

# metafore



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Spring 2019

Flash Fiction & Short Form Poetry Edition

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# THE HOUSE FAIRY

EDWARD AHERN

“You’re infested with house fairies.”

Leslie looked like she’d bitten into rotten fruit. “Don’t talk crazy, Michaela. It’s mice. Worse, maybe rats. Fairies are superstition, and I never even heard of house fairies.”

Michaela took off her Ascotty summer hat and sat down on a sofa. “You’ll wish it was rats. Stolen jewelry replaced with flowers, refrigerator food nibbled on, strange sounds. Oh yeah, *Mediocris Surbanis Suis*. house fairy. You live alone, Leslie, it’s not a roommate teasing you.”

Leslie sat next to her and touched Michaela’s shoulder. “I’ll play along with your gag. How do I get rid of house fairies? Rat traps?”

Michaela’s expression was sad. “Suburban fairies are the worst kind. They’re greedy, selfish and egotistical, just like the human occupants. And unlike their woodland relatives, they break their promises. They have no morals, breeding like mice, and their lack of ethics is Trumpian. The only thing to do is burn the place down and claim on the insurance.”

“Bitch.” The word seemed to come right out of the facing wall. “Don’t believe her lies, Les.”

Leslie, pale by nature, was the color of cheap copy paper. “Who said that?”

Michaela grinned. “It worked. House fairies are vain and lose their cool if insulted. We know you’re there, so you may as well come out.”

A flap of pastel wallpaper curled back and a chubby, nude girl figure of maybe seven inches stepped out with no wings, frizzy hair, and scattered pimples. “Don’t listen to Ms. Hot Flash. We brighten your emotional life with enhancing pheromones.”

Leslie was still in shock, but blurted out, “Pheromones? What the hell?”

“Used to be called pixie dust. Aren’t you happier now than you were before you moved in?”

“Uh, maybe, but that’s because I dumped my old partner.”

“No, that’s because we heighten your senses and brighten your dreams.”

Michaela opened her mouth to speak, and the fairy waved her into silence. “Quiet or I’ll crap in your hat.”

“Here’s the deal, Leslie. You can’t get rid of us without destroying the place, and we don’t want to move. You ignore our noshing on your food, and we’ll keep you in fine emotional states. Think of us as inexpensive Life Coaches.”

Leslie’s mouth had dropped open, not a becoming look. She shut it and said, “Okay, maybe, but you’ve got to give the jewelry back.”

The fairy frowned, creating multiple dimples. “Can’t do that, but we can trade. The next yard sale you go by, get a handful of costume jewelry. It’s bright we like, not expensive. Okay?”

Leslie nodded, blue-tinged hair swinging back and forth. “Okay.”

The fairy turned to go back into the wall, exposing a matronly derriere. “You probably won’t see us again. Just take us on faith.” The sprite stepped behind the curled wallpaper, which laid back down onto the wall.

Michaela patted Leslie’s hand. “I thought that went well.”

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BIO: Ed Ahern resumed writing after forty-odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He’s had over two hundred stories and poems published so far, and three books. Ed works the other side of writing at *Bewildering Stories*, where he sits on the review board and manages a posse of five review editors.

# THE GARDEN

BETHANY BRUNO

*He will never fully recover. He will always be sick and he will always be weak from the disease,* Doctor Johnson told my father in that cold outpatient room of our local hospital. He would have to try to build a new life for himself. Comfort and daily joy came from watering his blooming garden in a single corner of our backyard with the green rubber hose, which was old and leaked in every direction. The flowers and plants were high as our crooked fence, and their roots entangled our soil. The patch of square soiled ground was filled with juicy tomatoes, sunflowers which my mother adored, and thick lilacs that resembled his many bruises from chemo treatments. He would come out to his garden, hose in hand, and give life to his silent babies for hours, watching the sun fade into night. He inspected their bodies for damage from solar rays. He gave them plenty of soil to sleep upon warm nights. He protected them from intruders, wrapping them up tightly around an orange plastic fencing.

Once, we were talking by his garden when he was in his second year of remission, when he asked me if there really was a God. I told him I didn't know. He just stared at his plants for a minute as winds swept through his garden, lightly.

*If there isn't, at least we have this time now.*

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BIO: Bethany Bruno is a born and raised Florida Writer. She attended Flagler College, in St. Augustine, FL, where she earned her B.A in English. She later attended the University of North Florida for her M.A. Before becoming a Library Specialist, she was an English teacher and a Park Ranger with the National Park Service. Her work has been previously published in *The Flagler Review*, *Lunch Ticket Magazine*, *Paragon Press*, *Underwood Press*, *Foliage Oak Literary Magazine*, and *Ripples in Space*. She's currently working on her debut novel, *From the Passenger Seat*.

# I DON'T REMEMBER

## JUNE CALENDER

Maybe there was thunder. I was walking in the rain, and the rain was falling on my face. No, I wasn't walking. Something was on top of me. I couldn't move. Very nearby a dog was barking. When I opened my eyes, I saw the golden brown hair on the dog's neck. He was excited that I was there and wanted the world to know. "Nice doggie," I whispered.

"Over there!" a voice shouted. "Another one. Good boy!" A gloved hand caught the dog's collar and pulled him back. I saw the yellow of a hard hat and a man's dirt-smeared face.

"Oh, hello," I said.

"Hello," he said. "Hell of a spot you chose to take a nap." He grinned at me. He had blue eyes.

Other voices approached. It sounded like many men.

"Another. Alive?" I heard.

"Yeah, doesn't know what happened to her."

"What happened to me?" I asked the cheery man. I was growing fond of this guy. I liked his attitude.

"Earthquake. Whole damned building collapsed."

"On top of me?"

"You and a few others. We're here to dig you out."

"Good. The sooner, the better. The rain is ruining my hair."

"You look beautiful to me," the guy said.

"Thanks. And give that dog a bone."

They tell me I actually had that conversation when I was discovered in the debris. I have absolutely no memory of anything but the dog and the man's blue eyes.

# JEMMY PAINTS MY PORTRAIT

## JUNE CALENDER

I had other things to do. It's not as if my life was empty. Meeting and managing and persuading patrons of Jemmy's genius was my fulltime job. I'm not complaining. He is my life, all I have left after influenza took his father and his two brothers.

When Jemmy settled in London, he needed me to manage his career. I enjoyed it. Enjoyed too his wild and sometimes disreputable friends, flamboyant, brilliant, dressed in their velvet waistcoats and yellow kid gloves. Jemmy followed their fashion and, oh, my, he was beautiful. He had the wild curly hair from the McNeil side of the family. Except for his mustache, he looked like a cherub in a rococo painting.

He had an Idea with a capital I. Get rid of all the soft colors and billowy blue skies, the delicate young female flesh—it wasn't women he was attracted to, after all—forget about the melon breasts and delicate pink nipples. He would paint a symphony of gray and black. No, I didn't really have time to pose for him. But he was my darling Jemmy, so I stood, straight and still and serious in that awful black dress and lace bonnet. It certainly wasn't my most becoming gown, I only kept it for wakes and funerals. But he wanted black.

My feet hurt, my back hurt, I was a martyr for his art. I couldn't stop the sighs, even a groan now and then, just to let him know what a burden and imposition it was to pose like a corpse in rigor mortise standing instead of lying in the comfort of a pillowed casket. Finally, he went into the dining room and came back with a straight-backed chair. "All right, you can sit and be comfortable if you'll stop the dramatics," he said.

"A footstool would be a help," I said.

"Oh, a footstool, too? I'll get one. But no pillows. This is serious painting."

"I know," I said, "Gray and deep shadowless black. And white—my lace bonnet."

So I sat, and he painted. I turned my head away. Nothing is more boring than watching a painter dab and squint and chew his lips and wrinkle his brow, pick his nose. I closed my eyes to settle into my own thoughts, the gray and white and black of the Russian winter when I buried his father and his brothers and took this one beloved child back to Lowell, Massachusetts to make a life for us. My life a symphony in gray and black ... and Jemmy's sparkling blue eyes

and his sweet smile and kiss on the forehead when he said, “Thank you, Mother. This painting will make us both famous.”

“God forbid,” I said. “I don’t want the world thinking that’s what I looked like.”

(monologue spoken by Anna McNeil Whistler)

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BIO: June Calender is a retired off-off Broadway playwright now living on Cape Cod and trying to write prose and poetry of which both fiction, poems, and travel memoirs have been printed in literary magazines. She also teaches writing skills at the Academy for Livelong Learning at Cape Cod Community College.

# SHOVELS

DAN A. CARDOZA

I tell the salesclerk I'm just looking, and like any valued host, he says, "Take your time, I'll be here. By the way, we have more due next week."

"What a good steward," I think.

The shovels are all stacked in their designated boxes, row, one next to the other, diverse. Some reveal smooth hickory handles from the Richland Company, in Arkansas. Others disclose fiberglass handles, manufactured in Bristol Virginia, yellow and orange. They're a few short shovels presenting grip handled ends, for a more confident fit, purpose, maybe ambition. The hardware shop boasts square shovels too, for down under the cold: one painted black for trenches that narrow, two that seem serious about shoveling deep snow, with names like Ames, Seymour, and Bond.

Most built for all sorts of depth, width, and length of what was whole, in advance of shoveling any specification or design of hole. All their resumes nearly perfect, light use, all with warranties insuring long life, replacement if broken.

Before backhoes, shovels boasted a celebrated reputation, more dignified. In their heyday, they buried the strong, the fragile, even children. Designated duties were somber, yet renowned, performed to honor, often cause for literary mention in poems and novels.

