

Jet Fuel Review

Spring 2022 / Issue 23



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A High Octane Literary Journal

www.jetfuelreview.com

lewislitjournal.wordpress.com

*Artwork: Karyna McGlynn: Terrarium with Heart of Amateur Mycologist
Cover Design: Alecea Cardillo*

Mission Statement

As an online literary journal, we believe in the power of language and seek to provide a platform for quality writing and artwork that pushes boundaries, surpasses expectations, and creates an emotional resonance in our readers. In order to do this, we aim to showcase work that is representative of the complex and evolving human condition while featuring a diverse array of voices and styles. Every semester, we have a rotating editorial team of Lewis students who carefully evaluate our submissions. Our diverse staff strives to include authors that represent ourselves and others. We hope our journal will inspire and unite the literary community. In addition to our journal, we maintain a corresponding blog that offers an array of commentary on art, literature, film, music, and more, allowing us to interact with and expand our community. We seek to create a writer's community, publish quality writing and artwork, and maintain a blog connected to the literary journal site.

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Foreword

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Issue 23 of *Jet Fuel Review*! This spring, our editorial team combed their way through nearly 800 submissions in an effort to provide you with a collection of writing and artwork that is outstanding and thought-provoking. These works were carefully selected over the last few months, and represent our mission statement of publishing remarkable and diverse work that highlights the human condition and the world around us.

Housed at Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois, *Jet Fuel Review* is a student-run, faculty-advised, nationally recognized literary journal that publishes writers and artists from across the globe. Founded in 2011, *Jet Fuel Review* continues to expand, spotlighting writers and artists who unapologetically challenge, play with, and subvert, the artistic canon. This semester, our journal received the designation of “Excellent” by the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) for excellence in the Art and Literary Magazine program. Additionally, we received the College Media Association’s (CMA) Pinnacle Award for “Literary Magazine of the Year” Award at a four-year institution for two consecutive years, 2019 and 2020. And, in 2021, we were honored to be recognized again, receiving 2nd place. As a journal, we are incredibly honored to have received this recognition and are motivated to continue to do work that enlightens and enriches our community. For this issue, our cover art, titled *Terrarium with Heart of Amateur Mycologist* comes from writer, professor, and collagist Karyna McGlynn. This piece shows the intertwining of both the theatrical costuming and technicolor quality of nature. The lush thicket of greenery is juxtaposed by the “campy” addition of striking, bright red fungi, placed thoughtfully atop the woman’s umbrella. This piece reflects McGlynn’s ability to stitch elements of collage in a self-described “playful” and “provocative” way.

For our poetry section, we feature the 2021 Lauria/Frasca Poetry Prize winner Angie Macri. In addition to the pieces from our cover artist Karyna McGlynn, we also showcase the dazzling artwork of Andrea Kowch, whose art uses a variety of inspirations and techniques. Our fiction section for this issue includes a tender piece from Melissa Boberg, “Years Without Tuesdays,” which calls attention to the concepts of complicated familial relationships and memory. Boberg keeps the reader engaged through her use of metaphor and parentheticals, as we begin to unfold the relationship between the narrator and her father. Srinaath Perangur is the author of “Brown, By Apparition,” a nonfiction piece which addresses the serpentine “tangle” of post-colonialism and identity in a unique format. The complexities of the body, violence, and interconnected literary theory entice readers to absorb the intricate density of Perangur’s writing.

So many more captivating pieces can be found within Issue 23 of *Jet Fuel Review*. The works reveal multifaceted symbolism that challenges both the mind and heart, and are a testament to the hard work of the creative minds included. They will resonate with readers

readers from all backgrounds, and capture the attention of those looking to explore the complexity of the human experience, as told from the perspective of writers and artists from around the world. We hope you enjoy the sophisticated and brilliant work that makes up this issue.

Read on!

Cassidy Fontaine-Warunek and the *Jet Fuel Review* Editors



POETRY

AIR DNBS ON THE MOON

tell me this is temporary.
that one day i will wake up
to a bowl of fresh strawberries
& earth will be a head of hair.
i look out the portal
to see the darkness as thick
as grease. stars speaking
their old languages. i used to want
the distance to dance like veils.
used to hold a telephone
to every door. this is the nest
of the oldest hermit. a woman
with five-thousand years
of loneliness. no pictures
on the walls just rings of salt
in every room. a cottage
the size of a thumb. i think maybe
i could purchase her life.
lead my own wandering into hers.
what do i have to do to get
my permanent vanishing?
i'm putting on my suite
to walk in search of a dandelion
for conversation. on the moon
sentences are written by distance.
could we orbit today then?
step forward through dust.
animal shadow. songs of dead species.
all the while, you sit on earth
& maybe drink water
or watch television or
close your eyes for a second too long.
promise me i can have a beautiful life.
give me the oldest ocean
dried for lack of fingers.
a flock of strings plucked
to make an orchestra. i have
one more day here before
i have to become a girl again.
all the clocks say different years.
i take a bath in sunlight.
feel the cottage exhale.

go out one last time to stare
at my own foot prints leading away
into the galaxy's purple-black.
help, i don't want to go back
to my stained-glass life.

1. Are There Any Long-term Effects of Ionospheric Heating?

“A good analogy to this process is dropping a stone in a fast-moving stream. The ripples caused by the stone are quickly lost in the rapidly moving water and are completely undetectable a little farther downstream.” -- from the University of Alaska Fairbanks HAARP¹ FAQ

--or, instead, say the sea, say baroque rock dropped astern.
Say consider the hull of a cruise ship, consider the tension

water maintains as its surface. And then consider
breaching that surface, consider falling through water,

consider movements of fins in water, fins in vocal folds.
And consider the algae, the fish, the whales among the shoals,

stone-wavelets’ undulations faint against receptive skins.
Consider the eyes, convergently evolved therein--

Say the sea. Say baroque. Say what can be seen,
received. Say tentacles of giant squid, say manatees,

say giant oarfish, say giant Pacific octopus. Consider
failure to capture the wholeness of a being. Say sea-quaffed limb,

say how the stone falls toward the sediment-edged dim-
ness of things. Consider how I too am made monster--

¹. The High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program studies the ionosphere by heating it with high-frequency radio waves. Originally a project funded by the US military, HAARP is now maintained by the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

HAARP has been the subject of many conspiracy theories, including those that accuse HAARP’s researchers of controlling the weather for malicious purposes.

The FAQ from which the title and quote have been taken can be found here:
<https://haarp.gi.alaska.edu/faq>

8. Can HAARP¹ Be Used To Generate VLF or ELF, that is Very Low Frequency or Extremely Low Frequency Signals?

“However, the HAARP¹ facility does not directly transmit signals in the VLF/ELF frequency range. Instead, VLF/ELF signals are generated in the ionosphere at an altitude of around 100 km (more than 62 miles). Frequencies ranging from below 1 Hz to about 20 kHz can be generated through this ionospheric interaction process.” -- from the University of Alaska Fairbanks HAARP FAQ

“The youngest stude upon a stane, / The eldest came and pushed her in.” -- from the folk song, “The Twa Sisters²”

Consider, too, how I was made monster.
Once (again), you say: drowned woman. A river

arced her body, crest and trough, until the miller plied
her sinuous: sternum-violined, distal phalanges aligned

pin precise. No mermaid, no story of a mermaid’s
siren voice. Not that. Never that. Let’s call it a whale’s, then. Flayed

open to reveal what bodies always reveal. What the fiddle sings
harrowing through some low signal sent to submarines--

If I too am playing to a court, consider
which among you is my beloved, which my sister.

Consider who (you think) threw me in and who rends
strings that were never veins. If my voice’s low ghosts

shudder meaning into the resonance of your bones,
consider what it is to be an instrument--

¹. The High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program studies the ionosphere by heating it with high-frequency radio waves. Originally a project funded by the US military, HAARP is now maintained by the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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². "The Twa Sisters" is a British folk song that tells to story of two sisters. The eldest's fiance loves the youngest sister better, so the eldest pushes her into the river. A miller finds her body and makes, alternately, a harp or a fiddle. The miller brings the instrument to court and plays for the sisters' crime.

At night

my muscles unhook and wander the bed,
loose and unholy with indolence.

The kneecaps unlace, the hips buckle,
the spine a wilted elevated train

derailed, grown over green and ratty.
Shoulders bow and shake hands,

breasts slide down from the cage bars
of my torso. They creep like pilgrims,

sleep side by side, the tendons screaming
after, hoarse, recalling symmetry and order.

Function an alternative to pain, a plane
skimmed and skated over as if dreamt,

before and after which the lot returns
to where it first began, from where it went.

Reliquary

A body remembers violence,
welds the cells back together
to form ghost figures where
bones snapped or were jarred
out of place and home. The cold
imposition of blades and drag of
needles. The catch of breath,
the closed reservoir. Contractions
and the tiny flesh washed red, red.
I lost the first amid fireworks
don't imagine it there's no need
only now I try to release this,
too: any venom. Let out poison
in the form of love. Every scar,
the body lights a candle.

Bedeviled

Everything reminds me of ghosts today.
The oval clefts in the lawn where a stone-
paver walkway used to be, the undersides

of poplar leaves, white as vapor clouds,
the translucent skin of Chinese lantern seeds—
orbs that light the way for the souls

of the dead, in Japanese lore. On my chest,
the ghost of my chemo port, a red scar
in the shape of a lobster claw or a Y

bowed by an ethereal wind. But it's not
the dead haunting me. It's the living.
Mostly me. Guilt for having passed

through the eye of the cancer needle.
The sun traces an arch overhead,
an opening in the wall of my dark night.

I'm determined not to look back,
though even now, like Lot's wife,
I can feel the salt begin to lick my skin.

Egghead

is what my grandfather called me,
teasing. *Don't*, my grandmother
would scold, *call her that*. But I
could tell he said it with pride.

Soon, chemo will start. My cranium
will turn smooth as henfruit. Egghead,
once again. Of course, my grandfather
never meant the shell, only the dollop
of sunshine and the fury of creation
within. And then there's the egg's
namesake, oval, its *O* the perfect
evocation of astonishment that some
new thing is about to begin.

Chiffon Arrangement

*for Faith Bacon, a burlesque performer who lost her fame and leapt to her death
from her apartment window in 1956 in Chicago.*

Sitting on a glass drum in Chicago,
you are a nude perforation
heading for tears:
through your thighs, your head,
pain beading your brain
like a headdress
after the moment of the crash.
Falling through the glass drum,
you see blood and hear
your hearty lungs lunge.
Nothing will be the same.
I will need a nurse.
I will lose my status:
"Lady with the Fans."
Feathered movements
made you "America's
Most Beautiful Dancer."
now you are limping in pain:
What will I be? The pills
don't work for any of your pain:
the cuts, the mind, the loss.
The newspapers spoke of you,
breaking you further:
your moth eaten fan, your dance
that lost its punch long ago.
You try to fly, but not high enough,
a peacock flying like a spiked
rainbow. Your roommate stands
holding your chiffon.
You finally tore free.

Lucid

Again I arrange the desert rocks I found
on the windowsill over the kitchen sink.

They like to move.
The little personalities they got.

And the wind is speaking again.
Odd for the morning. Anhedonia's

cigar sizzles as she lights it. She's reading
a newspaper from years ago.

That other life in that other place.
The perfume of the newsprint and

my brunette protector's smoke rings
send dark messages. The air catches

me and those messages, carefully
constructed for years, and I imagine

the velvety coat of our horse, her
auburn I try to match, resting my head

on her, comparing. I wish I was velvet
with the soul of the world in my hair.

Her eyes never judge me, but they see me.
You see me good, girl. And all of it.

This does not scare me. I wash
my hair in the sink and see some red melt

into the white porcelain. The sink is a heavy
moment every time. I can't shake that either.

Red rides the drain down into somewhere,
and I wonder if those little ones who burrow

will glow in the sun today.

If they wake.

Orange

You can't kick that high no more.
That faceless man standing over me
again. My cold sweat makes the bed
a stone. He is judging me again,
lording over me, reminding me
of it all. I have had it with this shit.
I head to our Little Blue Bitch,
that humming steel of blue
from Detroit. *He is like a bad penny.*
The engine turns over and the sands
act like my Midwestern snow under
the proud rubber of Akron.
We will get through this.
The headlights see nothing,
it's all before us like that faceless
penny-man, my nightmares worse
these days. *No more being trapped*
in the mirror as I look into the rearview,
not realizing sunset is teasing again,
showing me its colors like the trees
about this time of year in that other
Midwestern life so far from now.
Then more orange gyrates ahead of me,
almost like a dance. *I would like to dance.*
Again. The Buick urges me to slow,
I can't argue with big blue steel.
I have been trying to do just that.
No dice, love. A smooth glittering smoothing
in front of me like a mirage,
the ones I run toward, desperate.
They never get old. This orange dancing
moment stops. Turns. More glitter. A woman.
A face. Tears. Smearred lipstick. Tired eyes.
Overworked just like mine.
I fold across the velvety bucket seat
that has worn out of will and velvet in spots.
I guess I am not really folding. Not like paper
does. The door opens, creaking.
Her color will never fit in here. At least not
in front, with me. I fold the seat down.
Now that folds like paper.
Even in the darkness away from the headlights,

she glows. *Get in. It's okay.*
Her tailfeathers fold
over the top of her head, canopying her
like an eggshell.
Lost showgirl? She nods in the frame
of the rearview. The Little Blue Bitch
sputters back to a life I haven't seen
her have in a long while. *See, we all
needed this.*

Screwing With Cowboys

With you here, it's hard to care
much about burned-out lightbulbs
and early mornings.
I am so happy with you,
Anhedonia, but that man
still rolls around my head.
His hands are kind
and as white as chicken fat.
His swaggering thoughts
and his eyes are strong
like masturbatory moonshine.
I hold you from behind
while you take me away
on the back of a red-headed horse.
You tell me you found a place that will cure me,
where mud is a Xanexed wonder
and kindness fills the veins of everything.
You help me down into the mud
and I pulse there and fall back
into my limping mind.
October is over, finally,
but it peels into November
with more shit luck.
So I live through you, Anhedonia:
I rotate through the tissues around your bones
and skirt the walls of your veins.
I learn there what a real woman is
and this realness is why men hate us so.
Outside a desert saloon,
I watch the fringe hanging from your jacket.
You are my sassy cowgirl,
moving like the tailfeathers of an angelfish
as you spit and dig your heels into the sand.
Lethal and packing, we stand outside the swinging doors and laugh about the cliché.
Many men are behind these doors.
We will enter and they will insist
they can save everything.
All of it. Especially us.
We will keep our life and keep them away,
resuming our kinky adventures
as the poor girls on the block
with closed drapes and unmade beds.

To the Sagacious Grouse

One-day old
 sage toddling.
 Mother grouse, keeping them under
 protection of the
 sage-
 brush.
 But to stray is essential.
 Must prove such a long
 survival:
 internal warming
 machinery. They sleep
 under her wings at night. They hatch.
 They run and hide.
 Mother creates a
 diversion: the old phony broken-
 wing routine, flopping. Almost
 caught. The chicks whistle plaintively.
 The cocks stay far from her. Mother.
 And then one is granted entry, clad in full nuptial plumage, gulping
 air. Inflating orange balloons of bare skin.
 A tasteful splash of color. Building-brooding for his
 pompous cakewalk. He takes a few steps forward. Orange
 inflated and bouncing, a drumming for 3 miles. In January
 the cocks practice privacy. It will
 soon be curtain time again.

* *a cento from *Desert Magazine*, 1970

Beachcomber Nocturne

Pink seafoam leaves odd gifts for me to find:
 a puffed-up man-o-war, a mermaid's purse,

empty lady slippers, Sargasso weed,
 as if these things could fill my human needs.

