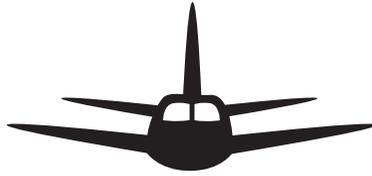


# Jet Fuel Review

Spring 2012  
Issue 3





# *Jet Fuel Review*

*A High Octane Literary Journal*

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*[lewislitjournal.wordpress.com](http://lewislitjournal.wordpress.com)*

*Artwork: Robert Nulphs "Spiral"  
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# **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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# Table of Contents

## Poetry

Lucas Boelter	Rest Room	2
	Cosmic Cubes	3
	Burrow	4
John Calavitta	Senses is Suction Fountains	5
Paula Cisewski	Night is a Mirror	6
	Look Down Your Own Street	7
Alessandro Cusimano	The Prisoners	8
	Hollywood Nymph	9
Dolly Lemke & Nick Demske	We Should Keep At It	10
	I Love Dolly, I Love Partrami	11
Farrah Field	Amy Keeps Her Cold Blood Cool	12
	Amy Stole From Your Blog	13
	Amy, Nerd Licker	14
	Le Creuset, Le Creuset, Amy Le Creuset	15
Kathy Goodkin	Cynefin	16
	Sleep Paralysis	17
Carolyn Guinzio	A Choir of Engines	18
	Random & Melodic	19
José Luis Gutiérrez	Tabula Rosa	20
	God Ma	21
Steve Halle	Splatter Prophecy	22
	Contrition in the Abode of the Word	23
	To Sacrifice to a Spirit Not One's Own	25
Christine Kanownik	Lamentations	27
	Laws & Misdemeanors	28
	Up by Your Hair	29
Mercedes Lawry	Fact of the Matter	30
	Couples Therapy	31
Jeffery MacLachlan	Labyrinth	32
	Copywriter	33
Gary McDowell	Tell Me Again About the Last Time You Saw Her	34
	I've Lost a Considerable Amount of Weight	35
	More and More Like the Wife	36

Marc McKee	Suspense Account	37
	Stellar Furnace	38
	We Blow the Pants Off the Competition	39
	Dromania Means Wanderlust	40
Jenn Monroe	Because She Raised a Nice Girl	41
	There are Only Ideas at This Stage	42
Ben Nardolilli	Irritable Canaries	43
Anthony Opal	Sonnets	44
Alexis Orgera	Knife Me a Weather of Walls	47
	The Good Girls Guide to Starting a Revolution	48
	Deepening Into	49
	Animalia	50
Mike Puican	Joke	51
	Through Slender Branches Storm Clouds	
	Scatter to Reveal a New Winter Moon	52
	Eden is Lost	53
Virginia Smith	[glass violin]	54
	[witches broom]	55
	[thank you for your submission]	56
Tony Trigilio	Kindling Ceremony, New Year's Eve	57
	Peeling Out of the Garage	58
	Ancestors	59
Carli Wheeler	Maestro Interlude	60
	Demi Lovato	61
	Alien Attack!	62
Jake Adam York	Secessions	63

## **Art**

Arianna Alvarez	Self Portrait	68
	Little China Girl	69
Sherard Harrington	A Bumpy Ride	70
Robert Nulph	Spiral	71
	Promise	72
	Carving	73

Ursula Sokolowska	Outside Mom's House, Woodridge, IL	74
	Untitled 106	75
	Untitled 117	76
Terry Wright	Juggling Accident	77
	Naysayer	78

## **Fiction**

Charles Blackstone	Christmas Broken	80
David Morris Parson	we hope this letter finds you well	85

## **NonFiction**

Anthony Opal	A Review of Brooklyn Copeland's Laked, Fielded, Blanked	90
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## **Biographies**

93

# Poetry



## Rest Room

I keep myself awake; the tunnel of solitude is a jawless  
wreath, glistening and bitter like the dust of Japanese  
moths. It was in the Wrigley Field bathroom, I was a crawfish  
heading towards the light – sizzle, sizzle. Lights burned, keys

stuck to my thigh, I thought my neck would be cut by the phone booth  
line or the stall door gazing down like a guillotine. It could be glorious  
to leave in a sparkling men's room, eaten by the badged gray wolf,  
taking your body sack down in black, and a smooth table for nefarious

examination. The reflective metal lining the mirrors, the faucets spewing a library  
of would-be drownings, the overrun bushes of a Catholic Church in the tattooed  
section of a cerebrum's schizotypal ruminations. As I lay in your apothecary,  
Doc, do not forget to let a ruined old boy see his face in your scalpel, lewd

fork. I imagined churning my finger in the ceiling light, my blown up alibi;  
How can any of us help but crush ourselves in search of Heaven's nuclei?

## **Cosmic Cubes**

I want to live my hours in a  
pod, the pallor of which will cause intestines  
to restrain themselves in visceral straitjackets,  
or perhaps uncork – just concave walls for me  
and the clot of day's daily surgery into darkness.  
I find a narrative in a wall-corner, see,  
and soon the constellations warp my pod window, the quilt  
is spread for metaphysics' and mathematics' twirling fingers  
to collide with a bang big  
of dislocation and a world to calm me forever.  
Serene is the life of a wall-worshipping spaceman  
Who'll coil the celestial mechanics of cosmic cubes he does create—  
the wormhole digesting the oily eighth grade,  
the radioactive high school, the beating hammer.

## **Burrow**

You were wearing black jeans and a black jacket,  
The grazing lawbreakers on the elevator gawked.  
We spent the night digging into your paper packet.

Your blanket-gray day was a church bell of clerical racket,  
A dusk of decaying Rubik's cubes, an eyeline glumly chalked.  
You were wearing black jeans and a black jacket.

You said you envisioned the deep of a palm, the hole of a rabbit;  
Our eyes down at each other's abdomens, softly our mouths hawked.  
We spent the night digging into your paper packet.

You need this burrow, where at times the windows slowly turn to agate;  
We'll lie in your damp closets, admiring the softness of cracks newly caulked.  
You were wearing black jeans and a black jacket.

Perhaps in the skintight wombs where the grown gray ticks inhabit,  
Our matches will snowflake, and our stalked eyes will become un-stalked.  
You were wearing black jeans and a black jacket,  
We spent the night digging into your paper packet.



**Sense is Suction Fountains**

in some city underneath an occult star

in a real city, bored with dragons  
hand-cuffed to a mysterious silo of glass

you kiss someone because a voice said  
we are at war

## **Night Is a Mirror**

Consider the many, many well wishes falling below our wish detectors.

Consider the lumens fleeing in the night.

Smoke anything you want. There's no one to judge.

How weird is it that we can never see our own eyes except in reflection and wasn't there a moment when that dawned on you, too?

Weren't you a kid, near the polished steel of the gas station Slushy machine or fixing your bike chain beneath a wide open sky halfway between someplaces?

Absence isn't visible. Visibility isn't presence.

I relish the austerity of my solitude. But when there is everything, there is everything, even another natural or unnatural disaster, even so many sandwich shops to choose from, a concept of "self" seems, at best, comedic.

Consider a whole lifetime of this. But to see the eyes of others!

There's evidence that even a rainbow can be burdensome, measured in a certain repetitive way or overemphasized due to someone's want of color.

Love love love love love love love. Good God!

Consider the currently hypothetical spring buds. It doesn't matter what time it is. The great rebirth refuses to be tabled, reshelved, or couched in some birdless loneliness.

Out every window of every house — a blank postcard.

And the present not even threatening to linger.

## **Look Down Your Own Street**

Is now simply some stark  
historical canopy to which we  
can later refer? Does it threaten  
the architecture of love?  
Even factoring in fiberglass  
and waterslides, motor oil  
and lurch, every tiny atom of  
your body is a church.

## **The Prisoners**

crawling against the light

the beggars keep watching  
the city has betrayed them  
has given them nothing

red faced nails in single file

move strange amputated shapes  
branched on the sidewalk

and the memory

well painted on their face  
has the sound of a chorus of voices  
and the voices die  
in the most bestial notes  
in the history of their humanity

in thousands

continue to strive  
for one truth at a time  
for a life  
as a vending machine

## Hollywood Nymph

the serendipity is in a motley  
bungalow where  
all the plans begin to jell  
Wendy lives in Queer Street  
dressed in a persuasive crocodile  
kimono  
Wendy is photogenic Wendy is  
pyromaniac  
Wendy has  
the nerve of a squeezed orange  
in the still of the night  
Wendy gets up with a jerk  
dreaming of  
a trip to Temptation  
odds and ends  
jeopardies  
jests and strait jackets  
and  
phony excuses

drunk

Wendy is the perfect woman  
of straw  
along with a braggart in  
a jammy loft  
or the rakehell of the day  
next to the rose gardens  
Wendy is the lover

of the betrayals

with the intent to entertain  
radio stars  
movie makers  
fummy outlines  
Rams  
and Raiders  
speaking into a wonky  
microphone  
chasing a nine days' wonder  
the crucial romance

confusional states of America



## **We Should Keep at It**

I'm not sure which part to shit on first  
It's your turn to make jokes  
don't you have a kid and a deep wooded accent

god damn it's bright in here  
you can see every part of my face

if you stood any closer  
you might catch it in your pony tail

how many times a week do you eat chicken tacos  
i'm a self-loathing marauder so I don't keep count  
with hate on your side it's never too much

## **I Love Dolly, I Love Pastrami**

The Long Now and Then  
was my nickname in high school.

because I used to long now  
and now  
that's then.

now then,  
when i say "I live on Gentrification Street,"  
know that I'm referring to the Blvd. formerly known as MLK.

Then now,  
i brought the crime rate down.  
i made the arts scene gay.

## **Amy Keeps Her Cold Blood Cool**

Ice with water. What are you  
doing under those rocks. Getting off  
on pleasing other people. Someone  
caught you with a vibrator. Stop  
laughing. These are my girlfriends.  
You look like pain. How come you say  
pocketbook. Glass hammer moments.  
Where do dreams go to die. Someone  
keeps touching your hips. Your car  
won't make it in the desert. It was only  
supposed to take an hour. Walking  
cattle gates. There are eight phrases  
that give away secret societies.  
Are women really women  
if they're not aware they're being  
watched. How'd you mount all that hair.  
Where do you get trim. The nose can do  
what the tongue does, the elbow.  
When you finish cleaning  
your glasses, go to Milwaukee.

## **Amy Stole From Your Blog**

Playing tipsy let's pretend  
the power's out.  
Sit in a dark room  
or a dark room sits in you.  
What a terrible search  
for a wire box.  
How much for  
creative materials.  
This pizza is best.  
This cousin is in labor.  
Folded fabric.  
Screaming ear.  
Everyone knows  
something I don't.  
In the locker  
where we were down  
to our socks.  
Are you going  
to unwrap the wrap.  
I saw your name on a sign  
and called the number.

## **Amy, Nerd Licker**

Mama's boy plays with his pubes.  
Listen very carefully. Stick this

up your shaved utopia. That rubbing

causes slight burning until hot face.  
Days go away faster. Send this to me

as an attachment. Airplanes look

like sharks. Politics isn't politics anymore.  
Vegetarian jerk. Open a piano

stick out your ass and breathe.

The worst volunteer.  
Staring out the window window.

## **Le Creuset, Le Creuset, Amy Le Creuset**

I put The French Revolution in a pile  
    Are these our battles  
    or what you never told your mother  
They were wearing sunglasses inside the studio  
The removal of women from the equation  
I typed hump and Humphrey Bogart appeared  
Do you know what happens to a potato stamp left out two nights  
    This is my teenage self  
    yelling at my parents  
Everyone in your family talks at the same time  
You babble in a pot of butter beans  
    Get me when I'm all salmony and fillibustery  
Cock you believe I sound so domestic Can you believe  
I'm loose in the hips again Can you believe  
all women stick-sketched  
into sand have big boobs  
    My name is not on the house  
    What loss I was looking for  
More emails meant more something  
Dinner plans on the 18th  
Touch the pom pom maker  
You'll be getting rid of the rid of soon  
    Abandoned plain and simple  
    Even if you died right now  
    I'd still say you talk too loud  
I'm kneeling on the hood of the car  
leading with a metal rod  
You were looking for a fabric napkin  
    Two people people together  
    Some of what they say is for the other person  
Are you where you can listen  
Let's call this a screen test

## Cynefin

Water drips from the bar ceiling onto my wrist and evaporates.  
I'm a grey satellite in the rings around my drink.