Most contemporary shovels are designed for vocations in mind, less occupation, mainly for renewal as seen in the hardware stores of spring. Chores include the planting of carrots, tomatoes, maybe corn, maybe fill a few post holes.

Or perhaps for digging up the past, so curious children can dream big, to dig clear to China through a pile of sandy loam, or if very lucky, discover the tip of a devil's horn.

With time, it's difficult to keep the past covered up, like the real reason for my enthusiastic shoveling, a chase for imaginary discovery so mother could speak to the Chaplin, alone.

In the Civil War, they buried soldiers, and slaves, and elbows and legs, and stallions in fields where fifes played Dixie and drums beat Yankee Doodle Dandy, with musical instruments both loved and hated. In World War two, at Normandy, they buried the honorable, where each

spring farmers swear not to stare at the hills. The yarrow will blind you like Sun. And in Vietnam shovels dug foxholes for G.I.'s who lay in a fetus posture, crazed and low through the dawns early light, pleading for mother.

As I fix my eyes on the shovels, they begin to fade, as a string of fluorescent lights click, switch off, and then out. Row, after row, after row, the way the sentinel moon zigzags and snaps through the tall gaps in the stand of windy sycamore, at Arlington National Cemetery. Just before dawn, the grave row lights switch off too; row after row, yet the dead remain asleep in the dark, not anxious about closing a store, to go home with family. So they can stay dreaming, while I do the math.

“How many shovels would it take to backfill all the craters that pock the moon?”

The End

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BIO: Dan A. Cardoza has an MS Degree in Education from UC, Sacramento, Calif. He is the author of four poetry Chapbooks, and a new book of fiction, *Second Stories*. His recent credits: *101 Words*, *Adelaide*, *California Quarterly*, *Chaleur*, *Cleaver*, *Confluence*, *UK*, *Dissections*, *Door=Jar*, *Drabble*, *Entropy*, *Esthetic Apostle*, *Fiction Pool*, *Foxglove*, *Frogmore*, *UK*, *High Shelf Press*, *New Flash Fiction Review*, *Rue Scribe*, *Runcible Spoon*, *Skylight 47*, *Spelk*, *Spillwords*, *Riggwelter*, *Stray Branch*, *Urban Arts*, *Zen Space*, *Tulpa* and *Zeroflash*.

# FEATURED ARTIST

## ANDRÉA ACKER

Andréa is a visual activist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She studied Art at Maharishi University of Management, where Transcendental Meditation is part of the curriculum. For her, making art is a spiritual practice. Ancient artists from many traditions ritually painted repeating patterns. Their goal, like the artist herself, was twofold; first the spiritualization of the piece, and second, the purification of Self through meditative labor.

Andréa is highly inspired by the Surrealist Movement, the symbolism found in the Neolithic period artifacts and the indigenous and tribal arts. The artist also holds a degree in Fashion Design; both the design and the fashion aspects can be identified in her art.

Andréa's artworks act as political, historical, socioeconomic and ecological commentaries, with the intention of calling the viewer's attention to issues ignored by the status quo.

Through her art, Andréa honors the Goddess worshiping societies from the Neolithic period, aiming to revive the ancient Matriarchal Societies ideals and reject the current patriarchal capitalist system.

For more of her art, artistic resume, email and social media please go to [www.andreaacker.com](http://www.andreaacker.com)





Gaia and Tartarus, 2016  
Andréa Acker  
Collage and paint on paper  
29.7 x 42 cm

# NAANI'S SONG

SARA SIDDIQUI CHANSARKAR

The rhythm of the train ride lulls me. My daughter, Diya, shakes my shoulder, “Mama, listen, Naani’s song.”

My eyes are sleep-stung after the long flight from Chicago to New Delhi, but hers are wide, wandering, as she gazes out the train window. We are, now, traveling to my sister’s place.

Diya was five when she last visited India. She hid her face in my scarf when anyone tried to talk to her. The shyness peeled off, layer after layer, year after year. Today, she is a peppy 11-year-old, hungry for the sights, sounds, and the snacks toted by vendors inside the train. I’ve given her some money to spend.

My daughter is right about the song. Some woman is singing aloud, “Chalte chalte mere ye geet,” a Bollywood number that my mother used to hum while cooking. I play it in my kitchen when I miss her.

The singer enters our coach, filling it with an odor of her unwashed body. She is a young woman, draped in a green sari with its end pulled over her head and face so that only her singing lips are visible. A baby girl, with dirty hair and sad eyes, clings to her left hip.

The song is a romantic duet about two lovers promising to be together in the journey of life. It’s a good choice for a train audience, I think, but this woman is mutilating the song, stretching its happy tune into melancholy.

At the end of her performance, she holds out her hand in front of each passenger. The baby follows her cue and stretches out her mud-ridged palm. Some passengers avert their gaze, some place money in her hand or the baby’s.

I am seething. Why is this woman violating my mother’s song? Why is she exploiting the baby to harness people’s compassion?

When the singer reaches us, Diya places some money on the singer’s palm. She also gives a packet of chips to the baby. The woman folds her hands into a namaste and moves on.

“Her baby must be hungry,” Diya whispers.

My daughter wants my validation. I smooth her hair. I don’t tell her anything; she’ll learn with time.

The train slows down as it approaches the next station. Diya is asleep on my shoulder.

The singer alights. At the platform, she lights a beedi and walks briskly to a tea-stall. I watch as she hands the baby over to another young woman wearing a magenta sari. This woman places the baby on her left hip and strides towards the train.

Glossary:

*Naani*: maternal grandmother

*chalte chalte mere ye geet*: Always remember my songs in the journey of life

*beedi*: a type of cheap cigarette made of unprocessed tobacco wrapped in leaves

*namaste*: a respectful greeting in India

---

BIO: Sara Siddiqui Chansarkar is an Indian American. She was born in a middle-class family in India and will forever be indebted to her parents for educating her beyond their means. She is a *Pushcart* and *Best of the Net* nominee; her work has been published online in *The Ellipsis zine*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Star82 Review*, *Spelk*, and also in print, most recently in *The Chicken Soup for The Soul* series. She can be reached at twitter @PunyFingers.

# NARROW PASSAGE

A.L.A. COVINGTON

turn right toward city  
NPR blares: backup  
a man waits by a broken car  
beside the road

mascara flashes at stoplight  
woman purses lips  
into rearview mirror  
her child is an honor student at CHS

man leashed to poodle in crosswalk  
flashes frown at passing cars  
horns bark angry  
at a truck crossing the line

tuktuk bounces  
beside motorbike  
by cart  
next to tiny truck  
walking man treads through

masses surge  
into the narrows  
sea spilling into pipe  
mother sidesaddles cycle, draping sari  
over sleeping child's toes

white cow  
lies on dusty road's edge  
by dozing dog  
vehicles volley happy honks  
skirting her haunches

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BIO: A.L.A. Covington has an M.F.A. in fiction writing from Spalding University, where she also studied poetry and other creative writing genres. Her short stories, poetry, and other works have appeared in various publications, including *FLARE: The Flagler Review*, *The Delmarva Review*, *Crosspoint* (translated into Bulgarian), *Equilibrists*, and the anthology *Woman's Works*. In 2017, *The Louisville Review* nominated one of her stories, *The Lamb*, for a Pushcart Prize.

# TEN ITEMS OR LESS

DONALD DEWEY

Dalton pulled a cart from the metal chrysalis of them in front of the supermarket. The wheels obeyed, all four of them turning smoothly. The electronic eye on the street door worked; so did the one on the inner door. He thought it smart of the store to display the fruits and vegetables right inside the entrance. Their aromas made for instant sensations—of hungers, of cool refreshment, reminding him he wasn't there as a passerby.

He parked in front of the tangelos. They were so impeccably colored he wondered if they had undergone some special orange dye processing. Their nubbed heads were also too perfect, suggesting baby bottle nipples and subliminal messages gone unsubtle. He chanced it, choosing three as a compromise between getting home to discover that the one he had bought was exquisite or that he had been duped into taking a sack of tasteless rocks.

He moved on to the peppers. Their military alignment argued for one of each—green, yellow, and red. But he was wise to the sets game. What the produce arrangers didn't know was that he had never been unsettled by less than complete sets, when necessary even playing solitaire at home with a deck of 50 cards. He took two green peppers without feeling in the least incomplete for leaving the reds and yellows where they were.

Not in the mood for cooking, he inspected the rotisserie shelves closely. He had no idea what was so *Italian* about the chicken breasts with the red speckles. He had a rule against eating anything but cookies with red speckles, and it had been years since he had eaten cookies. He chose the Cornish hens. They looked substantial enough, and there were two of them for two suppers.

The deli counter scolded him for having been hasty about the hens. The salads seemed to come in every color and substance, the pates didn't have their usual mound of sludge look. He could imagine sitting down to the meatballs, sausages, and sardines, too. There was an air of *people* to it all. People unwrapping the paper. People pulling down plates from a kitchen cabinet. People asking other people if they wanted soda, water, or tea.

The hens felt appropriate for him, after all.

He pushed on to the aisle with the cat food. He always seemed to forget which it was—Aisle Three or Aisle Four. He remembered his mnemonic of Fancy Feast Four when he was already in front of the endless array of the chipped and the minced and the roasted. He swept a few of each into his cart. As Dalton headed for the Express checkout, he liked the idea of surprising Sandy for supper.

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BIO: Donald Dewey has published some 40 books of fiction and nonfiction, as well as had some 30 plays staged. His latest book is *Mosquitoes and Tortoises: Flights and Crawls on the Fringes of the Media*.

