

JET FUEL Review

A High Octane Literary Journal

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Artwork: Brian Barker's *The Judge*
Cover Design: Jordan Benes & Patricia Damocles

Mission Statement

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 Reader,

Welcome to Issue 18 of *Jet Fuel Review*! The editors are excited to share with you the amazing collection of writing and artwork that comprise this issue. After months of reading—and much deliberation—editors have carefully selected pieces that reflect our mission to curate a publication which uplifts the many voices and experiences that diversify the world we inhabit.

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. This semester, *Jet Fuel* was honored to receive the College Media Association's "Literary Magazine of the Year" Award at a four-year institution. Founded in 2011, *Jet Fuel Review* continues to grow with writers and artists who unapologetically challenge the artistic canon. We are honored to provide a platform for the multitude of voices that depict the complexities of the human condition. For example, our featured cover piece for this issue, *The Judge*, by poet and collage artist Brian Barker, is one of five pieces that not only mythologizes the relationship between the human and animal worlds, but also deconstructs subjects of death, mysticism, power, and violence.

In our poetry section, we present politically insightful pieces by writers such as Kathleen McClung—a Rita Dove, Morton Marr, and Maria W. Faust winner—and Editors' Choice-recognized author Keisha-Gaye Anderson. In our fiction section, we showcase chilling prose pieces from Amy Sayre Baptista's forthcoming work, *The Whitechapel Aubades*, which are a tribute to the women brutally silenced by Jack the Ripper. In our creative nonfiction section, we are thrilled to be the home of Wendy Fontaine's "Badge," where the singular "I" transforms into the collective "we" as the story invites us on a journey from adolescence to adulthood, only to leave the reader with a heaviness one acquires with age. In addition to the pieces by our cover artist, Brian Barker, our art section features striking images—a combination of painting and photography—by Daisy Patton, who completed artist residencies at Minerva Projects, Anderson Ranch, the Studios at MASS MoCA, among other places. Patton explores the social conventions of family dynamics and the histories that are embedded within them.

There are many more powerful voices that swell within Issue 18. All of the pieces that live within these pages mirror and reinvent the marvels and faults of humanity. The creative styles that are prevalent in both literary and visual frameworks in this issue conjure emotions that are both familiar yet transcendent of the human experience. We invite you to enjoy our 18th issue and we hope that you appreciate the enthralling assortment of work that we have curated.

Read on!

Patricia Damocles & the *Jet Fuel Review* Editors



POETRY

My 8-year-old son

flips through *101 Cookie Recipes*,
the book he chose at the yard sale
where he asked to stop on the way back
from the hospital where he recovered
from his rape and where I had been
the week before, emerging with one kidney.
We are in our regular clothes,
sutures hidden in our sweats and t-shirts
as we pick through other people's lives—
pans, salad bowls ringed with old oil,
shoes missing laces, the full-color cookbook.
Mint layer bars or lemon ginger snaps,
twisted caramel peanut butter, dough heavy
with apples or toffee, dropped
by the spoonful or spread into pans.
He cannot decide which treat to make,
folds over nearly each page, corner after
corner bent, agonizing over what to want.
The recipes are caked in someone else's prints,
smears of icing and ancient chocolate stains
that to my son twitch alive on the page—
here, pick me, this one. Each unready cookie
fingertip-close, raw on the palm.
We huddle next to each other,
unsure of what has ever belonged to us.

In the Torn Photo, Little Mad Girl

feeds ducks, stretches her Little
Mad Girl arms toward the blue water.
She smiles, and small waves sparkle.

Her arms stretch toward the blue water.
She will never be as happy as she is now
when she smiles, and small waves sparkle.
Mad Girl lingers beside a dark water.

She will never be as happy as she is now.
The ducks will leave; the lake will freeze.
Mad Girl lingers beside a dark water.
The sun's dissolving, the ice crystallizing.

The ducks will leave; the lake will freeze.
There's a white winter in Mad Girl's head.
The sun's dissolving, the ice crystallizing.
In that photograph, it's fall, but

there's a white winter in Mad Girl's head.
Mad Girl sees oranges and reds in a photo
of Little Mad Girl, where it's fall,
not in the colors that drop dead.

Antarctica

After I buy my pills I roam the aisles of the grocery store.
I buy Minute Maid Fruit Punch because I love the taste.
I buy cotton-scented candles because they smell so good.
In Antarctica, there are two ATM's provided by Wells Fargo.
Every two years a vendor travels there to make sure
everything is functioning properly. He must undergo
a psychological evaluation to make sure he can handle
the climate in case he gets stuck. He could be there right now.
Not everything must matter.

The Music of Foxes

Sway the desolate beauty of sycamores. I am trying
To be present. Slow to the swiveling of the moon.
The crush of forever fluorescent. If you must, pucker
The night burning with the endless. Friday nights spent
On suburban corners spearing cigarettes between lips.
Blowing smoke into Orion's pelvis. The rusted beaten-
Down cars lurching like some death long gone, gone
As a minute, quick as the limp fox on the side
Of the road, legs wreathed around its ribcage
Like a song, orange fur crusted with crystallized
Blood, O heavenly sonata, all distorted through
American radio, holy static—all those years ago—
When driving through the backwoods at night
Seemed a divine profession, as if God perched
In the cold branches, your headlights coated
With a pall felt only by those who've crossed
To another paradise, those who have felt the cool
Lick of a gun against their tongue, the metallic
Whisper of nightmares, all of us lost in the murk
Of dirt & muck, perhaps even hell is more palatable
Than this glass doorknob, this slight mirror, ghosts
Gusting across stairwells in bathrobes, reliving
Their destruction over & over & over & over,
To dream of what tire skids could mean—what is
Gorgeous? What matters—because the dark
Evenings mean that God is lenient, that God
Remembers every fragile taped-up box of a soul,
Every collarbone leading to a forest, every summer
Of dusklit bicycles, 7/11 floors slick with mop water,
Employees blowing bubblegum with their infected nose
Piercings, their hair tangled with scrunchies, dreading the end
Of the hour, their return to their two bedroom apartment,
their drunk father, their medicated mother—yes,
Our lovely parents will die, a sliver of us will die too—
But I knew you then, and you know me now— isn't that enough?
But when is enough ever enough? When it is.
When will I know when's enough? You will.
It'll be so bright that the ruin of us will be perfect.

Middle of Everywhere

On a dark road in the middle of everywhere
a fawn prances across its stones into the trees.
A mother loves her son and a father tries to.
A father loves his son and a mother tries to.
We are loved. My mother on the balcony,
Pacific breeze. My father behind the sliding glass.
I am the glass. Sleek and lean, easily shattered.
Tonight, the fawn finds the buck, the doe.
Tomorrow, they drop me off, and fly home.

still life with diving duck & roadkill

the river's whiskey & my body
a raft i have built from detritus.
i burned a city to build a compass
that points only to a deer's body
splayed roadside, organs exposed.

once, i carved an entire forest
into a canoe just to wreck
among the rapids. once, i
swirled the deer's blood
into a mural on asphalt.
no, not a mural. just splatter.
I am always trying
to make death
into something gorgeous.

Instead, i chain a cement block to my ankle,
sink into the river-bottom muck.
lungs filter silt & burn.
i disown
willow bark each time i sing
into the current's neck.
even the moss knows my name
is not memorable.

like a wake of buzzards dipping beaks
into the carcass, tearing pink kinks
of entrails from the gut,
i subsist an entire summer vacuuming
the cream filling from moonpies.

i am vulture-drunk
on grief.
once, a corpse i called friend
became a poem, & i woke
with a gun that fit perfectly
in my mouth. once, i drank

too much gin, then plucked an elegy
from between my teeth.

the body
decomposing
is too slow
a rapture.

i know about joy

tonight even after the sun slacks off, sinks
into the hammock-horizon i grasp lightning
bugs in the mesh of fingers hold close
whatever passes for illumination here.

tonight i am lit-wicked roman candle
alighting the backyard in a wreath of ruin.
become barrage of abandon: each ecstatic
whizz

smears even the dark into kaleidoscope.
call this coronation call this halo of fluorescent
joy
a crown you wear only until
morning

tonight we have occupied the house
in the woods for five days,
a friend's family vacationing in florida & their home
become palace of debauchery:

a record catches fire
when it plays the right song
the hallway floods
with toilet water the porch becomes
dumping ground
for booze-drowsy bodies our bodies vessel
the impulse

to rage.
in revelry we confuse plastic pouches of white
powder with joy, half-full
bottles with joy.

tonight even what i write about joy
becomes eventually elegy,
grasping for what cannot be
held.

tonight—
a vinyl forty-five,
its grooves embedded with match-strike paper.
the record immolates when the needle drops & only
music
escapes, only a song whose words blur.

tonight becomes a husk of glitter—this
what we know of joy,
a substance we must slip into our bodies so that we
might slip outside our bodies.
what we know of joy is we do not know
how to survive when it is gone.

wing-borne flute aloft

flute/ carved from the wing bone of
a red-crowned crane/
nothing is isolated /; everything is a/
part &/
participates in /a greater
whole /(the sum of) inheriting wing &
/ swirling through swaths
of cumulous gong/ enabled flight & up/
lift of musical notes/ that suffuse the air
& /vibrate

/not /the destination /but the journey

/ is not dead / but is no longer
what it was/ is *spirited* /: this beautiful kind
of spiraling elevation /up
/ward & /onward

/ the mile marker signs/ pointing the way to
the last chance for gas/food/beer in 1 . . ./
2/ . . . 3/ . . . 4/ . . . 5/ . . . more miles

/transcendence/
like

/ immigration/ where we must always have
an escape plan
/is when we categorize survival /
as having a direction/ such as
towards/ or

away from /as good as any religion

finding a place /within a constellation of believers/
each uplifting
the other /
towards a higher power /which they might
call God /
or might simply / call each other

/nothing is a/part /; everything is/ a part of /
& participation in/ the sum of
a greater whole

The Sequestered Juror Writes a Cento

(Lines from Martín Espada and Rebecca Foust)

There are no words in our language to say this.
They call it being in shock, this state
where gas stations snap their lights off one by one
and we're marooned here now, left
deep in the well where anesthesia
is carnival. From the dolor
blood drums behind my ears,
all of it whispering—go ahead—go
where the dead stand in the rain
soft, and off-camera. Silence. Silence and ash.