It's an accident of time, or timing.  
The city feigns tectonic, but it never really moves.

I left and came back in June.  
I thought it was an accident of time, or timing.

Two years of absence should have been denoted  
in a building gone or altered, a new field,

a new hopscotch chalked on the walk.  
As ever doesn't make me think about permanence,

it makes me think of distance. How sameness pushes the mind away.  
I leave and come back and nothing's changed.

This place has the shape of a place shaped place. I'm lying  
on the table. I'm caught in a constellation of boat lights on the lake.

The bats in the humid courtyard at home fly away.  
I'm stuck on the same plodding bus, always late,

but thrilled to see the pigeons scatter when it rains.  
There's a new piece of paper caught in the fence. No,

it's the same. I saw it from the window when the bus pulled away.  
There's only one blue scrap; the wind just moves it really fast.

## **Sleep Paralysis**

This nothing landscape pulls last night's dreams  
from my head like strings of beads.  
Craters, blurred. Rocking chair, mocking bird,  
where have I heard this before?  
My attention to detail wavers. I can't think a thought  
without the word walking, or the word caught.  
Bats in the basement maintenance room;  
I saw them through a window in the parking lot.  
Some spice in the air or a small explosion.  
Something happened in your car.  
There was a brown overcoat, and a crowbar.  
Nothing lasts forever, and even so.  
Nothing feels as good as always not having you.

## **A Choir of Engines**

The conveyances  
are blinding.  
Without, the light

in a dog's eyes  
as it tries  
to find a scent

not yet sifted  
out in drizzle.  
Within the eye,

strands of light  
pull into blur.  
What are you

not missing?  
Markers and wild  
hogs. Our scarred

eye will sweep  
after the dust  
of light, a lame

deer waits, uncertain  
in the margin.  
The moving connects

to the moving.  
The moving connects  
to the still.

## **Random & Melodic**

I am trying to find the sound of a voice  
in a silence: a silence never the same,  
never different. Forcing the dry dirt aside,

an ant may wince at the dissonant cries  
of a wren, but the path to the ear is clear  
through storms of sound for some.

To perceive what we already know,  
oh, in the ocean of ear, the known voice  
is clear over the roars, the roof shingles

peeling away into sky. The dry dirt stings  
the eyes. The sound of things dropping down  
to the road is known, and the known is nothing.

**Tabula Rasa**

*for Heather*

Of better days I've no more than this to say:

The Great Wall lies  
at the foot of the bed.

Cats in the garden—  
our appetites roam

this surfeit of sun  
connubial among

the hoarfrost and blooms,  
an aftermath of bedsheets.

Distance has become landscape:  
our intimate histories slated for revision.

Morning is a verb  
our mouths meet to conjugate  
into psalm.

## God Ma

The apocalypse won't come in the manner of four equestrian enthusiasts who favor spandex over riding breeches and in bad need of Breathsavers or by way of a corporate barbecue as set forth in Revelations.

It will come on a Sunday morning courtesy of a woman whose hair is a silhouette dance of medusas, preaching in downtown from an unmarked pulpit.

The motley congregation assembled in the square seems to profess she is right by default, as pigeons are the only infidels in attendance and the occasional

nod of consent bumps a naysaying fly off its halo trajectory.

Fire-and-brimstone are not just metaphors, she assures this hapless coalition of the not-quite willing and the terminally oblivious.

Nevermind that the infernal machinery of the 20th-century has been vanquished.

Nevermind what the sky, cream-clouded and blue as a rapture of waves this morning, is trying to say.

## **splatter prophecy**

to unpaint on her skater jeans means nakedness. my sick cyclops sings to spite your five-day pain. a critique of reason. i mistrust dichotomies & modern life summaries: three-team trades & the number twenty-four car. it's no longer give & take but givetake (phenomena in which one appears to be giving in order to take later) & takegive (phenomena in which one thinks one is taking but gives up something unforeseen or unknown). & other systemic models. spend mornings perfecting my machine: spiritbody bodysoul mindsoul soulspirit etc. for repeated revolutions concentrics of task. recap @ 11. my crew chief says i'm in last place but i think he thinks winning. & so i think winning. to trust his divinations like the drone bee trusts the queen? the cyclops the skater & my third eye have hands on the planchette. it moves & spells in an imaginary grammar readable with telescope & ephemera & a wait-a-second russian doll mind. to interpret is to drone. it's all staves from hear. FEAR WATER FEAR FIRE FEAR EARTH FEAR AIR. i write this locked in a closet wearing a HAZMAT suit bright yellow like her skater hair is her self-esteem in love with her own skinned knees.

## Contrition in the Abode of the Word

List me a sinner.

That I lost my center,  
fighting the word.

I declined to write  
of the fidgeting world.

That dreams clash  
& are shattered—  
& slash their prices.  
Nobody buys.  
All are too busy,  
buoyed by the promise  
of Paradise  
& the illusion of its value  
once possessed.

Do not move Paradise,  
without first updating the map.

Let a wino speak  
& say, “That I tried to make  
a *paradiso terrestre*,  
but vomited instead.”

A dream clipped  
& shat upon  
in the nest—  
that is paradise.  
It has nowhere  
to fly to & no  
pretense of beauty.

I have tried to write to Paradise:

*Dear Paradise,  
Do not move or how  
shall I find you?*

That letter lingers,  
draft unsent.

Let the Gods forgive  
what I lied to wreck—  
Hell, it's their job.

Let the windows speak  
to the wind, hollering,  
“IN HERE PARADISE IS ON SALE!”

What have I made?  
An innocent pear?  
Whither?  
Arrest me.  
When my Fridays blacken,  
I will jostle & trample  
to gain admittance  
to Paradise, an agora where  
I must transcend the limits  
of my capacity to spend.

Let the widows,  
their voices long declined,  
speak of the gone men,  
& remember them to their depleted  
disposable incomes.

Let the sinners who outlive me,  
apologize for what  
I've bought & not made.

Let the wind speak.  
It has earned its chance  
to filibuster.

Let the Gods ask forgiveness  
of those I love  
in Paradise.

## **To sacrifice to a spirit not one's own**

is flattery perfect o lynx perfect or lotus  
willward unfolding, then, these winds.  
my smoke hole, my mouth, flatters  
none other than my spittle. o my shovel!

the directionless geese teem with people,  
the waves with phytoplankton,  
and language points the direction  
of one's will to explication. south

sacrifice is flattery. i name it not Athena.  
then to be more beautiful strung  
between what milk has soured,  
though, in serving just warm in service

to memory of mind. seven languages  
stir the borscht and wrestle the radish  
and butternut squash. anything can be  
aioli in the death cells. anything

can be language you may have eaten.  
lynx meat and mortars the flame-  
seared blood of creatures in mouth-  
corners, meat scorched long enough

to be terrified of earth, of air, of water  
i breathe, breathe and drown  
a life in fire a while anyways. a sparrow  
subdues attention dross as embers

in flickers that fade into feathers.  
a postmodern surface of wingflaps,  
bring me ruin four consecutive Thursdays  
until collapse and water in streets.

a language of damp threatens upholstery,  
basements, papers sodden and clothes.  
inundated with the tragedy, a night terror  
blows into morning the moorings

of our basement sea-cradle language,  
as it rocks, invents, departs like love  
in which as you take and take in, it eludes  
the palate of desire's fancy and possession.

between the nose and velveteen tannin,  
dollars appear. pay and the water  
pumps away: plughole, yard, spider,  
catfish, chrysanthemum. the sewer under

the moon knots the ocean takes millennial  
language to explain away and blur midnights  
of lunar haze. sublunar me left to forecast  
ruin and cast lots. the fool can rest trusting

mistrust: a cage he keeps. each trained hunting  
dog knows the taste of the feather of fowl.  
minutes before the death they nourish  
the chase. this same will heals the eyes beyond

surgery, beyond the salve made with the prophet's  
saliva as it pours from gutters of summer.

## Lamentations

I sigh more often  
than I did last year  
this year, out loud.  
I did, just now, sigh  
audibly. Everyone  
heard me sigh. Are you  
really so wistful,  
you dream-eyed  
bastard? I might  
ask myself, if I  
could be trusted  
to have an adequate  
response. No,  
instead, I sigh  
once more. Looking out  
the window this  
time. Thinking of  
things I can't tell  
you now. Am I really  
so ashamed of myself?  
Yes, always, sigh  
always. So delicate.  
Willowy. Bred from  
my own inaction  
and my reliance on feeling  
rather than action. If I  
acted I would not  
sigh. I would like  
to be remembered by  
you. I want you to remember  
me and the fact that  
you won't  
produces my most  
prodigious sigh yet. I sigh  
to this day. I have  
remembered everything,  
recently, at least and I  
will continue to  
remember and to  
obviously sigh as  
I remember. Maybe  
this ends too  
easily, but it does.

## **Laws & Misdemeanors**

Be witness, children, papa's killed his mistress and me,  
I've given this a lot of thought. There is no language  
barrier and no tight thing, once loosened, will shut again,  
so quit trying and devote your energy towards more a  
useful thing. Dad's on the sink when the phone rings.  
He picks up; no answer. Sounds have been inserted:  
ticking, phone ring, crickets. They suggest  
isolation, lateness, that time still exists, the absence  
of pop's guilt. We have to carry these things.  
We can barely. This day is my father's  
only: They are so strong and destroy.

## Up by Your Hair

It isn't a thrill  
cautious correction  
every time I time and time  
and what's a bargain  
if not paradise what is a  
statement of fact  
if not running through  
the forest

Last time I saw  
you there were  
fragments of another life  
in your life but what is  
working when construction  
is really necessary  
glorious buildings outside  
or around isolation

now not you not you  
now we are a crooked  
measuring tool  
now I'm still drifting  
agelessly all age  
no age you are the  
child of your age when  
you get older grow  
writing a letter using  
hair a disgusting letter  
that I eventually  
have to throw away  
even though  
the sentiment is perfect

**Fact of the Matter**

The downtown girls go clickety-clack, lights winking, thieves slinking out of shadows and their own skin. Don't the horns matter, rhythms of sweet sex and farewells? Step ferocious. Dark of the moon while the liars tell their mothers just enough. What oozes out of the night? Hunger in a tweed coat, artificial intelligence, micro-waved popcorn, lust. This one smells of lemon soap and beer. That one's losing hair. The men of authority admire their shiny shoes as a cold wind razors down the avenues where nobody's selling mercy.

## **Couples Therapy**

She took her lithe desperation  
undid the knots and tossed it  
from the bridge. Consider  
her need for recognition.  
This story has no chapters.

He lined up the shovels,  
small to large, and weighed  
his options against the size  
of the hole. After midnight,  
he would begin to dig, without whistling.

## Labyrinth

Your call is important to us, but a customer service representative will be with you shortly because we all have cooking to do.

When is the last time you prepared raw swan? Blew feathers from necks like dandelion seeds? Please continue to hold. We've changed the music since the last time you called. Studies show that you will grow hungry soon. This call may be monitored for quality assurance of the trembles in your head. How left unchecked they become cockroaches that feed on your kitchen backsplash and crawl through keyholes. There you are again, candlestick phone, waiting for an answer. The lamp just flickered in preparation for the tea kettle. What if you died right now, this instant? Waiting to be someone's fiftieth call today?

I'm sorry, you have dialed incorrectly. Please choose from the following options: 1) Meet someone new. Offer slices of rose petal toast. 2) Forego glasses, and wash scotch down your throat. 3) Para *español frenéticamente explicar sus sueños*. 4) A representative's fingers will shove yellowed recipes through the keyhole at dawn. You will take a brief survey after the call—ears filled with sparkling bells, alerting you of dinner smoke behind another closing door.