# THE NOSE WE BLOW IS OUR OWN

WILLIAM DORESKI

The cold in my nose is a secret that can't stay secret. Everyone in the village has a cold, flu, or pneumonia, but that doesn't prevent me from cuddling my personal viral infection in the dark of my darkest mood. After all, we can try to suffer communally, but the nose we blow is our own. You try to douse me with cream soda, root beer, ginger ale. I believe in forcing fluids, but I'm not sure what I'm forcing them to do. Maybe to form a new Sargasso Sea, where shipwrecks drift in perpetual calm, and a choir of drowned sailors rehearses. Once I've finished swallowing it, that sea will go adrift inside me where everything and nothing resolves. Because I'm so ecological you want me to press myself against the coming storm to hold it off until you get your makeup on. I'm willing to try, but the sniffles betray me. I'm too human to insert myself between competing weather fronts, but I can stand outside and look up at the sky, wistfully. You hate adverbs and so do I, but sometimes they convey something more than a head cold, more than a shot of bourbon, more than a kiss from the snow goddess, who is only you in drag.

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BIO: William Doeski has published three critical studies and several collections of poetry. His poetry, essays, reviews, and fiction have appeared in various journals. He has taught writing and literature at Emerson, Goddard, Boston University, and Keene State College. His new poetry collection is *A Black River, A Dark Fall*.

# SUBMERGED

WILLIAM EARLE

The waves crash against the shore, enveloping my feet in a cloudy brine. The water is brisk, and the sun hugs the horizon around six o'clock in the morning. I lay in silence, the golden rays slowly working their way higher into the sky. Cool breezes mix with the gentle heat of the sun. I breathe in. My clothes, tattered and stained, wrap around my fragile body. The tide barely reaches my lower back, but its lull is enough for me to close my eyes.

“Scuse me, mister. Are you okay?” I peek out from behind my eyelids, light blinding my vision. A young boy, front teeth missing, stands above me. I blink, and he blinks back. We stare at each other.

“Yeah, I, uh... I'm good,” I mutter, “Thanks.”

The kid's eyes widen, a smile creeping to his lips. He's young, maybe four, but a grin as wide as the Mariana Trench. He's soaked, sand glued to his skin from his feet to his knees, and again at his elbows. He leans in closer and tilts his head to the left. His left. “Say, sir, you wouldn't happen to know where I can find some good seashells, would ya?”

I squint while propping myself up on my right elbow. He waits for an answer, and quite frankly, so do I. My mouth is stiff, and the ripe taste of salt from the ocean air leaves my tongue dry. I push the hair from my face, and I clarify, “Seashells?”

He scratches his head. “Yeah, y'know”—he gestures in an attempt to draw my attention to the shell that rests a few feet away— “really big seashells.”

His beady eyes stay fixed on mine, and I can feel him pleading for a partner in crime. I feel the corners of my lips curl, and I comply: “I guess I could help you find some.”

He leaps in excitement, followed by *yippees* and *wahoos*. He grabs my hand and pulls me to my feet. “Thanks very much, mister.”

He slides his tiny fingers between mine and pulls me along the shore, showing me each and every shell he finds. We rank them out of five, with anything less than three being thrown back. “So the crabs can build their houses,” he explains. I take a deep breath in, which feels as if I had just breathed in seawater. I cough a bit.

The boy chants from behind me, “Let's keep going! There are still so many shells to see.” I grin at him, turning one last time to look back at where we had come from. A lump protrudes from the shore. Curiosity asks, “What's that over there?”

“What's what?”

“That lump over there in the dunes.”

I turn to face the boy once more, him digging through the sand like an animal. He giggles, eyes a little darker than before: “That's you, dummy. Can't you recognize your own body?”

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BIO: William Earle is a poet and writer and has been writing since 2012. He is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in English literature at Trent University. Beyond his studies, he spends his time filling pages with words while loitering in coffee shops and libraries. He is in the process of constructing his first anthology.

# AS YOUNG AS YOU FEEL

RAFIQ EBRAHIM

My friend, Professor Harilal Dodo, came to me last evening, exhausted and downcast.

“Well?” I asked, looking inquiringly at him.

“Tell me, do I look very old?”

Looking at him closely and observing the blue hat he had put on to hide his bald patch, the sun glasses to cover up the lines by his eyes and the silk scarf around his neck to hide the wrinkles and loose skin on his neck, I said, “I see that you have very cleverly camouflaged the indicators of age.”

“I am not even an octogenarian and they think I am done with, an old fogey who cannot even walk straight.”

“Who says you are an old fogey?”

“I’ll tell you what I had to suffer today.”

“Please do,” I said.

“Well, this morning I came out of my house, fresh as a daisy, feeling as if a fountain of youth was within me. Passing by a garden, I smelled the fragrance of rose and jasmine, and admired the birds....”

“Were the birds chirping?” I interrupted.

“Never mind about the birds chirping,” he almost yelled. “I want to tell you about my ordeals and you are interested in whether the birds were chirping or not.”

“Sorry, please go on.”

“I boarded a bus to go to a movie theater. Since all the seats were occupied, I had to stand. A couple of young girls sitting nearby looked at me. One of them remarked, ‘There is an oldie standing there. I am afraid he might fall down and injure himself.’ Saying so, she got up and offered me her seat.”

“A noble gesture,” I put in.

“But I don’t need such sympathy. I can very well stand in a bus! I went to see a movie and when I approached the ticket window, the clerk said, ‘Do you need any assistance to take

you inside the auditorium and make you seated?’ That was it! They were all bent upon making me feel as though a grave was my next step.”

“This really is a matter of deep concern, Harilal. You ought to take some vitamins and rejuvenating herbs,” I pointed out.

“Will you shut up?” he roared. “I am not that old! Neither do I look that old, but the world is bent upon me to bury the hatchet.”

“It is not like that,” I said. “Observations of a few unintelligent persons don’t matter. Looking at you, I see a man in all his splendor, ready to sprint any moment.”

He continued, “The final nail in my confidence was hammered in the library when a young man asked, ‘Sir, we are reading a chapter on World War One and I am sure you would be able to throw some light on the bravery of the Indian troops positioned in Burma since you look like a veteran of the war.’ That was it! I came out, took a cab and came straight here. Now get me some coffee – not the decaffeinated one.”

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BIO: Rafiq Ebrahim is a freelance writer and novelist. His short stories and articles are published in leading newspapers and magazines in Pakistan, USA and other countries. He has written three novels: *Glowing Embers*, *Advertising – The Other Side* and *Beyond the Crumbling Heights (Colors in the life of a Pakistani slum boy)*. His publications include *New York Times Magazine*, *Foliage Oak*, *The Fountain Magazine*, *The Friday Times Pakistan*, and *PIF Magazine*

# MIRAGE

MICHAEL ESTABROOK

Out the back window  
next to the mulch bin  
topped with watermelon rinds  
corn husks and withered pumpkins  
a Galapagos Tortoise, not moving or eating  
just resting, steady, sure  
as the harvest moon, two front legs  
stretched out, wrinkled head  
peeking out from its dark carapace.

But I know it's not a Galapagos Tortoise  
because this is winter in New England,  
light snow powdering everything.  
I look again & see it's only  
the large rock at the end of the path  
resting sure and steady as Mars  
in the winter sky, looking down  
at me standing next  
to the mulch bin  
in the snow.

---

BIO: Michael Estabrook is small press poet since the 1980s, striving always for greater clarity and concision rendering language more succinct and precise more accessible and appealing a Sisyphean adventure for sure. *The Poet's Curse, A Miscellany* is a recent collection (The Poetry Box, 2019).

# ON YOUR LIPS

R. GERRY FABIAN

When dawn exploded  
with thousands of light rays  
chasing cold darkness  
completely beyond now  
and dove couples  
cooed their soft notes,  
I gradually awoke  
to find you beside me  
with a smile  
on your lips.

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BIO: R. Gerry Fabian is a retired English instructor. He has been publishing poetry since 1972 in various poetry magazines. He is the editor of *Raw Dog Press*. His novels, *Memphis Masquerade*, *Getting Lucky (The Story)* and *Seventh Sense*, are available at Smashwords and all other ebook publishers. His first book of published poems, *Parallels*, is available at all major bookstores, and his second book of published poems, *Coming Out of The Atlantic*, is available on Amazon. His web page is <https://rgerryfabian.wordpress.com>

# COME HOME, SON

WARREN PAUL GLOVER

In the darkened cabin I'm alone with my thoughts, and that's the last place I want to be. I glance to my left, looking for company, but the woman beside me who I spoke to earlier during the flight is sleeping soundly, as is the man next to her. Across the aisle in the mid-section of the plane, I see one guy awake, watching a movie. Apart from that, it seems the rest of my fellow passengers are asleep, a destination beyond me. I take another sip of whiskey and look out of the window, peering into the night. I'm 33,000 feet above Russia, heading home for my first Christmas in a zillion years. And I'm scared.

Then I see him. Am I hallucinating? I must be sleep deprived.

Outside, riding merrily along on a sleigh is...Santa Claus. He's being pulled by a team of reindeer, who I guess must be Prancer, Dancer, Rudolf and the rest. As I stare blankly at them through the small square reinforced double-glazed window of the jet, my brain struggles to process what I'm seeing with my own eyes.

Let's get this straight. I'm seeing Santa Claus outside of an aeroplane, miles above the earth, in minus 40 degrees Celsius, keeping pace with a jumbo and being propelled not by four Rolls Royce RB211-524 turbofans but pulled by some famous reindeer whose names I can't all recall, the sleigh loaded up with presents which (miraculously it seems to me) do not fall off. It's all very surreal. I put it down to stress.