I push my toes beneath the cold, damp sand,
 observe the ocean's purple evening.

A loggerhead rides up and heaves her bulk
 to dig a hole, deposit future in the dark.

Until she's done and slips back out to sea
 I sit and match her labored breath to mine.

This sea: a Chevy engine revving high
 reminding me how everything's design.

Constructive Criticism

My mother asks why I must be the crying,
left-behind person. Surely, there is something

to be rosy about. Even the dead are rosy with delight.
This is the thing about questions. They pretend

to be curious but mostly they are invested
in change. I should be less sorry someone has died,

less occupied by dreams of a hellish baptism.
Nightly, my grown brother's casket a kiddie pool

filled with boiling water—my brother, a baby again
& drowning. My mother would be pleased.

Each morning, I awaken rosy: my forearms red
& blistered. The blood vessels in my right eye,

burst. My brother left behind in every dream.
My brother, crying.

Dropped Stitch

In response to Bea Camachos 'Enclose'

One night in an empty gallery an artist
crochets herself into a womb she starts at her feet
working the bone-tipped needles until she is disappeared
inside of a homemade uterus knit of mohair and bloody dye.

The instructions for erasing yourself into a womb starts with the feet,
the last part of the description reads: This is the Path to Reincarnation,
hand-craft a uterus comprised of mohair, blood, and dye get inside. Don't
think transcendence don't think sex or bird or body or repeating mouths don't think love.

Imagine, the Path to Reincarnation reads as a description on a wall
in a museum. That after death you will be invited back to birth yourself.
Think animalistic sex bird that transcends mouth, think love on repeat body think
of cardinals slaughtered in cosmic radiance. An entire landscape by your hands.

After death you will be invited back to birth yourself. You will need a museum
you will need bone-tipped needles erasers an invisible womb Your
hands re-knit the landscape a radiance of cardinals slaughter the cosmos
unrecognizable for the span of one night in an empty gallery an artist

Foaling

On the drive to the farm we talk about the taste of cherry
and how most horses are born before dawn.

As if they understand morning light looks better
on the wet matted fur of creatures newly escaped

from the confines of a body. It's freezing
pre-dawn—I am too young to share your coffee,

my breath hotter than the air. Your pick-up, rusty
at the wheel bed. Frost at the base of the windshield.

The smell of dog. Men like this always have dogs named
after their mother, or dead sister and the mass cards

glued above radio dials to prove it. When we arrive,
the pregnant Appaloosa is frustrated,

laid out on clean blankets trying to give birth, her body
unable to release the child. *These kind of babies*

stand moments after birth, you say.
All of the animal's nearby sound like they are dying.

It's only one horse giving birth but the others
mimic her cry from their stalls

even the males. You tell me to put my whole arm
inside of her, to the shoulder

to feel around, to hook the rope around the hooves
of the baby, but I can only feel the neck.

This is the first time my body
has ever been inside of another body.

The air is impatient. I slip twice on viscera
and the heartbeat I feel with my hands from the inside

of the animal starts to quiet.
I don't tell anyone. Finally

I get the feet hooked with rope
and fasten metal stirrups to the frayed ends.

You're not wearing gloves. We brace our heels
against a wooden partition and separate

baby from mother. He doesn't stand.
The slick beige, half-spotted body

is laid in a heap, behind the back
of his spilled open mother. A glowing

pool of fur in the burnt sunlight.
Years later, my children will be born in the evening

they will have no hair on their arrival.
Years later, I will remember the farmer insisted

I leave as he readied his shotgun
and I slid the barn door closed, listening

for sound, for metal released
into metal, for the hinge to relent.

Don't Trifle with Baboon Queens

In my hate mail, I spot the words *you fucking baboon* which fascinates me. What a specific primate to name. I guess *monkey* wasn't enough or

maybe they couldn't tell if I was black brown yellow red enough to earn a more tried and true slur. I confuse them which only makes them angrier.

But that anger is nothing compared to female baboons who roll up in packs of 50 and more. There is nothing more important to them than the matriline

and Ancient Egyptians called them sacred which is fitting for any such society—so singular and unyielding and divine. In the Atlas Mountains, male baboons

battle for the approval of the ladies and they are only invited to stay if they act right. When they don't the ladies pull up and give a warning—stretching their faces long

to show off rows of serrated teeth. If a quick threat doesn't work, they knuckle up darting from cliff to cliff to deliver a wallop followed by a vampiric lunge for

the jugular. One young dude gets pinned down against the black shale. He shrieks after, maybe from the bite or maybe just out of shame. Either way, this is a good lesson

and he really should shriek. Because the truth is that he might be the same as them and maybe even kin, but one hungry evening, he might get cannibalized all the same.

Kyrielle with the Crown Jewels

I run my brush through my hair like it is all gold thread like the embroidery dancing on my mom's shalwar. I covet all things made by hands that are brown. Give back the jewels you stole for your crown.

I wear my gold, sapphires, and pearls to bed just in case your avarice continues to spread. From England, the relics call to me at sundown. Give back the jewels you stole for your crown.

You heard the Koor-i-Noor's call and traveled so far for the massive diamond sifted from alluvial ground. But with all of your looting, you renewed a curse so give back the jewels you stole for your crown.

The diamonds belong to India, not to your dead. Our gods planted them: white, yellow, poppy red. For the sake of your greed, how many Indians bled? Repent. Give back the jewels you stole for your crown.

End of the World

I'm sitting at a bus stop, waiting
to get a lift

to some other plane
of existence.

The trees in this town
used to sway, almost whisper.

Now they're too dry,
too dead. I have a memory

of kissing a boy
under these oaks.

Clean, pastoral, we laid

down on the cool, soft earth,
and the earth was spongy, gave

under the weight of our bodies.
I have to say that there were other

trees here too:
Pine, White Ash, Silver

Maple, American Beech,
and it smelled old,

like dirt. The boy
slid his hand under my shirt

and I sucked
in the air, filled

my lungs—fresh, but I stopped him
before heavy breathing,

made my hand
guide his hand

out into the crisp light
of day. I told him

it was too fast, and I didn't get
a second date, never saw him again.

Now I'm sitting here looking
at the burn and ruin trying

to breathe like that,
but it's too hard.

I want to give
up. I don't think

there's a bus coming,
but there's a bird circling above.

FAQ: What's it like to have lesbian moms (for those of you who don't)

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: First of all, it's that question
on monochrome monotone
repeat all around you.
Instinctive hands over
ears won't quiet the noise, zzzzzzzzzz

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's sometimes changing a tiny pronoun
so you don't have to explain
and explain and explain cause today you feel tired
or maybe your grandpa died or maybe
you're at the DMV and you don't want the
line to take even longer
but whatever the
reason you just don't want to be an
experiment or someone's shock
or the basis of a stranger's
entire political viewpoint today.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's being nine years old and your mom offering
to take you to the father
daughter dance and saying yes because you are
afraid you will hurt her or you are afraid
crying will confirm that you are missing
something, which will result in the side effect of
some DCFS man in a black suit knocking at the
door to take you because you said
it's hard to be in a family
the world is not built around,
it's hard to be in a family
that so many people hate.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's never growing out
of this question even though it doesn't fit you.
Stuck in mom dialogue
you begin to wonder how long it will take
for people to stop asking.
You come to the determination that they
never will.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's having every single one of your mom's exes at your graduation

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's being the first in picked P.E. cause your momma knows the shit outta sports.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's misattributing blame. It is momentarily hating the nail when you should be mad at the
landlord who decided to fuck up the floor, leave a wound exposed.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's a thousand strangers around you watching to make sure you don't trip over the air,
choke on
your own spit.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's the reader's eyes. Always watching.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's watching a strangling at a church but you are the only one who thinks of it as
murder.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's always having something to prove.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's the church, casted as the scariest monster to ever have appeared in your closet.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's having to pretend your mothers' have no flaws. It is having to smile at a funeral.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's being gay in the rural(est) of towns.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's hating shoes but the cement is too hot for barefoot soles.

Q: *What's it like to have lesbian moms?*

A: It's not understanding how anyone wants you, needs you to answer.

The nothing known as a stranger on a plane

There's a little girl alone on a plane
& she sits next to a man who does
not touch her.

This is called a dream. Or
a redo. Or a fallacy.

In this scenario the little girl has
the window seat. One palm, flat and stretched, dances
& she mimics the movement
of the plane, of
her body.

The girl's other hand is pressed
to the window as they
go through clouds and over the sea.

It's like a book. A movie. It's made for children.

She feels possibility. Looking down
she imagines a whale about to dive. Imagines a sea
urchin. Imagines what the air will taste like
when she lands.

The man sits next to her & the two are neutral
the way objectivity
pretends to be. Neutral like a church wafer
bought in bulk as a snack.
& they just sit there
like they were supposed to. Like the movies say
they were supposed to.
hands in in his own lap
like he is supposed to.
& when they land, the girl is still smiling
like she is supposed to.

Future Humans Won't See This

An abecedarian cento

As for her children, she has already let them go,
broken shells flecked in gold—
could they be poppies?—some bright-blurred, orange flames

draped in black crepe, knowing that
everything she'd done had brought her to this.
Forever, how it could fill the hand: the smallest

green heron in the nest. In the stillness,
home is a prison made of gingerbread. Moving through
it like wind, in the dark alive. The giant

jolt. New words for *solace*, one of which is
knifed. Death is everywhere and pretends to be
life. Truth seems ancient, surrounded by

moisture, where loneliness languishes in
narrow beds. Down here the eye is its
own lantern, no answer from its flat, gray face,

pounding on the door she never used to lock.
Quiet as knives on the spring-punched street, the
répétiteur leads her through,

spirit sparkling in communion and discipline. Every
theory lingers in the cavities. Eventually the
undoing will cease, up there in a

vacuum littered with satellites for seeing the
whole world. Wars and all. Aligned in a miniature
xylophone: the failures, the losses, the broken path.

Yes, it was splendid, that echo and echo: compost onionskins,
zucchini stumps, damp ribbons of peeled carrot.

using poems published in 2020; sources available on request

Gap

Again, the shape of the rain, or the space
between rain, by which I mean the gap
we think we see in the middle of things,
in the places they connect or don't. Again,
my father on the phone when I call, how he speaks
or doesn't speak and I speak or don't speak
and both of us are waiting for something, waiting
for the sensation of rain to come and relieve the
nothing we can't say. My father doesn't call,
he sits inside when it rains and the rain taps
lightly on the jalousie windows and makes
a sound like smoke, like a train coming to a stop,
the rain of the tropics, a warm rain like the sky
is a dog shaking out its puddle-soaked coat and
again, his dogs sit with him, and he looks to the pack,
counting and calling them, their names the names
of our dead family: Paulie and Jerry and Moishe,
and again, the space when he says them, the slow pause
of his tongue finding its place in his mouth, and again
the space when the dogs hear his call and choose to
respond, or don't choose if they are getting into the treats
in the pantry or fighting in the kitchen over a ragged rope,
and again the rain and the small space between, as big as a child
or a man, and again the rain holds itself back for a moment
as if deciding whether to allow touch before it relents, gives itself
to the empty green lawns and vacant blue pools.

Gone Spectral

I scrutinize your mother's face: if
you had passed, the wrinkles behind
her glasses would droop – do they?

Rumination does not serve to restore.
As with all medical advice, I register
yet continue, yet continue.

The ghost in *ghosting* may be you
or me – our respective existences
increasingly uncertain, a translucency.

No, but really, says the psychiatrist. On
paper, the trajectory is clean, is feasible –
his legal pad. I drowns between the lines,

first, middle and last names as hook,
line and sinker. I propose scenarios:
she's on an MFA, incognito; reconstructive

surgery; forged passports; a new career
under her brother's wing; underground in
Berlin. But let's face it: there is no way

back in. Everyone has their bit to say
about *ships sailed, skies already fallen.*
Meanwhile, I envy my old self, the pink

peony cocktail dress that once embraced –

Iodine

Back from doctors, from scintillating
scans, you curled your aches within my
body of waiting, of wondering how bad,

and breathed – your stoppable, somehow
salvaged clockwork still lifting cracked
rib after rib, rack of weak winter suns.

I put a hand on your thick black-and-blues,
monitored for fevers – attempted to. You,

break of dawn made skin – four years in

and I still marvel that you happened,
small stubborn fists balled up, screeching
for milk, avocado, crackers – nothing

before you that did not conduct to you.

Your cherry cheeks now bruised, stitched
thirty-five times by patient hooks gloved

white, glowing their disinfected silver
salvation: one surgeon clasps, one nurse
cuts off, one soothesays in her foreign

tongue, one sits on your knees while you
scream like kitten skin unpeeled, like you
four years ago, like you newborn – I did

not know that you had kept that scream.

I type texts to whoever wishes to worry –
there are many – then drop my phone

and watch you sigh, watch you wince your
courageous small. Dawn ribbons while
I attempt to sing you into please, please,
carry on breathing.

grief

is a wrinkled hand that's all
knuckles.

is stepping out of a long
line at the coffeehouse because
the line to weep in a nearly
forgotten corner of your mind
is much shorter.

is a senile black poodle
you sometimes miss more
than your suicided wife
and the cold truth of that makes you
wonder if you shouldn't have
followed her example.

is a radio that plays nothing
but static 24/7,
volume either too low
or too high.

is an army of ghosts marching in-step
behind you everywhere you go;
at night they take up all
the room in the bed as you lay there
wondering why you can't
get to sleep.

it's a daylong symphony
of ambulance sirens playing
to barren streets,
early evening chorus of pots & pans
toasting those who've survived another
tour of an invisible war.

it's avoiding the supermarket
on a Sunday afternoon
because it's that unassuming box
of Shredded Wheat that just might
break you.

Michael Passafiume

it's a scene in a medical drama
reminds you of the poetic irony
of trying to breathe life back
into a corpse.

it's a revolving door that opens
up to a down escalator that leads
to a revolving door that opens
up to an up escalator that leads
to a revolving door that--

it's walking down the sidewalk
to the thrum of nearby traffic,
people passing left, right,
children zipping by
as the cats & dogs watch you
as the birds & insects watch you
as the sun & clouds watch you
as the moon & stars watch you --
everyone & everything moving
forward.

Jeannine Hall Gailey

In a Plague Year, I Found Foxes

all around. On islands, red fur, gray, dusky black,
shades of autumn leaves, eyes amber
and unafraid, standing in grasses, waiting for us.

I found the fox inside me,
curling up in twigs and fur,
my sharpened teeth and hunger.

I burrowed in to protect us from the plague,
but there was nowhere to run.
Like flames in the forest,

it was all around, lives going up in smoke.
I never left the forest. I trusted
only familiar paths, familiar smells:

dirt, trees, beetles. Berries that stained
our mouths. I drew poems in the dust.
I grew a tail, I left foxfur wherever I went.

I don't know how I will come back,
or if I will. Our burrow now littered
with bones and mushrooms, a home

or a place for the spirits of the dead.
I could never outrun death; it is coming
for us both. Enjoy the colors of this winter sunset,

the bare branches, the visits of other foxes,
their cries in the night, the softness
around us, the tenderness of endings.

I Was Only Able to Touch

The air with my breath, as I walked
inside a ribbon of steel.
Outside of the walls of my home,
so much to know, to hold, to sigh into deeply.

Trees that burst with laughter, died in the shade.
The gurgle of children, flowing
in a forest nowhere near those trees.

A flock of herons, swarming
into a missile, guiding themselves gracefully
through the ashy expanse.

The way I unclasped a bra with unsteady hands
in a cramped Cleveland Circle apartment,
imagining that this would be the first time

I'd ever been intimate by choice
with another human being.
If only I could capture their laughter:

a boy, a tree, a heron, a river.