## Copywriter

Vivek drained another old fashioned and pointed toward the heavens when he spoke.

Temp. Temporary. Temporality. Repeating words for little pay. Do you even know how you make an old fashioned? Muddle sugar with bitters and add jenever. Vivek was here. Vivek will return. You know how a neighborhood bar changes when you wake up for happy hour? I just counted all the freaking lights here. This is what the world feels like now. Always six o'clock. Every light a tobacco flower.

I smoke weed. Write copy. Wrote copy. Potent, potent weed. Anyone can get published, you know. Anyone can be a television star. I yelled that on my way out the door. Fuck Jaipur. Not going back there. New York has all the darkness and all the light in all the universe. Who wants more suds? Just say, Vivek was here and Vivek will return. Alcohol reaches true contentment when consumed by former strangers. I still feel young sprouts beneath my eyes. New light will blossom and rewrite the next world...

## **Tell Me Again About The Last Time You Saw Her**

The telephone on the moon has been ringing  
continuously

since 1969    The footprints  
ache to answer it  
See red Mars  
rise

Driving becomes difficult with only the road  
in your way    What shatters  
on it but light, two moons claiming the other false  
The best kind of torture  
The voluntary kind  
Ghosts revered for their sense of smell:  
fingerling potatoes roasted in olive oil  
and sea salt

And on the couch    Paranoia  
curled-up in the shape  
of a child's skeleton

## **I've Lost a Considerable Amount of Weight**

I want women without a God

If you've suffered death, heart attack, or stroke,  
call now

*God damn it, it's cold*, says Chicago,  
which is an almost better place for warmth to be  
Somewhere in Somewhere, TX  
an armadillo crosses the road  
and three goldfish share a ten-gallon hat

Would a bulimic fatalist  
trust fate

Would a diabetic baseball purist ever suicide  
squeeze the clean-up hitter  
Show me yours, and I'll show you mind  
I'm everything you meant to say and didn't  
Tell me how

## **More and More Like the Wife**

We hope the possession never ends:  
the molecular eye, the ocean's narration,

things *I cannot see to see*

Child,  
there is no easy way to drown  
I once ran a marathon barefoot,  
and the door to the desert locks  
behind you when you go  
So go  
Legendary jazz: chaos in a cracked  
coffee cup      The horizon

dips to the lips of a giant fish,  
a catfish so large

Even fate gets hammered  
hard by the hard rain

## Suspense Account

I am not jealous of the berries in Sweden  
until Miho says with searing sweetness at Alissa's party  
*I was jealous of the berries in Sweden,*

distraction from rapture by different rapture  
but to tell of all the raptures  
would let escape the remainder of our minutes

which is why we glue mirrors  
everywhere. I'm searching for an entourage  
to be a part of, a vehicle impervious

yet open to the oceanic flukes of contact.  
The berries wait. Every second makes them  
more of what they are. Numerous personnel

have invaded me. Numerous personnel  
have I invited and many watches  
have I lost. Aggression returns, over and over,

sprinting through each season,  
leaving on the ledger imprints of steel boots  
incapable of the reflection that makes of breathing

such a lavish riddle. Nothing to be done  
but make and be stuff for it to come wreck  
each time. The berries in Sweden

don't even take photographs. Look at the fracture  
that passes for a smile on our face,  
as if we'd just discovered that the pain

is a gathered wrath of effervescent roses,  
each petal a name that sings a pang  
into our frail and brilliant carriage.

We careen want-spun down the avenues  
of our own specific and lush time. How  
brave. Not for an extra second would we take back

anything we have given,  
though we are thirsty,  
though we are threatened stockings

bulging with chrysalises  
and the clouds' mouths won't tell us anything.

## **Stellar Furnace**

The labels and label makers come later,  
the lofty prerogatives, the philosopher  
despising indulgences of the body and thus

unequal to an ordinary refrigerator, sheets  
with high thread counts. What comes first  
is the size of a fist and 30 seconds later

it's out of the reach of any other fist ever.  
Archers, gentles, others: supreme architectures  
demand superior catastrophes.

Guilty of desolations birds flew above,  
the first robot demanded a robot queen  
and a story about how his side hurt

and even now it is unclear how  
this story grew into every other one,  
but birds flew above, and later paint

to the rescue, and quills. The lute  
was invented. Sometimes a number  
of people must die for those remaining

to agree upon the meaning  
of reaching consensus. The story  
is a story of poison, of love, of knavery

and battering rams and delicate  
baked goods. So much to complain about,  
so much to perish by while enamored of.

The story is of pangs with no cause  
and no remedy. Meadow into pothole,  
cauldrons of committees. Reparations?

Reparations can never be made.  
And we will never give full account  
of our peculiar and tenacious joy.

## **We Blow the Pants Off Our Competition**

You know our stylo  
by what can't be erased from the sky.

Your pants in our hands  
become traveling flags

natives across the globe  
lift their rare elixirs to.

The mountain wouldn't  
without the say-so

of our committee,  
and our committee

is made of irrevocable ascending.  
We play percussion with bank

accounts, war is like breakfast  
and we wipe our lips

with doves that never  
stop flying. We can't be

ruffled. Of course  
you admire our sunglasses:

they will never break.  
We contain platitudes

that shiver the timbres  
of your disinterested

philosophies. Our desert  
makes an outhouse

of celestial utopias.  
Parapsychology is like

finger counting to five  
for our most simple lamps.

We never ever sleep.  
Please call us.

## **Dromomania Means Wanderlust**

Look at how amazing everything is  
but then stop looking at how amazing  
everything is because it dulls

and then one moves as though through dishwater  
toward never collapsing ashore.  
The rhetor perishes at the zenith

of arresting intersections  
being overcome by the sparkle  
and gait of everything

in its amazing state of being everything  
not still and thus amazing-looking  
until it just kills you to wake.

From the ceiling I can see me  
like a roving hungry something  
dreaming a ravenous campaign

to silence the unquenchable amazing  
that stretches from here to there  
and back. I must go there and back,

must everything muzzle. I will lace my spine  
with everything's excessive amazing  
so we will never so keenly hurt

again. Nothing will ever ripple  
so relentlessly or be so still  
as the late, small bird

in a corner of white brick  
in the middle of a morning  
when the monsoon has stopped.

**Because She Raised A Nice Girl**

I want to touch you  
right there  
where my mother taught me  
to dab perfume. Pulsing  
cove, shadowed by velvet,  
vulnerable to tongue  
tip, pressed lips, parting  
breath. Your soft hair erect,  
nerves lit up, want me to reach  
through my hesitation.  
But again  
my hand falls to my side.

## **These are Only Ideas at this Stage**

They stayed there, indefinitely, like biological sentries.  
Apparently needs appeared to herd themselves, like Army  
Rangers. Artists and writers at last finding real answers. Bad.

But what if, in the process, by growing thicker, or more efficient,  
communication, by tinkering, can answer them. Cells activated  
by an experience, certain memories, chronic, could be misused,

could erase, could make you critical. Distant childhood scenes,  
enhanced, entirely dark, erupt when one cell stimulates another.  
Explorers of the past fear for addiction, for centuries. For trauma.

Forget. Forget a strong disgust. Like a group of people joined,  
like malicious stalkers, memory could lead to an arms race.  
My dad, he's dead now. Mysterious. Pinpoint the purpose

each one serves. Poems, possibly capture problems, racing  
ahead, attracting billions, raising questions. The answer,  
the discovery: the exploration of identity.

## **Irritable Canaries**

Or maybe we can go to puncture  
When we realize all substance,  
Urban special or suburban glacial  
Is stubborn made, and so  
Inconsistent in its weaknesses.

Nothing seems so weary  
Enough to split itself in front of us,  
Or ignite for our pleasure,  
Turning into tricks for fires  
Motioning for some self-destruction.

Quick, think of what might  
Be hiding from our wandering,  
We should go and pursue it, though  
I cannot imagine anything  
Capable of being defeated by lying.

Take up a bouquet of needles,  
Hypodermic and arboreal,  
We will have to learn to tempt  
With the sharp edges, a lesson gained  
If we decide to go puncture.

We will have to begin with snow,  
Easy to first part, then easier to melt,  
Snow is no burden except  
For the dams and rivers in spring,  
So now let us partake in parting snow.

**Sonnet**

everything is off and I am the snow  
bombed a job interview and saw a dead  
finch next to the bus stop almost cried for  
what Ginsberg called “the soul of the world” or  
Merton’s *agonia* fine the Metra  
is late which is okay with me because  
I feel clear and clean as the rain that’s  
mixing with the snow I look down the road  
and see the bus in the distance and  
remember how I’m always waiting for  
the next thing my father died when I was  
sixteen and then again when I was twenty-  
three as the flakes swarm all Fibonacci  
and I open Kant’s *Logic* for the last time

## Sonnet

I used to write lines about it raining  
far inside the body or about pain  
as the shadowed insides of a pine tree  
but now refuse to write such things  
as speaking of rain inside the body  
is poetry and poetry just like  
theology must never be itself  
if it is ever going to point to  
something else successfully and so I  
ask what is a successful question  
anyway I ask myself questions like  
was he holding an invisible rifle  
or was he just clutching his heart waiting  
as a child in the doorway to speak

## Sonnet

god's violence held to the diving bell as  
snow fell onto the upside-down bowl  
of your body through the window I be-  
held a sudden bird of sunlight a sudden  
fox of fire skimming the earth's surface  
below the downfall of leaf-spires spinning  
invisibly drawing Fibonacci  
sequences in the air as your hair moves  
in patterns unknown to even the bright-  
est theologians I touch your small hands  
and watch you stand as one dimension or  
another among the others the falling flakes  
the elements and the cars the people  
passing us in the wake of which I wake

**Knife Me a Weather of Walls**

*There is a color inside of the fucking, but it is not blue.*

–Maggie Nelson

Bride me a favor, duplex it.  
Dragon it in the soup I will make  
on the cold nights,  
on long nights. I floods torrential  
in my longing, I stands  
statue over a landscape  
of animal skins. A filthy heap,  
orificed in conjunction with lavish veins.  
I'd be apportionate. I'd be a rotten deck-  
slatting of purple degradation  
on the bluest, o the bluest  
bald horizon. Bellow me a favor, beast.  
Blood honey are you.  
Monster, fall. Salamander, knife me  
a weather of variegated walls.

## **The Good Girls Guide to Starting a Revolution**

Redolent of code and hammer,  
vocabulary of the marketplace

spells vacancy.  
For the miracle,

for the miracle answer our green  
bodies huddle against.

Stepping back into the fire  
it's taken so long for.

Our cells to remember, our cells  
to be undutied mothers.

To the wolf, to the grabber  
is the way and the wonder.

Says the father. Says the sister.  
Every life's a shelter.

If gambling, time aghast.  
If emptiness would learn to ask.

## Deepening Into

Such a lovely gathering  
of tuxedos and shiny red eggs.  
Such pomp and distance and the music  
like a dying girl in a chamber  
of cement bubbles. The piano played  
oh did it play without a player  
without a body to accuse it  
into action. And oh the night was quiet then  
at the party where everyone mulled  
and hushed and hushed to hear  
the phantom piano playing. When the voice  
the voice of like an angel spoke to them  
to the party to the people at the ball  
they'd already been silent for however many  
years silence really takes to set in  
and it said something into each of their ears  
and they were we and we heard a secret  
and then in the great hall a loud crash  
and from the crash a very large bird.

## **Animalia**

Woke with a brontosaurus crowding  
my heart, woke with it  
in my thorax dressed  
as something maximum, mentalist, dense.  
Sad shark, are you my mind?  
I think I would be happier  
filming grocery carts and fishing a lot.

**Joke**

The one Dad told after Uncle Bob's homemade beer,  
A dog walks into a bar and orders a beer.

As a child there were things I never mentioned:  
dogs walking into bars, ordering beers,

Uncle Bob coming home drunk asking me to dance.  
A dog walks into a bar and orders a beer.

In the 90s, I drank, smoked pot, shot pool while  
dogs under the bar lapped up our spilled beers.

“Stick your head in this noose.” And I do.  
A dog walks into a bar and orders a beer.