And then Santa smiles at me and waves and is immediately enveloped in cloud, leaving me staring into the void with only the vibrations of the plane disturbing the stillness of the cabin. I turn back from the window, reach for the attendant button and press it, several times. When the annoyed attendant appears, I request three bottles of whiskey.

As I wait for them, I think of all my childhood Christmases at home.

'Home' the word—the concept—feels strange. That place hasn't been home to me for such a long time now. And then I remember Dad always used to like a whiskey at Christmas.

But now my father is dying. This will be his last Christmas, and for the first time, I regret emigrating.

"Come home, son," Mum had said when she called to tell me the news.

The plane lands, and I disembark.

I take a deep breath, push aside a momentary stab of sadness as I think of Dad, and walk towards Customs. I stand in line and wait my turn. It is not until I get to the booth that I take any notice of the customs officer. He's a big man, with a generous girth, white hair, and a white beard. He looks vaguely like Santa Claus. He takes my passport, looks at me with the most kindly eyes I have ever seen, and says, "Welcome home, son."

# FASHIONABLY LATE

WARREN PAUL GLOVER

A quarter of an hour  
to fix your ringlets, you said,

those tight curls hanging from your head  
like wispy clouds on a summer's day

radiating against your face  
while I, in haste

speed out the door  
to get to the venue by four.

We fight over time,  
your clock, not the same as mine.

If you were on fire you'd keep the ambulance and engines waiting

at the gate

while you

fixing your hair

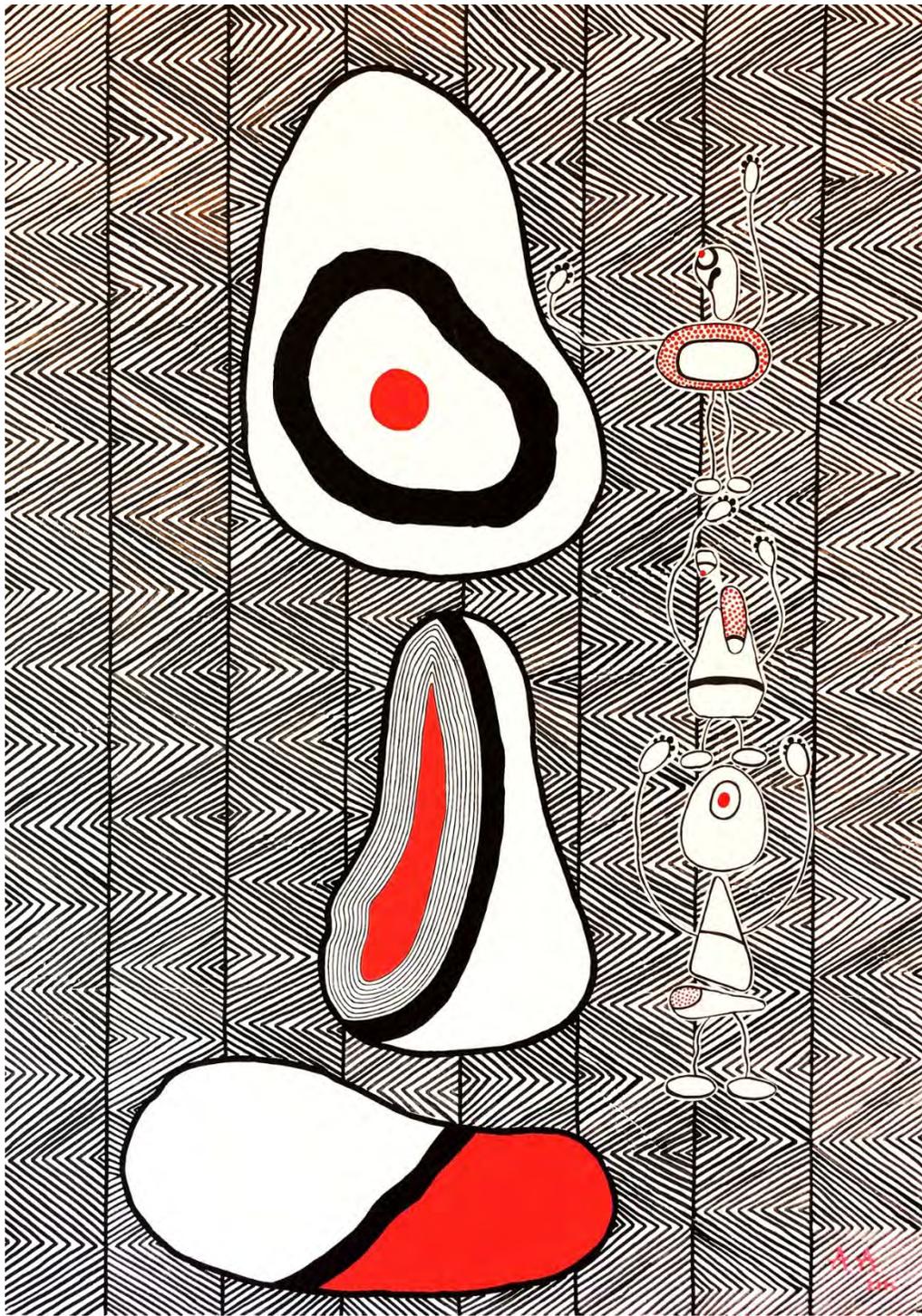
would be

fashionably

late.

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BIO: Warren Paul Glover is a British-Australian screenwriter, playwright, poet and actor living in Sydney, Australia. His work has been published in journals in Britain, Australia, and the United States, and also performed in Mexico and the United Arab Emirates.



Polyphemus and His Consciousness, 2016  
Andréa Acker  
Ink and paint on paper  
59 x 84 cm

# SENTINEL

ROSALIND GOLDSMITH

Pain? No. Glorious absence, for once. She breathed. She looked. Around her, wild mustard, dandelions, and blue cornflowers pocked the field with color. All was sun-drenched and ablaze with the high light. They walked through it, she picked a few golden lupines, no need to speak.

Then the pain came up again, brazen, hectic. She bent forward, hands on knees. He held her as she gulped air, straightened herself. They walked on.

“Ok?” he said.

“Ok,” she said.

“Should we go home?”

“No,” she said.

Moments then, when there was no pain. And the light flared and bloomed around the edges of the poplar trees that bordered the field, and it was intense, the light, coaxing every flower and blade of grass into the full fathom depth of its own color and into a harsh beauty. She felt she was walking through a world lashed in light and rich in meaning, every branch and every flower glassed by the sun. And still, they did not speak. After all these years, no need.

At the edge of the field, just ahead of them and to the left, a dog edged forward under the low rail of a wooden fence. It watched them, hackles spiked, black lips curled.

“Keep walking,” he said. “It’ll go away.”

But it didn’t. It followed them, by the edge of the fence, and wouldn’t let them out of its scavenging sight.

It was a blood dog, a hunter. Manged and blade thin. The face was all black, black to the eyes and the eyes yellow. It had the hackles still up and the gall to shamble up to them, edging along beside them as they walked. It growled low and deep, the sound of a threat in its gullet.

“Don’t look at it,” he said.

They walked on. The dog kept a cringing pace with them, lying low to the ground and creeping forward through the grass.

“Throw something at it,” she whispered, “Can’t you?”

“No, that’s the worst thing to do.”

The dog growled as it crept along beside them, its back roached, tail tucked under, the fur all around its neck thick with the fear and the threat as if a dementing wind raised it. From time to time it would stop. Just stop. Until they thought it was gone. Then it would catch up to them again, showing its teeth, rotten to the root yellowed teeth.

They got to the far end of the field. The car was just down the road. Slowly, he opened a gate and helped her through. Closed it. The dog didn’t follow. It sat by the gate and watched them as they left, yellow-eyed sentinel. Just before they reached the car, she turned back to look. The dog was slinking away from them, slowly weaving its way back through tall grass and wildflowers.

The light was all changed now, dulled to a grey cast, a withering stare of light that shrouded the field in a pale, glaucous bloom.

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BIO: Rosalind Goldsmith lives in Toronto. She began writing short fiction four years ago. Since then her stories have appeared in *Litro UK*, *Popshot UK*, *Filling Station*, *Thrice Fiction* and *Antilang*, and *Burningwood Journal*, among others.

# K IS FOR KYRIE ELEISON

CHRISTINE GRANT

The wavering notes of the Kyrie Eleison rise to the rafters, the only prayer still said in Greek. This church with its white walls and signs of the cross is familiar, a place of refuge, and yet I still feel displaced. Faith is a high wire act, no room to turn around. The only way is on, but how?

The journey began in a bare Presbyterian church, wedged between my parents with a grey beret squashed on my head. I wriggled and swung my legs while the minister described sin, judgement and hell.

I left, of course, driven away by a bogeyman God. No matter how hard I tried, he was going to send me to hell. So, what was the point? I might as well enjoy myself.

And I did: travelling the world, getting married, having children, writing stories.

The trouble was, once I had put all my anger and bitterness down on paper, I kept on writing. The stories began to change. Perhaps after all the running, I really did want to be found.

When my sister became ill, I remembered that a smidgen of faith can move a mountain. Through the hopes and heartbreaks of my sister's slow recovery, I attended Mass with my husband. It helped me pray, but I wasn't going to commit myself, no fear of that.

But the invitation came, quiet and irresistible, and I did the unthinkable; I joined the Church of Rome.

I watch the candles flickering on the altar and the evening light slant through the windows. The different, conflicting parts of myself, Presbyterian, agnostic, Catholic, perhaps they'll always be there, never entirely reconciled. All I can do is listen to the ancient prayer, Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy, and abandon myself to Whoever or Whatever brought me here.