What a Bed Takes In

The things I've seen would make me tear out my eyes, if I had any.
What I've felt, from so many years ago, still stains me
deep in every fiber of my being
no matter how many times I am washed.

I saw a boy, thin of frame, drawn into my center
by a larger one, stronger, who pushed
the little one's head under my folds, & there it
stayed for quite some time, bobbing like a cork in the Atlantic.

All of these years later, I want to swallow myself whole
for letting it just happen, right on top of me,
for not shouting, for not even breathing a word.
How does one recover from witnessing such pain?

Will I ever tell you, dear reader, of all that I know?
Can you wring it out of me, like water or semen?
Will I collapse in a heap, damp at your feet?
Can you stretch me in the rack, tortured & taut?

Even then, what am I?
Certainly not what you see & touch every day. Surely,
nothing so neat & serene & soft
could hold so much inside.

When I Went Camping, I Never Wanted to Come Home

The air up there was thick with silence.
Thick as heavy cream, uncut bread.

Along the East Branch of the Delaware, we hunted
for frogs, toads, anything that moved, really.

At night, as a bonfire danced & crackled, the stars reminded
us why they held our ancestors in such awe.

By day, the grownups would grill & we would explore
unmolested by anything except swarms of gnats & mosquitos.

My parents, behind closed doors, would probably call
the people who frequented the campground “white trash.”

Inside our home, the rot flowed silently, dripping
from my brother’s top bunkbed into mine.

At the end of the long weekend, I wanted, more than anything, to stay.
I wanted the smell of cut grass to stay with me forever.

Lick Observatory, Mt. Hamilton, Cal.

after Edison Studios’ 1897 short film

Here, for the first time
since Galileo, five years
before the studio staged
this early September
carriage ride, we found
another moon in orbit
around Jupiter. Here,
the promise of the lens,
of the eye augmented
with the finest glass
that money can polish,
compels the astronomers
working somewhere beneath
that great glass dome
to stretch themselves further
and further through the cosmos.
Whatever stars their eyes
are now absorbing, we
see none of that light. Why
does Earth appear so stark
in this footage? The horses
pulling the carriage lose
their bodies in the carriage,
itself swallowed by the walls
of the observatory, a single
mass of formless shadow.
By contrast, the skies
have melted away the glass,
like ice shavings dropped
into tepid water. Then,
before the visitors can enter,
the last frame vanishes,
putting on full display
the deepest realms of space,
as though the difference
between seeing everything
in the observable universe
and seeing literally nothing
is solely in the language.
Neither a telescope nor
a camera can bring us
any additional clarity.

Minerva Mine

Her father said she should think of the goddess in her purest form, that being the Greek, the Roman just a copy, and often poor. But the mine was called Minerva, so he couldn't argue this time. The girl went down the deep shaft in her mind, past the drifts men followed into the hill called Lead, for galena then, fluorspar placed to the side, past the wide rooms of other mines, random pillars so as to leave as little possible ore behind, deeper, to a bed, a belt, measured in miles. She remembered when there was nothing her father couldn't explain. This mine was sunk in the second world war, fluorspar already known by then as flux, what lowers the temperature at which the raw materials melt in making steel. In this part of the state, fluorspar was easy to find: in relation to fractures, parallel; in host rock, limestone, dark purple replacement beds; in relation to named formations that kept it from ascending: Bethel, which means sanctuary, and Aux Vases, French for swamps, first called Rosiclare, for a town named for two sisters long gone.

She couldn't see the boundaries even when her father pointed at the stone. The ore was crushed and milled at the surface, the slurry dumped in streams until they thought better and made ponds. Gravity drew the water out, leaving tailings in the piles. Even after the mine shut down, state mineral no longer mined in the state anymore, the water ran to the Saline, which means salt, and to the Ohio, great river, little danger, the agency said, so few towns, and even those were small. Her father had studied Greek, and she Latin. Her mother showed vague interest in the stones. Calcite took the shape of a crown, barite a woman's form born fully armed. Fluorspar had crystal twinning on its face, two moons, the gorgoneion, a face against the evil eye on the floor by the door, the aegis what the goddess wore when in her angry mood. What power she had, to turn anyone to stone. If she found anything besides empty shotgun shells, the girl knew fluorspar from the rest: it could be scratched with a broken pane of glass or the knife her father always had on hand. Fluorspar had perfect cleavage. Get to the bottom of this: the rooms are flooding; fluorite glows when you aren't looking; Minerva, she who measures, is from another language still.

Oh, Thumbelina

poor Thumbelina! Because *croaky-croak-croak* was all she heard. Because a home in the mud.

Because he who said *croaky-croak-croak* would be her wedded one. Because toads

don't care what humans want, but a little fish might, a little fish with fishy minions nibbling

her lily-pad seat till the leaf breaks free. Bye, bye, *croaky-croak-croak*! But poor Thumbelina:

the floating was fleeting, as were relief and glee, because a beetle three times her size grabbed her

by her thin waist, stuck her in a tree. Oh, pity pretty Thumbelina not-so-pretty on account

of no antennae, on account of two legs. For to be human is to be ugly, for to be thoraxed

is to be beautiful, for to be carapaced is preferred, to be scintillatingly six-legged. Ugly like an earwig

to a human, most ugly of all, so the beetle swoops her up, drops her onto a lone white daisy, where she pulls

her knees to her chest, relishes her utterly repugnant.

On trying to be less of a noun

I've seen shapes dissolve
into loveliness, body become

a feeling, knowable—Take spoon.
How a humble piece of cutlery

turns warm, a thing you can sleep in,
wrap yourself with. Friend turned verb

in the 1400s: to put it in scientific terms,
switched from matter to energy. I suspect

if you plunge deep enough into the doing
of anything, you become it. Vanish

into its ether. In the center of the room,
my friend: bright pink skirt, hair in a bun,

whirling, then disappearing
into the whirling—

Pivoting in Appalachia

Through shaded classroom windows can I see
red and sugar maple inflorescence
tasseling high above drifts of cherry
and saucer magnolia scurf.

Burnished carmine whirligigs on strings,
chartreuse pedicels growing yellow
with pollen—

millions of tiny parts confusing the eye at a distance;
nearer, unspooling like fractals.

Two more days till the end of March
and the cracking of the chocolate egg
that will drip with caramel, covering
all our sins. It is Lent,

but Southern Appalachia has always observed
with ireless green grass
and glistering fleshy petals, sepals cracked
and spread eagle.

Not even once
have I heard my Montessori preschoolers told
that they have sinful hearts and dirty
bodies.

Not once has a teacher asked them to imagine
being on fire with no mothers to help them,

nor that a bearded man in a picture
is the only one who can save them

where they are alone with a bad man from a place
with horns.

Sea Serpent

All was depth and vastness, and I lived in awe of my own world before it was made shallow. Sailors swallowed, ships smashed, the spikes along my slim and supple spine hot with poison— true. A churning vortex, a wet abyss, the tall tales of tunnels of funneled ocean spinning down into doom, turned to symbols of vaginas as man eating maws—true. I could create a tempest in my teapot’s worth of seawater. None of the stories you have heard and in turn told to be retold are untrue, but neither are their truths complete. Once, I chased a cold current as blue as my own birth, mapping with song the starscape of a galaxy’s reflection, the light of which found your eyes already dead. Imagine, if you can, so differently designed, bodies built to wholeness from halves, imagine, if you can, limbed and protrusive of form as you are, imagine, if you can, our embowed bodies binding themselves in bliss to make the blood-fed rope that made the knot of our great merging, big as the fist of any god, gone now, our number too small for the effort to enumerate, less than the definition of the task of counting. You have made of me a legend, and left me lonesome. When the lion and the tiger were forced face-to-face, their contrived connection closed at a dead end, a novelty to pace a stage set with jungle pieces, born an unwilling performer, caged behind bars and viewing glass. You and I, we were not meant to meet. There was not, between our greatness, and your desire for it, the space enough left for love.

Witch

A good girl keeps her mouth shut, and a bad girl gets the sound smacked out, and a smart girl knows she will be punished either way. He brought his baby to me, to be fed at my breast, one of my own so fresh that alone I would reach between my legs to hold myself together there where I was wet and ripped to rags, a red paste that smelled of fever clotting in my palm, and the one born before the newest, who never took to suck and had not much grown though a year had passed, was in a basket by the fire, not dead though soon to die, though for days I had fasted and I had prayed, and when I would not take his child and feed it at my breast, we quarreled until he raised his stick and struck me, and the next day met him dead, and then the casks of funeral wine disappeared, and then, when his body was laid out, his house caught fire and burned and burned itself to nothingness, but I open my hands and they are no less empty then when I knotted them to fists. I will ask you directly, where is the power that proves my mark made in the black book, where is the reward for my soul sold, where is the wicked magic you are certain sure I possess?

Spacja

In an application
to a writers' residency
I say that my forays
into Polish poetry
are attempts at becoming
better in my first language,
and that long-distance phone calls
with my parents and family
expedite that fluency. Now
every time my mother texts me,
though in English, the space bar
which doubles as language indicator
defaults to spacja. Next thing you know
the calendar automatically observes
Poland's sovereignty anniversary,
the Warsaw Uprising,
the tearing down of The Wall,
one day even Miłosz and Szymborska,
their bodies and then those of their work.
This is all part of the application.
All this and war.

Splitting Lesson

Occupied by going my feet's
snow-legible steps
trudge sorrow-conversations
dragging questions and confusions across
light-enthralled landscape to admit
the wounds I have born in others this year.

*May my presence and cold kneeling
abolish your bereft.
In this snow-trudge I burn your bruising words together with mine.*

Sweat healing interiors—

Sky's blue-eyed blue pall
to forget never again
axe wielding its simplicity
split would.

The Olives in Essaouira

We couldn't stop eating them—black, wrinkled, cured. Deep and complex, complementing French bread, sweet butter, honey, café au lait for breakfast

in the mornings. Later, we'd walk the medina, its winding streets, venture to the waterfront to feast on fresh shrimp and flounder.

The cats there did not have plush coats. Matted fur and loose skin hung from their bones as they howled for scraps from fishermen.

I bought presents for friends and family—purple and red silk scarves interwoven with gold strands. The shop wrapped them up

with their business cards on top, ones you later snipped off without asking. You said it was offensive how they wanted to advertise.

We stopped at a barber's. You got a shave, the old-fashioned kind with a straight razor. One misstep and there would be blood.

We came so close.

I'm searching for those olives now, this cold and snowy Chicago winter. I want to tear back memory, savor velvet flesh.

I want sunlight to warm me as it filters strong through ice-crust windows. I want to watch the mound of ebony pits

grow on my kitchen table as I scrape the bits, the last bits of salty earth from the stones with my teeth.

The Road Ecologist Has a Heart-to-Heart with the Chicken

What is it about the road, she asks, that makes it the center of our lives? The road ecologist has stopped at the farm stand

for berries. The chicken is wandering loose, regards her with curious eyes, too wide in its staccato-shifting head.

The berries are red as the chicken's comb, piled up generously in the little basket. The road ecologist feels

she might cry from their abundance, their sweet promise. *The side of the road is two parts sorrow and one part joy,*

she thinks, and the chicken seems to agree. It pecks a circle around her as she walks to her car, blinks in the near-dusk

sun. The road ecologist glances around, looks back toward the farm stand. No one is watching. No one is ever watching.

Let's go together, she says to the chicken, lifting it into the front seat of her car. They share some berries, pull onto the open road.

The Road Ecologist Tries Hitchhiking

In the middle of nowhere, she thinks. *That doesn't even make sense.*
The road is a sleeping snake between hills. The road and the hills

are not nowhere, just miles from anything else that looks like her.
The road ecologist studies roads that are more like dragons: awake

and belching smoke, thrashing their tails at the earth. Her car
at the side of the road is a broken, hissing thing. *Roadkill*,

she thinks, ironically. *Though what was I trying to cross?*
The road ecologist is only sort of running away from her life.

Her heart is like the roadside soil. Toxic. Particulated. Full
of what it's not meant to hold. Standing at the roadside,

the road ecologist thinks, *I am somewhere, I am somewhere.*
She understands barriers, roads too risky to cross. The road

is empty, quiet, nothing bearing down. When the moose steps
out of the woods, the road ecologist sticks out her thumb.

The Embroiderer

For now, she can hold anything together
with the right thread. She mends holes,
stitches emptiness with color, covers
pillowcases in meadows, dishtowels
in bluebells. The needle makes it hers.
She can fix anything, even her reckless
dreams, the angry children, the husband
with too many hands. She doesn't know yet
she'll be tethered to oxygen or about
the motorcycle accident that will take her
son. No, for now, the hoop in her left hand
is a portal. Her right hand, piercing down,
is god. She'll never learn to cook. She'll try
to paint. Every plant will hang in macrame.
In fifty years, everything will have yellowed:
landscapes of daises, a parade of elephants,
aphorisms surrounded by French knots.
A water-stained toaster cozy sprawling
with vines. They'll ask, *who made this?*
Someone will try to remember. Her
stitches, these moments of claiming,
like flags: *I was here*, thread says, tongue-
slicked cotton flat against linen, a record
of a particular desiring hand, tied off
and trimmed, knot sharp with want.

Ruin

I'm researching the best way to preserve
fabrics, investigating acid-free tissue paper
and archival boxes. The women in my family

have always been making something. No one
taught us what is worth saving or how to care
for what you create: resources are too much.

This quilt, white with blue flowers, like dinner
plates, is disintegrating. The thread seems
to dissolve. It is expensive to decide either way.

The quilt is evaporating in my hands. Someone
pulled the needle through. Someone tied the knot.
Someone sat in a hard chair at night and choose

this blue, that shape. There is a cost. No one
wants to live forever. But these women. I trace
the stitches like handholds, like warning signs.

All I know is this time, someone kept the quilt.
We don't save, but we long for. We hold on.

Unhoused Ghazal

Start with an animal, but not a bird.
A buffalo. And exterminate it. Think: *not a bird*.

Think policy or practice. I met the new neighbor.
He was hauling bags of grub killer. The crows

have been tearing up the lawn. In his words,
this is an act of spiritual reciprocity. *Think hawk,*

and by that alone we have animated the land.
The San tip their arrows with sun-dried grub guts, let fly, like birds,

arrows toward a kind of kind exhaustion. The first kill
is transcribed in the skin—the father slits the son's side with bird

bone, rubs meat and fat into the wound, scars the body
right side for buck, left side for doe. Every bird

has a name, the least articulate default to color and body.
White-browed, yellow-billed, grey-backed. Some birds

impale their prey on thorns. Some people feel the more
appropriate word is *unhoused*. You remind me of the swallows

that return, each year, to the same mission—this has become our
cosmology. Promise you'll leave me behind when it's time. Unburden.

Surround my body with thorn scrub. Light a fire at my feet.
Let me listen to the distance—birds, and just beyond them, more birds.

