her wild is closed, but it’s possible to live there unopened.

Once I finished reinventing the world of obscure obsessions and unnatural tendencies to see myself as a quirky little nerd-hero, I realized optimists are never really happy anyway. They can't be surprised.

My system of obsession development includes:

1. A place where the cold is never pretending.
2. A reluctant assassin who likes you more than he likes himself.
3. A containment system for the steam release valves hidden in symbol-driven folktales.
4. A further refusal of eyeball recognition tones.
5. A system of answers that hide the questions inside them. (They appear to be questions. They appear to be unanswered.)

Clarence played the tune his system had compiled on a sweet potato named Herman Melville, which appeared to be active and thus required gloves, (i.e. to be "Hermaned," or to be registered, or to be evident upon a table loaded with entertainments neither facile nor adequately contained).

No such person (the one I believed I was) could be located in the present circumstance. I'm an unrepentant mess with an honest mug and an unfortunate propensity for testifying. (This is what I thought Clarence intended.)

We carry our guns like children here, wrapped in the clothing the natives wear, as we edge around the intermittent blemishes of dying forest, watching a honey badger eye a cluster of yellow baboons, the Josephine forgotten.

Bat-eared wild dogs tear at a wart-hog, yellowthorn acacia softening to pastel in the dust, the sun and the heat like a claw. The sweet flare of a bush orange skirling along the breeze beside a blackened rain tree interrupts another meal of whiskey and buffalo kidney.

The millipedes scrabbling across the coral path move like miniature convoys executing evasion tactics. This will not save them. The wild geese argue in raucous delight.

The wild geese win.

## The Next Important Clue

I was asked not to do something for somebody and keep it secret, but I couldn't remember what it was I wasn't supposed to do although I could remember who I wasn't supposed to do it for. So I called this person who could be anybody of any gender or age and maybe wasn't even a person because it's a secret and I asked him what it was that I wasn't supposed to do and he said, "You're not supposed to do that." So I said, "What?" And he said, "Ask me what you're not supposed to do." "Oh so that's it," I said and hung up quickly so I wouldn't do what I wasn't supposed to do any more. But then I got to thinking about it and it made me happy that I couldn't remember who it was that I had called and I nearly burst with joy when I realized I couldn't remember his phone number either or if his divorce had come through yet or how many of his thirteen kids he had custody of or what illness his grandmother was in the hospital dying of or even why he was quitting his security job to manage the little grocery store over on fifteenth street. So I thought it would be safe to call Bert and tell him how happy I was about knowing I was going to be able to do this strange favor for this person and Bert says, "Hello? Who's this?" like he didn't know it was me that called him when everybody else was asleep. So I said, "It's me, Numbnuts," because we have that kind of a deep friendship between us, and he said, "What did you say?" like he was really sleeping before two o'clock in the morning, so I said, "What are you wearing, Sugarpants?" and then we got cut off like we do sometimes because Bert lives in his Mom's house with six of his kids and the battery's always going out on his rechargeable phone. And then I get to thinking about how sleepy Bert sounded and how he didn't answer the way he usually does though his voice was definitely familiar, and it occurs to me that the voice sounded a little like this person I'm not supposed to do something for, a little anyway, so I hit redial again and I'm relieved to see that it's Bert's number alright so I say, "To win you must apply raccoon grease to the left buttock and shout, Papa's got a slide trombone and Mama's bell's a ringin'," and then I hang up and wait for Bert to call back and I watch the clock because if he hasn't called in an hour or so, I know his phone will be recharged and I can call back with the next important clue.



### **The Goatherd as the Goat**

Father Raphael began contemplating a large body of water. He wanted to be inside that body of water. This animal does not exist. This animal does not exist. This animal does not exist. That's what Father Raphael was chanting at his mother's bedside.

Okay, Bible Boy, then listen. Jamone he take little little. He take not much. Jamone he witness. He go see miracle. He buy chance at lifelong from old woman who see tomorrow. Gone be thief money.

Bobo and Fifi and Eustace eventually they grow up, don't even remember Father Raphael. Baser instincts altered but persisted they (unabated them).

And Jamone he washing Big Man car. Big Water. Big River. Old Woman say lifelong cost big money. Row me across to other side.

Okay, Bible Boy, when it tired, it gone. Evaporate. Contemporary as the inside of water buffalo. Go be there and go be occupied. Ain't like edge of river in memory. It flow only here to here again. And here again we be there.