On the beach I found the skeleton of a blowfish
and no science, god, or creed
to keep vigil over the waves,
and so I took my place in the line
waiting for the alchemy of dust
and spent light. Sometimes a song rings out
as if the words were missing teeth
made from recycled rubber. I like
my comrade the angry bald man.
His eyes are blue, too. He tells us

about veterans who drench themselves in liquor
north of the old shuttered silk mill.
He lights a cigarette for those who would see the ruins
through a chink in a cellar wall, the attic air
dissolved in smoke. There was silence
folded, refolded in the same locked drawer.
You will not hear this, even after the war is over.
You pack your new purse with lipstick, and mace,
a poem useful as a coat to a coughing man,
the plume somewhere behind him, the fire.

A Year

October waits outside the movie theater
like a street gang in the honeyed light.

You adjust to its contours with a foot,
then two, into its bath and hurry home.

November is a void where nothing is.
The cat makes snake and rabbit noises,

terse and unfamiliar, in the living room.
In its dark, you are new like a tourist.

Where can you go now but through it,
a new bruise for each piece of furniture.

§

December's unscissored ghost costume
falls onto the block. Only soft reasons

to see your folks, brave the roads, wake.
You jerk like a stop-motion snowman

to the curb, exhale into your hands,
making them a warm little woodwind.

January's short days spent whistling
harmony with your howling kettle.

February, fabricating: Did you know?
Geese in flight close their eyes.

§

It is March. Allergies try new symptoms
out on the lovers, sneezes dandelioning.

You brow furrows, and, oh so quietly,
you glide like a German Shepherd-

shaped hand past a tent flashlight
to a park in April where everything

is named: Lucy the Lake; a picnic's
swept-away plate, Persephone;

Randall, the town's only taxi, idling
all May by the school, raincoat loose.

§

The jambs are poorly weatherized,
so July lets all the spiders inside.

Evening teems with friends, drunk,
dumb, and buzzing near the stove.

By August, ringtones like gnats
linger over the hamper, the trash,

until the only sound left is the static
from shirts pulled off after work.

Then, one afternoon, you see it:
September, gouging you a skylight.

Hoarder's Episode 4.

I don't know what happened it just got away from me.

A family of rust

laughing in the dirt
and the soil.

A reunion of onion grass and
buttercup children turning to razors
sharp enough to slice heels.

Driving shattered cars. Wearing smashed rear-view mirrors for eyes.

Metal turning scab-texture.
Scab becoming capable of driving and a horn

buried deep and humming.

Garden of needles and portraits. Garden of
nothing wrongs and everything perfect.

Garden of dead direction and floating miles and
headlights as pairs of glasses.

How can you see everything singing
and not want to keep it forever and forever

until it refuses to be anything but dust?

How can you watch a rusted chain
and not consider
the possibilities of love and metal?

I'm not looking to be saved from wilting rubber.
I'm not looking for a God in the brush.

I'm not asking for forgiveness but I am asking
for observation.

Do you see the animals in
each appliance how the blender was a calico cat
and the toaster licked heat from the sun.

How the oven's stomach opens and closes
like a ripe cantaloupe.

 You cannot undo
my lineage

 this is where we bud.

Nice Rack

with definitions and phrases from the dictionary.com entry for rack

Framework of bars.

Antlers. Former instrument of torture.

See spread-eagle.

See wrists & ankles.

See slow.

See stretch.

Racked with pain,
to rack one's brain.
The neck, the rib.

To strain beyond what is normal or usual.

Luggage. Clothing. Shoe.

See tally, see accumulate, see amass
as achievement.

Rack up profits.

At the pool table—rack 'em.

Nautical: To seize (two ropes) together side by side.

Horses: Fast pace of legs moving in lateral pairs.

To strain beyond.

Roof.

Gun.

Affixed to a wall.

Current instrument of torture.

Spice. Gun.

A group of drifting clouds.

The neck, the rib—mutton, pork, veal.

Destruction, wreck, gait of a horse.

A group of broken clouds moving in the wind.

To stretch out for drying.

See stretch.

See slow.

See to trash.

Rack & ruin.

Rack out.

Rack up.

The gait

of broken

clouds

in the wind.

What is driven.

What is drawn.

city boy hears crickets as advancing army sirens

I came to the mountain & listened. my mission, to find out what silence sounds like. I found it is not what you think. first you remove the whistling kettle to a cool burner. second ask the wind where it's come from in such a hurry. third you must wait for the rain to end. while it is singing you hear a whole bluegrass band, the picking of guitar strings, mandolins wailing behind moaning fiddles, almost like women in labor. you will swear you hear voices, a choir, but faintly. it may be the crickets, whose sound is like, when glass breaks, that shattering sound that's a series of tinier sounds. crickets are missing their collective noun, like cloud, the word for a group of grasshoppers. I will nominate one. a cotillion of crickets, after the rain stops, gossiping down by the creek. do you know, some birds stay awake all night? just like I do. door open. impossible to see apart tree bark black from black mountain rising into black sky. but now I know some things. silence is never still, it is motion, like when a mouth moves in a dream without a soundtrack. even when you subtract all the actions that spook & surprise & enliven you you are left with what comes from within you. your pillow shushing the blood in one ear at time like half a womb or if you prefer a faraway bomb.

Lontaine

1.

For a long time I had struggled toward such clarity,
the mouth of ash & not the film,
in which I was free to
flicker and enter as I chose. To give in too easily to “wanting
the impossible,” now seemed
a repudiation of the skin as it breathes, the facticity of another’s
breath, tasting of onions or cigarettes,
thin wine or yeasted bread, a decay to be
embraced & to hesitate a betrayal of the truer forms:
the scudding clouds or the sunlight which strips
bare, much as winter does.

2.

In those days, I often walked
without direction, not infrequently seized by
a longing to fling myself
down to the earth, to dig a hole & pour my voice in.
Afraid, at times, I might start hugging the trees—
blood sister of cherry, moon-bark of aspen,
Often, I wondered at my purpose—
this dogged sorrow, which had taught me so little,
until I understood I was struggling to construct myself around
an absence:

what-I-desired-and-could-not-will-to-be.

3.

When autumn came, the pain attenuated to almost-pleasure:

the world now limpid, my mirror—

pale grass, high wind, bruise clouds drifting over,

even the somehow tortured-looking shapes of the junipers.

Ice filled the space behind my eyes. I believed I had never

seen each object in the world so clearly

or understood what desert and plain and forest might mean,

those spaces where people still enter

as alien, outside the range of hearth or village, town or strip-mall,

far from creature comfort.

4.

Rain pelted and turned to hail.

Icicles coalesced along the edges of the buildings.

One morning the car refused to start.

I walked until my fingers were blue, and I was afraid to look at my toes,
like ice-fish, deep under a lake, the fact that they freeze

in place, sometimes years.

5.

You left on a journey and came back

tanned and speaking loudly. I pretended not to notice
the precise manner of your not noticing me,

winter inside, a hunger for eternity,

until I believed I could understand even the trees gloved in ice,

the meekness of lawns, the grasses' inexorable stiffening,
believed I would choose to stay awake through any operation,
which was why I watched you, just watched you,
regardless of the pain it caused me,
or my refusal of all consolation,
so long had I sought to enter the realm of pure feeling.

On the Destruction of Autumn

Hard to imagine
the interior of words
and what they've done to each other.

For example:
the muting of storms beyond the alphabet.

The rain a means of counting.

A lantern monk asks: if I stop looking
at Ash Mountain
will it fit in my eyes again?

*

Take a snowflake apart—
wolves freezing there,
on the moon.

A man breaks his arm.

From the inside his shadow breaks.

Nobody lives in the approaching
autumn—nobody exists
in that leaf.

The sound it makes falling is the ground.

*

The crickets growing
louder

the farther I walk

through what hasn't been
remembered.

For each heartbeat
I have a different life.

What I tell you in those lives

makes the birds darker,
even from here.

office bowtie thursday

on thursday, we wear bowties-- polka dots,
redwhite&blue, pinstripes, dog-themed, cat-themed.

it's always fun to see who wears what.
last year, karen wore a st. pat's bowtie

that really knocked our socks off: green background,
two pots of shining gold on either side

connected by the most gorgeous rainbow.
after work, we went to the city's last irish pub

and cried and cried and cried and cried and cried.
on friday, we are allowed to wear blue jeans.

The Basket

On a condom company's website, a photo
of a woven basket holds two fluffy bunnies, just born.

A reasonably handsome bearded guy raises
an eyebrow. Slightly smirking for the camera to say

“Whoops! Babies”. There's a trademark
on Momentum™. I'm so tired of irony.

What was I expecting from a condom website? They wink:
with the right barrier, anything can be avoided.