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BIO: Christine Grant has worked as a scientist in several different countries and now lives in the Scottish Highlands with her family. Her short stories have been published in a number of places, including the inaugural issue of *Metafore*. We are pleased to carry her work again.

# SONGS WITH AND WITHOUT US

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JILL HAWKINS

Tempo for Spiders  
Rain on glass  
Songs without us

Pressing her ear to  
a brass bed post  
she hears something  
nobody else hears  
tomorrow she will play  
it to sound  
on slick ivory and black

Bravo on your creation  
like spiders and rain  
she didn't plan her gift

The airy electric buzz  
trapped in a bulb of light  
inspiring the wood to creak  
a house composes a new  
tune from that energy of us

Solos and symphonies  
city comforted by country  
wind teaching leaves to rustle  
water teaching rocks to move  
we know it's happening, the sounds  
of seasons

Tempo of bullfrogs  
Rain becoming hail  
Songs without us

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BIO: Jill Hawkins is a recent graduate of The Red Earth MFA program at Oklahoma City University. She was born and raised in Oklahoma. Jill has publications in: (JAMA) *The Journal the American Medical Association*, *Blacktop Passages*, *Southwestern American Literature*, *Pink.Girl.Ink.*, *Poeming Pigeon*, *Mizna*, *The Endeavor*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *Red Earth Review*, *Lowestoft Chronicle*, *The Whiskey of our Discontent: Gwendolyn Brooks as Conscience and Change Agent*, *Degenerates: Voices of Peace*, *The Penwood Review*, *PCC Inscape Magazine*, *Toe Good*, *Deaf Oklahoman*, *Oklahoma Today*, *Montana Mouthful*, and *Stream Ticket*.

# FREE RIDE

D. R. JAMES

Yoda-like—the eyes, the smile, even the ears that flume from under a pinstriped engineer’s cap—the tiny man-boy careens around Sweet Pea’s Espresso, serene and squat and centered in a chair as solid as a forklift. With every turn, every flick of his right-hand joystick, he threatens a chair leg, a top-heavy double latte, a stockinged shin, a disgusted look. His parents, Barbie and Ken, sit nursing cappuccinos, bribing his little sister with a bagel and pink-flavored cream cheese. Already a giant to her older brother, she will one day be as precious as her mommy.

“How about riding in...now, who is this...?” Ken baits the boy across the tabletops and financial sections, pointing to Tommy the Tank Engine installed for toddlers on the tile floor of the old smoking section.

The boy pulls up sharp, whirls around. “Yeah, I wanna ride him, Daddy!” he bugles, circling back, dodging the girl bussing the two-and four-tops, who backs away in a clatter of cups and saucers piled high in her plastic bin. He’s a mechanical pigeon, homing in on his hero, honking like Daffy on helium. “Put in the penny, Daddy. Lemme ride!”

Lifted from its roost by armpits no deeper than divots, his body, seemingly half dead, dangles springy, naked legs like sprung sausage curls that slide easily into Tommy’s pilot house. The fit is perfect and, at the clink of a token, the bullish ride, euphoric. The ancient face savors every swirl, every hydraulic spasm. He’s Oscar Peterson mumbling at the piano, Bird Parker juking on sax. The convulsive legs never stop jazzing.

Meanwhile, Barbie wet-thumbs the corners of their daughter’s sticky mouth, the blond wispies at her temples, cooing to the perfect little girl, who strains to witness her brother’s totemic ecstasy.

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BIO: D. R. James has taught college writing, literature, and peace-making for 34 years and lives in the woods near Saugatuck, Michigan. Poems and prose have appeared in a variety of journals (including *Metafore*) and anthologies, his latest of eight poetry collections are *If god were gentle* (Dos Madres Press) and *Surreal Expulsion* (The Poetry Box), and his microchapbook *All Her Jazz* is free and downloadable-for-the-folding at the *Origami Poems Project*.

# GINA

DAVID JOSEPH

Gina grew up in the shadow of Jefferson High School in South Central Los Angeles. Jefferson was a tough school in a tough neighborhood, but it had something of an esteemed past. Barry White went to school there, and so did Etta James.

When Gina arrived at Jefferson, the school was still predominantly African-American. Latinos were the minority. The music had changed too, and the beats and lyrics of N.W.A. now filled the airwaves. Gina liked rap even though most of her girlfriends didn't. Some of the African American kids took note of the Mexican girl bumping N.W.A., but any potential racial tensions were put to ease quickly. Gina was a girl who never said a bad word about anyone and, in return, nobody ever said a bad word about her.

That was decades ago. The city had changed, but Gina hadn't. Not really anyway. During the day, she worked at a school now, assisting with the most challenging students.

In the evenings, Gina worked two jobs so she could pay to send her siblings to college even though she never found time to finish herself. She was a daughter, a sister, and a de facto mother—without apology.

Gina never knew her own father. She heard stories, but all that mattered was that her father wasn't around. He lived in LA, and Gina's mother had given her his address and phone number years ago. Gina still had the piece of paper. For so long, she had wanted a father, but not anymore. The only reason to see him now would have been to tell him off or show him what he missed. But Gina was too good for that.

When Gina got married, she walked herself down the aisle. It was the only way. And when she had a family, she gave and gave to her family the way she always had. But she never gave to herself. Ever.

One day, I asked Gina if she ever wanted anything, and she told me she always wanted one of those old Cadillac El Dorados from the '80s. She remembered when they used to roll by Jefferson High. It would need to have a state-of-the-art sound system. That was essential, but she had a friend from the neighborhood who could hook her up.

One day, after work, we walked across the parking lot and there it was, glistening in the late afternoon sun. I sat down in the worn, leather passenger seat and stared at the retro dash. It was easy to tell how proud she was. As she pulled out of the school parking lot, I could hear her still bumping N.W.A. inside the car.

Gina was a truly great woman. She “knew nothing in life but to be legit” and she was. I watched her drive off into the distance as the sun began to descend over the wrecked majesty of Los Angeles, California.

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BIO: David Joseph's writing has been published in *The London Magazine*, *Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, *Doubletake Magazine*, and *Rattle*. A recipient of the John Henry Hobart Fellowship for Ethics and Social Justice, he spent the past two decades as an educator and nonprofit executive in Los Angeles. He has taught at Pepperdine University and at Harvard University. He lives in San Roque, Spain with his wife Karen and sons Jackson and Cassius.



Medusa, 2017  
Andréa Acker  
Collage and acrylic on paper  
50 x 66 cm

# DEAR SIGMUND, FROM YOUR HOUSEKEEPERS

REBECCA KELLER

I say, “If only those walls could talk” and imagine your wallpaper soaking up secrets: absorbing embarrassing details and then releasing them in a whispered breath, feeding my shame-tinged desire to hear what happened after the door clicked shut.

What if the walls and banisters and floorboards went beyond merely soaking up titillating confessions, like silent storage devices, and developed opinions of their own? Rubbed clean by female hands, they might have pointed out that the women who swept the kitchen and cleaned the dishes knew something about repression.

\*\*

What was it like, before? Before you invented the mind, back when dreams were visits from another realm: the angels, or the dead. When our demons really were *demons*.

Nobody's dreams are purely their own after all.

But now we are all infected. All of our spirits are colonized and infiltrated with your collective dreaming. There is no spare tangle of ganglia where you haven't already laid claim, moved through the halls and pathways of our minds, wafting your incense, your cigars, your categories, your mythic personas, smoking out our innocence, our beliefs that our problems were visited upon us by the heavens, or fate.

Giving our fears the names of Pagan Gods who never existed. Possessors of magic you have taught us to disbelieve.

The Gods of the past can be re-purposed: our dreams have been colonized by the Gods of Athens and Egypt, Electra and Isis.

But our dreams are born of the body. We taste the cigar on our tongues, our chapped hands sting in soapy water, our abilities to make our futures subsumed in the loads of laundry and torn hems and syndromes and organ-envy and

Visions of perfect womanhood.

# FETCHING GREEN BUNNY

REBECCA KELLER

The sheets were nice and warm, but the wind was too loud. The light coming through her curtains was shaped like bony fingers. Then something thumped against her window. She pulled up her blanket. “Mommeee.”

In a moment the door opened. “What is it, honey?”

“I’m scared.”

Her mom lay down on top of the covers, curling her arm around her shoulders. Her voice was foggy. “Just go to sleep, sweetie.” She kissed the top of Sophie’s head. Her mom smelled like cherries and dish soap.

“I want Green Bunny.”

“Hmm--mmm.” Mommy was falling back asleep. Sophie could feel her breath ruffle the top of her hair.

“Please Mommy? Can’t you go find her?”

“Come on honey. I need to get up in the morning. Just go to sleep.”

“But...”

“Shhh. Go to sleep.”

Her mom’s breathing slowed till it barely warmed Sophie’s forehead. Sophie bit her lip. She longed for Green Bunny.

She slid out from under her mommy’s arm and dropped off the edge of the bed, gasping as she slipped into the icy, moon-silvered water. The waves rose over her chin and splashed into her eyes and nose. She held her breath and stretched, trying to reach her bunny. But she couldn’t, she couldn’t even move. Her heart began thundering. Something bobbed against her foot, and she cried out and lunged, heaving herself out of the depths and over the edge, back into the safety of her bed.

Her mom jumped when Sophie flopped in next to her. She sat halfway up, rubbing her eyes. “Did you get Bunny?”

“The floor is a raging ocean.”

“Don’t be silly.”

Sophie held out her dripping sleeve “See?”

Her mother's head was a shape against the window, and her eyes were shiny spots in the darkness. Sophie stared back without blinking.