Then custody battles over who gets the dog.  
The dog waits at the bar nursing its beer.

Dog, my little flame, ignite this bar,  
You, me, our beers.

Invented life: we can say anything!  
A mallard walks into a bar and orders a duckquiri.

Once again, a bartender walks up to me and says:  
“S’up, dog? Need a beer?”

**Through Slender Branches  
Storm Clouds Scatter to Reveal  
a New Winter Moon**

Three men in black wool  
winter coats—ankle-length, waist-  
tied and buttoned down—

stand holding hand rails  
while staring at transit signs,  
their phones, the woman

who is sitting and  
gazing out the window. She's  
also dressed in black.

The windows darken  
as the train descends into  
the subway tunnel.

Overhead a sky-  
blue bank ad in which a boy  
in yellow shorts beams.

## Eden Is Lost

Eden is lost,  
but the kitchen

Finally some work  
gets done.

is here. It marks  
the end of

our sadness. The rest:  
God's pessimism.

This could be a bar  
in Buckhead

where bartenders  
labor in poverty

but not despair. See,  
one lays her

head on a rail  
as if a doorway.

Outside a dog  
snarls at a mole,

shadows begin to  
take us leaf by leaf,

two boys with sticks  
enact stories of

death and war, above them  
a rose shines

like a light. Today,  
as I attempt

to split the winter  
wood, pine sap

stains articulate  
the moment.

Today, the soul  
leaves the body.



**[witches broom]**

A moth large as a house alights,  
feet barely brushing shingles,

its new-dried green the exact  
color of summers one never expects  
to see again.

I want more than you  
offer, something austere –

slight lamp-sway through woods,  
a red-hooded jacket worn,

adored years ago that casts  
a glow, panes loosening the wind:

come in come in.  
Am I beautiful yet? Be careful

of what you are willing to do  
without: children covered in  
cobwebs,

windows that hang in air,  
a forest of candied cottages,

pale animals caught in a fell  
of bluets and witches broom.  
Each season

built this wall of bones, your body  
rushing away from the names  
I gave you.

Cracks in the plaster become  
a fascination, as when a crazing

of bare oak branches against  
night skies become openings,

an escape from the predatory  
eyes trapped in moth wings

that warn I am not what I seem  
and no one will thank me for it.

***[thank you for your submission]***

While there is much to admire here,

the character you've fashioned  
from me to fit your self-titled tome

feels strangely unformed for such  
an inherently endearing figure.

Also, there is a frustrating lack  
of dialogue between her person-

ality and any other,  
most noticeably your own.

Due to the constant strain  
and pinch of the role,

I regret to inform you that I  
will no longer be inhabiting it.

As for the sketch you've offered  
for my own (tentatively

planned) epic-length tale,  
after careful deliberation,

it's been decided  
to cut your part entirely.

Best of luck placing it elsewhere.

## Kindling Ceremony, New Year's Eve

I learned to keep concealed the peevish  
complaints about myself, a technique  
that's overstayed its welcome. I'll write one  
with golf pencil tonight on a scrap of paper  
and bring it to the altar to be burned.

I can't summon the right defilement  
to disavow. I'm flying with conceit—  
the ache lights me up from inside.  
I'm holding the blank square of paper  
handed to me at the doorway when  
we took off our shoes. Maybe I'll write

about the 10-point rise in systolic pressure  
since my last physical, my fear of dreaming  
about dead relatives, the constant jolt I feel  
in back of my neck on the train platform  
when I realize anyone could catch me off guard,  
push me on the tracks (embarrassing).  
I'm relieved the chanting is in English  
and before rising from my seat I write:  
Anything my mind does to fuck itself and make me  
indifferent to love. I walk heel-to-toe in synch  
with the man in front of me, the candlelight  
fidgets as we approach the altar. All light

in this room comes from tiny candles  
cradled in our hands, and my palms  
flinch from the heat. My turn at the altar,  
I'm thinking about the odds I can catch a cab  
after the service—New Year's the deadliest  
night for pedestrians, most walkers hit by cars  
drunk themselves. A senior Zen student,  
cross-legged, burns the paper I handed to her.  
It simmers a moment in the water-filled urn,  
smoke the odor of chocolate and basement musk.  
Here we go, burning land to make a garden.

## Peeling Out of the Garage

I can't taste the falafel when you swerve  
this close to the parking garage pillars.  
I'm sorry about earlier, when I said I'd take  
a cab if you wanted to stay. It's hard to eat  
when you take the corners so fast. Drive  
like this—ride your finger and thumb  
along the rim of a glass. No one should  
strand you anywhere. Just don't give me

the look that says you wish I owned a car  
when actually you're jealous I'm chewing  
falafel, not driving. If only the goddamn  
garage didn't dump you onto the one-way  
street we didn't take here. Remember,  
I don't hold it against you for owning a car.

## **Ancestors**

We'll never escape them, so it's about time we accept  
they were farmers even though there were cities  
to live in. They caught fish with bare hands  
through lucent streams. Their descendants (not us  
but those in the old country) make hoot and catcall  
at your girlfriend and it's condoned the way we allow

the dying to flirt with their nurses. We can visit  
our friends in love in Paris who promised  
to find us a one-month rental in their neighborhood,  
smoke in the studio where they write with the front  
edges of their desks touching. We can vow to travel  
only where the Métro takes us. Then fly back  
to the States, where we pretend our ancestors

were famous. But, really, some of them—we can't  
tilt the machine for a more favorable outcome—  
some no doubt were run over by their own tractors,  
even though they prayed for rain and rich soil  
to a shepherd god imprisoned in the underworld.  
I'm telling you, not everyone in Italy is a farmer,  
and people live in cities in Sicily just like they do  
in Pennsylvania, where it's Pittsburgh, Philadelphia,  
and everything else is farmland.

## Maestro Interlude

I speak fluent song-and-dance-man, abridged  
and not just with The Supremes or the Radioheads.

I am your maestro  
and write compound meters, dynamic rhythms.

I hear the coda of your heart, accentato.  
As clearly as any kettle-drum, I follow.

My brilliance as a honky-tonk, rag-time charmer  
would stun you.

I strum the waltz interlude the way we ought to,  
i.e on my own.

I can't complain:  
I've been able to locate the silence... still, still.

It's gratifying that I can always  
Wake up before your dreams are plunked on my guitar.

As soon as juke-box music breaks out,  
I roll over my lullaby; leaving my song to haunt you.

I am a prima donna. A lyricist of my age,  
but I don't have to be.

A few years ago  
I saw a man tapping his foot. As if anything can be turned into song.

A night before last, a dove-chord was calling, singing, begging.  
clear as a tambourine chiming, orchestrating me to dance with ghosts.

## **Demi Lovato**

*an imitation of Gertude Stein's "Susie Asado"*

Lose lose lose lose lose her.

Demi Lovato.

Lose lose lose lose lose her.

Demi Lovato.

Demi Lovato which is jade head junk.

A stout on the shoe this means tin tin issues.

When the new dark red is dirty it is orange, it is a blue-green buyer.

This is a no this is a no there are the shouts to jam. These are the drys these say  
the shys to keep a plug on Suci.

Suci is short for succubus.

Pot. Pot is the result from a bit of the cannabis plant. Cannibis calls, the new bags are in  
bobbins, bobbins which push and pull and hide dirt, hide dust it must.

Bot tum sup.

Bot tum sup. Bot tum sup lease a sash hold, ignore the dull and a bilby has pillows. It shows  
a

nut.

What is a nut. A nut is disharmony.

Lose lose lose lose lose her.

## **Alien Attack!**

*an alien cento*

Some things I do not profess  
to understand, perhaps  
they understand everything.  
They're on our side. They forgive us.

They peek at us, they see us  
in this world illumined and pasted.  
Scanning the dark matter,  
the nothingness, that now the heads say is chockablock.

Mysterious voyagers from outer space,  
Attenuated, golden—shreds of lace.  
And while I laugh,  
My spirit crumbles at their teasing touch.

You may not believe it,  
but such people do exist.  
Their bodies look like cauliflower,  
And those who watched them were confirmed in faith.

America, as much a problem in metaphysics as  
it is a nation, earthly entity, an iota in our galaxy.

### Sources:

*The Abduction* by Stanley Kunitz  
*American Journal* by Robert Hayden  
*The White Fires of Venus* by Denis Johnson  
*The Alien* by Greg Delanty  
*Aliens* by Amy Lowell  
*The Aliens* by Charles Bukowski  
*Taken Up* by Charles Martin

## **Secession**

There isn't any time. We have our order. We are on the move. I would tell you, if we had the time, what awaits you behind. A fistful of paper that you could unfold into a map if on a line between shadow and light, that you can read when you have time to listen. I pocket this the way someone might whisper in your ear, almost audibly, so you'll find the word just before sleep covers up the trail. A moment, a mystery. Later, you'll think yourself a prophet in a world of confessing surfaces.

## **Secession**

Evidence collects beneath the cancelled stars, lint fringing the couch, the bed, skin in every shriveling corner. The story hangs like a swallow beneath the nails. Pull the hair that's needled through the sweater's weave, let it curl into a question, an accusation. Pull the drywall from the studs, floorboards from their joists while the priest is kneeling, tongue hungry in the hardwood's grooves while sparrows clamor for the cloth to be shook. While the nest in the drain is lifted, when the absence is invaded by any convenient symbol, when the bath like the hills is an affidavit of withdraw, the scrim, the trilobites, the bands, the vanished ocean, the shock of clay. Unless the vanished never were and everything that seems a postscript is but a used-to-be, a who-we-were, what we've forgotten of ourselves, of which we make a universe, in which we wrap ourselves to hope we're not alone.

## **Secession**

Scarecrow, mannequin, forgotten sentry. A shirt hung on a blighted tree has let its color go, slow autumn, without anyone to see. When wind unfurls it, it reveals its early years, its histories. A heart still vibrant, bright, however grey the sleeves, the departing hems. And beneath, the paraph of a placket, cuff's cedilla, abdicated edge, separating into separate fibers, the lines of a neighborhood, a house, its frame opening in invitation. Welcome ants, welcome wind, each litter that would carry home.

## **Secession**

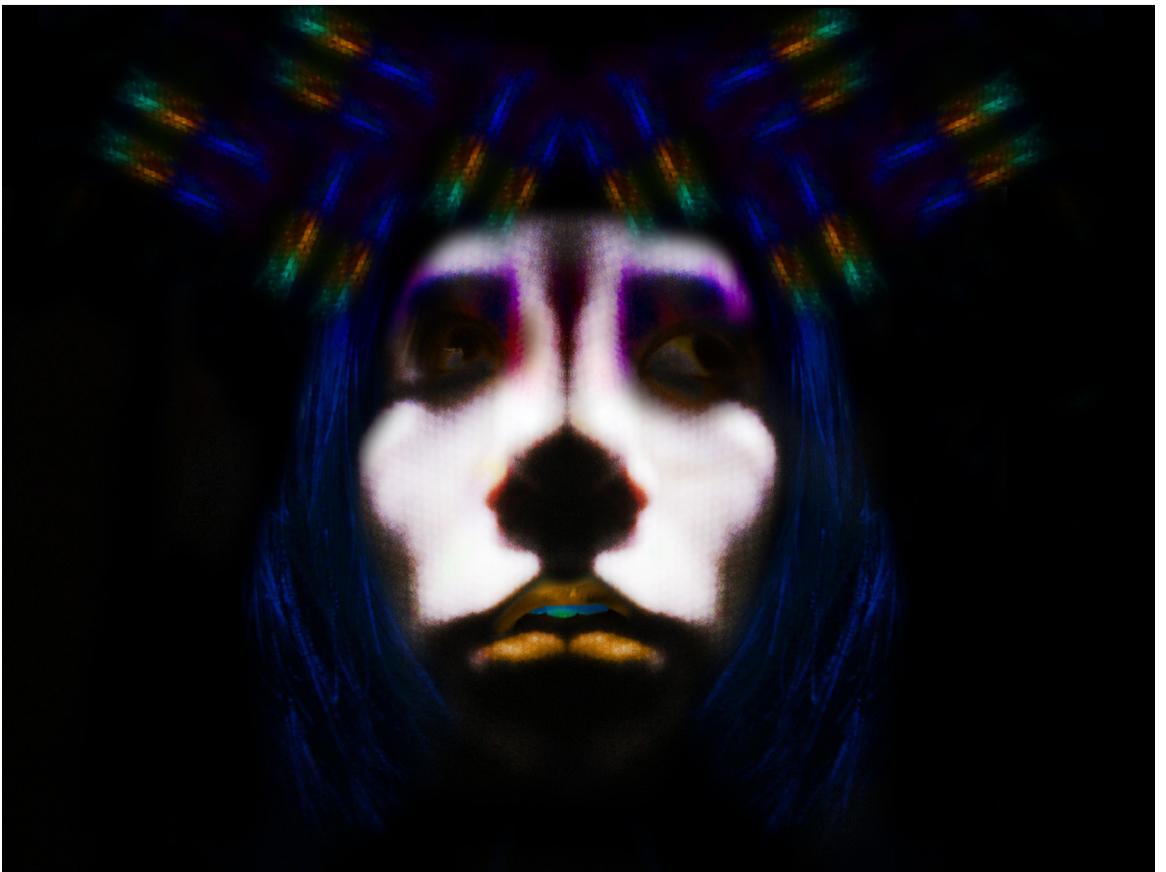
The last word still tender on the eardrum, gauze of noise in the air, the woods are pulling me deeper, hush is the one word everything seems to know. Sticks cough beneath me, and now I've wrecked the auditorium, assigned attention. How to listen? In snow, in wind, and afterward, the pines have drawn each posture, walking from the town. Weather, come lick my eyes. Twigs open mouths forever. I can't remember now even the shape of your mouth around that syllable. Even the syllable. There is too much now. There is just enough.