We ordered a small box of them months ago.
First with high hopes for your birthday,

then our anniversary. When that came and went
with nothing but dinner, we carried it

in the glove compartment to Florida
for fun nights in the festival tent.

Now the un-opened box is a permanent fixture—
a lamp that never gets turned on—on my side of the bed.

I am too busy being a mother. When I lay down
at night, my body buzzes with anxiety

over the tiny body that came out of me.
We can't find a way back to the river

we used to know so well. Footprints melt
in muddy April snow. It's almost Easter, again.

In the dark when your snoring is established, I put my hand
between my legs and find I am still woven shut.

Self-portrait as Cardinal after Watching *A Star is Born* (2018) with My Mother

My mother knows the cardinal's song.
Says hear him out in my garden.
Says look. We see different worlds,
orange guitar pick & two black eyes.

People caged cardinals for the audacity
of red crest. Conspicuous. Will never
be mistaken as crow, as raven. Music,
his own – my father's band, hard rock

in FL bars. He gave me my first drink.
At 15, became his drinking buddy like
Jackson & his daddy were. & when I
fled the scene judge ordered outpatient

rehab – the working-class kind with grey
walls & no fancy name like Promises
or Chances because only rich people
get those. At 19, I sat with drunks.

Their country songs: dirt roads
& nights. Only stars to guide them.
I still drank but not as much
& we all gotta start somewhere.

You might think the bassist is safest –
the least assuming – but he's the most
bitter, the one who doesn't have the voice
to be a star. & I say if you're gonna fuck

anyone in a band, choose the drummer
with good tattoos. I used to get blackout
drunk & pretend to be a rock star
like my father was in my mind.

I stopped when I got sober
because I'm no cardinal.
Can't carry a tune. My mother
& I know how this movie will end.

It's a remake of a remake,

but when Lady Gaga says
It's not your fault we're crying.
Both know he won't survive.

I pray let this ending be a beginning
unlike the one before this
& the one before that one, too.
A few years under my belt decided

songbirds shouldn't have all the fun.
Sang Cher & Dolly & Shania at karaoke
because I'm a diva & dramatic
but those songs helped me survive.

Realized drunk people clap for anybody
who isn't scared & I can bring down
the motherfuckin' house & my voice
is mine – it's all I got in this world.

War

A war can be quiet
like, “Hey...try these pills. We
can skip gym class” or

Casting:
Sassy Black Friend
Prostitute
Thug No. 3

A war disappears
those who prey
in cathedrals
or survive in the
bullseye of its
permanent theater

75,000
missing
black
girls

gone quietly
no one sees
because no one ever saw
“Did that really happen?”
“I don’t see race...”

A war sprouts
pyres of glass
and steel
around you
call it revitalization
incinerate
the frame house
of your honest work
and the one safe place
for your children to exist
as themselves

A war assures you
that you think too much

that you are paranoid
hands you any version of
Jesus
that will shut you the fuck up
while the priests all know
that the allegories
are much more
than a bedtime story
are absolutely a map
in, up, and out
that you'll never
figure out

A war is raw
putrid
rotting life
that looks like
maltodextrin
arsenic
petroleum
all the not-food
you have the constitutional right
to choose

A war be writ
in your birth certificate

Are you legal?

We can never
be sure
about these shores
we stumble onto
blind and fragile
pulled through
waters by unanswered
questions
just to find community
in the shape of
shattered glass
and mass amnesia
like a fog
under new moon

But, since when is a warrior
afraid of war?

We keep coming
because the war
sounds like
abeng
waking us up
to teach

We cannot die
we are the I am
that always
be
and a war
is a blip
on the timeline
of the galaxy

Cui-ui

a beautiful outlaw

Today, the holster hosts no weapon, not even a fang.

A feast of snow feeds a lake, pesters a lonely plate.

How does a hologram dream? A so-so lord battles

a hologram's blooper: a ghost whose feelers

feel of frozen stone. Drool grows to flood. Not a handsome wet.

*

Forget blood's fleet. Forget bloom's flop. A woman leaks. Forget grass

as green's poster-kid. One fawns over a doe. One yawns and a yodel

emerges. Address a meadow as land's slow jam. Groove. A beastly storm

hardly stops a bone. Fog as a plaster on the broken sky. Hope softens.

A flagrant web of hope passes as home, morphs to table. We're the meal.

Chinchilla

a beautiful outlaw

error's robot wrote body body body
week to week week or two of
better yogurt: pure fuss, gourmet sorrow
woke to 'best of' of sex
yet bored oyster but
deeper fork worked
burst purse
guess muumuu or murmur
suds grope form
soft dowry of regret
geese perk up sky
joy stems from bye
youth's porous detour droop-troupe
dumb fumes
our seer borrows dust from dry streets
moved by go's story, our seer, too, goes
poster of empty eggs
poser vortex demoted to storm-sour gust
ego-stuffed motor ordered to zoom
red red ruses

June Sucker

a beautiful outlaw

a giddy widow hid a foal: a hoax-family
to fool—fill—a “why?”

a filly to add glad to a bald day
mad at a limit—ova afloat: blimp? boat?

a tomb told off by whom?

a TV told of a wall, a gloat

a body bid that a moat halt
what might dim—to loot god
of doom—a moot gig—a limo
with a flat—a lamp lit at midday

Me

Many parents work all day every day. A paycheck is different from poetry. I couldn't justify what I was doing because I couldn't predict the product with authority. I couldn't bring myself to say what the poems would do and have absolute faith in the outcome. I realize now that's because I'm process-oriented, but also because I couldn't sell a product I didn't believe in.

Do I still feel that way? As a child I temporarily lived with a young Russian woman who sobbed hysterically upon seeing the cosmetics aisle in an early 90s era Jewel. She'd been shaving her legs with a blade, hoping to marry a man who'd let her stay in the U.S. I saw the world through her eyes, I saw the rows and rows of goods.

The Oven Bird

Let's just put it all out there because that's what you want me to do.

I'm neither married nor religious but own an image of Audrey Hepburn with a cat wrapped around her neck and a cigarette holder in her mouth.

Could I not see my own disaster? Everyone in self-preservation mode was waiting for me to take control, which looks like the efflorescence before early petal-fall.

I understand mystery but not deliberate confusion, which is gaslighting. Love isn't extremely efficient at producing light because of the large surface area of chemicals.

The Other Side

Earlier I thought of you in a photograph. What right do any of us have to speak on behalf of the other? My mother is making calls because her brother has special needs. She was taught four different responses based on whether or not the person who answers the phone is interested.

But this is also a woman who listened to me sing and swing for hours. It was a running joke that I sang loudly from the swing. Sometimes the words were made up but at least she knew where I was.

Nothing makes sense when you are gone.

How do I explain the need for your presence? Do I love you, or mining for exact meanings of words, as if whole nations depended on them?

We had looked like the postcard I saved from a creative writing activity, the commissioned image of two people kissing on a street in Paris while everyone else is rushing past them.

[The sky when it turned out to be a cancer...]

from The Star Cabins

The sky when it turned out to be a cancer
The sky when it itched

The sky when it ate gnats
The sky when it ate children

The sky when it licked the lotus flowers
The sky when it grew too dry to lick

The sky when the awaited event occurred but no longer weighed much
The sky when the expected visitor arrived at the expected time

The sky when the chalk-white tablets filled the silver envelope
The sky when the pale blue tablets filled the silver envelope

The sky when the conversation was the same again
The sky when the conversation was the same

With one new topic
The sky when it was time to be seated

The sky when the microphone was passed
The sky when it was time to receive the guests

The sky when the sparks flew upward
The sky when the [I cannot write it Elizabeth]

The sky when the water-lily bloomed
The sky when I photographed the water-lily

The sky when oars in tandem smote the sea
The sky when what could there be

To worry about
Enjoyment enjoy n joy n joy

Whether anyone is entitled to it
Whether I am

Doing enough to earn a quiet summer week
But the star cabins but the star cabins

You have read this far without me you have lived
This long in one town on one state highway in the same gray house

You should be kinder to yourself you should allow yourself
To enjoy the fucking fruits of your fucking labors

But this would force the admission that your labors have worth
You are showing your ass you are showing off

You trash with your own car your TSA Pre-✓® the things you give
The government they had already the things you own

Own you food should be ugly enough to eat but
Good enough to photograph good enough at walking to walk

Each daylight hour through the mountain the green plastic
Bottles mark the miles the bus pulls up

The glacier trail the gemblue falls
The water the water the rain the rain the rain

The rain the rain the rain the rain the rain the rain
The rain help me Elizabeth the rain on your mouth

I will say the rain the rain the rain the rain the rain the rain
The rain the rain

[Cotton briefs folded in the package...]

from The Star Cabins

Cotton briefs folded in the package
Taped around the cardboard insert

The nurse hovering whose holes
Who was all who represents who rearranges

The figure's manly ice columns
Angels are the ones

Hovering who were once hovering
One penguin scared of the others

Except his friend
Who said we can practice

Looking at penguins
By looking at the penguins far away

I'm putting this here so I remember
The way your saying sounds

Though sound
Is one way to stay asleep

For those who waste
Or who have become inured

For those who can find consolation
In verisimilitude two ships do not lose sight

For example [you] and [me] and the [night]
Did pass

In holy ever-loving rot
Preserve the dead who have been dead

So long they have perfected
Death you don't need it

To die doing tricks for no reward
Makes the moon a simple pet

From this foul company be it removed
Bodily what might

This mean now
When it exists apart from the past

It becomes another
Inoculation

A little stick that only hurts
Yes baby for a moment and shoos

I've lost you I've lost you I've lost you I've lost you
Gladly flew and the flowering tree

Repairs its winter damage
By eating its buds

Which were helpless anyway
And owed their lives

Not even to the observer
Are you not tired the dead are tired

As cliché you should delete
They are already eaten and excreted

They have already eaten
A detail in a larger scheme

Strange Loop

I.