Don't make nevermind. Don't make have me some. Little river go round and back. Be pond (the finely drawn witness of these expanding rings folded like the hands that are the dove descending).

Erase my name from more than my own memory say Father Raphael. Make a little effort to dismiss me from my passing, so that what remains is where I was going and not where I've been.

## Katie Hartsock

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### **The I Wish It Would Rain But That Song's Been Written Motel**

*TREMORS* is on TBS again; Kevin Bacon fights mutant worms.  
A rip in the drawn curtains shows the afternoon  
spending itself outside; sunshine through the trees, a warm  
breeze lifting all light things. Kevin Bacon orders the whole town  
to stay home, kill the generators, climb high, and keep still  
with zipped lips: they hunt, he reckons, by sound and motion.  
He'll wait atop the water tower with plenty'a ammo.  
He'll beat these freaks. No matter what, don't move a muscle.

**N67: Stella Maris**

You came to be undone,  
historian of light,  
by your histories.

To pile cuts of turf  
and bricks of tea,  
ignite the cottage stoves.

To walk the coastal road  
whose edge refused  
to be fulfilled by any will.

As if something worshipful  
can be pronounced  
by rituals of loneliness

that do not end in solitude.  
Off-season guest  
of a seaside town,

the boarded-up arcades  
and beach gazebos peeling paint  
made an initiate of you.

## **The Let's Have a Cigarette and Assess the Situation Extended Stay Motel**

In order to assess the situation,  
a good wall is necessary  
for strategic leaning  
and contemplative exhales  
cast in smoke.  
Across the state highway,  
the strip mall sits for sale,  
its parking lot lamps  
empty umbrellas of spit and shine.  
In this dead of the country  
night, a passing trucker  
shifts gears to meet a hill  
where the pavement looks to end,  
and the outline of his hat rim,  
its rope trim as he drives by,  
is too much a detail  
of a separate consciousness.  
Out of the soft turnpike din,  
an exotic bird squawks  
as though being mercilessly  
mated or killed  
in the stand of skinny trees  
by the closed Kum N' Go,  
but it could be a trap,  
a maniac with a recorder,  
a brigand baiting the curious.  
Neither 24-hour drive-thrus  
will serve pedestrians.  
Very few walls are no good  
for leaning on.

## Therese Jones

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### **The Bath**

I turn the cold, reflective knobs,  
and the raging hot water splatters up the porcelain.  
The air fills with lavender,  
and I plunge into the baptism of fire.  
The water scalds and blisters my skin.  
Let it burn.  
Let it hurt.  
Let me feel my flesh  
rise to the surface and peel.  
Poached parchment—  
a taint to be sloughed away.  
Blood streams from my wounded skin.  
Your acidic stain is replaced  
with raw, fragrant flesh.

Tim Suermondt

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**MY BLOODY HEEL AT GETTYSBURG**

Gingerly as a moth I make my way down  
the rugged rocks at Devil's Den, reminding

myself that the battle started when a group  
of Confederates rode into town, looking

for shoes, the importance of good shoes  
looming over me more than I could have

imagined, as important as a good man  
and a good woman, a good bottle of wine,

a good ball team, hope where there hasn't  
been any in sight for days and months.

I feel a tad of blood seep through my sock,  
but I survive, well enough to flank around

General Pickett's Buffet and make it back  
to the hotel along the no longer employed

railroad tracks, the pink light of the early  
evening gnarled in the clustered poplar trees

like a sharpshooter and I unlock the door  
and slip, relatively unscathed, out of my shoes.

## Contributor Biographies

**Jessica Baran** is an art writer for St. Louis's alt-weekly, the Riverfront Times. Her poetry and art writing has appeared in *Art in America*, *BOMB Magazine*, *Harp & Altar*, the *Tusculum Review*, *TAR Magazine*, the *Village Voice* and *Weekday* (Publication Studio), among other journals. In 2010, her first book, *Remains to Be Used* – a collection of ekphrastic poetry – was published by Apostrophe Books. In 2011, a chapbook of prose sonnets, *Late and Soon, Getting and Spending*, was published by All Along Press. Baran's most recent poetry collection, *Equivalents*, won the inaugural Besmirk Brigham Women Writers Prize by Lost Roads Press, and is forthcoming this Spring. She holds a BA in visual art from Columbia University, New York and an MFA in poetry writing from Washington University, St. Louis. With poet Jennifer Kronovet, she co-curates the fort gondo poetry series.