“Oh, all right.” Her mother sighed and got up. Something crunched, and Sophie heard a bad word. Then her mom moved through a slice of light by the window. She patted Sophie's shelf, her hands disappearing into the shadows. Then she came back through the light, reappearing next to the bed, tucking Green Bunny next to Sophie. “Now go to sleep.”

“Will you stay here?”

Her mother was a shape that didn't move. Then she exhaled. “Okay, you win.” She pulled back the blanket. “Move over.”

Sophie hugged her bunny as the covers closed around her, inhaling her mom's soapy smell and listening to the waves, calm now, lapping the sides of her bed.

---

BIO: Rebecca Keller is an artist and writer. Her fiction has appeared in *New Fairy Tales*; *Calyx*; *Great Lakes Review*, *Alimentum*, and other journals, and in anthologies from *MainStreet Rag Press* and *KY Stories*. Awards include Fulbright and NEA grants, the Richard Sirota and Betty Gabehart prizes, honorable mention in the Pacifica Literary competition, a finalist for the 2013 Chicago Literary Prose Award, and two Pushcart nominations.

# SPRING

ROGER KEW

Spring: I wish  
I could.

Spring: Where  
To?

Spring: What's it on?  
The axle of your car.

Spring: What's it for?  
To keep your old time peace ticking.

Spring: Like Nynka's smile  
Racing across a smooth complexion.

Spring: Like Skippy,  
The child who danced everywhere.

Spring: Should never end.

Each day of our lives  
Lived with exuberance. And  
The force of a new shoot  
Bursting from the ground  
Determined to excel.

---

BIO: Roger Kew says: "I'm a traveller of no special merit. My view is not unique. Sometimes I feel history in the moment."

# THIS SIDE OF EDINBURGH

ANDREW LAFLECHE

feet hung  
off the lip of the Grand Canyon  
the bluff above the Mediterranean  
the Cabot Cliffs of Cape Breton

staring into the void  
the place where time settled  
where you placed me  
then disappeared  
in a whisper

“wait.”  
or was it,  
“separate?”

hoarding lies about who we were  
romanticized they remain untrue  
rivulets join eyes to lips  
become the warm oceanic air

face the wind so not to hear  
the water carves its footprint  
in artisanal erosion

all salt dissolves from stone hearts  
in Hopewell

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BIO: Andrew Lafleche is an award-winning poet and author of seven books. His work uses a spoken style of language to blend social criticism, philosophical reflection, explicit language, and black comedy. Andrew enlisted in the Army in 2007 and received an honorable discharge in 2014. Visit [www.AJLafleche.com](http://www.AJLafleche.com) for more information.

# REVERIE

KELSEY LAYNE

I found Daisy in the garden, knelt down next to the flowers that had long since withered.

Her hands were covered in dirt as she held them in front of her, a vacant stare resided in her eyes — void of the magic that once lived there.

Daisy heard me approach and rose up, wiping her earth-stained hands onto her summer dress. The wind made the thin fabric sway, clinging tightly to her body for a moment before releasing it back into the breeze. The dance continued as she stood there, with the sun shining down, illuminating her body through the thin cotton.

I took off my hat. It seemed only right. Daisy made her way towards me, wiping her brow with the back of her hand. Soft beads of sweat fell upon her chest where it caught the fabric and spread, like little veins.

“Hello.” Her words were as smooth as honey and cold as ice at the same time.

An aurora of solace glided with her, always emanating the space around her. Drawing you closer, making you crave her milky sound. You yearned for it, her presence, the more exposure only strengthened the desire.

Daisy asked me inside, and I followed her, taking in the sweet smell of the sun and the earth as it fused together with her scent, enticing you to follow.

“Tea?” She called from the kitchen.

I watched as she glided throughout the kitchen in her bare feet, soles stained from the earth. Her dress following behind as the cloth caught the summer breeze streaming in.

I could stay here all day, caught up in this reverie. Watching the way the world construed to her, willowy and rhythmic all at the same time. An enigma filled with an unexplained nostalgia that I felt deep inside.

I took in her features as she concentrated on the tea, biting the corner of the lip. I watched her release it, allowing it to bounce back to its perfect pink shade once more.

Daisy’s gaze caught mine, but we didn’t look away, not as we usually did. We held on for a moment longer and let it linger.

Without thinking, still caught up in my dream, I brought my hand up towards her cheek. With one fluid movement, I wiped away the dirty earth that remained, leaving behind nothing but a clean canvas.

The way the sunlight falls upon her hair, the magical way the wind dances around her. It's as if she is conducting a symphony every time she moves. The world dances to her, like the most rhythmic tune you will ever hear.

I dance to her, move to her most freely. In a way, I never knew I could.

Like the first time, I saw her all it took was a moment to know she is perfect.

Daisy has me wrapped around her delicate finger.

Nestled up tightly against her wedding band.

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BIO: Kelsey Layne is from Madison, Wisconsin and is a photographer and writer. Kelsey has written two novels and several short stories and holds a Liberal Arts degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

# DEATH OF AN ACTRESS

ELLEN LEARY

Morphine vials on the coffee table  
Oxygen tanks by her chair.  
There are no heirs:  
She was an actress.  
And though she had a happy marriage,  
There were no children.  
How could there be children when she had chosen the stage?  
An actor's life is a transient life:  
One job might take her to Chicago and  
And the next to Santa Fe.

Her husband died three years ago.  
(His voice is still on the answering machine.)  
And all her friends are gone.  
There is no one but me to remember  
How she laughed.  
She once threw a party for my birthday,  
When I was all alone,  
And she surprised me with a present:  
A handsome playwright.

We roomed together on a summer tour  
Up the Eastern Seaboard,  
Laughing and sunning ourselves during the day,  
Acting at the theatre at night.  
Carole King sang on the radio:  
“Doesn't anybody stay in one place anymore?”

As we travelled up the coast.  
A French waiter asked me on a date.  
He said he would bring his friend (who was very short).  
“Wear your flats,” I told her.

I don't want the box of photographs.  
I don't want her wedding ring sent to me.  
I don't want to be writing this poem.  
But I will wear the ring on my finger  
And stare at the photographs and remember.  
I will try to be the friend  
That she was to me.  
When I spoke to her a few days before she died,  
She told me she had to get dressed.  
“Where are you going?” I asked her.  
“To the theatre,” she said.

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BIO: Ellen Leary spent twenty years on the professional stage as an actress. She self-published a memoir called *Mother Once Removed* about growing up in the Greenwich Village of the 1940s, the single child of an eccentric divorcee and recently sold her novel *The Understudy*.

# A PRAYER

RAYMOND LUCZAK

*after Walt Whitman (1819–1892)*

May the mist singe the tufts of my hair.  
May the sun freeze my veins of revenge.  
May the trees needle me to look down.  
May the glass of youthful water mirror death.  
May the snap of spring heal my brittle skin.  
May the slices of autumn carcass nourishment.  
May the winter of romance melt my heart.  
May the summer wind strip my freedom.  
May the seasons be the religion I never had.

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BIO: Raymond Luczak is the author and editor of 22 books. Recent titles include *Flannelwood* (Red Hen Press) and *Lovejets: Queer Male Poets on 200 Years of Walt Whitman* (Squares & Rebels). He lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and online at [raymondluczak.com](http://raymondluczak.com).

# 315 FRAMBOISE VELOURS

JESSE MARDIAN

The lipstick is on the dresser. 315 Framboise Velours—deep raspberry pink. It stands there like a relic sheathed in gold. Margaret had bought it at the mall while I was in the men’s section buying slacks, or ties, or briefs. That was years ago when things had been simpler—words, feelings, truths, everything unspoken and locked away within our flesh. But our bodies and minds are withered by time and all the secrets we’ve harbored—yes, Marge must have hers too—cannot be contained forever.

I sit on our bed and face the circular mirror above the dresser. A middle-aged man stares back, receding widow’s peak, plaid shirt tucked into khaki pants, nothing special here, another husband, dad, brother, uncle on the back end, left with the uncertainties of his decisions, or perhaps, the regrets of indecisions.

All those childhood phantasies pirouetting in my mind—mascara tears, fluttering flamenco dresses, delicate powders, swaying, sauntering, being comfortable in my skin.

I guess it’s something akin to lust. The desire to see myself the way I want to be seen. It is so easy to become something you’re not. You’re born, you’re molded, you’re fed. And then one day, you look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself, “Who am I?”

Like Perceval I reach for the holy grail, remove its casing, and immediately smell the chemical there within. I twist the tube and watch as the waxy color emerges.

The Framboise Velours meets my lips like a soft kiss. I start with the top lip, that half-heart, and the deep pink fills the fissures and blemishes the blisters. I’ve always had what Margaret calls bird lips. But now they are full, brightened, alive. Pursing, as I’ve seen Margaret do a thousand times, I press the bottom to the top, back and forth, almost like love-making, the two become one.

Of course, there is more to this partial metamorphosis. I peer into the closet and see the heels, the flats, the slippers. Not my size, but the fancy exists to try, one day. Also, the dresses. But for now, this will suffice. After all, man wasn’t made in the first day.

I hear the clinking of dishes downstairs, and Margaret whistling some tune. Will she feel a loss? Or something gained by truths finally spoken? I sit on the bed where we lay as man and

wife, the lipstick chalky on my lips, and I call out her name. Each footstep in sync with my heartbeat, and soon she will see me.

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BIO: Jesse Mardian earned his MFA degree at San José State University. His recent works have been featured in *The Surfer's Journal*, *Gambling the Aisle*, *The Rumpus*, and *Three: An Anthology of Flash Nonfiction*. Currently, he is working as an educator in Los Angeles, California.