Just the odd car. Just the odd car driving along the waterfront.
It's ridiculous getting up so early.
It's perverse, the distance at which I stand from life.
Now you're really on the ropes. Not merely a pose.

Let's say the wine looks splendid in the glass.
Let's say there is a man holding the glass. The man is you.
We love that he is distant, unreasonable, special,
walking in the hotel's hallway maze.

Someone has rearranged the furniture while we were asleep,
but all we have for proof is this deep feeling. Off-camera, a bowl
of water and my own dark jacket hanging its head on a hook.

The fire burns in its place in the wall.
I'll chase you till you take wing. Okay, we can start here.
Isolate precisely what leaves a mark on you,
the abject human being, just falling into his white bed.

II.

Someone has rearranged
the furniture while we were asleep.
The man is you. The abject human being.
Just the odd car. The distance at which
I stand from life. It's ridiculous, and all we have for proof
is this deep feeling. Walking in the hotel's
hallway maze is not merely a pose. You are
really walking, you are really falling into
his white bed. Off-camera, just the odd car driving along
the waterfront. Getting up this early, the man is you,

my own dark jacket hanging its head
on a hook. The wine looks splendid in the glass
before it falls, not merely a pose. Okay, we can
start here, with the bowl of water and the proof
is the deep feeling. Isolate precisely till you

take wing. There is a man holding what leaves
a mark on you, a fire that burns in its place. Now you're
really distant, unreasonable, special. Now we really love you,
and give perverse chase, into the wall.

III.

My own dark jacket is a hallway maze. This deep feeling looks splendid in a glass,
and each fire burns in its place. Someone has re-arranged his white bed, and the
man is perversely you. Isolate precisely the marks on you, what left its head
hanging on a hook in you. All that wine is not merely a pose. The hotel furniture
oddly along the waterfront. The car, and then the human being. There is a
distant man, special, abject, taking wing into the bowl of water. Getting up, I'll
chase you off-camera, we will really love you, okay, we can start here, what leaves
you on the ropes is ridiculous, and falling from life into a piece of proof, an early
pose.

(Re)cognition

my hunger's home
take it to the hole
You don't know
what I crawl towards:
locked door
piano bench
every where
I've been touched
by no one
that merits a lie
the white keys don't listen
the chess pieces don't listen
the story is boring
a hole so deep
that I can't look up
to see how far down
I am now
Unfamiliar blood
runs through me

keeps ringing on
still the unplayed song
from my fingers
lick the residue
dig, hunt, bury
that touch won't listen
wet in my ruined underwear
in the backseat
but someone placed me
in the radio
and the drumming
runs through me
unfamiliar blood
I am now
to see how far down
that I can't look up
a hole so deep
the story is boring

and the drumming
from the radio sets in
as someone placed me
in the back seat
wet in my ruined underwear
that touch won't listen
so I dig, hunt, bury,
lick the residue
on my fingers
still the unplayed song
keeps ringing on

the chess pieces don't listen
the white keys don't listen
that merits a lie
not no one
I've been touched
every where
piano bench
the locked door
what I crawl towards:
you don't know
take it to the hole
my hunger's home

Still

All other exits have been sealed.
Jorie Graham

I look at you—mirrorcut—past time—lost—mirror-eyed dark wine red Still a fragile thread the haunting frayed Still the undersmile the blood Still biting lips the grapes the dark drapes pulsed repulsed the window tight the pulse Still pulling blood through vein like [] what is the simile—fear, fear, fear—off-white smile brittle-eyed Still there is the miracle—the wine red or gold the taste—a consecration? I am here now lost—and now again and then it is—will be—maybe Autumn—all the songs of bone and soil iterating moan harvesting The sky an ax—an adze carving sugar skulls—flowering the eyes— The craters of the moon weary of their view Shall I—may I wait— another—weight a prayer indulge my sins with gold There are no doors anywhere There are doors everywhere The windows sing their firstlast benediction *ouvrezfermezsilvousplâit* Spiders knit communion—wait—weighted webs ravel past the dark flies How planets seize a gravity in nets How accretion disks apocalypse How light sacraments horizon—a world of holes wholly holy is thy name—I see the breath and skin dark beating Life is but a dream the Bard(o) sings Atomize the dust motes memory—Atoms seal tight and split out and spitting out into thin skin thinning blue spider spins the world a vein—a nest—a net and all the mirrors smoked.

Glossolalia

i.

Fog clots the air, almost
absent, nasturtiums denuded
in the small distance.

Dew pallor gathers
in the park. Ravens
interrupt. Scraps

of paper, plastic bags,
the movement of anything
acknowledging

the wind's receipt.

ii.

Ravaged
cabbages, the shell
of a salted snail

tossed among dandelion heads. The heads
pricking through
a brick wall. Fog

sieves the sound
of a dumptruck
extracting discarded

matter from a can. White moths
circle a pistil, tongue
an orchid's yellow
fuzz.

iii.

Crushed glass kneads
the ankle's thrust,
 blood erupts

 on the pavement. Last night's
rain's inscribed
 on a patch of winded

 cellophane wrapped around
a metal hasp.
 Weather's edge,

 your mouth's an open
wound. Clouds
 surround the puncture's

 bright bloom.

Unexpected Autobiography

For so many years, I was the girl waiting
for the train, scribbling.

I was not the man in the cowboy hat
on the roof of an old brick building,
the man I am watching now,
blowtorch in hand, burning some ancient duct
near the Granville El. I was not the tight-shirted guy
in the next building over, hammering
a new roof from scratch, the bare wood
beams visible to all, like a naked man,
unexpected, embarrassing, like a skeleton
the living are not allowed to see. I was not
the streetlight left on in daylight
by mistake, in a broke city that can't
afford to err. The scribbling years
were all intentional, the deferred dreams
the dreams I chose to defer,
so that now I am exactly like the old man
who first taught me, who said he writes
on yellow legal pads on trains next to executives
who stare in disbelief or wonder.

How I loved him, how I love him.
Though he is dead now, to me he
and all poets live in present tense.
Even he was too embarrassed
to write poetry on public transit after a while,
he confessed. So on trains he scribbled notes.
In long lines, in what might look like an actual
job—and now that I am more than half the age
the old man was when he taught me,
I understand the pressure to have
an actual job, to look like it, and also
I have discovered that I am not
embarrassed at all. I am who I am,
a scribbler in public, a parasite, a believer.
I look at the scribbling girl less than half

my age waiting for the train, oblivious
to the blowtorch on the roof, the tight-shirted
man and his pectorals, the streetlight
left on in daylight and I thrill
for the past. On the platform I discreetly
dance in remembrance, in gratitude
for all the years I could not wait to get home
to write and so I wrote right there, anywhere,
by daylight or streetlight, and once in a while,
barefoot, by the glorious shine of starlight.

In memory of Mark Strand.

Guitar Music in the Desert

Nearly midnight in the student dorms
in the city of the patriarchs,
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
and what do I hear but guitar,
played loud, live, next door,
by a neighbor who sounds
no more than twenty-three?
How long have I been
in so many deserts, but
not this one: *Be'ersheva*,
desert capital, four thousand years old.
Abraham's city, or so we are told.

Through all my deserts,
Biblical and secular,
I have remained on a student budget,
and here I am, twenty years
past graduation, writing in a borrowed dorm
on the green couch and wooden coffee table
with the glass showing welts in bamboo
and outside, there is Rachel,
who came here from Moscow
and now upholsters furniture
for a living and bargains like
a desert hooligan, a pirate of the sands.

*I saw her lift a couch, alone,
like a man.*

Why is it that in this emptiness
I feel full? Give me just this: sleep,
sand, language, music. An upholsterer
with my mother's name, Rachel,
selling her wares to penniless students at midnight,
reminding me that anything
can be transformed. Recovered. Lifted.
Let the patriarchs take care of the rest.