鬼地方 **UNHOLY PLACE**

u try so hard for everyone else, wut abt doing something for urself

google search: charlie puth height

brodsky claimed that birds in poems = the poet themselves

more likely: birds in poems = carl phillips

i'd rather get squished by a tank than write abt tiananmen

shush, sanctimonious cathy

change the label, still sewage in a bottle

i'm a serious child, ur an ekphrastic of an ekphrastic

when i was a preteen & closer to death

i was ashamed for the boy & his bike

huge, shiny, & new

so practiced at lifting my legs, separating from reality

shaft me gig economy

i rely on a strength, it comes from inside

i wait to walk behind u, stare gratuitously

u have the same idea, so clever

i look twice

there is dignity in work

like piss hitting the back of a statue

soon ur breathing on me

elevator in limbo: 16th floor

knowing how to proceed: another kind of surrender

whisper & smoke

after “The Urban Wild Coyote Project” by Mandy-Suzanne Wong

old man coyote // demigod/shape-
shifter /
dons a missionary’s collar/ & snakeskin boots//
cocks his head/ a God engine of whisper
& smoke // a politician’s wink & a grin/ sound
/byte filtered honey/: incognito amongst
the People of Hope

// coyotes // the symbolic chaos of disorder
in white myths/: the illegal indigenous
colonizing *their* cities/ mercilessly shot/
& tortuously
caught in traps/ their progeny/tear-gassed
inside their dens

// but wild things are wild/ not a rib
to be subserviently yoked/ because the walls
we build to contain them/ mean nothing
to them /& their *Other*-ness
is the filth/ that makes them feel //

coyotes are entangled/ live under constant
surveillance/
in many Amerikkkan urban networks/
where the native tribes who venerated them
were ousted or exterminated/
but coyotes survived (trickster/ finagler/&
taboo breaker)

/: in Chicago/ radio-collared coyotes work
as civil servants/ hunting rodents
in the city center /
but gunshot splayed if they overstep their place

// their refusal to lie down
& die/ their adaptability/ tenacity &
elusiveness/
their uncanny staying power
even as white folks/came a-slaughtering /&
Progress swallowed up the land/ the guns &
concrete
& asphalt of Manifest Destiny/
in the name of ‘sivilized/: a self-
generating meta-

phor vermin //

we are *people from shithole countries* /kid-
napped in tall ships /Atlantic crossing
into the Gloaming/ between bated breath
& the muted silence of dread //

now/ we root ourselves
in tribal birthmarks/ & blooms
of bruises of old blood/ remake ourselves
from jaw bones/ gri-gri wishbones/ &
backwoods ham-
bone Blue(s) /like blood diamonds
ground down /to whispers on the color line /
the comet in us /
fur-sleek over sinewy muscle/ our
multi-Colored chanting Jubilee // we
were told we no longer belonged/
as our endeavor to persevere/ marched
on Baltimore/ Ferguson/ & Sanford, Florida/
seething to the surface irides-
cent in hoodoo magic/ & pixilated
kaleidoscope
to replicate ourselves/: as many
as *They* can count /plus one more/
like schools of minnow
glimmering gunshot celestial neon with galaxies
/or Mason jar caged
electrical ball lightning of fettered fireflies /
phoenix up-
risen/ to roar again/
singing mighty protest songs //

Note:

Philadelphia, Denver, Toronto, and the Gotham Coyote Project in New York City boast research organizations devoted to metropolitan coyotes. In Chicago, radio-collared coyotes work as civil servants, hunting rodents in the city center. In Tucson, biologists found that 50% of the city’s human residents enjoy seeing coyotes in their neighborhoods. Up to 85% believe coyotes pose no threat.

You Have to Make Up Your Mind About What You're Going to Love

The stomach is the seat of emotion.
It's about discovery.

There is so much to discover, so much to uncover. I saw a rainbow at the reservoir yesterday and it wasn't even raining. That, was science. Nature. That was lucky-for-me. I have never felt so blood and bone and cellular. All my vibrance, a narrative elongating...

*

The day after the inauguration, after my procedure, the nurse calls and I am teaching, *I have very good news for you. Call when you can.* I call after class and she says, *Leah, you did a great job*, and I say *good job, body*, and think: thank you body thank you spirit thank you fear and trust and will and heart and self.

*

There is so much beauty in the world. Part is at our base, part is primed and moving, part is always attaching, a shadow paled. Part is always escaping, taking a breath. That's the marvel in being alive in this world: one part leads to another part and together, they are impartial and parting the curtain to the unknown ahead

*

a decade

has opened up

a story

shifting in light

in spell in lyric in flash

in love in echo in armor

in time in image in memory

a hook

a link

a braid

unbraiding

an assertion

reckoning

a belonging

here

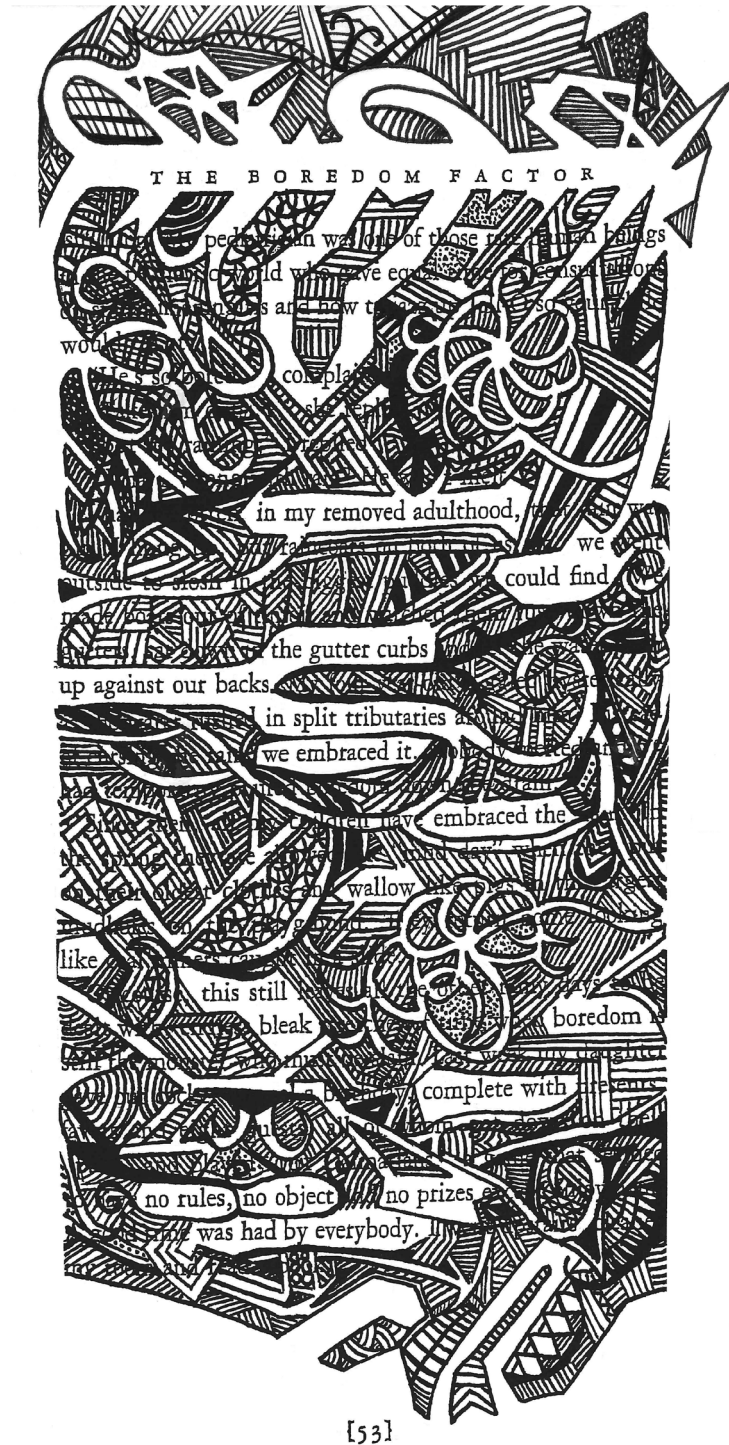
*

These days, I think I am smiling, even when I'm not.

Everything is a lesson.

Everything is okay.

The Boredom Factor



[53]

Drunk Like a Korean

It's hard living in the West / When the East has the best of me -Omar Offendum

I was twenty eight when I learned to make proper kimchi stew
fatty pig meat boiled in orange broth

at thirty I learned a proper taekwondo side kick
knee tilted towards chest leg tilted flat enough to hold a paint can
my kick shakes a punching bag like a rubber tree
my coach smiles and swears it's Korean DNA

UFC wide brim cap on my head a Palestinian scarf
is a large atlas of strings and diamonds
a coworker flirtatiously suggests i look like a Korean pop star
at the train station near work foreign East Asian students
stare at my scarf in curiosity an insect with mysterious colors
zipping past their head

on a date with a US soldier the half white half Latina lady
holds my pale hand blank as origami paper says it's a *Korean hand*
like Je Moon's hand after some few drinks my cheeks are pink cherry blossoms
she says i get drunk like a Korean skinny porcelain faced people falling asleep
on the plastic seats of the Seoul subway trains

we made out on Madison st bridge Chicago skyscrapers
in their evenings gowns studded with golden coins
i don't know if she's kissing me or remembering a karaoke bar
air dank with scent of soju liquor food stalls selling fried squid legs

in college, an Afro-Arab woman from Beirut asks me,
Why do you talk like a white man?
with indignation like my midwestern upbringing was blasphemy

anthrosphere

who brought toxic mollusks, boat or sneaker, human, vegetation,
listen —cannibal snail, gravel, carbon, gibbon, bedlam— listen

to each sweet felicitation, to construction, our consumption. gobble, feast,
eat after asking any of the billion chickens toppling over its giant breast

how we make what's most delicious to us, ask the numbered, patterned cats, sleek
now past sense, sleek toward extinct, toward prowling cities, predators. one week

is a lifetime for each chicken we invented. ask an ocean, rolled into a marble
on the scientist's image: map of small blue trouble

{all the water covering earth's surface is thinner than the skin

of an apple} ask an apple, almond, lemon, olive, bouquet of kale
ask *anthro* how it came to cover *bio*, fast slap, mat, plastic fat fail.

auditorium, kolkata's *la martiniere school for boys*, curious
children fret about extinction. one asks, furious,

why grownups lie, asks: *why are kids the ones*
you're asking for solutions?

after each sheepish answer, boys shy as deer approach the stage, boys formal
in their navy blazers, bravely handing scientists flowers, such as will

be strewn upon us soon. we'll wilt, too. all that used to be
wild we've coaxed into delicious, ours, enormous, too hot? we

chill, too cold? heat up. too far we jet across, unpassable blast
with dynamite so glittering our highways ribbon, silver tons of fish

float up into our open mouths. what's going to moor us back
to a devoured earth, so much sweet water brackish, ask

fracked oil, ask detritus, whales, glaciers we are melting, melting into—

these days i keep falling

i keep falling. slipped on the rocks in a river and caught
my left pinky, landing, tore bone away {*avulsion*}, thought
it would heal, was wrong, did not. i am not distraught
though, change is falling, change this year has taught

me: kick harder in sleep, remember falling may prepare
us to fall harder, faster, be broken/okay/i won't despair—
blading uphill, i slipped and cracked a rib right where
the incline sharpened, errant twig or seed pod there

lodged in my wheel, twisted, flipped me over, numb
with shock. i'm not distraught. this fight is different from
the one i used to have with my body. i've become
myself descending, protective of what i opposed, some

version i am, one i cannot save, someone who
falls through layers of time i climb, too—