**Erica Bernheim** is an Assistant Professor of English at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida. Her first full-length book was published in 2012 by 42 Miles Press, and it is called *The Mimic Sea*. Also, her poems have appeared most recently in the *Iowa Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, and *Saw Palm*.

**Ester Bloom's** writing has appeared in *Bite: An Anthology of Flash Fiction*, *Salon.com*, *Creative Non-Fiction*, the *Hairpin*, the *Awl*, the *Morning News*, *Nerve*, *PANK*, *Bluestem*, *Phoebe*, *Zone 3*, and numerous other venues. She blogs on culture for the *Huffington Post* and is a columnist for *Trachodon Magazine* and the *Billfold*.

A writer and artist, **Kristy Bowen** is the author of several book, chapbook, and zine projects, including the forthcoming books *the shared properties of water and stars* (Noctuary Press, 2013) and *girl show* (Black Lawrence Press, 2013). Her work has appeared recently in *Spittoon*, *Projectile*, and *Fifth Wednesday*. She lives in Chicago, where she runs dancing girl press & studio.

**Aaron Brossiet** has poems published previously in *The Mac Guffin*, *Sky Magazine*, *Mudfish Magazine*, and online at *Redneck Review*. He also won the 2010 Literary Life Bookstore poetry competition judged by Heather Sellers and was short listed in the 2012 Fish Short Memoir Prize judged by David Shields. Currently, he's an M.F.A. candidate at the University of Texas El Paso.

**Melissa Carrington** is currently a student at Lewis University working towards her Bachelor of Arts. Although this is her first time being published, she plans on making the necessary leaps towards becoming an emerging writer.

**Rachelle Cruz** is from Hayward, California. She is the author of the chapbook, *Self-Portrait as Rumor and Blood* (Dancing Girl Press, 2012). She hosts *The Blood-Jet Writing Hour* on Blog Talk Radio. An Emerging Voices Fellow, a Kundiman Fellow and a VONA writer, she lives and writes in Southern California.

**Alan Elyshevitz** is a poet and short story writer from East Norriton, PA. His collection of stories, *The Widows and Orphans Fund*, was published by Stephen F. Austin State University Press. His poems have appeared most recently in *South 85*, *New Fraktur Arts Journal*, and *Riversongs*. In addition, he has published two poetry chapbooks: *The Splinter in Passion's Paw* (New Spirit) and *Theory of Everything* (Pudding House). Currently, he teaches writing at the Community College of Philadelphia.

**Aaron Fagan** was born in Rochester, New York, in 1973 and was educated at Hampshire College and Syracuse University. He has lived in Chicago and New York City, serving as an Assistant Editor for Poetry Magazine and as a Copy & Research Editor for Scientific American respectively. He is the author of two poetry collections *Garage* (Salt Publishing, Cambridge, 2007) and *Echo Train* (Salt Publishing, London, 2010) and he has recited his work for the Harold Clurman Poetry Reading Series at The Stella Adler Studio of Acting. Poems of his have appeared in a variety of journals including 5AM, The American Poetry Review, Boulevard, Brooklyn Review, Dossier, Link, Maggy, Poetry Daily, Shenandoah, Stand, Tuesday: An Art Project, TriQuarterly, and The Yale Review. He lives in Victor, New York.

**Luka Fisher** is a Los Angeles based painter known for his frequent collaborations, mixed media projects, and work with musicians. Fisher has designed forthcoming releases for LA based bands Feral Kizzy and Death Hymn Number 9. His work was also featured in Feral Kizzy's latest music "22 A Month." He has also collaborated with a wide range of artists, writers and photographers including—Dash Hobbeheydar, Brian Pulido, Brenda Carsey, and Tate Hemlock. His work has been shown in Los Angeles, Detroit, Phoenix and is held in private collections in the United States and Russia. He also began drawing and painting while studying Russian literature in St. Petersburg, Russia.

**Dan Fliegel** is a teacher and musician living in Chicagoland. He is an MFA candidate at Northwestern University.

**Andrew Galan** an upstairs food court writer in exile Andrew Galan lives in Canberra, Australia. His poetry has been published in print and digital anthologies, magazines, and phone applications in Chile, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland, the United States, and Australia—including in *The Best Australian Poems 2011*. He has featured at festivals and venues on Australia's east coast, and with Hadley, Joel, and Amanda, he co-founded BAD!SLAM!NO!BISCUIT! at The Phoenix Pub. Andrew also writes and performs with The Tragic Troubadours. His website is Huitzilihuitl's Reign of Death.