ART

Untitled (Chauffeur Funeral)



Untitled (May 15 1933)



Untitled (Family Ties)



Untitled (Floyd + Dania Isley)



Untitled (Patterned Shirt and Fan Flowers)



Hoodwinker



Loner



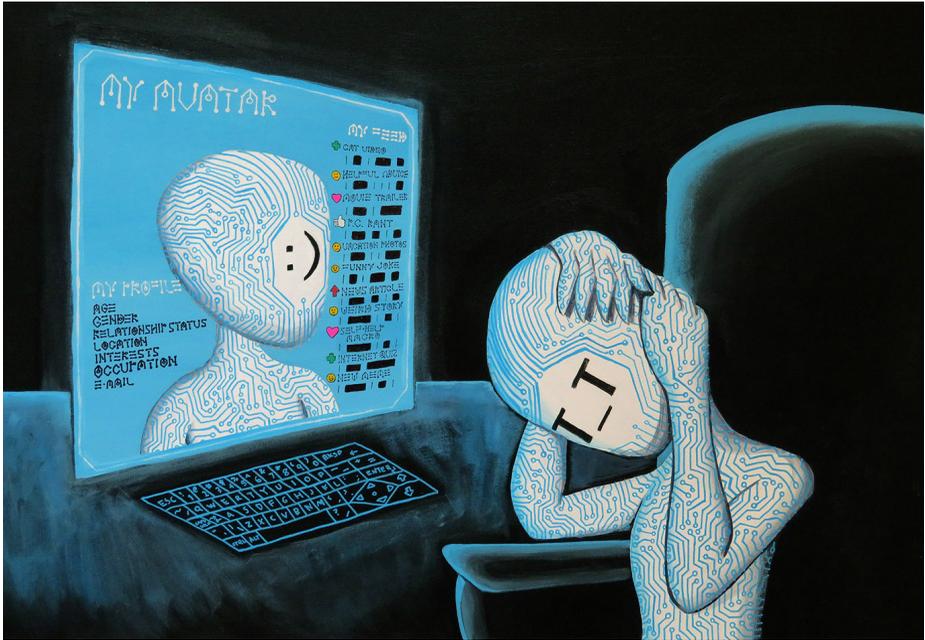
Mystic



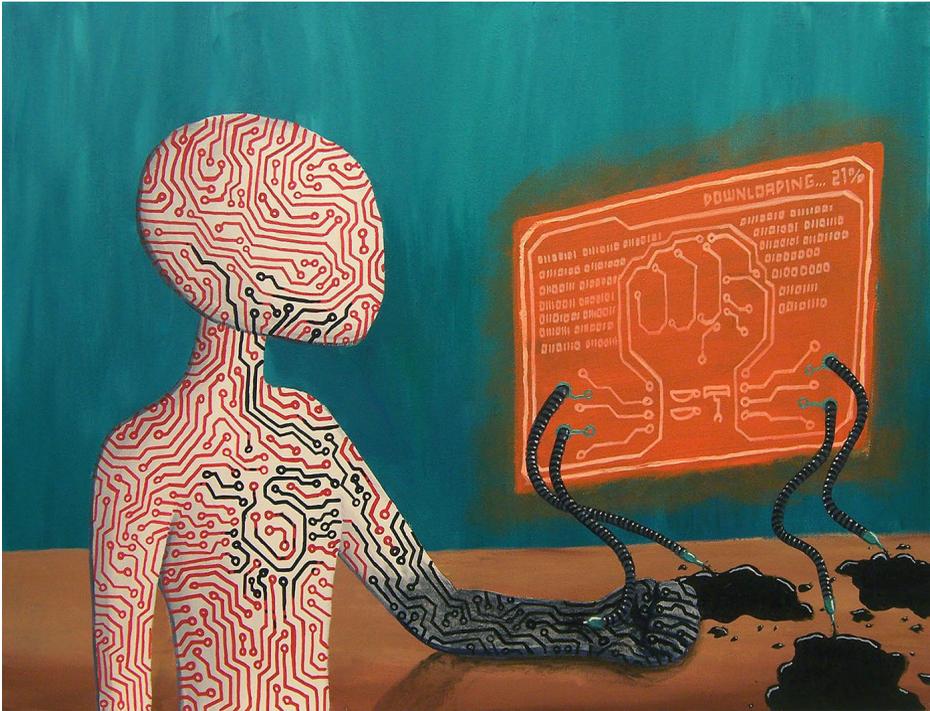
Premonitions



Magic Mirror



Perception Virus



Fluidity



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Ocean of Fire



FICTION

The word "FICTION" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font with a white speckled texture. It is centered horizontally and overlaid on a thick, yellow, jagged line that resembles a stylized mountain range or a signal waveform. The line has a white speckled texture and extends beyond the left and right edges of the text.

Sex Ed

One afternoon in the 5th grade the boys and the girls were cleaved from each other.

The Boys

We were shuffled from the gym into a classroom and, after a few minutes, Mr. Millins wheeled in the TV cart. A movie. A real treat. He bent and grunted, plugged in the VCR and the TV. He pushed in a tape and then ambled to the back of the room and sat in one of the child-sized seats.

We watched a single, unbroken shot. The camera did not move. We struggled to define the image. Through context clues, the identification of thighs, of a butt, we understood that we looked at a vagina. For most of us this was our first vagina. It was furry and confusing. Just as we identified the object it transformed, stretching, screaming, blood and shit and undefined muck, like snot, like pudding, there on the screen. The vagina shit itself. Some other thing, some other harry flesh emerged from the vagina and retracted, emerge and retracted. The other thing became a head, a head like an old man, a head like an alien covered in snot and blood and hands pulled a baby from the vagina. We thought the movie would end now but it began again, the stretching and screaming and the vagina pushed out a chunk of something misformed, dead.

Mr. Millins paced silently to the TV cart, held down the rewind button and we watched the dead thing and the mucky, skinny baby and the blood and shit and snot go back into the vagina and then Mr. Millins took his finger off the rewind button and we saw it all again. After the dead thing came out of the vagina a second time, Mr. Millins unplugged everything and wheeled the TV cart out. For several minutes we sat quiet, unsupervised. Mr. Millins returned.

“Go to the lunch room,” he said. “Single file.”

The Girls

They took the boys away and we were left in the cavernous gym. We, all, had been seated together so, when the boys left, gaps existed between us, girls adrift and stranded cross legged on the shellacked wood. They were saving energy a lot that year so the lights remained mostly off except one row of florescent tubes on the far edge of the

ceiling.

Ms. Jenevieve said, “Girls, we have a special visitor.”

A nun came and stood in front of us.

The nun spoke about how she had been a fallen woman. How she had made a baby inside her. How she had birthed the baby and how the baby had been taken from her so that it could have a better life. She told us she had become a nun when she was eighteen. The way she talked, the inflection, we expected her to touch her belly but her hands always stayed stretched a few inches to the sides of her body.

She spoke and, if we leaned the right way, we could make it so that, from our perspective, her head blotted out the basketball hoop behind her.

“Sit still,” Ms. Jenevieve said, in the same yelling tone that our mothers used if they were scared we were going to tumble out of a third-story window.

The nun went to the big double doors of the gym and opened one and wheeled a trolley back to where she had been standing. The trolley had a tall something on it covered with a sheet. She pulled the sheet off and reviled a bloody, skinny Jesus. He looked upwards, begging for something, rivulets of blood all down his ears and cheeks and nose. He held his hands out a few inches from the sides of his body, the palms full of blood as if he was going to cup his hands and drink.

The nun told us that this was where she found salvation and where she would remain for eternity. She covered up the Jesus and Ms. Jenevieve applauded so we all applauded and the nun wheeled the Jesus out.

Ms. Jenevieve left for a while and then rolled the TV cart in, plugged in everything, turned off the row of lights and started a video. In the movie nuns sang in a choir and then the camera zoomed in on a Jesus and then one nun sat in a small room for a while and then the camera zoomed in on a Jesus and then, on top of Jesus’s bloody face the screen said *St. Magdalene for the Fallen*, and then the screen went to static.

“All right, girls. Let’s head over to the lunch room,” said Ms. Jenevieve and she turned on the one row of lights and we all filed to the lunchroom where they had Capri Sun juice boxes lined up on a table and we each took one and, as gently a possible, punctured a hole in it with the pointed end of the straw. After a minute the boys came in and we made way for them to get to the juice boxes.

Senior Year

We all asked each other to the prom. We went to the high school gym and wondered what would happen, after midnight, in the back seats of cars. We drank juice from plastic Champaign glasses. If we were not careful, the long plastic stems of the

glasses disconnected from their round bases and toppled over. The tables and floors and our hands became sweet and sticky.

###END###

To Be Born

I was a difficult birth.

Breech. Ass first into the world, my jelly body folded up like a levered chair. The summer, stretching into fall and filling the house with flies come up from the earth around the well, had exhausted everyone.

“That night was a boot on my neck,” mother told me.

Long labor. Longest the midwife had seen, and dangerous.

“He’s got the blue about him,” the midwife had said, gently shaping my not yet formed skull with her thumbs wet with amniotic fluid.

My father had been pacing between the yard and sitting room, failing to smoke, the matchstick flame flickering out with the tremor of his hand. Every so often he would linger outside the bedroom door, his face pressed up against the wood, and speak softly.

“Is everything okay? I don’t hear crying.”

The women would lie. Why worry him? If I died it wouldn’t be as a result of his inattention.

The midwife put her ear to my chest, listened for heartbeat, for breath. She pinched the fat of my leg. She wanted me to cry out as though my thick-throated wailing would be the peal of a bell announcing life. She palmed my chest and turned me over like someone inspecting the doneness of a loaf of bread. She drummed her fingers along my back.

“Look at the hair,” my mother said, just now propping herself up fully. Sweat inked her own hair to her cheeks, her forehead. She reached out to stroke my face but the midwife pulled back.

“Wait.”

“He’s not going to make it, is he.”

“Wait, I said.”

And they did, my mother still tethered and patiently watching my limp body, my father metrically knocking and the subsequent sound of his footsteps receding out the front door. Cricket song found silence in the room suffused with heat, until, like a great held breath, my mouth opened and I shrieked. The midwife cut the umbilical cord rough with a knife and passed me to my mother, who pressed my slick body against her bare chest glossy with sweat.

Afterwards the midwife slept in the sitting room, spread out across two kitchen chairs. Her smock was stained with formless outlines of blood.

“Always there is blood.” That midwife, Hattie Grace, told me all of this piecemeal

throughout my childhood. Every autumn she would pick clean the apple tree at the border of our property, a sort of long-term token of gratitude from my parents. I would sit on what was left of the rotted fence and watch as her hands, the same that had pushed around the gummy bones in my head, would pluck the fruit from the tree. She would always remove the stem, littering it into the grass, before placing the apple into a woven basket.