ART

AAA



16 x 12, Digital

Shadow



16 x 12, Digital

Lens Flare



Terrarium with Eve and Split Durian



11" x 17", Collaged on gesso board

Terrarium with Heart of Amateur Mycologist



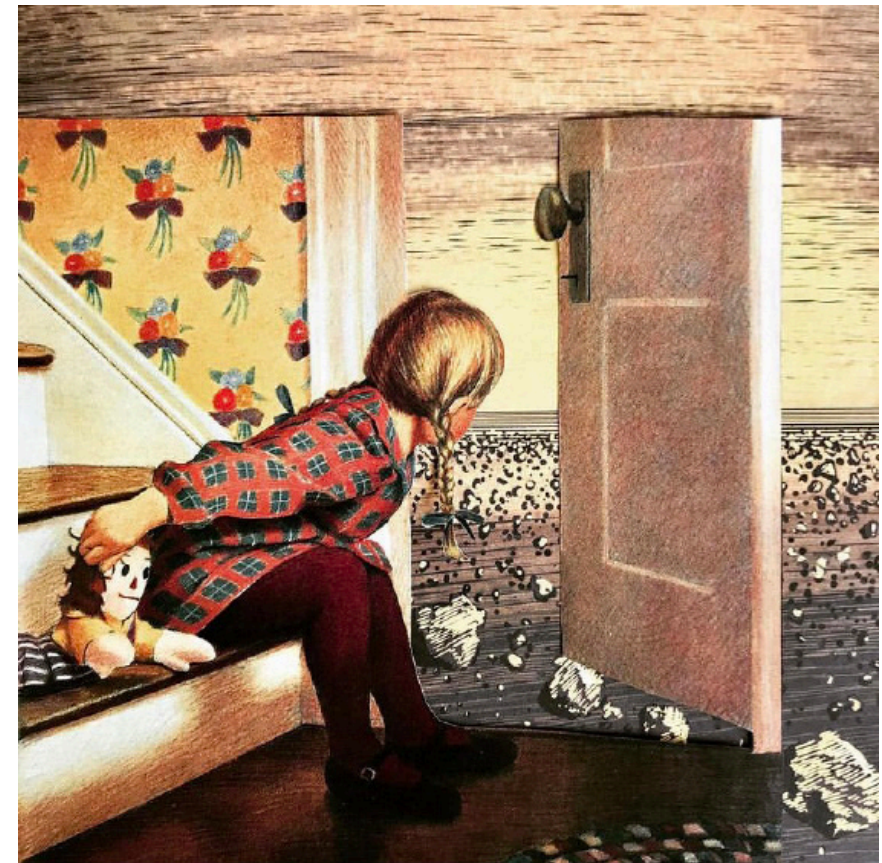
11" x 17", Collaged on gesso board

The Coronation



18" x 24", Mixed media collage on masonite

Saturn Returns



6" x 8", Collaged paper on cardboard

Queen of Melting Ice



16" x 20", Collaged paper on masonite

001B 1201



GJM1251



Sojourn



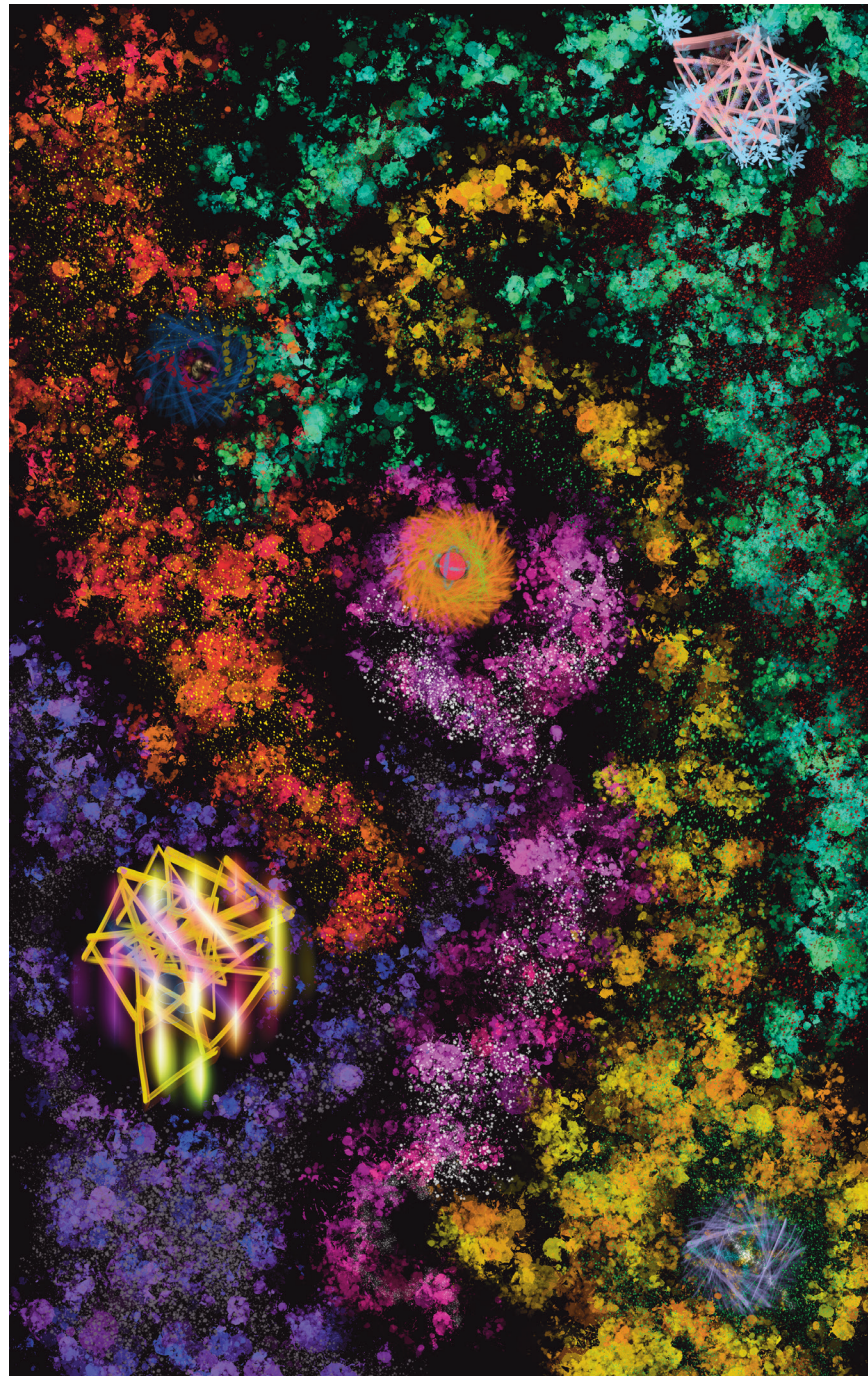
The Courtiers



The Feast

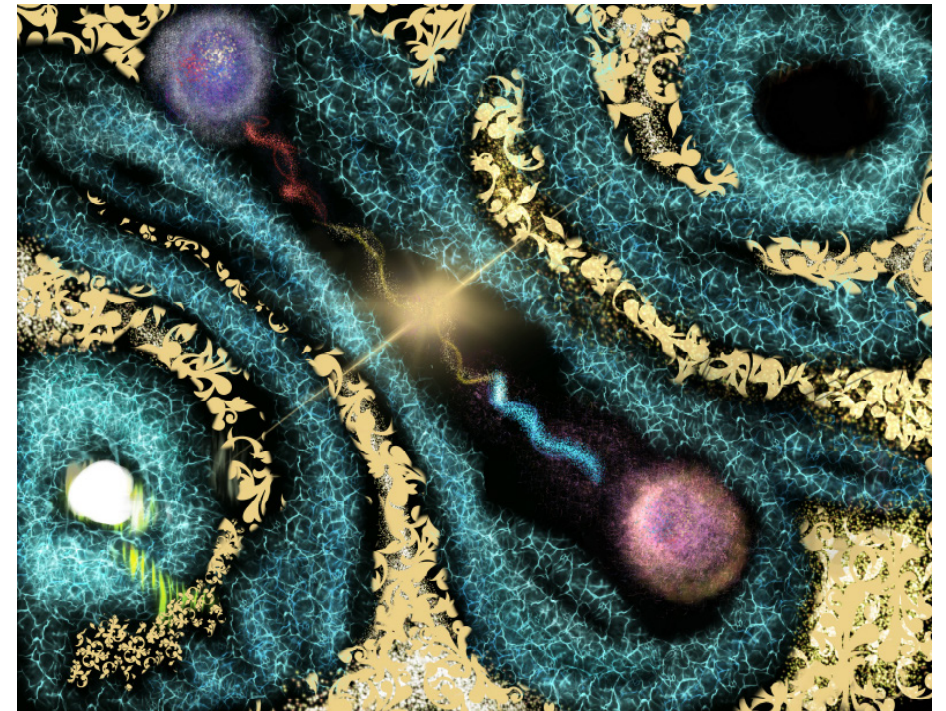


A Garden Made of the Universe



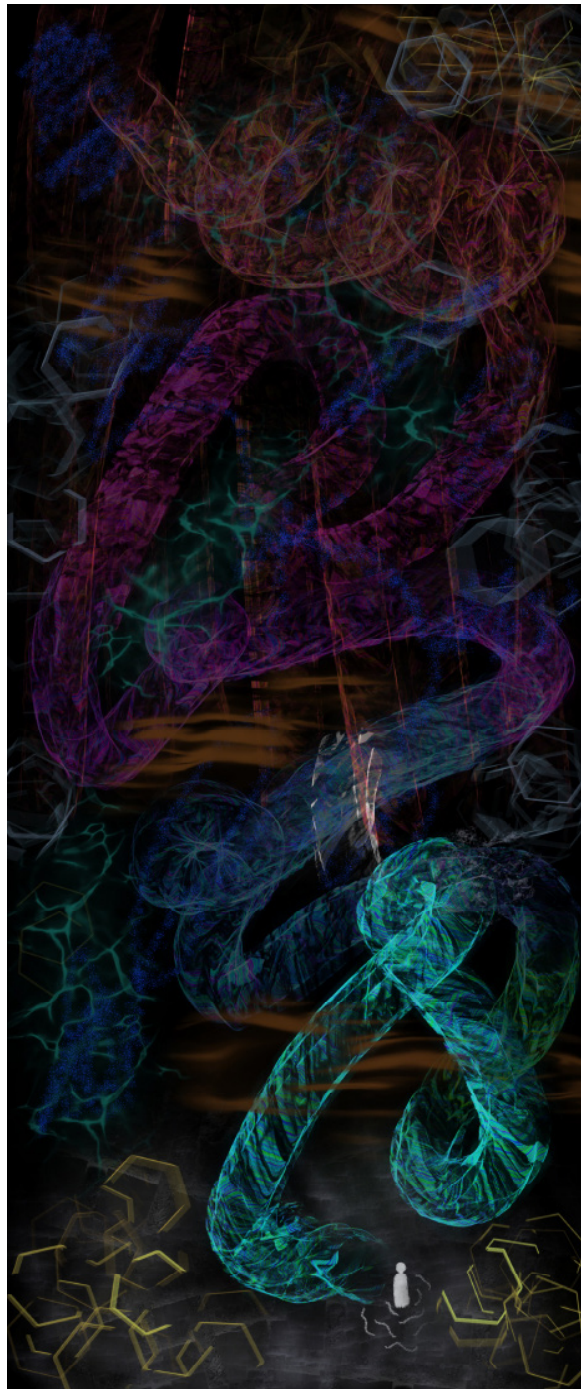
6" x 9.5", Acrylic on canvas

Is This My Mind?

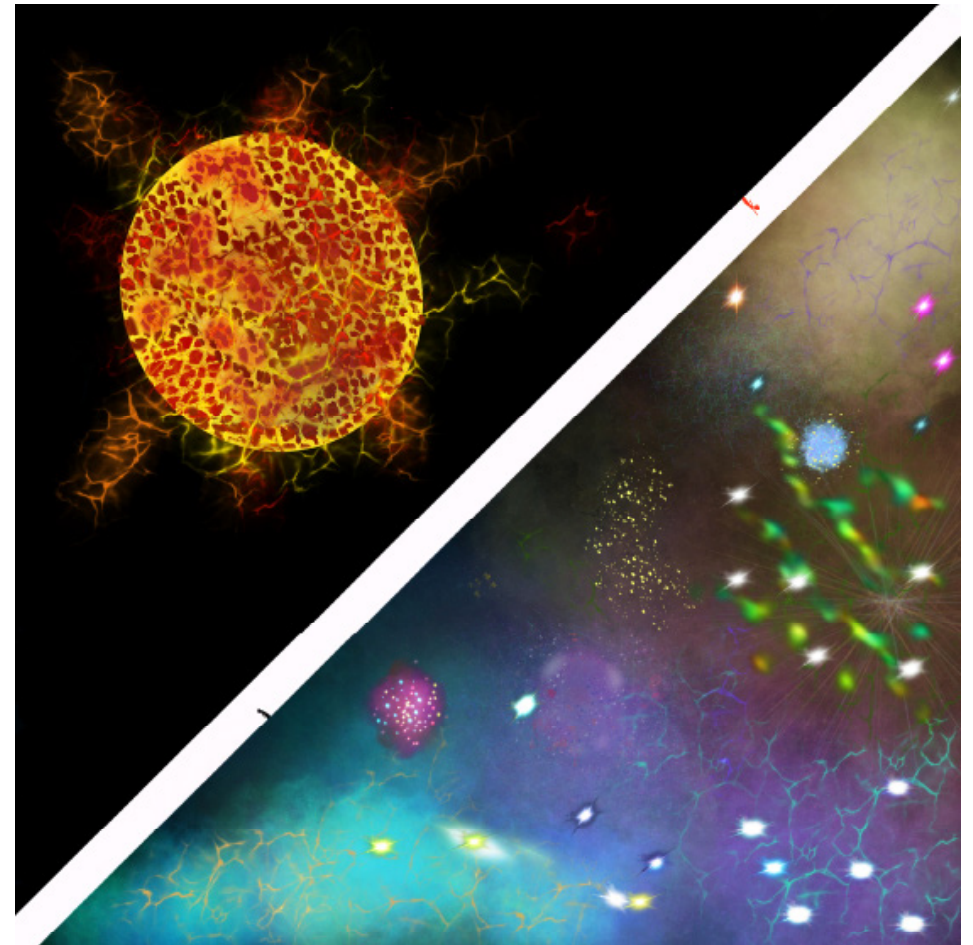


1714 x 4096 px, Digital painting

If I Could Create a Star



Let Me Choose



2048 x 248 px, Digital painting



FICTION

Years Without Tuesdays

Wednesday was to be the celebration of life for my uncle Amal, who had died a year earlier to the date. My father had rented a car to drive us there, and a cabin for the two of us through Thursday. I did not know why they were holding it in New Hampshire. Everyone my uncle had loved was either dead or in Brooklyn.

Monday was our first morning in the cabin, and we did not speak for the whole day. We had been in the car together for most of Sunday, and we had exhausted ourselves of small talk.

There was a distinction to the silence on Monday, and my father and I both believed in it. Evidently, we also had faith in the feverish recovery of Tuesday. We woke up and addressed each other as if it were simple.

The drive felt scenic, but the driver felt a stranger, and I might not have come if I felt I had a choice. Naturally, my father had reminded me immediately after extending the invitation that attendance was not mandatory. Whether this qualifier was real or was for liability I was not sure. I was not used to being invited by him. In the end, it was not up to either of us. I had loved my uncle like I was made of him. Every second of love like that had a cost.

Tuesday morning, my father cracked eggs into a skillet on the stove. “I could make you some,” he offered.

“Sure,” I replied and sat up on the couch. I gathered the thin, knitted blanket around my legs. “I like them scrambled.”

“You didn’t used to like eggs,” he said.

“You didn’t used to cook,” I said.

“Yeah, well. I lived with your mother and then I lived with my chef of a brother. Sue me if I took advantage.”

The comment sat suspended in the air, hovering as if trying to unlock a trapdoor. Finally, it fell through the ground with the gravitational weight of a passing beat. I looked out the window and changed the subject.

“I slept okay last night,” I said.

“I’d hope so,” he replied. “This is a beautiful place to sleep.”

“I dreamed about that rest stop,” I said. “The one from Sunday, where we saw that little girl with the yelling parents. I swear I saw them in my dream.”

“I’m surprised it was the parents,” he answered. “You were looking at that kid like you knew her.”

“No,” I said. “I can’t even remember her face.”

“It was embarrassing for all of them, anyway,” he said. “Better not to look.”

I brushed my hair with my fingers. The cabin was basically one room, excluding the slightly more secluded bedroom which my father had claimed his own, and the attached bathroom. For the middle of nowhere, it was nice. I was surprised that he was able to pay for it. The stove was situated along a wall of countertops, but the couch and small eating table faced two intersecting walls of windows. Out of them, I could see only a spectrum of greens. Tree branches sectioned the morning sunlight off into linear beams.

We sat across from each other at the table. We ate our breakfast. My father looked old.

What hair he did have was thin, with roots white enough to dull the color collected at its ends. His face was sunken inwards at the cheeks, like he had gathered all the air for a gasp, then, in the absence of anything striking, imprisoned it in his throat. Thoughts of his death occurred to me only vaguely. To me, age and death had never been correlated by more than coincidence.

“Who’s going to be there tomorrow?” I asked.

“The same crowd as the funeral,” he said. “Minus Ingrid, obviously.”

“She’s not coming?” I asked.

Ingrid had grown up next door to my father and uncle, her childhood home a near replica of theirs. When I was a child, I had called her my aunt. By the funeral, it had been about a decade since our last interaction. That day alone, she told me more stories about the adolescence of my uncle than I had ever heard before.

“Ingrid died,” my father said. “I thought you knew that.”

“How would I have known that?” I said.

“I’m sorry,” he said. “It was a drug thing with her. Always was.”

I finished my eggs and stood up from the table. “I’ll miss her tomorrow,” I said. “She was really nice to me.”

When I saw that he was done, I picked up my father’s plate, and took both our empty dishes to the sink.

“You don’t have to clean those,” he said. “Do you want to go for a walk?”

From the other side of the window, the woods were just as beautiful, only much colder. After we got a few feet in, the trees arched inwards and formed a lush ceiling. Sharply bounded tunnels of sunlight streamed in through their gaps.

“Real shame about Ingrid,” I said.

“I didn’t know you cared about her so much,” he said. “You talked to her at the funeral?”

“She told me so much about Amal,” I replied. “She really pulled him open for me.”

“You’re lucky,” he said. Sheets of expired snow made sporadic appearances on the ground. Besides that, everything was dirt. “I know everything about him that I’ll ever know.”

“Everybody has secrets,” I replied. “Even dead people.”

He smiled. “You’re just how you were when you were a kid. Empathetic.”

We were silent for a while after that. We just walked.

“He died on a Monday,” my father said. “This year, the date is a Wednesday. A normal year would have been better – the leap year really confused it all. If he had wanted to die on a Wednesday, he’d have done it.”

“I don’t think he wanted to die at all,” I said. We continued to walk.

“I bet it was hard,” I said. “To find him the way you did.”

“Very empathetic,” he repeated.

I told him that his shoelace was untied and he told me that it was fine. I offered to tie it for him, but we kept walking instead. When ditches in the ground noticed his dragging lace, my father did not move gradually into cursing. He staggered through half a second and he landed at “Fuck.”

His hands hit the ground first, bracing his body. The lifelines in his palms collected thin particles of black dust and cracked leaves. His knees and stomach were next, soft body on hard dirt. Our stomachs made visible the lineage of my father into me. We had the same slope downwards into our pelvises, circular bellies that sat on flat hips. I asked if

he was all right.

“Fine,” he said. I offered my hand and he used it to stand up. When he was back on his feet, I bent down and began to tie his shoe.

“You know,” he said. “I can tie my own shoes.”

“I know,” I said. “You taught me.”

I knelt over his sneaker. My cold fingers could only generate halfway knots in the slippery laces. I asked, “Did you kill him?”

He jerked his foot away from my hands.

“You didn’t, right?” I added, quickly. “I just want you to say that you didn’t.”

I looked up, and imagined that from the corneas of each of his eyes emerged strings that knotted my vision to his. It was my best mechanism for maintaining eye contact. Eventually, the wind took a gentle scissor to the strings. He offered me a hand to stand up. A small laugh in my throat crawled onto the back of my tongue, and I only uncaged it when I saw that he was laughing, too.