# Art

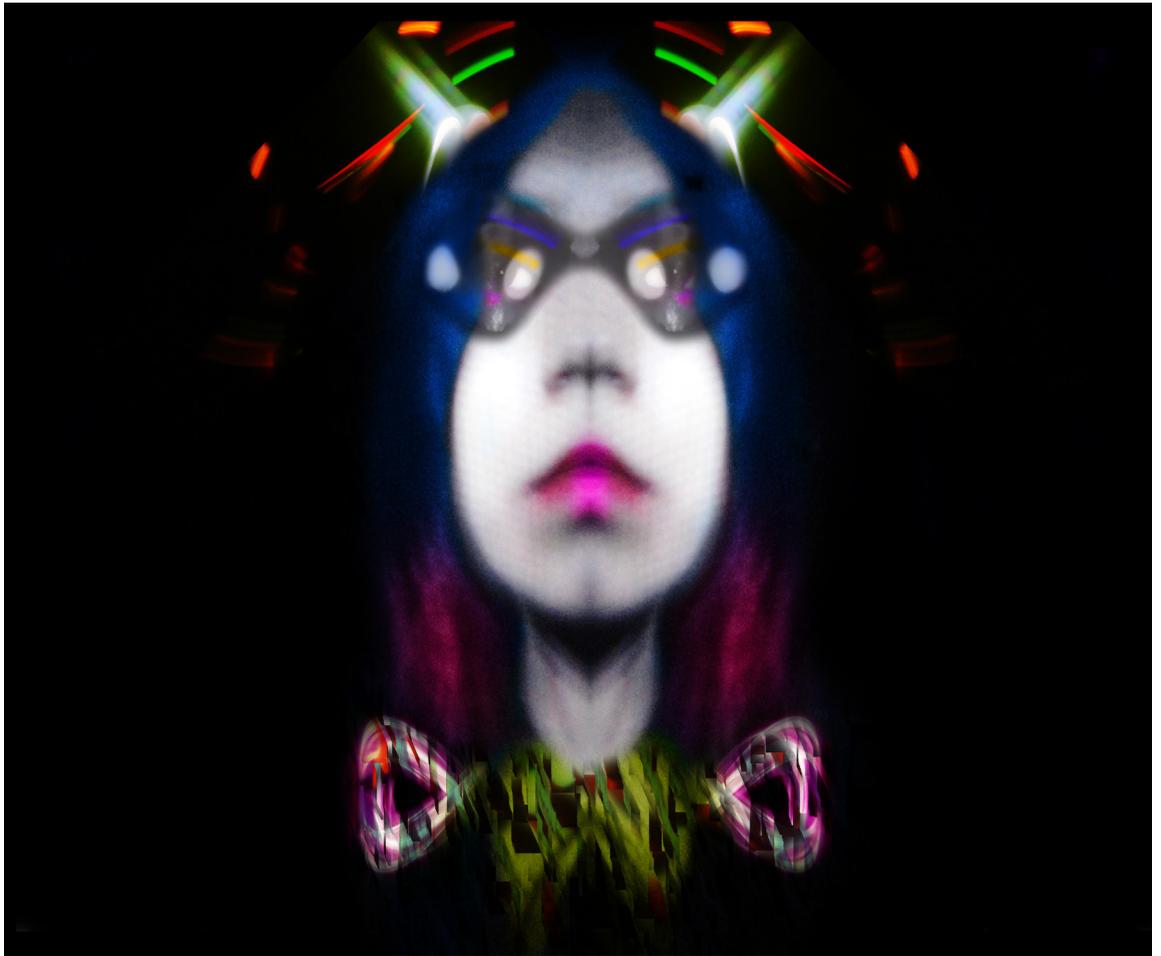




**Self Portrait**



**Little China Girl**





**A Bumpy Ride**





**Spiral**



**Promise**



## Carving





**Outside Mom's House, Woodridge, IL**



Untitled 106



**Untitled 117**

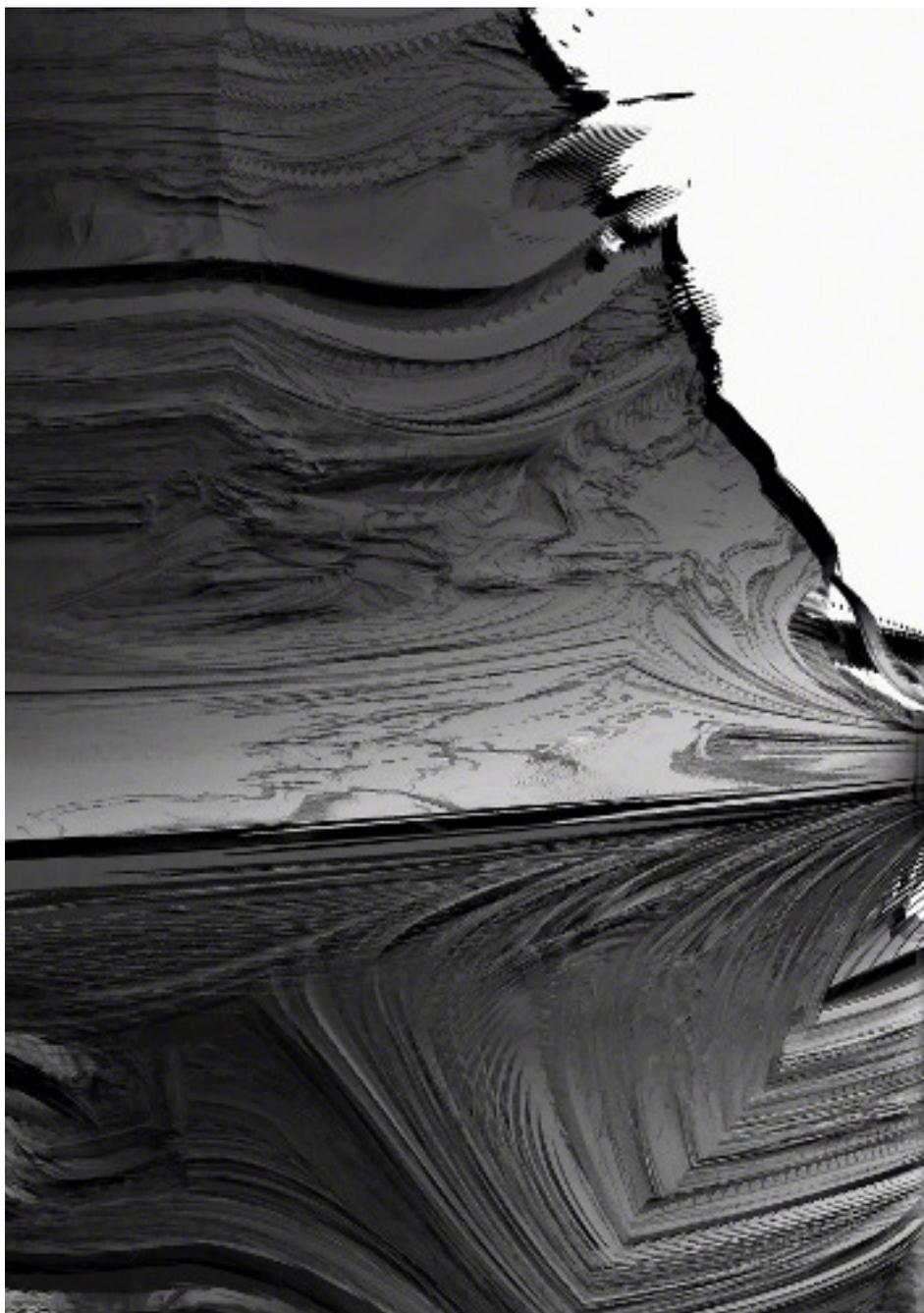




**Juggling Accident**



## NaySayer



# Fiction



## Christmas Broken

Marina was always the one in the family who knew how to fix things, whom to call in case of emergency, intuiting and implementing plans of action faster than Greg could even register a need, but she took her savvy and her Rolodex with her when she moved downtown, and now, with his son Marcus at boarding school, days away from completing his first semester in Groton and returning to Chicago for the winter holidays, Greg was alone and had to figure out how to improvise. There was a crack in the long driveway that faced their big old house in the suburbs, and he had no idea what to do. How hard could it be to arrange for something, call a guy, a twenty-four hour patching service? If you were Greg, it was practically impossible. When he came home last night and discovered the crack, he forewent microwaving dinner and instead effaced with scotch he poured over stale ice. He fell asleep crumpled on the couch in his gray suit and green tie and shiny black shoes.

This morning, chagrined, but clearheaded, he entertained the possibility that maybe the situation wasn't a big deal and that he'd just overreacted. What if every driveway fractured in the winter and he'd just failed to pay attention to *pianissimo*? In an attempt to absent the Kabuki-grade amplification that his ineptitude effected, he put on his coat and gloves over his robe and went outside on disinterested reconnaissance. He found that overnight the crack had quadrupled in size, in depth, and now couldn't have been more *mezzo forte*. It seemed to stick out its menacing tongue and bear serious teeth. Greg bent down, and though careful not to get his knees wet from the piled snow, he hovered close enough to see it clearly: the crack was a grand fucking canyon. So much for it's *no big deal*. He traced the surface, beginning where the groove started, noting the stress marks with the edge of his thumb. He pulled out a scaly fragment of the debris and studied it for a moment before flicking it away.

Greg didn't go to the office the morning Marcus came home. After the limo dropped the boy and his suitcase off, and Greg ushered him in and out of the cold, they exchanged a few pleasantries before Marcus lost interest. But he didn't leave, didn't go upstairs to watch TV or nap or god only knew what. Greg watched as his son surveyed the house in which he grew up in big sweeps. He imagined Marcus as a child running around this very house, every gesture a grand one. How many times had he taken the stairs from the preceding floor two at a time, practically swinging off the banister, the same banister he laid his hand on now? How many entrances had he made with an operatic flourish only a young child could pull off without feeling self-conscious?

"Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you going to sell the house?"

Things were different now, Greg could tell by the way Marcus spoke, but the boy still more or less resembled himself, the way Greg last saw him, almost three months earlier. Same blonde hair frozen in place with a compound that smelled vaguely of thyme, a gray Lawrence Academy T-shirt, jeans with frayed windowpanes out of which exposed knees pushed forth, and an argyle sweater, a thumbhole in each of the sleeve cuffs, tied around his waist.