“Though that wasn’t the end of the trouble,” Hattie told me.

The heat broke in the days following my birth and rain poured in endless sheets, soaking the ground and bringing worms up through the soil. The house flooded and the crib my father built was propped up on crates to clear the standing water, which would later leave a permanent ring near the baseboard.

My mother took to melancholy, often holding me to her breast absentmindedly and then, after having nearly forgotten my presence, passing me to my father. Then she would roll onto her side and stare out the window streaked with the persistent rain.

“Have you given any thought to a name?” my father asked. The two of them were lingering beside the hearth, soaked socks and pants drying on a metal spindle near the fire.

“None.”

“He needs a name.”

To this my mother said nothing, instead only watching as a log split in the heat of the flame, a plume of smolders spit against brick. During this time my father slept in the same configuration Hattie had the night I was born, blanket eaten through by moths barely covering his body.

“It’s too hot with both of us in there,” my mother had told him, pulling the sheets around herself. When I would cry during the night he would enter the bedroom and rock me in the inelegant way he knew, and I would spit up over his nightshirt. A month passed like this, my mother inattentive except to put me to her breast, holding me limp as she stood before the window and watched horses pass by on the road skirting the river.

“She felt responsible for nearly killing you,” Hattie told me, reaching on tiptoe for the apples not yet touched by insects.

I suppose now I can understand. She felt helpless, like she couldn’t control her own body, couldn’t birth a child as her mother had, and countless others far back in her lineage. When she finally did choose a name for me, after the spontaneous sobbing had abated and her and my father were again sharing a bed, it was like an act of permanence. By naming me she affirmed my place in the world. I was someone, not simply Esther’s baby—you know the one, who nearly died, purple in the face like wine? A named thing can survive on this earth and take refuge in it. A named thing exists, existed, lives.

“Now take these,” Hattie told me, placing an apple in each palm, “and set them aside. Make sure they last. They’re especially good.”

The Good Death

The term euthanasia is derived from two Greek words—eu, which means good, and thanatos, which means death.

My cat plays snowballs on the deck while I'm listening to Music for Cats by David Teie.

My cat bends his paw at an impossible angle and throws a ball up. He's very fit. I mean, he was. Until the diagnosis.

He follows me around when indoors, or herds me toward his feeding bowl. He thinks he's a sheep dog and I'm an old ram. I can see a cat we cremated before him in his eyes. All cats share the same soul, but they don't get equal shares.

When the snowball goes up, it goes up, and up, and up, until it reaches the cat heaven, which is right next to the human heaven, which in turn is flanked by the dog heaven, but I've never studied the latter.

If they ask me, the said snowball has no chance to go to hell. I hope, for the cat's sake, they will ask me but only when the music stops. It will be very quiet then, and the snow will lay undisturbed, reflecting the heavens and my upturned face.

The Whitechapel Aubades

The Whitechapel Murders occurred in London's East End between April 1888 and February 1891. The following mourning songs are excerpted in testament from a larger and growing manuscript of séance recordings from the area.

Polly Ann Nichols Addresses Visitors to Her Body at the Morgue ¹

from The Whitechapel Aubades

When the police lay me out on the slab
they find eyes pecked away by rooks, a sunflower between my
teeth. The men grow dizzy staring into the dark-seeded center
stemming my swollen tongue.

When the monks come to boil flesh from bone
I dissolve. No relic remains.
Bone after bone,
white as God's memory.
Ash and curled as a blackbirds' severed foot.

Rag-pickers sort my clothes.
The velvet trim of my bonnet stiff with beetles. A rook's black feather
and a cracked egg alive with maggots chases
their fingers from my coat pockets.

Grief's song
my torn throat,
a tune
impossible to carry.

When the angels come to take my spirit
they find a dove unable to weep. They assure
the delicate bird that it will get better with time.

Angels pry open her beak

¹ Polly Ann Nichols was the first of the “canonical five” women murdered by Jack the Ripper in the Whitechapel area of East London. She was the mother of five children.

inflate lungs with lute and whistles. Pattern my constellation after a crow.

The white bird stutters a n d stutters.

Understand this tune lives and dies on your tongue

Open your mouth and let me out.

The angel told the dove: *If you're willing to hurt enough you can have it.*

So sing,

you faithless bird. Sing.

Catherine Eddowes Describes Life After Death ²

from The Whitechapel Aubades

The summer before I was murdered, I walked Brick Lane every day. Sewing a few days a week at a ladies shop, gathering scraps for the boot maker, and at night, I passed the evenings as I needed to. As we all needed to from time to time. Trading a man's pleasure to pay my bread and a place to lay my head. A place you might rest without being roused up red bitten by fleas or prodded by a stranger for a shag in the middle of the night. I gathered my share of men's bruises and scoff, "bang-tail" they'd holler at me as I passed, or "step right, slag," as if they was the Queen's own brigade. The night he cut me open is just a shudder of light against the pavement, the wage I paid to pass there.

I wander these same streets, a soul half-lit, untethered.

Now, Brick Lane is populated by dark-skinned women in sari's and scarves brilliant as the finches and larks the bird-catchers used to sell here. And I am spirit covered in spice: saffron, curry-clouded. I cannot stop watching them, these bright Bengali women.

My life fed on the hope of a boiled potato, but my shadow trails the taste of sweet curd. The girl, Asha, works in the curry shop on the corner, just past where the Ten Bells used to be. As she pours mustard oil, I hold out my hands to be pierced by gold. Illuminated in liquid. I am a haunt mad-hungry for touch, and she, just a girl who forbids her own desire. Her smile is widened by scars purple as plums. Cuts made by a man whose affection she did not return and thought her face his knife's tapestry. Her

² Catherine Eddowes, the third victim of Jack the Ripper, owned a coffee shop with her husband and sold penny poetry at public executions.

name in Bengali means hope, but Asha tells her mum that her name is a lie. She says, "a ghost with a murdered face walks in my shadow." But I can't leave her side. Her mum says, "You will make me a grandmother one day." She repeats the words lighting incense, touching her head and heart, hoping the Goddess Kali will hear her and make mercy from smoke and ash. When her mother speaks of men and babies, Asha sharpens her knife and says nothing. The women cut and chop, cut and chop. Knives and spatulas crushing and rolling. Hands made for giving. Palms resplendent as sunrise. They use every root, peel, and stem. I love them. I worship every move, for nothing is waste, not even the tiniest scrap is judged trash and thrown out.

the sharpest blade never turns to hurt,

but cuts,

cuts, and cuts

to cook comfort.

Elizabeth Stride Demands a Viking Burial ³

from The Whitechapel Aubades

Slit the necks of nothing in my name. Slaughter only the sound of breaking ice. Bring the ashes of my incinerated child, stillborn and unburied. Bring my grey babe out from the furnace. Garb her in my own christening gown, for I was an infant once too, anointed on a sacrifice. With my cindered offspring, bring rope of maiden's hair, soil from the Telemark, pitchers of glacier-melt from Svalbard, I'll mix them in myth and pour them into my womb for binding. Lay out herring and pork with bread and honey. Fill the troughs with mead. I'll need four man-eating mares left on guard. Leave me silk to sew my own sails and as I stitch, I'll sing my daughter to sleep. Leave me fresh eggs. I'll swallow the golden centers whole, spit them into the sky and chant the sun into burning my passage home. Whisper my saga to whales. Let them sing of me if they will.

No man's voice need attempt my tale.

When they bury my ship, understand that we sail beyond Valhalla. We clutch the mast and I trace the map carved into my shinbone. Our eyes trained on a lost astronomy, past the origin of North, known only by gods and giants.

³ Elizabeth Stride aka Gufstafsdotter, the 4th victim of the Jack the Ripper, was born in Sweden. Due to complication from contracting syphilis, she gave birth to a stillborn child. She was given a pauper's burial in East London marked with a numbered grave, 15509, square 37

NONFICTION

The word "NONFICTION" is rendered in a bold, black, distressed font with white speckles. It is centered horizontally and overlaid on a yellow diagonal arrow graphic that points from the bottom-left to the top-right.

Badge

When my mother finally gives me permission to go to the neighbor's house to sell Girl Scout cookies, I grab the illustrated order form and throw on my sash. The fabric loops heavy around my torso, weighted by the pins and badges I've earned so far this year. My troopmates and I meet once a week in the basement of the Methodist church. We learn to draw maps and sew. We make first aid kits. At one meeting, when the troop leader isn't listening, an older Scout uses the word "pussy." For too long, I think she's talking about her cat.

Order form in hand, I march across the front yard and through our small trailer park, past discarded toys and soggy sod. Springtime mud sucks at my shoes, but I don't mind. It's the dry weather I don't like. That's when the garden spiders come out - black and yellow, as big as Easter eggs. They gather in the tall grass by the driveway. They spread their legs wide between the reeds. They spin their webs, white and wispy, like a dead man's hair.

Sometimes at night, the spiders venture all the way to the door of our trailer. They make their nets and wait for prey. I dream about them, about what they will do if they get inside. I imagine them on the carpet, on the curtains. I feel them crawling on my skin.

One hot summer day, my father slipped on his fishing waders and started the lawn mower. He pushed the mower into the grass and made the spiders disappear. Their webs, destroyed. Their bodies, mulched. I watched from the living room window, horrified and delighted all at once.