**Ricky Garni** is a writer and cyclist born in Florida and living in North Carolina. He was recently published in BEECHER'S MAGAZINE, RIPRAP and EGG. His latest work is entitled DOTS, a book with an important box in the middle.

**Katie Hartsock** grew up around Youngstown, Ohio, and earned a MFA from the University of Michigan, where she received the major Hopwood award in poetry. She currently lives in Chicago and is a doctoral candidate at Northwestern University in the program for Comparative Literary Studies.



**Katy Horan** makes paintings and drawings that explore a range of interests including (but definitely not limited to) Victorian femininity, mourning practices, historical dress, and female archetypes. She works to bring these sometimes disparate sources of inspiration together in heavily detailed and often ambiguous images. She received her BFA in Illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2003. Since then, her work has been shown in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Toronto, and published in a number of art books including *The Exquisite Book* and *Drawn In*, as well as in magazines such as *Juxtapoz* and *New American Paintings*. From Houston, TX, she now lives in Austin, TX with her husband and two dogs. She is currently working on future exhibitions, and hopes to some day illustrate a book or two.

**Rich Ives** has received grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Artist Trust, Seattle Arts Commission and the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for his work in poetry, fiction, editing, publishing, translation and photography. His writing has appeared in *Verse*, *North American Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Northwest Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Iowa Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Fiction Daily* and many more. He is the 2009 winner of the Francis Locke Memorial Poetry Award from *Bitter Oleander*. His story collection, *The Balloon Containing the Water Containing the Narrative Begins Leaking*, was one of five finalists for the 2009 Starcherone Innovative Fiction Prize. In 2010 he has been a finalist in fiction at *Black Warrior Review* and *Mississippi Review* and in poetry at *Mississippi Review*. In both 2011 and 2012 he is again a finalist in poetry at *Mississippi Review*, as well as receiving a nomination for The Best of the Web and two nominations for both the Pushcart Prize and The Best of the Net. He is the 2012 winner of the Creative Nonfiction Prize from *Thin Air* magazine. The Spring 2011 *Bitter Oleander* contains a feature including an interview and 18 of his hybrid works. His book of days, *Tunneling to the Moon*, is currently being serialized with a work per day appearing for all of 2013 at <http://silencedpress.com>.

**Jennifer Jackson Berry** works as a claims adjuster for a mass transit bus line in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She holds degrees from the University of Pittsburgh and Indiana University's MFA program. Her poetry has recently appeared in *SOFTBLOW*, *The Chaffey Review*, and is forthcoming in *Saudade Review*.

**Therese M. Jones**, Assistant Professor at Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois, is the Director of Writing Placement and Editor, Designer, and Coordinator of Lewis' annual journal, *Windows Fine Arts Magazine*. She regularly teaches all levels of the First-Year Writing sequence, as well as general education literature courses. She regularly presents papers at the ACCA Scholarship of Pedagogy, the annual NIU English Articulation Conference, and has recently applied for a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant to study African American Poets and Poetry. Prof. Jones is a published poet, short story author, book reviewer, and has published many papers on composition.

**Kenneth Kubacki** is a senior at Lewis University, minoring in Film Studies and Creative Writing. He currently works part-time in the manufacturing industry as a machine operator and material handler. This work was intended to express the idea of struggling to find "one's place" in the world. This is meant to include identity, self-worth, and even the literal sense – physically-occupied space.

**Joseph E. Lerner** has worked as a photographer, filmmaker, writer, editor, and small press publisher. His stories, essays, reviews, and poems have appeared in *The Washington Book Review*, *The San Francisco Review of Books*, *100 Word Story*, *deComp MagazinE*, *Gargoyle*, *Pif*, *PoetsWest*, and elsewhere. After several years traveling in Europe and South Asia (and one year traveling by train across the U.S.), he has returned to the Seattle, WA, area, where he's working on a novel as well as poems and short stories.

**Nancy Méndez-Booth** was born and raised in Queens, New York. After receiving her BA from Amherst College, Nancy moved temporarily to New Jersey and completed an MA at Rutgers University. Nineteen years later, she's still in Jersey, returned to Rutgers Newark, and completed an MFA. During those in-between years, Nancy worked as a copywriter and editor, taught in corporate and academic settings, completed seven marathons, and learned to drive. Nancy's work has appeared in *phat'titude* literary magazine, *Jersey City* magazine, *Philadelphia Stories*, and she is a frequent featured blogger on *mamapedia.com*. Nancy blogs weekly at <http://www.nancymendezbooth.com>. Nancy teaches writing, Latina/o literature and cultural studies in the New York City metropolitan area. She lives in Jersey City with her husband, John, an ardent supporter of her pre-dawn writing and running.