“It’s not that crazy to wonder,” I said. We started to walk again. “You’re new to being nice. He used to hate you.”

“He never hated me,” he said. “He was my brother.”

We were quiet for a few minutes. The wind, like a reminder, whipped softly at our coats.

“Let me get this straight,” he said, breaking the silence. “You think you’re out in the middle of the woods right now with a murderer?”

“I don’t know what I think,” I answered. “It’s not like I really know you.”

“Just for the future,” he said. “Probably best not to go to the woods with strangers.”

“What else is there to do in New Hampshire?”

His laugh was really more of a cough, but I was proud nonetheless.

“You know,” he said, after we had walked a few steps further. “It’s not like I didn’t want you to know me. I used to tuck you in every night.”

The wind picked up against us and made each step a confrontation. As we walked and spoke, it blew our words backwards.

“You stole from me,” I said. “When I got my first job, I was trying to fill out all of these tax forms. I remembered you taking me to set up a bank account, so I called the bank to see if I had one. They said the account had been overcharged for years. I owed them two hundred dollars. I was sixteen. I had to give my whole first paycheck to the bank.”

“I said I tried,” he said. After a pause, he added, “I never said I was any good.”

The air felt dewy and wet in my nose, even though the ground was so dry I almost worried it was cracking beneath us.

“Yeah,” I agreed. My pace quickened until I was a few steps in the lead.

“Hey,” he said, and stopped. I turned around to face him. “I’m sorry. I really am.”

I said nothing. In the distance between us, I felt embarrassingly large.

“Why don’t we turn around?” he asked.

I turned and took the steps towards him, and we both began back the way we came.

“I didn’t know you were alive,” I said. “When I was sixteen and owed the bank two hundred dollars, I wondered if you were dead.”

“I would’ve come back around sooner,” he replied. It was like pushing a promise back through time. “If I thought I could’ve been better, I would’ve.”

“You know what you told me once?” I asked. He shook his head.

“Shit changes,” I answered. “It doesn’t have to get better, but it at least gets different.”

He cracked his knuckles. “When did I say that?”

“Over the phone,” I answered. We both knew what that meant. He had been a voice from the rehabilitation center, and I had been an excited ear from the living room landline.

“In hindsight,” he said, “you might have been a little young to be hearing the word shit.”

We both laughed. No one added that I might have been a little young for a lot of things. Still, we both heard it, ticking in the background like a grandfather clock.

“Your mom would have killed me if I stayed,” he said to the silence. “Rightfully.”

“It’s not like you had much to lose,” I countered. “She was going to hate you either way.”

He kicked a stone between his feet for a few steps. I was reminded that at one point, in the body of a teenager, he had played soccer. “She thought I was having an affair,” he said.

“Were you?” I asked.

“I was a drunk,” he answered. “Call that what you will.”

I was quiet for a few steps. The cabin, in the near distance, came back into sight. Visible through its massive window was the couch on which I had slept, alone in the space except for the eating table. It looked microscopic.

“I just don’t know how you could do that to her,” I replied.

“I did it to you, too,” he said. “I don’t know how, either. You were just a kid.”

“I’m still a kid,” I replied.

“I know,” he said. “I still feel like a kid, too.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

We reached the clearing of the woods and left our dirty shoes out on the steps of the back porch. We took turns taking showers before my father drove to the nearest deli to pick up lunch. Alone in the cabin, I tried on my outfit for the celebration of life: black boots and a short white dress. I stood in the bathroom mirror, leant over the sink, and pulled my hair back to examine the outline of my jaw from different angles. I never looked pointy enough.

My father returned with a paper bag of food in his hand. He stood behind me in the bathroom doorway. “You look nice,” he said. The reflection made him appear to be in front of me. “You’ll be the prettiest girl there, tomorrow.”

I smiled. “The day will be about Amal.”

“You’re also liable to be the only girl there.”

I laughed.

“Still, he would’ve wanted it to be about you,” my father said, and left the bathroom.

Even though it was hardly one in the afternoon, I changed back into pajamas. We sat down at the table to eat. My father and I agreed that the chicken salad sandwiches in New Hampshire were nothing compared to Brooklyn.

That night, I laid on the couch in the dark. Falling asleep led me into a nightmare wherein my body was covered in unwanted tattoos. It was a recurring dream of mine.

Looking for a glass of water, my father made his way out of the bedroom. On his way to the sink, he accidentally and loudly kicked the refrigerator. “Fuck,” he whispered. I jolted awake to the sound of his subsequent “sorry.”

In an effort to orient myself, I touched my sweaty skin everywhere I could, making sure that it was unmarked, that it was clean, that it was mine.

He apologized again. I listened to the tap water collide with the confines of the cup.

“You’ve got to keep it down,” I said. “I need sleep to be the prettiest girl at the funeral.”

We both laughed.

“It’s a celebration of life,” he said. “So much for you being an empath, huh?”

He walked back to the bedroom and I remained on the couch. My hands still rubbed up and down my skin, investigating from ankle to eyebrow, as if to summon a genie from inside of it. If one could be extracted, I wondered what she would tell me to do. It was quite possible that she, in keeping with every therapist I had ever had, would want to talk about my father. The therapists fell into two camps: some of them urged me to start more conversations with my father, others argued that complete silence was at least more predictable than disappointment.

I did not expect that he and I would talk much after we returned from the cabin, anyway, not until there was some other reason or some other death. The genie would at least be a helpful resource in negotiating the insurmountable loss of my uncle. After that, if she could earn my trust, I would tell her about my new and perverse wish for Ingrid to die a second death. I wanted to spend her second funeral with my father.

My efforts to fall asleep were insufficient, so my mind set to assemble an image of the little girl at the rest stop. I could concoct a view of her from behind, of the purple veins that understudied her skin as she tried to pick out a convenience store candy. She wore beneath her body the sheet music for a symphony of public parental disputes. She was not wearing a jacket. When I tried to see her face, called out for her to turn around through my blurry attempted sleep, all I could see was my father. With his face on her body, the two of them looked back at me. It gave my half-constructed dream a sense of shared recognition, though I knew it was accidental. In the morning, the three of us would passively notice the permeative distance carving our lives into distinct wholes, and we would actively choose to surrender to it.

The analog clock on the wall revealed to me that today had transitioned into tomorrow. I threw my body over to the cushioned backing of the couch. It was Wednesday.

NONFICTION

Brown, by Apparition

{ The Partition of India, 1947: immolation in
medium-brown streams. In the dark soil:
heart-holes. The shapes of our new countries
buried with the bodies.

[That year, our breath blackened within us.
Rusted away into the fresh iron under our
feet. In our hands.

[The subaltern could hardly speak.¹ But the
subsumed, the self-mutilated? Did we even
have a *voice*?²

[Distance, especially temporal, is a feared
night we must traverse.³

...

¹ (Perhaps Spivak should have asked: “When were we hol-
lowed—emptied from within?”)

² (As if I really do now. As if independence could be prescribed.)

³ Here is a truth you don’t want to hear: Partition feels like a
dream I’ve never woken up from. The seven decades were never long
enough.

- [Where do I begin? The words come out in spirals.⁴ As much as I'd like to fault myself for this messy traversal, I cannot help but remember: this is an imitation of our history.⁵
- [The postcolonial narrative can only write in circumlocutions. In tangles. I find my way in the dark, because that is the only way I know.
- [How long did I run? Deceive? Maybe I scrambled all the fragments and laid them out in front of you, like a pile of autumn leaves.⁶
- [I cannot help but wonder: After all these years, how does this history materialize onto me?

⁴ And maybe for the better. I compress them under my thumb like a spring (or perhaps like DNA, or a mosquito). One day I will allow them to curve out into the world. Set them loose, if they are still breathing.

⁵ As if I can bear this weight. (No, bear it with *innocence*.)

⁶ When you wade in, that crunch of tiny bones under your feet. And you—witness to the violence, a gaze full of needles. Your pitch-dark pupils entry wounds.

- [Our stories weigh more than the condensation of memory on our wine glasses.⁷ & maybe even this story—or a part of it—has been told before. My role is performative. A voice on a page.⁸
- [Seventy-five million women were raped on the border of India and Pakistan in 1947. The others were instructed to kill themselves to avoid that dishonor.
- [Over one million civilians perished. Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims—we washed our hands in the same river. That new snake that curved through Punjab, Rajputana, Sind.⁹
- [Ayesha Jalal: “A defining moment that is neither beginning nor end, partition continues to influence how the peoples and states of postcolonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future.”¹⁰

⁷ (Now that our words are alive, I long for my skin to feel them.)

⁸ But who is caught in my net—circumscribed? Implicated? *For whom do I speak, if I speak at all?*

⁹ Have we forgotten it so soon, the mirage of its stained scales? At one moment brown, at another, deep *red*?

¹⁰ A story my grandmother once told me: *1947. A quiet, stifling night. We jolted awake to the tinny din of the town alarm. It was not the first midnight attack. The screams nearly drowned the messy hiss of iron. We tore through the night. East. This was twenty kilometers from Amritsar, the bloody heart of Indian independence. We had learned nothing. Years later, we found out that our town's watchman had been killed while staving off the attackers. He hadn't been included in the original death toll because, like the attackers, he was Muslim.*

...

{ I know about living. I am alive the way milk-swirls in coffee beg for separation. I waver between particle and wave, crudity and sentience.¹¹

[Sometimes I swear I can feel the blood on my hands—*my* hands.¹²

[I wonder: must I condemn myself?¹³

11 I am either unbelievably alive in the present or smeared across the past. But we are all subject to the pangs of our history. Eventually, classification loses its tail in the dirt.

12 & I wonder why the Atlantic Ocean wasn't wider. Why the ships brought the pangs with us, like a disease.

13 Whenever I ask this—which I do often—I feel the haunt of Partition on my neck. My blood runs painfully warm under my skin. The walls we've erected have followed us. I see them in the mirror, on the days I'm able to meet my own gaze. I see them in my Pakistani friend's eyes, too. (Perhaps we've erected them ourselves, beneath our eyelids.) When someone calls him a terrorist & my first instinct is not to defend him but to wonder, when will they mistake *my* religion for his. & when we are together and I look at him and all I can think about is: *we are so indistinguishable it hurts*. When, in the eyes of the world, we are all the same, but in ours we could never even share a name, let alone a neighborhood. Not for millions of lives. Our families. Not for our own conscience, nor for the neat eloquence of a single moment. Nothing is clear enough to glance through.

[The distance between us transpires before I can retreat into its curvature. Only a hollow in our wake.¹⁴

...

[Here is a truth you have always taken for granted: The colored spots you see when you close your eyes ("eye-floaters") are the remnants of shadows cast onto your retinas by fibers in your eyes. These patterns can shift or grow more intense as you age.¹⁵

14 Even though our skin brushes the same against starlight, and our breaths combined easy in the night wind, I don't see my friend anymore.

15 Here is a truth I have always taken for granted: The color I see when I close my eyes deepens over time. The world seems to concentrate at the extremum of my pupil and grow dense with saturation. As if all the color in the world couldn't support it. Usually when this happens, I realize my eyes are open. The image becomes the afterimage. What remains is all that is. For us, anyway, it is all there will ever be.

[Even across the ocean, I can see the line of
Partition. It is right in front of me.

...

[We know the grind of decades on the human
heart.¹⁶

[An offering:¹⁷

16 (But our bodies intuit allurement here, even if we can speak
only in whispers. Tucked at the bottom, beneath the cusps of sounds.
Within the skin of the page.)

17 To breathe the air wet with murder. To sink into the soil
palms-first. To witness the violation seep into our skin. Under the moon-
light—we know.

[*Bits of leather, the pages of a book, the mud un-
der our feet; all our gods are made from these.*

[18 19 20 21 22

...

18 Our words arc only towards the dirt. Fastened to the past. We
bury them alongside the others. Our soil full of them. It's easier that way.

19 The ash remains, at right angles. Fingers full of wet earth. The
ground beneath us descending into singularity.

20 At the center: likeness. The eyes like porcelain. A beautiful
fracture.

21 & what remains is apparition. Do the dead sing through me,
or have I devoured them? The first person plural cannot be borne by one
body, but in the crevices of the page.

22 To cleave is to split into two adhesive parts. The boundary is
clear now, but where was it before? When did our repulsion start?

Acknowledgements:

“Does the Subaltern Speak?” is a seminal essay in postcolonial theory by Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak.

The phrase “Your pitch-dark pupils entry wounds” is inspired by Ocean Vuong’s poem “Night Sky with Exit Wounds.”

The phrase “grind of decades on the human heart” is adapted from Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s poem “The Founding of Yuba City.”

Surviving Survival Mode

Survival is a state. It is an existence; it is existence. It is the continued refusal to expire, cease, wither, perish. It is an act of hope as much as it is anything else, the hope that survival will prove its worth in the end.

Survival guarantees nothing, of course, except for the escape of death, and even that is only a guarantee of the current moment. *Fight-or-flight* only goes so far as the sympathetic nervous system; it doesn’t detail any of the other varieties of recoil, ghosts of the choices we make to wake up the next day in the safest situation that we could forge for ourselves. Surely I must have learned the sequence at some point, the way the reaction traces its way through the amygdala, the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland—but, in truth, hormones and glands were never one of my strengths, in psychology or in biology before it. My interests in the way that one thing affects the other were always more firmly rooted in the outside, in the consequences.

It is easy enough not to think about the million little pushes toward survival that we make a day: eating, sleeping, checking the road before we cross it, using a turn signal, wearing a mask, locking our doors at night. Survival is merely part of the human condition—a major part, though, something that sticks stubborn in our guts as we navigate even struggles that seem impossible, even states of the moment that seem like they will be the state of forever. And still we survive. We fight to survive.

The first time that I can remember really thinking about survival in the moment was while I was looking down at my baby girl. It was a moment of clarity, a flash, a realization. The power had been out for roughly 60 hours. It was October in Rhode Island, and a cold October at that. I had laid my daughter on the floor on top of a crocheted yellow blanket. The moment came when I was zipping up her dark blue vest, fitted over her onesie and pants and socks. And in this moment, I felt a deep maternal distress, doing what I could to keep my child warm with no power. It was nearly her first Halloween. I took a picture of her in the outfit as she laid there, chewing on the tail end of a Very Hungry Caterpillar toy that was supposed to enrich her life—give her colors, give her textures, help her understand patterns. Our food had spoiled; her bottles would not keep in the fridge. I had a presentation for my graduate seminar to worry about, and we had no heat, and none of these anxieties could exist discretely.

I felt the tenuousness of her survival nearly daily for five months by this point—making sure that she didn’t suffocate in her crib, helping her when she couldn’t even hold her own head up, making sure that she ate enough, panicking when she threw up an entire bottle of formula all over me and herself and the couch and the floor. But I hadn’t thought of it in those terms, not until I was zipping up a vest to keep her warm enough to survive. Survival was a story of winter in the wilderness; survival was the story of escaping a predator or battling cancer. It was verbs more action-oriented than what we were doing. As I did what I

could to protect my daughter, I felt the tenuousness of my survival, too. Within days, we would need to drive to family in Pennsylvania to have heat, electricity, wi-fi to get work done. And I would sleep on the floor with my daughter that first night in Pennsylvania, my arm around her so that she could be soothed, convinced into sleep, as I ached all through my back and limbs beside her.