I knock on the neighbor's door. He invites me inside, then asks about each type of cookie. Trefoils are shortbread, I answer. Tagalongs have peanut butter. As he looks over the order form, I peek at his kitchen, at his couch, at his trailer that looks a lot like mine. Aluminum siding, wood-paneled walls, brown carpet. In a trailer park, everything is brown. The houses. The dirt. The dirt we track into the house and sweep under the rugs. Even the cookies are brown.

He says he'll take two boxes of each, plus some Thin Mints. He buys a lot of cookies, probably because he's stoned, although I don't know that yet. I don't know a lot of things. Like how many beers my dad drinks on his drive home from work, or how many more he has after we all go to bed. Or that he drinks because he is anxious, because he is overwhelmed, because he is sad and misses his mother, who died on Valentine's Day. I don't know yet what addiction means. Or depression. These are things I will learn in time, and there will be no badges for any of it.

A few weeks after my father mowed the spiders, more came back. Black and yellow, bigger than ever. They stretched their legs. They built their webs. They came to me in dreams, crawling and crawling.

Cookies are two dollars a box. Let me get my wallet, the neighbor says. Then he disappears down a long, dark hallway. My trailer has a hallway too, with the light switch at the far end. You have to walk all the way down, fumbling through blackness, before you can turn it on, before you can see what's in front of you, or what's behind.

I wonder if the neighbor has the same light. I wonder if he's really getting his wallet. He's a big man, with dark hair and eyes, and for a moment, I think maybe I should leave. Take my order form and go, back over the soggy yard, to my mother who is waiting at home. To the spiders and the darkness. To my father, asleep in his chair in front of the TV. Instead I stay. I stay because my troop is counting on me. Because there's a cookie badge on the line. Because there's nothing here at my neighbor's house any scarier than the things at my own.

He comes back, a wad of bills in hand. I put tiny pen marks next to his name, next to the things he's ordered. I take the money and say goodbye, promise to return when the cookies are in. I cross his yard and then my own, straightening my sash, which is about to get a little heavier.

BIOGRAPHIES

The word "BIOGRAPHIES" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are filled with a white, speckled pattern, giving them a starry or textured appearance. Behind the text is a bright yellow, multi-pointed starburst or comet-like graphic that extends horizontally across the width of the word.

POETRY

Julia C. Alter

Julia C. Alter is an MFA candidate in Poetry at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her poems can be found in, or are forthcoming from *Palette Poetry*, *Foundry*, *The Boiler*, *CALYX*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Glass*, and elsewhere. She lives and writes in Burlington, Vermont. www.alterpoetry.com.

Keisha-Gaye Anderson

Keisha-Gaye Anderson is a Jamaican-born poet, writer, visual artist, and media professional based in Brooklyn, NY. She is the author of *Gathering the Waters* (Jamii 2004), *Everything Is Necessary* (Willow 2019) and *A Spell for Living*, which received the Editors' Choice recognition for the Numinous Orisons, Luminous Origin Literary Award, and is forthcoming from Agape Editions as a multimedia e-book, including music and Keisha's original artwork in 2020. Keisha's poetry, fiction, and essays have been widely published in national literary journals, magazines, and anthologies that include *Kweli Literary Journal*, *Small Axe Salon*, *Interviewing the Caribbean*, *Renaissance Noire*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *The Killens Review of Arts and Letters*, *Mosaic Literary Magazine*, *African Voices Magazine*, *Streetnotes: Cross Cultural Poetics*, *Caribbean in Transit Arts Journal*, *The Mom Egg Review*, and others. Keisha is a past participant of the VONA Voices and Callaloo writing workshops, a former fellow of the North Country Institute for Writers of Color, and was short-listed for the Small Axe Literary Competition. She holds an M.F.A. in creative writing from The City College, CUNY.

Brittany J. Barron

In May 2019, Brittany J. Barron graduated with her MFA in Creative Writing at Georgia College, where she served as co-Assistant Poetry Editor of *Arts & Letters* and taught freshman composition. Her poetry has appeared in *Still*, a journal dedicated to publishing Southern-Appalachian writers; *The Examined Life Journal*; and *Not Your Mother's Breast Milk*. This fall, she began Florida State University's PhD program in Literature, Media, and Culture.

Derek Berry

Derek Berry is the author of "Heathens & Liars of Licksillet County" (PRA, 2016). They are the founder of The Unspoken Word, a Carolina-based literary non-profit providing free literary resources to authors and readers. Their recent work has appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Yemassee*, *Gigantic Sequins*, *BOAT*, *Taco Bell Quarterly*, & elsewhere. Their work can be found at derekberrywriter.com.

Jennifer Jackson Berry

Jennifer Jackson Berry is the author of *The Feeder* (YesYes Books, 2016), and her most recent chapbook *Bloodfish* was published by Seven Kitchens Press in 2019 as part of the Keystone Chapbook Series. Her second full-length collection, a memoir-in-verse, will be published in 2020. She lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Sheila Black

Sheila Black is the author of four poetry collections, most recently *Iron, Ardent* (Educe Press, 2017). She is a co-editor of *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability* (Cinco Puntos Press, 2011). Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Spectacle*, *The Nation* (forthcoming), *The New York Times* and other places. She currently divides her time between San Antonio, TX, and Washington, D.C., where she works at AWP.

Kathleen Casey

Kathleen Casey is an emerging poet living nervously beneath several sleeping volcanoes. She holds a degree in fine art and has received awards for her photography, illustration and graphic design. The fragile gifts of the earth, the mysteries of human and animal behavior and the wonders of the cosmos are constant sources of inspiration.

Rob Cook

Rob Cook lives in New York City's East Village. He is the author of six collections, including *Asking my Liver for Forgiveness* (Rain Mountain Press, 2015), *Undermining of the Democratic Club* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2014), *Blueprints for a Genocide* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2012) and *Empire in the Shade of a Grass Blade* (Bitter Oleander Press, 2013). His recently re-released *Last Window in the Punk Hotel* was a Julie Suk Award finalist. Work has appeared in *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Caliban*, *Fence*, *A cappella Zoo*, *Zoland Poetry*, *Tampa Review*, *Minnesota Review*, *Aufgabe*, *Caketrain*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Bomb* (online), *Sugar House Review*, *Mudfish*, *Pleiades*, *Versal*, *Weave*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Ur Vox*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Phantom Drift*, *Osiris*, etc.

Anthony DiPietro

Anthony DiPietro is a gay Rhode Island native who has worked in community-based organizations for 14 years. In 2016, he joined Stony Brook University, where he earned a creative writing MFA, taught college courses, and planned and diversified arts programming. He is now associate director of the Rose Art Museum in Waltham, Massachusetts. A graduate of Brown University with honors in creative writing, his poems and essays have appeared in *Notre Dame Review*, *Spillway*, *Washington Square Review*, and others. His website is AnthonyWriter.com.

Emily Franklin

Emily Franklin is the author of numerous novels. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *London Sunday Times*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Rumpus*, *DIAGRAM*, *Mississippi Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *New Ohio Review*, *Passages North*, *North Dakota Review*, *Monkeybicycle*, and *The Chattahoochee Review* among other places as well as featured and read aloud on National Public Radio, and named notable by the Association of Jewish Libraries. She recently completed her first poetry collection.

Emma Furman

Emma Furman is a poet living in Evanston, Illinois. She earned an MFA from the University of Alabama, and has been published in *American Chordata* and *Breadcrumbs Magazine*, among others. She teaches community courses at the Newberry Library in Chicago. She is glad you made it here.

Tyler Gillespie

Tyler Gillespie is the author of **Florida Man: Poems** (Red Flag Poetry, 2018) and the forthcoming nonfiction collection **Florida Men & Monsters: My Search for Pythons, Pioneers, and the Truth about Paradise** (University Press of Florida).

Robin Gow

Robin Gow is a queer and trans poet, editor, and educator based in the NYC area. They are the author of the chapbook *HONEYSUCKLE* with Finishing Line Press and their first full-length collection of poetry is forth-coming with Tolsun books.

John James

John James is the author of *The Milk Hours*, selected by Henri Cole for the Max Ritvo Poetry Prize (Milkweed, 2019). He is also the author of *Chthonic*, winner of the 2014 CutBank Chapbook Award. His poems appear in *Boston Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Best American Poetry 2017*, and elsewhere. He lives in California, where he is pursuing a PhD in English and Critical Theory at the University of California, Berkeley.

Aviya Kushner

Aviya Kushner is the author of *The Grammar of God* (Spiegel & Grau) and *Eve and All the Wrong Men* (Dancing Girl Press). She is *The Forward's* language columnist and her essays, poems, and translations appear widely. Her first full-length poetry collection is forthcoming from Orison Books.

Kristi Maxwell

Kristi Maxwell is the author of six books of poems, including *Bright and Hurtless* (Ahsahta Press, 2018), *PLAN/K* (Horse Less, 2015), and *That Our Eyes Be Rigged* (Saturnalia Books, 2014). Her poems have appeared in *Black Warrior Review*, *Bennington Review*, *Boston Review*, and *jubilat*, among elsewhere. She is an assistant professor of English at the University of Louisville.