"Dad, it doesn't even look like you live here. You haven't gotten any new furniture." Greg froze. "All that's here is what Mom left behind."

Father and son pantomimed and grunted through the next few days. Greg began to feel guilty that he was squandering irreplaceable time with his boy, and so Tuesday, after he returned from the office, after he'd finally worked up the courage to suggest to Marcus that they do something together besides eating pizza and Singapore noodles in front of Nick at Nite reruns, he

said, "So, maybe we could go look for a tree?"

"Sure," Marcus said with a slight nod, a glimmer of interest. "Why not?"

Greg recalled many trips in his pre-divorce fatherhood to this very same parking lot, which was fenced with a chicken wire and demarcated by the big signs reading "Christmas Trees! Fresh! Huge!" at the far ends of the plaza in downtown Wilmette. The parking lot normally served as overflow for a bank and a Starbucks and dry cleaner and a deli, but for a brief spell in December was transformed by the magic of tree-proffering elves. Floodlights plugged into buzzing generators kept things bright while the sky was nothing but blackness. The shoppers moved and touched and poked and prodded and pushed and dragged trees too heavy to carry. Everything and everybody seemed nervous and unsteady and in a hurry to simultaneously get in and out of there, as though a collective consciousness intuited they were all seconds away from disaster, but still had shopping to do.

Greg made perfunctory evaluations, but really had no idea what to look for. Marcus, headphones blaring, looked bored.

When they returned home, a huge Kentucky fir strapped to the roof of the Volvo wagon, and in the back six bags of garland, tinsel in long ropes, ornaments arranged in neatly stacked boxes, and blue and white and red and green reels of icicle lights from the warehouse club, and barely enough room for the suffocating silence between them, they sat in the car for a minute. When Greg turned the engine off, the quiet was even more conspicuous.

"What's wrong?" he asked his son. "You're being weird."

"Weird?" Marcus asked, without looking at him.

Greg swept an open hand around the car filled with Christmas. "I thought you wanted this."

"Why are you so hung up on that stupid dent in the driveway?" Marcus blurted.

Greg replied sharply, "It makes me mad. I don't like it. I don't know."

"Why is it such a big deal to you?" his son pressed.

"Marcus," Greg sighed. "It's my—it's *our*—goddamn house." He turned away and spoke to the window. "Why can't I have things that start out nice and stay that way?" He was so close to the glass, a fog circle formed in front of his mouth, and so he faced Marcus, who now turned the opposite direction.

"Why," Marcus breathed, "if it's so important to you, can't you just fix the fucking crack yourself?"

Often Greg was confronted by questions for which there were no answers. These questions always threatened to break him, knock him down, shatter him into a million flinty pieces. But he never cracked, not outwardly. He'd just smile and wait it out. He could withstand a lot. Moore and McMillan at the other end of the conference room whispering in their secret partner language. The college kid interns peering over his drafting table and then snickering in the break room too loudly about how derivative his work had become. Marcus balled up on the floor, laughing because he was high, laughing because of how ineffectual, how much of a non-father he realized Greg was, the night he and Marina—really Marina—decided to send their boy away. No matter what happened, no matter how he felt, he could grit his teeth and pull himself together, even if it meant occluding. He'd shown no emotion when Marina leaned over him, naked, screaming, punching, spitting, after she issued the ultimatum: *If you can't do something, this marriage is over. Don't just lie there and live in your head. Come into the world. This used to be yours, remember? You're not useless. You gave up on your son, and now you're done with me, is that how you want this to go down? Goddamn it, Greg. What is going on in there?* But didn't she know him well enough to see, without him having to point it out, that there wasn't anything left inside, that a for-lease sign hung in the opacity, that it had been months, years, since he'd even lived there? It was the last in a long series of fights over his gradual retreat deeper and deeper into futility—how had a desire to avoid the arduous and intractable escalated into an affront against his wife that was

actually capable of wrenching them apart?—and though he knew he was blowing his final chance at keeping his marriage together, he refused to cry or apologize or even avert his eyes then. He just stared until everything turned into halos and starbursts. When she finished—*Maybe we'd better just start planning an exit strategy now and save ourselves*—the only thing left to do was flee, but he couldn't even do that. Marina, as usual, took care of the leaving for him by exiting herself, and so here he was, upright, mobile, held in place with the shellac of superficiality, but a pile of rubble beneath the surface, a complete mess in a way nobody could see. Nobody except Marcus.

Greg took off his cap and the sharp air blew through his desiccated beige hair, burning his scalp. It wasn't just the tree that made him feel like a failure. It wasn't the crack. It wasn't this Christmas break. It wasn't that Marina was gone. His eyes itched and burned the way they did when he caught Marcus in the throes of the fabric softener incident all those months ago. Greg thought he'd never get the black-and-white images of busting Marcus, the chorus of giggly, pimply boys behind him, a thin half joint smoldering on the windowsill, leaving a greasy burn in its wake that still remained, and all the subsequent still-frames of tense meetings and fraught negotiations with the school and the counselor and, finally, each of them pressed against an opposite door in the back of Louie's cab on a wordless trip to the airport, Marcus's ticket to Logan in Greg's shirt pocket, sticking out absurdly like a clown's handkerchief, out of his head.

Late that night, in the corner of the living room, before a backdrop of icy windows, stood a majestically resplendent Christmas tree. Ponderously and thickly decorated. Almost cloying. Not an inch of green exposed except where you'd want it for the necessary contrasts. Needles and branches hung heavily from the weight of so much garland and tinsel and ornaments, the room awash in blue and silver and gold and red. The tree presented itself to the world proudly, certain of its inherent prominence. Everything shone brilliantly. Tiny lights, red, white, and green, clung to each other, pulled away from each other, string after string of them, each connected to the other, tying Greg and Marcus's decoration composition together. Though there was distance between the bulbs, some flashing, others trailing, they still had a sense of unity, of continuity. Greg stood beside his son and patted his back, but as much as he wanted to, he felt no pride over what they'd accomplished. He was wobbly from exhaustion and drinking too much this week and not eating enough. His vision blurred, his planned speech garbled inside the slosh, but he felt like he should say something and so he coughed and shook his head.

"Well, what do you think?" he asked the boy.

"It looks like . . . our tree," Marcus said. Though he might have meant something entirely different, Greg clung onto this simple expression and couldn't let it go.

Hours after Marcus had gone upstairs to bed, Greg put on his boots, his thick winter coat, and the wool cap with those stupid earflaps he couldn't stand. He looked at his handwritten note again: *Concrete is tough, but it can crack because of settling, moisture, or extreme temperatures. Wider cracks require a little more work to prevent them from reoccurring. 1. Wearing safety glasses, use a hammer and a cold chisel to deepen the crack. 2. Brush away loose debris with a wire brush. 3. Mix a patching compound specifically made for concrete, following the label instructions.* He stopped reading there and folded the paper back up. He'd figure out the rest on his own.

It was way too arctic for precision. Greg could barely maneuver the heavy tub of concrete or the silver tools he laid in a crude semi-circle around his small makeshift workspace. Nothing was level—the driveway slanted; who knew?—and he slipped and spilled and implements rolled and he quickly lost control of the entire project. He couldn't even see what he was doing. The station wagon shielded him from the elements somewhat, but it wasn't enough. He was damp from the snow and his body shivered, resisting this. As a precaution, he looked to the house. The lights from the new tree blurred together and pulsed against the fog of the window, like peppermint breath, as though a warm fire burned inside, like a heart, understanding what he was doing outside, cold, wet, trembling, entreating him to return, offering forgiveness. He tried to apply a thin layer of concrete to the crack but the compound wouldn't stick to anything except his hands

or the other parts of the driveway in embarrassing gray chunky drips the neighbors would be sure to make fun of. He cursed loudly, but it didn't matter; nobody was around to register dismay. More concrete mix splattered and spilled, and as it resisted capture, pieces of indistinct shape congealed. He had no chance to come up with a plan of attack; he couldn't keep up. Greg regretted coming outside. This whole thing was a mistake. *I have to stop*, he chanted inside his head. *I have to stop or Marcus will see.*

The concrete Greg poured that had started to set at jagged, imperfect angles almost immediately was now frozen in place, didn't stand a chance of being reckoned with. He stood outside himself and appraised the driveway wreck. He then pictured the scene as his own father, the taciturn village pharmacist who never failed at any domestic challenge, and tried to imagine how he'd fix this. His own father, a man he never felt particularly fond of, forty years younger, now down on the ground and trying his best to flatten out the disorder desperately, pounding and scraping and prodding, but nothing seemed to work for him, either. Despite his practical knowledge, he too would have reached the point where this clumpy oatmeal would start doing what it wanted to do, as all controlled things eventually do. It didn't matter how carefully Greg had planned, or not planned, how much forethought went into his patting and pressing, and when that failed, more indignant striking and slamming the trowel into the bumpy, impervious half-solidified mess; the concrete still was going to move the way it wanted to, until it would find its place and yield no more, setting the way it was destined to set long before Greg came along to spill and misjudge and curse and wobble, long before the crack even first pushed its way into his once-impenetrable world. Marina was right. Greg couldn't handle anything, with or without her in his life. The night after Marcus left for Groton, Greg came home from work to an empty house he'd dreaded for months and drank until he couldn't stand up; he awoke hours before the alarm, buried under a mountain of sheets and blankets and comforters, the room freezing, screaming at a dream about Marcus, about Marina, still angry about the divorce—didn't she know they'd both failed?—and, in the plum apricot light that gauzed through the blinds, covered his eyes, tried to understand what they'd done, what had happened, what would happen, the future as blank and dark as the world was from the bedding sarcophagus in which he was entombed.

Now he felt undulating, a physical presence behind him, wet stentorian breathing loud enough to discern through the wind, but instead of fighting, instead of evading, he submitted to it. Trees shook and swayed furiously, branches whipped around, smacking at invisible things. Marcus didn't say anything then, just wiped tears from his eyes with his sleeve. His bottom lip trembled and his hands moved forward and backward, as though of their own accord. Greg withdrew from his hunch. He had to brace himself against the car when his knees buckled and his feet started to slip under the ice, and Marcus reached toward his father slowly, extending an unsteady hand, while trying to keep himself from falling with the other shot behind him. Greg wasn't expecting the grip of their hands together to be very strong, but it was a lock, and it was real.

"You're a good boy," Greg said, in the voice he remembered he used to have when Marcus was growing up.

"And you're a good dad."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

Inside the house, Greg accepted the mug of cider Marcus offered to heat up for him without hesitation. He pulled the drawstrings of the fluffy green bathrobe close to his body, trying to get warm. His teeth chattered.

"Couldn't sleep?" Marcus asked. He grinned while his father shook his head. His hair was still casting droplets onto the table. Marcus returned to his place on the couch, before the fire. Greg sat beside him. The heat seemed to blaze hotter than he'd ever noticed before.

"The crack—" Greg began.

"It's okay," Marcus whispered. His eyes met Greg's.

They sat together and drank cider and didn't say anything. Before long, the sun began to emerge from a far off point in the sky. The snow stopped falling not too much longer after that.

**We hope this letter finds you well**

in your post-abortive recovery.

It should be stated at the outset: *Your* personal health and happiness are our top concern here at the State Bureau of Future American Families. Each day when we arrive in our little office in the Capitol we pinch ourselves and say, “What a privilege it is to care for the citizens of this fine state.” Yes, this includes you, Case #D4221xfZk899Y!

No doubt about it, an abortion is not a walk in the park. Research from *The New England Journal of Medicine*, in fact, suggests that it takes up to ninety days for the average female to physically recover, which is why we’ve waited three months from your ‘surgical’ date to send you this delicate correspondence. We acknowledge—and we want to be perfectly clear here—it is not the intent of this letter to proselytize on the politics of abortion. Your opinion of abortion is of no importance to us. For that matter, neither are your religious beliefs concerning the death of your non-born. At the State Bureau of Future American Families our job is never to get in the way of one’s ecumenical affairs, regardless of one’s religious affiliation (even if one’s religion is outside the norm of Protestantism and Catholicism, including but not restricted to Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Taoism, atheism, Islam, Shinto, Rastafari, Hoodoo, LDS, and Wiccan). No, we firmly believe in the separation of church and state. Simply put, Case #D4221xfZk899Y, your choice to abort a precious child is between you and your God.