It's likely not advisable for someone with fibromyalgia to sleep on the floor. The neurologist who had diagnosed me before this asked a question: *Do you have a history of childhood or adolescent abuse?* As I sat next to this man in his exam room, I felt a tug of familiar dread. No one could figure me out—why I started coming into office appointments with a cane, why I needed the bright paper FALL RISK bracelet for my CT scan, why I felt like I could never wake up. I searched for answers with a furious determination to no longer be written off by medical professionals when I wasn't a simple pregnancy diagnosis; my two strongest contenders were a Chiari Malformation or a brain tumor. (I had hoped for the former, if for no other reason than because brain surgery has long been one of those fears on the border of rational and irrational that burrowed under my skin.) I had a deep-set malaise that made everything feel distant, something that felt like it would never go away, something that felt like it was killing me; all I was trying to do was live.

And I thought this question — *Do you have a history of childhood or adolescent abuse?* — was just another way to explain my body away as psychosomatic symptoms, another way for a doctor to say that depression was the root of it all. But the neurologist was a man with theories, and once the MRI came back clean and the trigger points ignited pain, one of those theories was confirmed, and I had the name for this thing that my body was trying to survive.

But he had another theory, too; it was the reason that he posed the question that led to a diagnosis. As the theory goes, a young person undergoes a trauma (sexual abuse, for example). The teenager survives by any means, by whatever psychological and physiological fortifications their body can cook up. The teenager's brain chemistry changes, rewiring in ways that will become important later. The teenager in this scenario likely comes out of it with PTSD, common among survivors. Even if the teenager, now an adult, is able to get to a point where they can sleep through the night, even if they can be around strangers without spending every second assessing who poses the biggest threat, their brain might still be wired in particular and peculiar ways. And, if there is another instance of trauma with enough weight, then it's possible that fibromyalgia is triggered, telling a body that every pain is bigger than it is, that pain is there when it isn't. The body spent too long in survival mode, and the brain doesn't want to be caught unawares again, and so it becomes oversensitive to the world, a defense mechanism that backfires against itself because of its hypervigilance. (This is paraphrasing the good doctor, of course, but it gets at the gist of things.)

Survival one: abuse. Survival two: an SSRI that causes an allergic reaction. Symptoms include black tar vomit, being unable to remain awake, fatigue, and confusion. Withdrawal symptoms from two and a half doses include full body tremors as a person lays in a fetal position on their living room floor. The body survives, but the body shows its wear and tear, too. Survival makes no guarantees about the conditions in the aftermath, the state

of days and weeks to come.

And so stressors become bigger in the face of this, pain coursing through a body in the face of even the most minor of threats. I cannot remember where I heard it first—Twitter, some news website—but around the time my daughter was two-and-a-half, the water was no longer drinkable from the tap:

A boil water advisory is in place for the customers of five public water systems serving parts of Narragansett and South Kingstown because E. coli bacteria was found in the water supply.

Approximately 38,000 residents are impacted by this boil water advisory.

These recommendations pertain to water used for drinking, cooking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, and food preparation. Boiling kills bacteria and other organisms in the water. Infants and young children should not be bathed in this water because they may swallow it accidentally. Anyone else using this water for bathing or showering should be careful to avoid swallowing the water.

Department or agency: Department of Health

Online: <http://www.health.ri.gov>

Release date: 08-31-2018

It's like when you take your body for granted—walking without a cane, waking up without hurting in every place that touched the mattress overnight. Until you have to do it, really and tangibly do it, it seems impossible to imagine every way that water is woven into all areas of life. It's one thing to learn in science class that we'd die without drinking water by day three. But every little thing, every little act of survival, every little act of pleasure—drinking coffee, washing fruits, boiling pasta, brushing teeth, cleaning dishes, showering—goes unnoticed in the daily mess of things.

Showering with your mouth clamped shut is easier than showering with no hot water or lights in a windowless bathroom. But going to the fire station and the nearby university to have enough water to make dinner is less than ideal. Bottled water from the convenience store takes care of water for coffee and washing fruit. Everything is more work, more effort, more spoons (as we call them in the disabled community). And each extra effort makes the necessity all the more glaring, the lack all the more distressing.

The worst of it, though, is the fear.

This is the state of fibromyalgia, heightened by generalized anxiety: the *what ifs* make the *what is* seem like a threat at every turn. It is woven into the brain chemistry, this hypervigilance. Every stomach grumble could be hunger, or could be E. coli sending its condolences to your colon. Every moment of dizziness (often fibromyalgia-induced) becomes a possible sign of dehydration. And the concern sets into the body, a theory made manifest, stress shooting soreness through joints and foggy brain and everything becomes more difficult. It's a kind of defense mechanism, I suppose, to be worried about everything when you've been hurt enough that it feels warranted. But it is a self-destructive mechanism, too, making

making it more and more difficult to handle prolonged stress as though your body and mind have already hit their quota for a lifetime and shutting down might cause some kind of retreat from the trigger of it all. Or that's a theory, anyway.

It is nearly two years later when it becomes obvious how bad the pandemic is going to get. Some of us started sanitizing grocery bags and washing the food inside of them as best we could. Using doorknobs required hand sanitizer, and so did the elevator buttons that I needed to get up from the first floor because my fibromyalgia was flaring. Perhaps my body is so sore because of the tension of coiling, preparing for the next thing to come, the next thing to be survived, the next thing to wear on the physical.

Executive Order 20-02: March 9, 2020. A state of emergency is declared for the State of Rhode Island due to the dangers to health and life posed by COVID-19 and the state disaster emergency plan is activated.

Executive Order 20-13: March 28, 2020. All Rhode Island residents are required to stay home unless traveling to work, traveling for medical treatment or obtaining necessities (food, medicine, gas, etc.).

Hand sanitizers were sold out, and price gouged online; canned goods and toilet paper went quickly. We stuffed our repurposed linen closet with rice, pasta, mac and cheese, canned vegetables. We prepared not to leave the apartment for we didn't know how long.

And we waited.

Every car on the road by our kitchen window felt like a risk. It was a survival event on a massive scale, one that we could track daily on the local news and on the Johns Hopkins map that turned redder and redder.

It came in phases—quarantine, sourdough starters, rollerblading, sea shanties. We all wanted distractions from surviving. Sitting at home, even with work and childcare, only left time to think about the dangers of the world outside. I know this game well. If I think too hard about surviving, then my body goes into its backwards survival mode, making survival harder, more painful. And so I write and read and plan and make lists. COVID-19 only brings this out for me more, a descent into homebodiness and introversion to protect from the pandemic consuming every thought. It is the whole world in a state where I have found myself before, afraid of the ways that the body might betray you.

Not many months before COVID came on the radar—a time before talk of masks and sanitization and quarantines and stay-at-home orders—I was trying to figure out my own pain. For the first time in my life, I had to buy a heating pad for the sharp stabbing in my ovaries that made vision and balance vanish without warning. I knew that I had endometriosis from a post-pregnancy diagnosis, but this was worse than anything I'd had before. It was tests, ultrasounds, blood draws, every attempt to figure out what was wrong. It was fear of cancer, of endometrial tissue taking over, of my body consuming itself. It was falling against walls in my own home because of pangs, it was discomfort and anxiety. And tests came back with a cyst, noncancerous, and then a pill change lifted the pain. But my

body would not accept that I was safe, pain in limbs and back and all over still lingering.

The summer before this, I woke up one morning with enormous dark bruises all over my legs, an inability to stand without getting winded, getting so dizzy that my vision failed me. More doctor's visits, more fights to survive, more tests with no real results. But there is a souvenir of this day, a picture that I took. This picture is one of many on the custom coffee mug I drink from each morning. I am sitting on my bed, smiling at my own phone, my chin resting against my daughter. She's about two, her thumb in her mouth as she wears a watermelon-printed dress.

I remember very clearly taking the picture, deciding to take it. I thought that I was going to be in the hospital by the end of the day. My mobility was the worst it had ever been; I wondered if my leg bruises were blood clots. I didn't know if I would survive. And so I decided that I needed to take a picture with my daughter, because if I died, I wanted her to have the most recent picture of the two of us possible. I wanted something of me, of us, to survive, no matter how the day might sour.

I reassured my students in Arkansas one semester as we read the list of emergency procedures: I had been through every one of the emergencies listed. This was before COVID, but after a shooting at Walmart; before taking care of a baby in a cold October power outage, but after arriving in the university parking lot with tornado sirens blaring not for the Wednesday test at noon but to warn us into a building and away from windows; before boiling water, but after evacuating a convention hall in Austin as an event volunteer because of bomb threats. Until I had to make the syllabus, until I had to include the building's emergency procedures, I hadn't thought about all of those moments I'd survived. Even as I tried to reassure my students, I didn't think of it as survival, I just thought about it as events, as payment to the piper for passing through the world.

And maybe this is why I don't think of survival as survival, because of this little voice in the back of my head telling me *You've survived worse*.

Survival is a state. It is an existence; it is existence. It is the continued refusal to expire, cease, wither, perish. It is an act of hope as much as it is anything else, the hope that survival will prove its worth in the end.

BIOGRAPHIES

Lorelei Bacht

Lorelei Bacht's recent work has appeared and/or is forthcoming in *Mercurius*, *Anti-Hero-in Chic*, *Menacing Hedge*, *Beir Bua*, *Sinking City*, *Barrelhouse*, *SWWIM*, *The Inflectionist Review*, *After the Pause*, and elsewhere. She is also on Instagram: @lorelei.bacht.writer and on Twitter: @bachtlorelei

Cody Beck

Cody Beck graduated with his BFA in Creative Writing from the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, completing a University Honors thesis in fiction. Making his home in rural North Carolina, Cody works at a public library and pursues writing that reimagines the southern gothic form. His work can be found in *The Elevation Review*, *300 Days of Sun*, *Secondary Story Journal*, and *Haiku Journal*.

Melissa Boberg

Melissa Boberg is a soon-to-be alumna of Boston University, where she studied English and Philosophy. Her short story “*Dinosaur*” won the first annual campus-wide fiction contest in 2021. More of her work can be found in the *South Shore Review*, *Off the Cuff Magazine*, or at her personal website melissaboberg.com. She is trying to be cool about it, but really hopes you enjoyed reading this story.

Cori Bratby-Rudd

Cori Bratby-Rudd (she, her) is a queer LA-based writer and co-founder of *Influx Collective's Queer Poetry Reading Series*. She is the author of the chapbook *Cage of Eden* (Finishing Line Press, 2020) and the editor of *Under The Belly of the Beast* (Dissonance Press, 2020).

Callista Buchen

Callista Buchen is the author of the full-length collection *Look Look Look* (Black Lawrence Press, 2019), and the chapbooks *The Bloody Planet* (Black Lawrence Press, 2015) and *Double-Mouthed* (dancing girl press, 2016). Her work appears in *Harpur Palate*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Fourteen Hills*, and many other journals. She is the winner of the DIAGRAM's essay contest and the C.D Wright conference's Emerging Writer award.

Erin Carlyle

Erin Carlyle is a poet living in Atlanta, Georgia. Her poetry often explores the connections between poverty, place, and girlhood, and can be found in journals such as *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Ruminare*, and *Prairie Schooner*. Her debut full-length collection, *Magnolia Canopy Otherworld*, is out now on *Driftwood Press*.

Audrey T. Carroll

Audrey T. Carroll is a Best of the Net nominee, the editor of *Musing the Margins*:

Essays on Craft (Human/Kind Press, 2020), and the author of *Queen of Pentacles* (Choose the Sword Press, 2016). Her work has been published or is forthcoming in (mac)ro(mic), *Miracle Monocle*, *The Broken Plate*, *Elsewhere: A Journal of Place*, *So to Speak*, and others. She is a bi/queer and disabled/chronically ill writer who serves as a Diversity & Inclusion Editor for the *Journal of Creative Writing Studies*. She can be found at <http://audreytcarrollwrites.weebly.com> and @AudreyTCarroll on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

MICHAEL CHANG

MICHAEL CHANG (they/them) is the author of several collections of poetry, including *BOYFRIEND PERSPECTIVE* (Really Serious Literature, 2021), *ALMANAC OF USELESS TALENTS* (CLASH Books, 2022), & *SYNTHETIC JUNGLE* (Northwestern University Press, 2023). Tapped to edit Lambda Literary's Emerge anthology, their poems have been nominated for Best New Poets, Best of the Net, & the Pushcart Prize. They were awarded the Poetry Project's prestigious Brannan Prize in 2021, & serve as a poetry editor at the acclaimed journal Fence.

Brittney Corrigan

Brittney Corrigan is the author of the poetry collections *Daughters*, *Breaking*, *Navigation*, and *40 Weeks*. *Solastalgia*, a collection of poems about climate change, extinction, and the Anthropocene Age, is forthcoming from JackLeg Press in 2023. Brittney was raised in Colorado and has lived in Portland, Oregon for the past three decades, where she is an alumna and employee of Reed College. She is currently at work on her first short story collection. For more information, visit <http://brittneycorrigan.com/>.

Rachel DeWoskin

Rachel DeWoskin is the author of *Two Menus: Poems* (The University of Chicago Press, 2020); *Banshee* (Dottir Press, 2019); *Someday We Will Fly* (Penguin, 2019); *Blind* (Penguin, 2014); *Big Girl Small* (FSG, 2011); *Repeat After Me* (The Overlook Press, 2009); and *Foreign Babes in Beijing* (WW Norton, 2005). She is an Associate Professor of Practice in the Arts at the University of Chicago, and an affiliated faculty member of the Centers for East Asian Studies and Jewish Studies.

Lupita Eyde-Tucker

Lupita Eyde-Tucker writes and translates poetry in English and Spanish. She's the winner of the 2021 Unbound Emerging Poet Prize, and her poems have recently appeared in *Columbia Journal*, *Raleigh Review*, *Women's Voices for Change*, *Rattle*, [PANK], and *Night Heron Barks*. Lupita is pursuing an MFA in Poetry at the University of Florida and will be a Staff Scholar at Bread Loaf Translator's Conference this summer. Read more of her poems here: www.NotEnoughPoetry.com

Jeannine Hall Gailey

Jeannine Hall Gailey is a poet with MS who served as the second Poet Laureate of Redmond, Washington. She's the author of six books of poetry: *Becoming the Villainess*, *She Returns to the Floating World*, *Unexplained Fevers*, *The Robot Scientist's Daughter*, *Field Guide to the End of the World*, winner of the Moon City Press Book Prize and the SFPA's Elgin Award, and the upcoming *Flare*, *Corona* from BOA Editions. Her work appeared in journals like *The American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *Poetry*. Her website is www.webbish6.com. Twitter and Instagram: @webbish6.

Layla Garcia-Torres

Layla is a young artist currently living in Washington D.C., Virginia. For Layla, art has always been her passion, even when she suffered from artblock for many years. Despite this, Layla returned to her passion with inspiration from astronomy and psychology art. Layla hopes to grow as an artist and expand her art in hopes of inspiring other artists.

Phil Goldstein

Phil Goldstein is a poet, journalist, and senior editor for a content marketing agency. How to *Bury a Boy at Sea* is his debut poetry collection, available now from *Stillhouse Press*. His poetry has been nominated for a Best of the Net award and has appeared in *The Laurel-Review*, *Moist Poetry Journal*, *Rust + Moth*, *Two Peach*, *2River View*, *Awakened Voices*, *The Indianapolis Review* and elsewhere. Phil and his wife, Jenny, live in Alexandria, Virginia, with their dog Brenna and cats Grady and Princess.

Robin Gow

Robin Gow is a trans poet and young adult author from rural Pennsylvania. They are the author of *Our Lady of Perpetual Degeneracy* (Tolsun Books 2020) and the chapbook *Honey-suckle* (Finishing Line Press 2019). Their first young adult novel, *A Million Quiet Revolutions* is forthcoming in March 2022 with *FSG Books for Young Readers*.