Mother Thera, 2018  
Andréa Acker  
Water based paint on paper on collage and acrylic on wood  
29 x 38 cm

# A LA MODE

DIANE G. MARTIN

Only wasps should have wasp's waists;  
on women they're absurd, grotesque.  
One wonders when they breathed their last—  
the Langtrys and Ksheshinskayas  
and Barbies.

Petite like insects, no dispute,  
like Scarlett before progeny.  
But what price envious repute—  
corseted fainting spells, mis-  
carriages.

They got their fame and wealth and shame,  
notoriously tiny,  
admired by men of note and name  
who sought their fine ideal in the  
insect world.

*Jan. 27, 2006  
St. Petersburg, Russia*

# ALMOST INCOGNITO

DIANE G. MARTIN

It hardly seems possible that so much and so little have changed. That I still recall and tell this story. Because those were the days. It feels like last night that, perched on a rickety stool in my late friend Marina's cramped kitchen, an impromptu panel of vodka-shooting Moscow artists coached my pronunciation of „Сколько за белье?” (“How much for the bedding?”). Damn the slippery, indispensable question.

After midnight, these same revelers put my nine-year-old daughter and me on the Red Arrow train for newly reincarnated St. Petersburg. That is, Leningrad repainted. The scene proved sufficiently authentic as, dressed in shabby, bazaar-bought clothing, we boarded our second-class sleeper car. Amid the chaotic diversion of kissing, hugging, and well-wishing, the conductor did not even check our passports. Ensnared in our coupé, modest baggage stowed, I spread out greasy sausage sandwiches and opened a volume of *Master and Margarita* in Russian. Raya propped up her Russian math textbook. Train tickets for foreign nationals then cost the equivalent of \$160.00 per person, as opposed to about \$6.00 for Russian citizens. We both spoke Russian well, and were living in Moscow in straightened circumstances, so why not give it a try? “An attempt is not torture,” („Попытка не пытка”) as the rhyming Russian saying goes.

Soon we were joined by two young men who tossed their backpacks onto upper bunks while greeting us cheerfully and respectfully in rudimentary, thickly accented Russian. This was going to be a piece of cake. After my yawning request for linen had passed muster, and we had efficiently made up our berths with crisply starched white sheets and thick, scratchy, brown wool blankets, it transpired, through a patchwork quilt of languages, that the shy men who occupied the other two berths in our coupé were Indonesian students. We, ostensibly, were a taciturn teacher with her daughter, who had been to visit Grandma. No, unfortunately, we spoke little English, but after a brief exchange in Russian with Raya, sternly ordering her to switch off her light and go to sleep, I patiently exchanged a few pleasantries with our neighbors, pretending to be perplexed by the English words interspersing their chat.

“You on *vat*? No, no understand,” I answered in the muddiest English I could muster.  
“Vat is kholidei?”

“*Kho-lee-day*, Mama,” Raya could not resist drawling from her pillow.

“Akh da, *holiday!*”

Indulgent smiles, polite yawns all around. No thanks, no greasy sausage. Lights out.

Early the next morning, I was jolted awake suddenly when the train shunted into the station and shot up like a spring. “Get up, Raya. We’re here,” I commanded in unmistakably native American English.

Without a word of query or reproach, a disappointed glance flashed between the young men, who then raised eyebrows at me.

No time for embarrassed explanations, and in any case, the conductor was bustling about within earshot collecting bedding. Muttering sheepish goodbyes with our cabin mates, I smiled wanly, adding, “And that’s why I can’t be a spy.”

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BIO: Diane G. Martin, poet, photographer, prose writer, Russian literature specialist, Willamette University graduate, recipient of the Diana Woods Memorial Award, has published in numerous literary journals, including *New London Writers*, *Poetry Circle*, *Open: JAL*, *Dodging the Rain*, *Antiphon*, *Dark Ink*, *Gyroscope*, *Rhino*, *Shooter*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Lady Liberty*, and *Lowestoft Chronicle*.

# BIANCA

LINDA MCMULLEN

When I still slept in her womb, my mother foretold that I would be a girl, and planned to give me the loveliest of all names: Bianca. It would tell future suitors that I was beautiful and graceful, with skin white as...

I was born skinny, dark, and ugly, but still she called me Bianca.

My mother was an artist: she taught me to spot tangerine gleams in a cat's eyes, and emerald brume near waterfalls, and lavender in a woman's shadow.

When she died, my father locked himself in his tower room. My aunt directed the household, paid the tradesmen, harried the servants. She preened.

I drew.

She despaired of finding me a husband. She invited every hemophiliac earl's son, elderly baron, and broad-waisted country gentleman to meet me. They recoiled.

My father died. My aunt buried him before noon and ordered a good lunch.

I left, carrying coins, food, and a locket with my mother's portrait.

A thin bronze path wound through the woods toward the capital. I passed a mining camp; the slack-jawed, squat men were persuaded that I desired nothing more than to become their maid and laundress. I walked on. Hazel branches cradled me as I slept. One day a prince, out on a hunt, caught me, and tried to polish the apples on my chest. I drove my elbow into his abdomen. And walked on.

In the capital, I rented a room and placed an advertisement. Within a week I was a blue-patterned governess. My charges were wayward, not evil. They mocked my looks, then curled in my lap like cats.

The paterfamilias cultivated an investment collection that happened to consist of paintings. He engaged an artist to impart taste to his daughters. For months, those lesson-times were my only respite: for an hour I could read, draw, or dream...

...then retrieve my charges.

During one lesson, I disappeared into my work: a sketch of my mother, *souriante*. The artist – mournful eyes, a ludicrous mustache – brought the girls to me in the library. I colored,

apologized. He bent over my paper. “When you have finished, may I purchase this?” I looked my skepticism. “I have a commission to paint a Madonna and child. Her expression...”

The girls tousled, bored; the younger girl’s wrist propelled the ink jar...I saw the blackness swallow my mother.

The artist cleaned up the spill.

A month later, he handed me a jingling pouch: coins totaling more than my quarterly wage.

“Your commission,” he said.

I protested.

“Your sketch proved inspirational.”

We spoke of pomegranate sunsets and indigo thunderheads. He asked me to debut sketches for his new commissions. On my day out, I visited his atelier; I sat so close that his brush dabbed me with red, the color of heart’s blood.

“Will you be my wife?”

“Only your wife?”

“No. My partner in love and art.”

So, in all things.

“Yes.”

He smiled at the scarlet daub on my arm. “Your skin sets off the color beautifully.”

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BIO: Linda McMullen is a wife, mother, diplomat, and homesick Wisconsinite. Her pieces have appeared or are forthcoming in *Chaleur*, *Burningword*, *Typishly*, *Panoply*, *Open: Journal of Arts and Letters*, *Allegory*, *Enso Publications*, *The Write Launch*, *Palaver*, *Curating Alexandria*, *SunLit*, *Coffin Bell Journal*, *Five:2:One*, *Every Day Fiction*, *The Remembered Arts Journal*, *Raw Art Review*, *Weasel Press*, *Dragon Poet Review*, *Scribble*, *Cosumnes River Journal*, *Watershed Review*, the *Poet's Haven*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and the *Anti-Languorous Project*.

# BURGER RAID

DAVID MCVEY

We've got visual from inside the target premises.

We watch a thin, spotty lad in a corporate baseball cap laying a tray of supposed hot foodstuffs on the counter for a customer.

'It's a burger of some kind,' says my Sergeant. She makes a little note on a tablet.

Indeed it is - the curved edges of a large fat-sweating brown disc are visible in places between two halves of a rubbery American-style 'bun.' There are also indications of a flat tile of plasticky orange 'cheese' above the burger. Around the whole assembly is a petrified mass of 'fries,' thin, long and spidery, any resemblance to actual chips microwaved out of them, along with any remaining taste.

'Right, we're going in!' I shout, and we emerge from the van, cross the street, burst in through the front door (causing some diners to jump) and confront the offender. 'You are about to serve foul American food substitutes. We are closing this outlet down!'

'Who do you think *you* are?' says the spotty boy. 'The Food Police?'

I smile. 'Son, that's *exactly* who we are.'

I serve a compulsory Conversion to Chip Shop order, and we're back on the streets, ready for our next case; a Spar that doesn't sell Bourbons or Custard Creams but does keep 'Oreos.'

I love this job.

---

BIO: David McVey lectures at New College Lanarkshire in Scotland. He has published over 120 short stories and a great deal of non-fiction that focuses on history and the outdoors. He enjoys hillwalking (i.e., hiking), visiting historic sites, reading, watching telly (i.e., TV), and supporting his home-town football (i.e., soccer) team, Kirkintilloch Rob Roy FC.

# TO THE MOON, AN ACQUAINTANCE

ELISSA NOBLITT

Or maybe I'll call us old friends,  
because I haven't seen you in a while,

but your silver slivers peeked into my bedroom  
window at 15 when I couldn't fathom sleep

or anything that wasn't hate hate hate  
my thighs my acne my crooked teeth.

Now you catch glimpses of me on fast car rides—  
music loud, kisses hot, maybe we should take this inside,

wide smiles on cold nights, car door to front door,  
tangled limbs, I love you I love you I love you more—

I wonder if it's hard to recognize me,  
like a middle school best friend in the cereal aisle

two years after high school graduation,  
fluorescent lights illuminating past time.

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BIO: Elissa Noblitt is a junior at Saint Leo University in Florida, working toward her degree in English with a specialization in professional writing. Her work has previously appeared in *Sandhill Review* and *4 Boys Mother*.

# SHE, THE ARTIST

TOTI O'BRIEN

With camera in hand, she asks me to sit in front of the tapestry I made, hanging behind me like a backdrop.

Light is coming in sideways. I wear pink, flamboyant—a costume I didn't have time to take off. But it fits this impromptu sacred.