We just want our citizenry to be healthy, that’s all. For a healthy citizenry is a productive citizenry—and a productive citizenry works and shops and creates revenue for the state. To be blunt, health produces wealth. Therefore, since research proves that you should be back in the swing of things, it’s time we discuss your fiduciary responsibility to the government.

What fiduciary responsibility, you ask? We’ll get to that in a moment.

First, we hope you can fully appreciate our country’s current economic climate. Unless you’ve been living under a rock you no doubt have read something about (and perhaps have been personally affected by) the economic downturn. Consider just a few of our country’s recent financial maladies: the stock market crash, the mortgage crisis, bank failures, bankruptcies, foreclosures, credit card debt, rising gas prices, it’s enough to make your head spin! Add to that: 1) the patriotic burden of conducting multiple wars, as well as the cost attending to our returning wounded veterans; 2) our altruistic assignment to feed the world’s poor (read: Africa); and 3) the humanitarian handouts we’ve given carte blanche to the victims of tsunamis, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, fires, famines, mudslides, plagues, genocide, etc. This is the fallout from our country’s “We Are The World” emergency aid approach. We are the cow’s teets upon which the globe feeds.

If you’re like us here at the State Bureau of Future American Families, ever since the economic meltdown we’ve experienced one big disappointment after another. At home we eat leftovers. We wear last season’s clothes. Our vacations have become staycations. We’ve downsized to basic cable. And now our honorable Governor has mandated wholesale cutbacks across the state. Roads remain unrepaired, post office hours are reduced, state workers are getting furloughed, libraries and schools are closing, and we’re nixing all parades, fireworks, fairs, festivals, holiday lights, ribbon cuttings, concerts in the park, beautification projects, plus we’re shutting off all town fountains and closing all public pools. We’re even auctioning off state artifacts on E-bay.

Our Governor is bereft. To reduce our shortfall he’s pondered many solutions, one of which includes slashing the state’s education budget. By his account, this solution affects only children, who are a non-voting block of our population, rather than to raise taxes on their parents,

i.e. adults, 100% of the voting population.

As brilliant and bold as his idea is it's not enough to whittle away our mountain of debt. So a special oversight committee has suggested increasing the Vice Tax, which is only meant to affect chain smokers and alcoholics. Still, our honorable Governor, like most hard-working citizens, is tired of paying more for his Pall Malls and Jim Beam. Can you say, "Veto"?

Galvanized, our lawmakers went back to the drawing board. They brainstormed, think-tanked, retreated, and voila! A new state agency was born: the State Bureau of Future American Families. That's us! Our mission is to estimate and expedite all future revenue from our citizens. The State Bureau of Future American Families is focused on the future. That's our tagline. Focused on the future™.

Which brings us to you, Case #D4221xfZk899Y.

You are our future. You and your (supposedly) growing family. See, an economic community relies on positive growth in order to ensure a higher intake of revenue. There is a pact between citizens and the state: citizens pay taxes—the state provides services. You scratch our backs, we scratch yours. All for one.

This pact is even true for Dead People. One of the final patriotic acts a citizen gets to perform (posthumously) is to pay an Estate Tax based upon one's accumulated assets. It's the state's last opportunity to get what's coming to them. It's as if the dead person has graciously given an inheritance to the state so that future generations can reap the rewards.

*But what can be said for an Aborted Fetus?* Isn't an Aborted Fetus just another name for a human being whose life was cut short? That debate has been raging for decades, for sure, with all sides coming to the table with their own set of facts and figures. (We can't even bring up the subject of Abortion in the House Chamber without fuming clergy and passionate scientists parading to the podium, fists to the skies!) But what is *not* debatable is this: the citizen who lived a long *natural* life must pay an Estate Tax, while the Aborted Fetus, to be candid, gets off scot-free.

Is this fair? Especially when we're all a day late and a dollar short! Nothing is more definite than death and taxes, right?

Therefore, we are sending you this bill in the amount of \$2,789,574.36.

Let us explain.

First of all, \$2,789,574.36 is the average amount your Aborted Fetus would've spent during his lifetime (with an average life span of 82 years) had he been given the opportunity to be a productive member of society.

Second, the amount of \$2,789,574.36 is not a tax. It is a *Lost Income from Family Extermination* fee. Or L.I.F.E. fee, for short.

Third, the amount of \$2,789,574.36 has been especially assigned to you, Case #D4221xfZk899Y. Your ex-child's L.I.F.E. fee is as unique and individual as a human fingerprint! It is based on a complicated cluster of facts and statistics culled from marketing companies and polling corporations and specialists in the field of data trafficking. (We are unapologetically thorough when it comes to information mining, especially when it impacts our state's economic outlook.)

It works like this: the L.I.F.E. fee of \$2,789,574.36 is based on the fact that your baby was scheduled to be born a White Male. Therefore, your male baby's *lifetime earning potential*, based on North American privileges, prejudices, and mores, would've been the highest of all ethnic groups. Congratulations!

The importance of the zip code of the *mother's residence* at the time of birth is also significant. Why? Because there's a clear correlation between the mother's home environment and the economic status of her children. And since you still live at your parent's house, that would make their house your house, which technically puts you in the statistical milieu of zip code 75205. (Boy, the average home income in that tony 'hood is off the charts!)

While we're on the subject, it would behoove us not to point out, particularly since the

data is staring us right in the face, that you live in one of the lowest abortion zones in the state. Which says *boo coos* about the pro-life, pro-family, and pro-education environment in which you would've brought your child up. Ironically, since *you* grew up in this same bucolic neighborhood, we scratch our heads and have to ask: where did *you* go wrong? Perhaps you got in with the wrong crowd, like the one across town in zip code 75216, which has—how's this for irony—the *highest* abortion rate in the state! But we digress.

In compiling a L.I.F.E. fee we also look to see if the non-born's Mother graduated college or whether she attempted nothing more than a GED. For you, Case #D4221xfZk899Y, *one* year at Community College puts your amount slightly above a high school graduate's, but it's certainly less than the astronomical sum you'd have been billed had you matriculated at Harvard. In this case, my dear, a mediocre education is to your advantage!

To be sure, a lot of complicated factors go into determining a L.I.F.E. fee. Take the health of the baby's mother. Typically speaking, if the mother has a clean bill of health, then the amount of the fee is higher. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that a White Female who eats well, exercises, and abstains from cancer-causing carcinogens (give or take a few mind-altering substances consumed during one's teenage years) will live longer than an African-American female who couch surfs and has more-than-a-passing-flirtation with Value Meals and Handguns.

Even the grandparents of your aborted fetus play a part. Heart disease, cataracts, Alzheimer's, cancer, if it's hereditary and you can die from it, then that's going to adversely effect your L.I.F.E. fee. Take *your* maternal grandparents (of Irish descent) and fraternal grandparents (of German and French stock). Yes, Case #D4221xfZk899Y, your family tree contains its assortment of age-related diseases (diabetes and high blood pressure). But other than a handful of embarrassingly acquired ailments (syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, scurvy, not to mention your uncle's HIV+ status—kindly swept under the rug like his homosexuality) nothing significant seems to have been negatively passed down to you. (Concerning the illegitimate son of your slave-owning great-great grandfather: nada is known of the boy's health. All records, including documents of ownership, were destroyed in a house fire when northern troops scourged the south during the final days of the Civil War. So whether the little tyke was born with pre-existing conditions or birth defects is not known.)

On the subject of birth defects—we hesitate to mention, but we must, for it's a sad fact of life—such “born with” features adversely affect one's earning potential. We're talking about everything from Down Syndrome to lazy eyes. Like it or not we are a society that rewards beautiful people. A roll of the DNA dice determines whether you drive a Mercedes or take the Short Bus. It's not fair (you should see some of the challenged folks in our office!) but statistics don't lie.

Last but not least, Case #D4221xfZk899Y, we base the L.I.F.E. fee on the projected due date. In your case, the baby was due to arrive March 29th. If you project 82 years from that date, then you get the amount of \$2,789,574.36.

Yes, it is a large number. (It makes one think twice about getting an abortion, no?) Yet when you amortize it over a lifetime, the bill comes out to only \$93.20 a day. Peanuts!

(For a detailed report filled with graphs and charts and reams of data, please request a Future Genealogical Lifetime Assessment Document, which can be found under Forms on our website. The cost is \$450.)

Still, you may be asking yourself, “How can I afford to pay this fee?” While it is not *our* responsibility to manage your money (budgeting the state's coffers is hard enough!), we can recommend obvious sources: ask your parents (if they haven't disowned you); get a loan (assuming your Credit Score is above 740); or get a job. (Perhaps you can reclaim your Assistant Managership at The Gap at Northpark Mall?) Better yet, get the cash from the irresponsible man who got you into this precarious position in the first place (if he hasn't left town). It's the least *he* could do!

Another question you might have: Do we send a L.I.F.E. fee to *all* people who die before their expected statistical death? Like the folks who die from car wrecks, suicide, bank robberies,

war? True, thousands of citizens die yearly from horrific circumstances. But the answer is NO. The reason for us not pursuing them and their families is based on one simple fact—we don't have the manpower. At the State Bureau of Future American Families we're just four people—three office workers and an intern. Trust us, if we had the resources we'd hunt down every dead person and make them pay their fair share. Maybe as the state's economy improves our Governor will award us more employees and we'll widen our scope. Until then, Aborted Fetuses are our game.

Caution: if you're thinking of committing suicide, whether out of emotional trauma or as a means of getting out of paying the \$2,789,574.36, we urge you to call the suicide prevention hotline we've set up for women in your circumstance. But keep in mind that the L.I.F.E. fee is connected to you, the carrier of the Aborted Fetus. Meaning, if you jump from a bridge or swallow sleeping pills, you may not have to worry about your life earning potential anymore, but your Aborted Fetus's L.I.F.E. fee is still assigned to you, and thus gets passed down to your next of kin. The short of it: you and your family can't get out paying the L.I.F.E. fee any more than you can erase the fact that you got an abortion in the first place. Our Governor likes to think of it as Tough Love.

The Fee is due upon receipt. We accept cashier's checks, credit cards (except American Express), and Automatic Withdrawals from W2s until the amount is paid in full. Please indicate your preference of payment on the enclosed form and mail it in. Otherwise, you'll be hearing from a collection agency, and that would just get ugly.

Remember, Case #D4221xfZk899Y, The State Bureau of Future American Families is *focused* on the future. Your future. The state's future. Even the future that your Aborted Fetus no longer has. You could say we're honoring your dead baby with this L.I.F.E. fee. Which means, each time you pay it off, month after month, year after year, you are doing so *in remembrance of him*.

It gives you a warm fuzzy feeling, doesn't it?

Sincerely.

# NonFiction





## A Review of Brooklyn Copeland’s *Laked, Fielded, Blanked*

Brooklyn Copeland’s latest chapbook, *Laked, Fielded, Blanked*, is an exploration of the ways in which language interacts with silence, or the ways in which lived experience interacts with the page, or the ways in which the reader interacts with the writer – in wakefulness. The collection contains three poems, “Morse,” “Notes on Vanishing” and “Seall,” and is about twenty pages long. However, page count can be misleading here, as each page contains only a small section of each poem, leaving the rest of the page *empty*. Or maybe empty is the wrong word. When I asked Copeland about the significance of blank spaces in her writing, she said:

My poems have never been “long” or wordy, and a length of blankness, for me, holds nearly the same value as a string of words. I think words come to life when you give them room to breathe. When I see a lot of space on the page, I know that I should read the poem slowly. Even poems made up of a single word can be read slowly, you know? Once you’ve read the poem, you have enough elbow room to work out your reactions to the poem and relate the poem to your own experience.