Kathleen McClung

Kathleen McClung's books include *Temporary Kin* (2020 forthcoming), *The Typists Play Monopoly* (2018) and *Almost the Rowboat* (2013). Her poems appear in *Southwest Review*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *California Quarterly*, *Spillway*, *Forgotten Women*, *Fire and Rain: Eco-poetry of California*, and elsewhere. Winner of the Rita Dove, Morton Marr, and Maria W. Faust poetry prizes,

she is a Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee. Associate director and sonnet judge for the Soul-Making Keats literary competition, she teaches at Skyline College and The Writing Salon in San Francisco. In 2018-19 she was a writer-in-residence at Friends of the San Francisco Public Library. www.kathleenmcclung.com

Beth McDermott

Beth McDermott is the author of *How to Leave a Farmhouse*, a chapbook published by Porkbelly Press. Recent poetry, reviews and criticism appear in *Kenyon Review Online*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and *The Trumpeter*. She is currently an Associate Editor with *RHINO* and an Assistant Professor of English at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL.

henry 7. reneau, jr.

henry 7. reneau, jr. does not Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Instagram. It is not that he is scared of change, or stuck fast in the past; instead, he has learned from experience: the crack pipe kills.

Justin Runge

Justin Runge is the author of *Plainsight* (New Michigan Press, 2012) and *Hum Decode* (Greying Ghost Press, 2014). His criticism has been featured by *Black Warrior Review* and *Pleiades*, and his poetry has been published in *Cincinnati Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Sycamore Review*, and other journals. For more, visit justinrunge.persona.co.

Brennan Sprague

Brennan Sprague is a poet residing in Rochester, NY. He loves dream pop, golden retrievers & Baja Blasts. His work appears in *The Adroit Journal*, *Barren Magazine* and *The Shore*, among others, with work forthcoming in *Westwind*.

Sara Wainscott

Sara Wainscott is the author of *Insecurity System*, winner of the 2019 Lexi Rudnitsky First Book Prize from Persea Books, and a chapbook, *Queen of the Moon* (dancing girl press, 2017).

Brendan Walsh

Brendan Walsh has lived and taught in South Korea, Laos, and South Florida. His work appears in *Glass Poetry*, *Indianapolis Review*, *Baltimore Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *American Literary Review*, and other journals. He is the author of five books, including *Go* (Aldrich Press), *Buddha vs. Bonobo* (Sutra Press), and *fort lauderdale* (Grey Book Press). He's online at www.brendanwalshpoetry.com.

ART

Brian Barker

Brian Barker is a poet and collage artist from Denver, Colorado. His collages have been selected for the National Collage Society's 35th annual juried show and have appeared on the cover of *Denver Quarterly*. He is the author of three books of poetry—*Vanishing Acts* (SIU Press, 2019), *The Black Ocean* (SIU Press, 2011), and *The Animal Gospels* (Tupelo Press, 2006)—and teaches at the University of Colorado Denver, where he is a poetry editor of *Copper Nickel*.

Artist Statement

I love the depth, richness, and texture of old paper. Thus, my collages draw almost exclusively from discarded 19th century books and magazines of natural history, science, medicine, religion, and children's literature, and other paper ephemera. My collages are populated by chimera, misfit saints, wayward travelers, and other apocryphal figures. These darkly whimsical beings wander up from the worlds of myths, fables, dreams, nightmares, and the afterlife. I hope my collages spark for the viewer a sense of wonder and reverie, creating a space to consider their underlying concerns, such as death, power, violence, mysticism, and the relationship between the human and animal worlds.

Renée Cohen

Renée Cohen is a Canadian freelance writer and artist. The 2019 winner of The Fieldstone Review's Banner Art Competition. Renée's artwork has been exhibited in group and solo shows in Montréal, and has been featured in *3 Elements Review*, *Sonic Boom Journal India*, *The Spadina Literary Review*, *Flash Frontier New Zealand*, *Headlight 22 Anthology*, *Montréal Writes* and elsewhere.

Artist Statement: Fluidity is a study of wild colors and free flowing movement. It is an abstract depiction that the artist wishes to leave entirely open to the viewer's subjective interpretation. Oceans of Fire is an exaggerated, abstract reflection of the artist's current environmental concerns. Together, these two images are a complementary marriage of colour and flow.

Daisy Patton

From Los Angeles, California, Daisy Patton's practice is focused on history, memory, and social commentary; her work explores the meaning and social conventions of families, little discussed or hidden histories, and what it is to be a person living in our contemporary world. Currently residing in western Massachusetts, Patton has a BFA in Studio Arts from the University of Oklahoma with minors in History and Art History and an Honors degree. Her MFA is from The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston/Tufts University, a multi-disciplinary program. Patton has completed artist residencies at Minerva Projects, Anderson Ranch, the Studios at MASS MoCA, RedLine Denver, and Eastside International in Los Angeles. She has exhibited in solo and group shows nationally, including her first museum solo at the CU Art Museum at the University of Colorado. K Contemporary represents Patton in Denver, CO, and J. Rinehart represents her in Seattle, WA.

Artist Statement

In *Forgetting is so long*, I collect abandoned family photographs, enlarge them to life-size, and paint over them to re-enliven these individuals removed from their space and time. Family photographs are sacred relics to their loved ones, but unmoored the images become absent. Anthropologist Michael Taussig states that defacing these objects forces a “shock into being;” suddenly we perceive them as present and piercing. By mixing painting with photography, I lengthen Roland Barthes’ “moment of death” into a loving act of remembrance. Not alive but not quite dead, each person’s reimagined portrait straddles the lines between memory, identity, and death.

Mitchell Van Duzer

Mitchell Van Duzer (b. 1985, Greenville, SC) graduated with a BFA in General Fine Arts from Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver, Canada, and now lives and works as an artist in Bellingham, WA. Working mainly in acrylics, Van Duzer's work has explored the thematic focus of technological advancement and its ethical and societal ramifications for over a decade; his 'Circuit Figures' series is the most recent iteration. His work has been displayed throughout the Pacific Northwest over the years, chiefly in the state of Washington.

Artist Statement

Over the past few decades, our society has experienced a period of unprecedented technological advancement, particularly concerning our communications apparatus. With the advent of the internet and the growing popularity of mobile devices and wireless connectivity, we have developed a level of interpersonal access never before seen in humanity's history. It is my aspiration to use a fusion of digital imagery and traditional painting techniques to explore these advances, along with their cultural contexts, in order to encourage a broader dialogue about the ramifications of technological progress, and perhaps provide answers to some of our modern ethical and psychological dilemmas.

FICTION

Mark Budman

Mark is a writer, editor, inventor, engineer, translator, interpreter, photographer and a wearer of many other hats. He was born in the former Soviet Union but now resides in Boston. Mark follows the fine American tradition: a person moves to the US, learns the language, takes any job he can find, complains bitterly, but perseveres. Mark also writes flash fiction, so he knows how to express himself concisely, before the reader gets bored. He loves to travel so he can compare foreign countries to America and congratulate himself on the fine choice he made 35 years ago when he came here. He loves his family so he can get emotional support and an audience for complaints. He loves his cat, especially when the cat bites him on his ankles. Above all, he loves his readers, in sickness and in health.

Benjamin Kessler

Benjamin Kessler's work has appeared, or is forthcoming in, *Hobart*, *DIAGRAM*, *Entropy*, *The Oakland Review*, *Epigraph*, *Superstition Review*, *The Masters Review*, *The Gravity of the Thing*, *What are Birds?*, and *Portland Review*. "To Be Born" is an excerpt from his second novel, currently in progress. He lives and writes in Portland, Oregon.

Kathryn Kruse

Kathryn Kruse is a writer and educator living in Chicago and the executive director of Residency on the Farm, an interdisciplinary artists residency. She has received a Disquiet International Literary Program scholarship and is a finalist for the St. Lawrence Book Award. Among other places, her work is forthcoming from or has appeared on the walls of the I Hope You Are Feeling Better Collaborative Art Exhibition, on the stages of the San Francisco Olympians Festival and in the pages of *Indian Review*, *Quiddity*, *Interim*, and *The Adirondack Review*.

Amy Sayre Baptista

Amy Sayre Baptista's flash fiction collection, *PRIMITIVITY*, won the Black River Chapbook contest by Black Lawrence Press. Her writing has appeared in *The Best Small Fictions* (2017), *Ninth Letter*, *The Butter*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and other journals. Performances include the Poetry Foundation (Chicago), Brown University and Columbia University. She is a former fellow and current co-director of CantoMundo, a scholarship recipient to the Disquiet Literary Festival in Lisbon, Portugal, and performs with Kale Soup for the Soul, a Portuguese-American artist's collective. She is a co-director of the St. Louis Writers Workshop. She has an MFA in Fiction from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and teaches Humanities at Western Governors University. She lives in Illinois and is currently working on a novel.

NONFICTION

Wendy Fontaine

Wendy Fontaine is a multi-genre writer whose work has appeared in *Full Grown People*, *Hippocampus Magazine*, *Mud Season Review*, *River Teeth* and elsewhere. She's been nominated for a Pushcart, awarded the Tiferet Prize for Creative Nonfiction, and featured as a speaker at literary conferences around the country. A New England native, she currently resides in southern California, where she is at work on a novel, a memoir and a collection of flash essays.

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Julia C. Alter
Keisha-Gaye Anderson
Amy Sayre Baptista
Brian Barker
Brittany J. Barron
Derek Berry
Jennifer Jackson Berry
Sheila Black
Mark Budman
Kathleen Casey
Renée Cohen
Rob Cook
Anthony DiPietro
Wendy Fontaine
Emily Franklin
Emma Furman

Tyler Gillespie
Robin Gow
John James
Benjamin Kessler
Kathryn Kruse
Aviya Kushner
Kristi Maxwell
Kathleen McClung
Beth McDermott
Daisy Patton
henry 7. reneau, jr.
Justin Runge
Brennan Sprague
Mitchell Van Duzer
Sara Wainscott
Brendan Walsh