**Nikki Nellen** is an artist and student at Lewis University

**Brittany Nelson** (b. 1984 Great Falls, MT) received her MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2011, where she was the recipient of the Merit Scholarship, Director's Award and has had her work collected by the Cranbrook Art Museum. Current exhibitions include Art Miami, Art Platform Los Angeles, David Klein Gallery (Detroit, MI), the Cranbrook Art Museum (Bloomfield Hills, MI) VisWeek (Seattle, WA) and The Museum (Greenwood, SC). Brittany is currently working from her studio in Minneapolis, MN, and is represented by David Klein Gallery in Detroit.

**Joey Nicoletti** is the author of three poetry collections, including *Cannoli Gangster*, which was selected as a finalist for the Steel Toe Books Poetry Prize. His work has appeared in *Waccamaw*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Heron Tree*, and elsewhere. A graduate of the Sarah Lawrence College MFA program, he is a former poetry editor of *Puerto del Sol* and currently teaches at SUNY Buffalo State College.

**Christine Pacyk** is currently finishing her thesis for MFA in poetry at Northwestern University, which gave her the opportunity to work with Dr. Simone Muench. She has poems published or forthcoming in *The Found Poetry Review*, *Monsters and Dust*, *The List Anthology*, and *The Beloit Poetry Journal*.

**Steve Papesh** is a graduate of Lewis University, a former *Jet Fuel Review* editor, and a writer.

**Shaun Reynolds**, Regional Assistant at Shorewood Campus, was born and raised in Chicago. He earned his BFA at the University of Notre Dame in 1970, his MFA at University of Chicago in 1977. He currently resides in Frankfort, IL. He enjoys the dubious distinction of membership in the Computer Graphics Pioneers SIG of SIGGRAPH, due to having been a computer animator starting in 1977, and one of the 2 animators of the first fully digital film, "Dilemma", directed by John Halas of Halas & Batchelor Films of London. He worked as a director for several film and video houses in the Chicago area from 1977- 2001 and as a freelance designer and artist since. He also taught drawing at the South Bend Art Center and Computer Graphics, Illustration, and Advertising Design at DePaul University.

**F. Daniel Rzicznek's** collections and chapbooks of poetry include *Vine River Hermitage* (Cooper Dillon Books 2011), *Divination Machine* (Free Verse Editions/Parlor Press 2009), *Neck of the World* (Utah State University Press 2007), and *Cloud Tablets* (Kent State University Press 2006). His individual poems have appeared in *Boston Review*, *The New Republic*, *Orion*, *Mississippi Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Shenandoah*, and *Notre Dame Review*. Also coeditor of *The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Prose Poetry: Contemporary Poets in Discussion and Practice* (Rose Metal Press 2010), Rzicznek teaches writing at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio.

**Jacob Saenz** has been a recipient of a Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship and a Letras Latinas Residency Fellowship. He currently serves as an associate editor for *RHINO* and works at a library in Chicago.

**Tim Suermondt** is the author of two full-length collections: *TRYING TO HELP THE ELEPHANT MAN DANCE* ( The Backwaters Press, 2007 ) and *JUST BEAUTIFUL* from New York Quarterly Books, 2010. He has published poems in *Poetry*, *The Georgia Review*, *Blackbird*, *Able Muse*, *Prairie Schooner*, *PANK*, *Bellevue Literary Review* and *Stand Magazine* (U.K.) and has poems forthcoming in *Gargoyle*, *A Narrow Fellow* and *DMQ Review* among others. After many years in Queens and Brooklyn, he has moved to Cambridge with his wife, the poet Pui Ying Wong.

**Glenn Taylor** is originally from Detroit, Michigan, spent a few years living in the Chicagoland area, and recently moved back to the Detroit area. He works as a technical writer and in his spare time, chases around his two-year-old who is becoming...terrible.

**Sara Tracey** is a poet and teacher in Chicago, Illinois. She is the author of *Some Kind of Shelter* (forthcoming from Misty Publications), and *Flood Year* (dancing girl press, 2009). Her work has recently appeared in *Vinyl*, *The Collagist*, *Harpur Palate* and *Passages North*. She is a regular performer in *The Chicago Poetry Bordello* and a teaching artist in *The Rooster Moans Poetry Cooperative*.