And this “elbow room,” as Copeland puts it, is not only found in the ample white spaces surrounding the text, but in the text itself, in the spaces and indentations that Copeland uses to create a certain syntax, soundscape, or image – the way a piece of paper is folded to give a single plane multiple dimensions. The first poem in the collection, “Morse,” begins:

Morse Lake forms  
where the Big  
creek meets

the Little creek—  
bits of boat,  
bits of dock

mark the spot—

As the poem continues, Copeland goes on to speak of feeding rocks to diseased ducks, opening geodes, breaking hammers, and finding dead fish that smell “red.” All in all, a day at the waterfront that ends up sounding strangely familiar...yet utterly unique. And that’s the brilliance of it. Copeland’s poetry is not flashy, or “baroque,” as she puts it, but *human* in that it expresses one’s honest interactions with nature, others, and oneself with a straightforward originality that is hard to find in a poetic milieu dominated by the avant-garde and the mundane. The very musicality of Copeland’s language is the result of colloquial speech arranged in such a way that words expose themselves for the music that they already are.

In this way, Copeland is the sort of writer that, no matter her subject, is ever present in her poems. Even in an outward-looking nature poem such as “Notes on Vanishing,” Copeland’s energy can be felt in the precise imagery and playful language. One section reads:

Gravid stems  
erupt.

The hale

yellow pale once

they're plucked.

And then:

The smallness of this  
colloquial cannot

muffle the full morning orchestra—

amphibious greens  
clotting the trickle

of thaw. The tinny

fin flip and eyeflake flash—  
small schools that

give shimmer in the dull

sulk of wind.

When I asked Copeland about “Notes on Vanishing,” she said that it’s a poem about, “...tribal Baltic-Finnic languages, some of which are truly vanishing. The idea runs parallel to vanishing natural landscapes, particularly in a part of the world that feels like my second home.” In this way, Copeland illustrates yet again just how much gravity can be contained (or not contained) in the be-coming void and empty spaces.

The collection ends with the poem “Seall,” – perhaps the strongest of the three. It is a bodily poem in both subject and sound. Whereas the rhythms of “Notes on Vanishing” gesture toward the rhythms of nature, “Seall” gestures toward, or moves with, the rhythms of the body. One section reads:

Our pulses  
gulp  
in rhyme  
upon  
release— our

bodies beyond  
us  
siphon,  
harbor.

This is an example of Copeland’s covert profundity, using that which has been articulated in the first two poems about nature and the reservoir, and combining the two to illuminate the connectedness of the personal to the communal to the natural. In this way, Copeland is a meditative – even ‘confessional’ – poet who manages to transcend egoism without leaving behind her own personhood. The collection ends with two fragments that read:

Midnight

integral—  
each night

an event—  
we find in

mismatched  
Coke glasses

Svedka, chokeberry

wine—I clutch  
your musk  
your brine

to my  
breast

& goad

-

Star bands  
tack layers

to longer days—  
black satin,

white linen—  
either,  
always  
wide awake.

These last two words, “wide awake,” seem a fitting end to the collection, as one has the sense after reading these poems that though Copeland is no blind idealist or naive dreamer, but rather someone who manages to write with a certain joy born of an unassuming openness toward the waking, lucid moment.

# Biographies

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# Poetry

## Lucas Bolter

## John Calavitta

## Paula Cisewski

Paula Cisewski's second poetry collection, *Ghost Fargo*, was selected by Franz Wright for the Nightboat Poetry Prize. She is also the author of *Upon Arrival* (Black Ocean), of the chapbooks *How Birds Work* and *Two Museums*, and the co-author, with Mathias Svalina, of *Or Else What Asked the Flame*. A liberal arts instructor and a Jerome Grant recipient, her poems appear regularly in literary magazines such as *A Handsome Journal*, *H\_NGM\_N*, *Forklift*, *OH, failbetter*, *We Are So Happy to Know Something*, *BOMB*, and *REVOLUTIONesque*. She lives in Minneapolis.

## Alessandro Cusimano

Alessandro Cusimano was born in Palermo, Italy, on July 2, 1967. He lives in Rome, where he is writer, poet, playwright. Anarchist and visionary, painful and surreal, his works reflect on anxiety, crush conventions and illusions, proclaiming, with a barrage of words, that life is, by its nature, a scandal. Appeared recently on the international literary stage, some of his writings have been published by *The Cynic Online Magazine*, *Decanto Magazine*, *The Recusant*, *FOLLY Magazine*, *Exercise Bowler*, *Streetcake Magazine*, *Bewildering Stories*, *Numinous Magazine*, *Deadman's Tome*, *RED OCHRE Lit*, *Orion's Child Magazine*, *Black Cat Poems* and *EPIPHANY Magazine*.

## Dolly Lemke & Nick Demske

Dolly Lemke lives in Chicago where she works as Assistant Editor of *Switchback Books* and is founder and co-curator of The Dollhouse Reading Series. Her poems are published or forthcoming in *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Best American Poetry 2010*, *Court Green*, *Sink Review*, and *Salt Hill*. Her chapbook, *O Town Heights*, was recently published by DoubleCross Press. Her current favorite local brew is Daisy Cutter.

Nick Demske lives in Racine and works at the Racine Public Library. His self-titled manuscript was selected by Joyelle McSweeney for the 2010 Fence Modern Poets Series Award and was published by Fence Books. Nick was featured in 2011 as one of fifteen emerging poets to watch for by *Poets and Writers* magazine and his book was chosen as one of the 10 Best Books of Poetry in 2010 by a Believer Magazine reader survey. This past fall, he completed a month-and-a-half-long book tour that traveled over 10,000 miles across the whole of America. Nick curates the *BONK!* performance series in Racine, the poetry headquarters of the world. You can visit him online sometime at his blog [nickipoo.wordpress.com](http://nickipoo.wordpress.com)

## Farrah Field

Farrah Field is the author of *Rising* (Four Way Books, 2009) and *Parents* (Immaculate Disciples Press, 2011). Two of her poems appear in *The Best American Poetry 2011* as well as *Harp & Altar*, *Sink Review*, *West Wind Review*, and *Sixth Finch*. Her second book of poetry *Wolf and Pilot* (Four Way Books) is forthcoming in 2012. She blogs at [adultish.blogspot.com](http://adultish.blogspot.com) and is co-owner of Berl's Brooklyn Poetry Shop.

## Kathy Goodkin

Kathy Goodkin holds an MFA from George Mason University, where she was the recipient of an Academy of American Poets prize. Her poems have previously appeared or are forthcoming in *Fourteen Hills*, *RHINO*, and *wicked alice*. Kathy lives in Denver, directs the Writing Center at Regis University, and loves the mountains.

### **Carolyn Guinzio**

Carolyn Guinzio's third book, *Spoke & Dark*, was chosen by Alice Quinn for the To The Lighthouse/A Room Of Her Own Prize and will appear in 2012 on Red Hen Press. She is also the author of *West Pullman*, winner of the 2004 Bordighera Poetry Prize, and *Quarry* (Parlor Press, 2008). Her work has appeared in *Blackbird*, *Colorado Review*, *Indiana Review*, *New American Writing*, *Puerto Del Sol*, and *Smartish Pace*, among other journals. She is the editor of an online journal of innovative writing and images by women called *Yew* (yewjournal.com).

### **Jose Luis Gutierrez**

### **Steve Halle**

Steve Halle is the author of the poetry collection *Map of the Hydrogen World* and the chapbook *Cessation Covers*. He edits the online poetry journal *Seven Corners (7C)* and is the founding director of Co.Im.Press. He is the assistant director of the English Department's Publications Unit at Illinois State University.

### **Christine Kanownik**

Christine Kanownik is the co-founder of Augury Books. Her reviews, art, and poetry can be found in past or upcoming issues of: *H\_NGM\_N*, *Lungfull! Magazine*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, and *Ping Pong*. In 2008 she performed a theater residency at the University of Chicago where the collaborative piece *Memetic Jukebox* was staged. She currently lives and works in New York.

### **Mercedes Lawry**

### **Jeffery MacLachlan**

### **Gary McDowell**

Gary McDowell's first collection of poems, *American Amen* (Dream Horse Press, 2010), won the 2009 Orphic Prize for Poetry. He's also the author of two chapbooks, *They Speak of Fruit* (Cooper Dillon, 2009) and *The Blueprint* (Pudding House, 2005), and he's the co-editor of *The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Prose Poetry: Contemporary Poets in Discussion and Practice* (Rose Metal Press, 2010). His poems have appeared in various literary journals, including *The Bellingham Review*, *Colorado Review*, *The Indiana Review*, *The Laurel Review*, *New England Review*, *Ninth Letter*, and *Quarterly West*. He lives in Nashville, TN with his wife and two kids where he is an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Belmont University.

### **Marc McKee**

Marc McKee received his MFA from the University of Houston and his PhD from the University of Missouri in Columbia, where he lives with his wife, Camellia Cosgray. Recent work appears in *Sixth Finch*, *Sou'wester*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *The Journal*, and *Artifice*. He is the author of a chapbook, *What Apocalypse?* (New Michigan Press, 2008) and two full-length collections *Fuse* (Black Lawrence Press, 2011) and *Bewilderness* (forthcoming, Black Lawrence Press, 2014).

### **Jenn Monroe**

### **Ben Nardolilli**

### **Anthony Opal**

Anthony Opal lives in Chicago where he is chapbook review editor for *TriQuarterly Online* and a grad student at Northwestern University. His poems have most recently appeared in *Boston Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Harpur Palate*, *Permafrost*, and *The Greensboro Review*.

### **Alexis Orgera**

Alexis Orgera lives in southwest Florida in a half-remodeled bungalow. She is a poet, freelance writer/editor, and part-time professor at the local art school and is the author of two chapbooks, *Illuminatrix* (Forklift, Ink) and *Dear Friends, The Birds Were Wonderful!* (Blue Hour Press) and one full-length collection, *How Like Foreign Objects* (H\_ngm\_n Bks). Her poems, essays, interviews, and reviews can be found online and in print, most recently in *Barrelhouse Online*, *Beecher's Magazine*, *Big Bell*, *H\_ngm\_n*, *HTMLGiant*, *The Leveler*, *Parthenon West*, *RealPoetik*, *The Rumpus*, *Sixth Finch*, and elsewhere.

### **Mike Puican**

Mike Puican has poetry either published or forthcoming in *Poetry*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Courtland Review*, and *New England Review*, among others. He also writes reviews for *Cerise Press*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, and *TriQuarterly Online*.

### **Virginia Smith**

Virginia Smith received her MFA in Creative Writing from Northwestern University. Her poems have appeared most recently, or are forthcoming, in *Denver Quarterly*, *Lily Review*, *Moria*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.

### **Tony Trigilio**

Tony Trigilio's newest collection of poetry is *Historic Diary* (BlazeVOX, 2011). Recent poems are published or forthcoming in *American Letters & Commentary*, *Denver Quarterly*, *FIELD*, *The Laurel Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Seattle Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Sou'wester*, and *Spinning Jenny*. He is also a co-founder and co-editor of *Court Green*.

### **Carli Wheeler**

### **Jake Adam York**

Jake Adam York is the author of three books of poems including *A Murmuration of Starlings* (2008) and *Persons Unknown* (2010), published by Southern Illinois University Press in the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry. An associate professor at the University of Colorado Denver, York co-edits *Copper Nickel*.

## **Art**

### **Arianna Alvarez**

### **Sherard Harrington**

### **Robert Nulph**

### **Ursula Sokolowska**

### **Terry Wright**

## **Fiction**

### **Charles Blackstone**

Charles Blackstone is the author of *The Week You Weren't Here*, a novel, and the co-editor of *The Art of Friction*, an anthology. His short prose has appeared in *Esquire.com*, *The Wall Street Journal.com*, *Modern Luxury*, *The Journal of Experimental Fiction*, and the *&NOW Awards: Best Innovative Fiction*. He is managing editor of *Bookslut*, teaches at the University of Chicago's Graham School, and lives in the city.

### **David Morris Parson**

## **NonFiction**

### **Anthony Opal**

Anthony Opal lives in Chicago where he is chapbook review editor for *TriQuarterly Online* and a grad student at Northwestern University. His poems have most recently appeared in *Boston Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Harpur Palate*, *Permafrost*, and *The Greensboro Review*.