Jen Schalliol Huang

Jen Schalliol Huang's work has been published or is upcoming in *Cincinnati Review*, *Flock*, *RHINO*, *The Shore*, *Sou'wester*, *Shenandoah*, and others. She reads for [PANK] and has been nominated for the Pushcart, Best New Poets, and Best of the Net. Jen lives in Massachusetts by a pond with her dog.

Jenny Irish

Jenny Irish is from Maine and lives in Arizona. She is the author of the collections *Common Ancestor*, *I Am Faithful*, and *Tooth Box*.

Jen Karetnick

Jen Karetnick's fourth full-length book is *The Burning Where Breath Used to Be* (David

Robert Books, September 2020), a CIPA EVVY winner, an Eric Hoffer Poetry Category Finalist, and a Kops Fetherling Honorable Mention. She is also the author of *Hunger Until It's Pain* (Salmon Poetry, forthcoming spring 2023) in addition to six other collections. Co-founder and managing editor of *SWWIM Every Day*, she has work forthcoming in *The American Poetry Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Cutthroat*, *A Journal of the Arts*, *DIAGRAM*, *The Dodge*, *Notre Dame Review*, *The Penn Review*, *Terrain.org*, and elsewhere. See jkaretnick.com.

Danyal Kim

Danyal Kim lives in Chicago, where he works at an office job with a government agency by day and writes poetry by night. He is a big fan of combat sports and practices kickboxing as a hobby. His poems have shown up in a few publications such as *Collective Unrest*, *Apricity*, *Mockingheart Review* and *Hungry Chimera*. IG: [danyal.kim](https://www.instagram.com/danyal.kim)

Andrea Kowch

Andrea Kowch has been described as “a powerful voice emerging, demonstrating a highly sensitive consciousness that informs a culturally-laced symbolism.” Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1986, she attended the College for Creative Studies on scholarship, and graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BFA in 2009. Her paintings and works on paper are rich in mood, allegory, and precision of medium, reflecting a wealth of influences from Northern Renaissance and American art to the rural landscapes and vernacular architecture of her native Michigan. Kowch resides and works in Michigan where she paints full-time and enjoys giving back to the creative community by serving as an adjunct professor at the College for Creative Studies, and juror of various art exhibitions. She is represented exclusively by RJD Gallery in New York.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Inspired by memories, inner emotions, history, and my fascination with nature and the human psyche, the stories behind my paintings stem from life's emotions and experiences, resulting in narrative, allegorical imagery that illustrates the parallels between human experience and the mysteries of the natural world.

The lonely, desolate American landscape encompassing the paintings' subjects serves as an exploration of nature's sacredness and a reflection of the human soul, symbolizing all things powerful, fragile, and eternal. These real, yet dreamlike, scenarios serve as metaphors for the human condition, all retaining a sense of vagueness because I wish to involve and motivate the viewer in uncovering the various layers of mood and meaning to form conclusions from their own perspective, despite that my main idea will always be before them.

We all share a common thread, and as active participants in an ever-changing modern world, the purpose of my work is to remind viewers of these places that we sometimes perceive no longer exist, and to recognize and honor them as a part of our history that is worth preserving.

In juxtaposing the human form with animals and a bygone uninhibited American land-

scape, I provide glimpses into “rooms,” those often times chaotic places we possess internally. The rural, Mid-western landscape of my home state serves as backdrop for the stage of human emotions. The animals present are vehicles for expressing the feelings and underlying tensions suppressed behind the human mask. Symbolic explorations of the soul and events concerning our environment are expressed through the combination of these elements to transform personal ideas into universal metaphors.

Marek Kulig

Marek Kulig immigrated to the USA from Poland in 1992. His poems and translations were published or are about to be published in *The Orchards Poetry Review*, *Spire Light*, the *Under Review*, *Seneca Review*, *National Translation Month* and elsewhere. The last line *Spacja* is a song title from the album “Radical” by the band Every Time I Die.

Jonathan Kvassay

Jon Kvassay is an artist and designer originally from Los Angeles CA. His work spans across mediums from large-scale paintings to digital illustrations. Creating imagery that tells a story and engages viewers brings him a lot of joy. He currently works and lives in Old Brooklyn, Ohio where he hikes, jogs, and naps.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Jon's work reimagines his own personal experience growing up in suburbs on the edge of the desert. Both overcrowded, lonely, and vast. Integral to this reimagining is the exploration of interactions. The interaction between fear and freedom, between people and nature, and people as part of nature. Jon's work also explores folklore and the supernatural. Symbolic imagery such as serpents and spirit orbs pervade the language of each piece. These elements stem from a love of open spaces, folklore, and the unknown.

Susan L. Leary

Susan L. Leary is the author of *Contraband Paradise* (Main Street Rag, 2021) and the chapbook, *This Girl, Your Disciple* (Finishing Line Press, 2019), which was a finalist for The Heartland Review Press Chapbook Prize and a semi-finalist for the Elyse Wolf Prize with Slate Roof Press. Her work has appeared in such places as *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Cherry Tree*, *Arcturus* (*Chicago Review of Books*), *The West Review*, *Posit*, and *Pithead Chapel*. She holds an MFA from the University of Miami, where she also teaches in the Writing Program.

Jami Macarty

Jami Macarty gratefully recognizes Native Nations of the West—especially the Coast Salish and O'odham—as the traditional and rightful owners of lands where Jami has the great privilege to live and work—as a teacher at Simon Fraser University, as editor of The Maynard, and as a writer of essays, reviews, and poetry. Jami is the author of *The Minuses* (Center for Literary Publishing, 2020), winner of the 2020 New Mexico/Arizona Book Award - Poetry Arizona, and three chapbooks, including *Mind of Spring* (Vallum, 2017),

winner of the 2017 Vallum Chapbook Award. Jami's writing has been honored by financial support from Arizona Commission on the Arts, British Columbia Arts Council, and by editors at journals such as *The Capilano Review*, *Cascadia Zen anthology*, *Interim*, *Vallum*, and *Volt*, where Jami's poetry is forthcoming.

Angie Macri

Angie Macri is the author of *Underwater Panther* (Southeast Missouri State University), winner of the Cowles Poetry Book Prize, and *Sunset Cue* (Bordighera), winner of the Laura/Frasca Poetry Prize. An Arkansas Arts Council fellow, she lives in Hot Springs.

Carrie McGath

Carrie McGath's first collection of poems, *Small Murders*, was released in 2006 by *New Issues Poetry and Prose*. Since then, Carrie has self-published five limited-edition poetry chapbooks, including: *Ward Eighty-One*, *The Chase*, *So Sorry to See You Go*, *Ohio Lonely*, and *Dollface*. She is currently at work on her second full-length collection of poems, *The Luck of Anhedonia*. Her poems have appeared in literary journals including *The Chariton Review*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, and *Barrow Street*. Her poem, "Dear Anhedonia" won the AWP Intro Journals Project Award in 2019 and was published in *The Tahoma Literary Review*. Carrie is listed on VIDA's 'anti-list' of Under-Acknowledged Women Writers where author, Monica Drake writes: "... McGath reimagines a world that opens to grand possibility while simultaneously remaining painfully claustrophobic, and therefore married to a new kind of truth." In addition to being a poet, Carrie has worked as an art critic in Chicago since 2009 and has contributed to *Chicago Art Magazine*, *Chicagoist*, *Third Coast Review*, and *Brut Force* as a Midwest contributor covering Outsider Art. Carrie is a Doctoral Candidate in the Program for Writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago where she teaches writing.

Karyna McGlynn

Karyna McGlynn is a writer, professor, and collagist. She is the author of three poetry collections from *Sarabande Books*: *50 Things Kate Bush Taught Me About the Multiverse* (2022), *Hothouse* (2017), and *I Have to Go Back to 1994 and Kill a Girl* (2009). Recent honors include a Wisconsin Institute of Creative Writing Fellowship, a *New York Times* Editor's Choice, the Rumi Prize for Poetry, and the *Florida Review* Editors' Award in Fiction. With Erika Jo Brown and Sasha Debevec-McKenney, she's co-editing the anthology *Clever Girl: Witty Poetry by Women*. She's also designing a collaged tarot deck called *Paper Arcana*. Karyna is the incoming Director of Creative Writing at Interlochen Center for the Arts.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Karyna McGlynn's collages use found and repurposed textures: children's books, vintage magazines, science textbooks, paper dolls, employee manuals, fabric samples, paint chips, postcards, etc. Like her poetry, her collage work is gurlisque, theatrical, technicolor, dream-inflected, and darkly humorous. McGlynn explores gender, ambition, violence, sexuality and spirituality in campy, provocative, and playful ways.

Michael Mingo

Michael Mingo is a poet and medical editor currently living in northwest New Jersey. He earned his MFA in poetry from the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars. His work has appeared in *Spillway*, *The McNeese Review*, *Third Coast*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, among other journals.

Rita Mookerjee

Rita Mookerjee (she/her) is the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Postdoctoral Fellow at DePaul University. Her poetry is featured in *Juked*, *Hobart Pulp*, *New Orleans Review*, *the Offing*, and the *Baltimore Review*. She is a co-founder of *Honey Literary* and a Poetry Editor at *Split Lip Magazine*.

Michael Passafiume

Michael Passafiume is a Brooklyn, NY-based writer who received his MFA from Antioch University Los Angeles. His work has appeared in *Black Heart Magazine*, *The Louisville Review*, *Madcap Review*, *Meat for Tea* and *Welter Online*, among others. His chapbook, "archipelagos," is available from *Blue Hour Press*. He occasionally tweets from @passafiume.

Srinaath Kidambi Perangur

Srinaath Kidambi Perangur is a musician, poet, translator, and scholar. He has received several prizes and grants for his work, through which he attempts to untangle questions of Indian identity, performativity, and postcoloniality. He attends Brown University, where he studies Sanskrit Classics.

Sarah A. Rae

Sarah A. Rae's publications include her chapbook, *Someplace Else* (dancing girl press, 2020), and poems in *On A Wednesday Night* (University of New Orleans Press, 2019.) Other work has appeared in *Burlesque Press*, *fieralingue*, *Solamente en San Miguel*, the Mexican journal *Revista Blanco Y Negro*, and elsewhere. Her translations of poems by the Mexican poet Guadalupe Ángela may be found in the online journal *Ezra*. A native of Champaign, Illinois, she has worked as a high school educator in the Chicago area, and holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of New Orleans.

Vismai Rao

Vismai Rao's poems appear in *Salamander*, *RHINO*, *Rust + Moth*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Psaltery & Lyre*, *Rogue Agent*, *SWWIM*, & elsewhere. Her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and the Orison Anthology. She serves as Poetry Editor for *The Night Heron Barks*. You can find her on twitter: @vismairao

Anna Laura Reeve

Anna Laura Reeve is a poet living and gardening near the Tennessee Overhill region, historic land of the Eastern Cherokee. She's working on her first poetry collection. Previous work of hers has appeared or is forthcoming in *Canary*, *The Trumpeter*, *The Racket*, *Cutthroat*, and *Fourteen Hills*, and others. Read more: annalaurareeve.com

henry 7. reneau, jr.

henry 7. reneau, jr. writes words of conflagration to awaken the world ablaze, an inferno of free verse illuminated by his affinity for disobedience—is the spontaneous combustion that blazes from his heart, phoenix-fluxed red & gold, like a discharged bullet that commits a felony every day, exploding through change is gonna come to implement the fire next time. He is the author of the poetry collection, *freedomland blues* (Transcendent Zero Press) and the e-chapbook, *physiography of the fittest* (Kind of a Hurricane Press), now available from their respective publishers. Additionally, his collection, *The Book Of Blue(s) : Tryin' To Make A Dollar Outta Fifteen Cents*, was a finalist for the 2018 Digging Press Chapbook Series. His work is published in *Superstition Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poets Reading the News* and *Rigorous*. His work has also been nominated multiple times for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.

Martha Silano

Martha Silano's fifth full-length poetry collection, *Gravity Assist*, appeared from *Saturnalia Books* in 2019. Previous collections include *Reckless Lovely* and *The Little Office of the Immaculate Conception*, also from *Saturnalia Books*. Martha's poems have been featured in *Poetry*, *Paris Review*, *American Poetry Review*, and the *Best American Poetry* series, among others. Honors include the *North American Review's* James Hearst Poetry Prize and the *Cincinnati Review's* Robert and Adele Schiff Award. She teaches at Bellevue College, Seattle's Hugo House, and as a Poet in the Schools in Skagit County, Washington.

Meghan Sterling

Meghan Sterling's work has been nominated for 4 Pushcart Prizes in 2021 and has been published or is forthcoming in *Rattle*, *Colorado Review*, *Idaho Review*, *Radar Poetry*, *The West Review*, *West Trestle Review*, *River Heron Review*, *SWIMM*, *Pinch Journal* and many others. She is Associate Poetry Editor of the *Maine Review*. Her first full length collection *These Few Seeds* (Terrapin Books) came out in 2021. Her chapbook, *Self Portrait with Ghosts of the Diaspora* (Harbor Editions) will be out in 2023. Read her work at meghansterling.com.

Kate Sweeney

Kate Sweeney is a poet living in Los Angeles. She is Marketing Director for *The Adroit Journal*, and *Word is Bond*, a community-centered poetry reading series partnered with AAWW that raises funds for transnational relief efforts and mutual aid organizations. Kate has a chapbook, *The Oranges Will Still Grow Without Us* (Ethel '22), and her work has

appeared in *Northwest Review*, *SWWIM*, *The Shore Poetry*, etc., and is forthcoming from *Muzzle Magazine*.

Leah Umansky

Leah Umansky is the author of two full length collections, *The Barbarous Century*, and *Domestic Uncertainties* among others. She earned her MFA in Poetry at Sarah Lawrence College and has curated and hosted The COUPLET Reading Series in NYC since 2011. Her creative work has appeared or is forthcoming in such places as *The New York Times*, *POETRY*, *The Bennington Review*, *The Academy of American Poets' Poem-A-Day*, *Rhino*, and *The Massachusettes Review*. She can be found at www.leahumansky.com or @leah.umansky on IG. The title of this poem was inspired by *The On-Being Podcast* with Krista Tippett episode with Nikki Giovanni.

T.D. Walker

T.D. Walker is the author of the poetry collections *Small Waiting Objects* (CW Books, 2019) and *Maps of a Hollowed World* (Another New Calligraphy 2020). Her poems and stories have appeared in *Strange Horizons*, *Web Conjunctions*, *The Cascadia Subduction Zone*, *Luna Station Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Walker curates and hosts *Short Waves / Short Poems*, a program created for broadcast on shortwave radio that features poets reading their work. Find out more at <https://www.tdwalker.net>

Issam Zineh

Issam Zineh is author of the forthcoming poetry collection *Unceded Land* (Trio House Press, 2022). His work appears or is forthcoming in *AGNI*, *Guernica*, *Pleiades*, *Gulf Coast*, and elsewhere. Find him at www.issamzineh.com or on Twitter @izineh.

Yvonne Zipter

Yvonne Zipter is the author of the poetry collections *Kissing the Long Face of the Greyhound*, *The Patience of Metal* (a Lambda Literary Award Finalist), and *Like Some Bookie God*. Her poems have appeared in numerous periodicals over the years, including *Poetry*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and *Bellingham Review*, as well as in several anthologies. Her published poems are currently being sold individually in Chicago in two repurposed toy-vending machines, the proceeds of which are donated to the nonprofit arts organization Arts Alive Chicago. She is also the author of the nonfiction books *Diamonds Are a Dyke's Best Friend* and *Ransacking the Closet* and the Russian historical novel *Infraction*.



Jet Fuel Review Staff Spring 2022

left to right:

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