I didn't expect the halo, the aura... upholstered chair, dark paneled walls, surrounding penumbra. My hands in my lap and this calmness. My work so much bigger than me, my work framing me.

At my feet lies a black dog. Invisible in the dim light, it melts into darkness.

At my feet is an invisible dog. Her dog. Or my soul.

Her dog, limping by, resting at my feet, staring straight at the camera. Her dog, invisible.

My soul, limping. Melting in the shade.

My soul, invisible.

# CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

TOTI O'BRIEN

During the first three months she appeared in my dreams. She was old and a child at the same time, always wanting to play. I organized balls, picnics, games, all possible festive events, maybe to compensate for a loss, giving her a crash course on something she had missed. Catching up with a part of life Grandma hadn't truly perused—music, dance, colors, shine.

I was giving the parties her dad should have thrown in his turn-of-the-century mansion, with all of his freaking money. But he sent her to a boarding house and forgot about her, did he? Her mom had died of childbirth. Her stepmom...

In our gatherings Grandma amused herself with great gusto. She wore fancy clothes, tender hues laced with silver and gold. She said little but couldn't stop laughing. Neither did I.

The dream cycle culminated with a scene I'll never forget. One more party, on the grand side. She showed up in flapper attire, nineteen twenties fashion. Many layers of pink, purple, crimson. And we danced and we danced, but a zest of sadness lingered. While we twirled she said she had something to ask.

I should push her away, she said. Time for her to reach another circle, a more distant ring, more removed crown of reality. She had to further dissolve and she would. But she didn't want to. Could I?

What, Grandma?

I pushed her while dancing. Little pulses at first, then gradually stronger. It was hard. She was light, but heavy at the same time. And there was that gloom, typical of the moments when you have to make choices and they split you. They tear you apart.

I woke up in a sweat. She didn't come back.

---

BIO: Toti O'Brien is the Italian Accordionist with the Irish last name. She was born in Rome then moved to Los Angeles, where she makes a living as a self-employed artist, performing musician and professional dancer. Her work has most recently appeared in *Crossways*, *Colorado Boulevard*, *JMWW*, and *New Reader*. *Metafore* is delighted to publish her again.

# NAPPING 101

KEMAL ONOR

You turn out the lights, grab a blanket. Kick off your shoes. Breathe, inhale the dark of the room. If you have tea you should move the cup to your bed stand. Place your glasses in the case that you keep losing. Then shut your eyes and focus on the warmth of the room. Breathe, picture the life you want, before it all became so complicated. Dream and breathe, wish yourself invisible, or at least to fade into a state of not being. Nap and breathe. Hours later you will wake up. When you do, make sure you have not left the windows open in case it rained while you did not exist. Close them if they are. Put your shoes on, sit up in bed. Keep the blanket close to you, do not let go of the warmth that surrounds you like mother's embrace. Drink the tea which you moved to the bed stand, it will be tepid now and bitter from being left so long. It did not disappear with you.

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BIO: Kemal Onor has an MFA in writing from the Solstice MFA in Creative Writing Program at Pine Manor College. His work has been featured in *The Offbeat*, *West Texas Literary Review*, *The Tishman Review*, *The Flexible Persona*, *ZPublishing House's Vermont's Best Emerging Poets*, and more. He lives in Vermont.

# THE POET

HADI PANAHI

A small piece of paper,  
a sharpened pencil,  
the poet is alive

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BIO: Hadi Panahi is a PhD student of psychology, living in Tehran, Iran. He writes poetry, in particular short poems.



Supergoddess, 2016  
Andréa Acker  
Paint and ink on paper  
21 x 29,7 cm

# IN DOG YEARS

MICHAEL PANTANO

Old Boots was dying  
you could see it in his eyes,  
he'd hobble down to the dock  
on saggy, arthritic hips  
and bark half heartedly  
at the geese flying over the lake,  
shadows quick in the trees,  
no longer inclined to chase  
rabbits though the yard,  
bring the shot mallard to shore,  
spending his final days  
curled beside the fireplace,  
snorting and wheezing  
in his sleep, a white haired  
grandpa napping in his great chair,  
amusing the grandchildren  
with twitches and farts,  
the same young pup  
who took a bullet at Iwo Jima,  
married his high school sweetheart,  
and rolled barbed wire  
across the west Texas flats  
for five dollars a day after the war.

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BIO: Mike Pantano's recent work has appeared in *Third Wednesday*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Gravel and Slipstream*, and other journals. He lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with his beautiful wife and an assortment of spoiled animals.

# A MEETING OF TRAVELERS

ELIZABETH PAUL

It is late afternoon in early September, and the school is itself now that everyone has gone. Its walls feel the blush of their blue talent. Its floors shine like ripe persimmons. Its lace curtains splash floral patterns into the artless faces of its brooding hallways.

You are two friends returned at this hour for a lost talisman or forgotten book. I am a stranger in your village, wandering an empty building out of curiosity. The sight of me has arrested your search—one of you stands in the light of the window, the other behind in shadow. Because of the direction you're facing, you don't notice the beauty you're a part of—the shadow, the light, and the lace.

You, in the light, wear your backpack like a duty. Your eyes, mouth, and chin are round and full like summer fruit. Your white polo shirt is buttoned to the top. You know you will be a man someday. You, in the shadow, have a face like a winter landscape. There is a patch in each leg of your pants. Your clothes are baggy, soft, and faded, and your shoes too big. You are still growing into things.

We thought ourselves alone in these empty corridors, and coming upon each other, we see ourselves in one another. I see you, and I see myself doing puzzles, drawing pictures, waiting for the walk sign, catching moths, collecting petals, falling asleep to my own heartbeat. I see myself far from home and seeking a second childhood. What do you make of me? Maybe you take me for a premonition of the future looking back at you, strange and curious, from a faraway place. Or maybe you see the strangers in yourselves. We all wonder what the other is thinking. We all wonder what we're doing here, in this building in contemplation of itself.

# THE GARDEN OF HEROIC LOVE

ELIZABETH PAUL

So this is the garden of heroic love. You came upon it adventuring on the cusp of middle age and in consequence of a bet. You sensed life's slow rotation while others saw only their own rising and falling, so you staked your happiness on life's cunning and packed your bags. Tales of Montana, greetings in six languages, hiking boots, and comic books. Your stash of Spidermans purchased unlikely but inevitable friendship with ten-year-olds on the opposite side of the earth.

There are those who feel a tug in the gut. Their footsteps are not truly their own—they belong to the world. They think they understand that others do not belong to the world, but they really don't. Consequently, they think better of themselves and others than they should, and this protects them. When they cross paths with each other, they feel a wellness that nearly overwhelms them, for they belong to the world and their footsteps are not their own.

I don't know why I should, but I remember your young friend's name. I knew him so briefly—just long enough to take your picture together—that his name should mean less to me than so many others I've forgotten. Maybe it was the look on his face. You can see in his calm pride that he knew you belonged to him, for in that moment he was the world. His boyish adoration was the door, and so you found yourself there. It was early fall. The maple was just beginning to turn, and the buckhorn and bull thistle harbored ashen husks. But the world was still green and held a gorgeous recklessness of wild roses.

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BIO: Elizabeth Paul's poems, essays, and hybrid work have appeared in *Cold Mountain Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Sweet Lit*, *The Indianapolis Review*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook, *Reading Girl*, is a collection of ekphrastic prose poems based on paintings by Henri Matisse. Liz served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kyrgyzstan and currently teaches writing at George Mason University. Learn more at [elizabethspaul.com](http://elizabethspaul.com)

# TRUE STORY

## PIANTA

*Homesick, even in my sleep, I slide my body into the embrace of water. As surely as the phosphorescence of fish is revealed to night divers on the North Shore, I burst into light.*

You show me a photograph of you as a kid, which later you photoshopped next to a picture of yourself at twenty-seven. When you call me to say they broke your board in transit, and you can't compete, I realize the eyes are basically the same.

*I am grateful to you, to someone I can talk to so far from home, to someone who is here yet is very far away from the Western world. You dive as you sleep, reappearing by the Guilin River so that you can run your fingers along the sheared rock of the Great Wall. You tell me about Forbidden City and that your grandmother took you there when you were eleven.*

The two of us sit in my living room after you return from the meet in Bali. You tell me metaphors about fruit, which I don't understand until later.

*That city was yours: the thousand-year-old doors opening as poignantly as the limbs of the woman you now love. You run your tongue along the lips of your beloved, but you keep dreaming of dragons that scurry across in silken feet across a mahogany Beijing stage with 8-foot vases and walls carved of jade. These ecstasies startle you awake.*

A few days later I meet you and your friends in Newport Beach. We sit on the sand to watch you compete, and the wind blows too hard. Conditions are poor.

*What I want to tell you is trapped in the liquid of feeling, the exoticism of gardenias, the brown, sturdy legs of my own body, and the body of my islands. A'a' and pahoehoe are coiling and uncoiling to make their own new bodies of land.*

But in the end, it's me who ends up staying in California, and you are the one who moves there, carving wide fans of spray on the North Shore on some days, and on others, teaching small kids at Palama Settlement how to swim and have big dreams.

*I've become only a rhythm now: a vibration that's grown distant, a receding hum over water, the fading sound of someone who can't find her way back home.*

---

BIO: Originally from Honolulu, Hawai'i, Pianta teaches and writes in San Diego, California. Her work has appeared in *Ekphrasis*, [Terrain.org](http://Terrain.org), *Bamboo Ridge Press*, *Istanbul Literary Review*, and *Yuan Yang: An International Journal*, among others.

# CRESCENT ROLL OF THE MOON

ALENA PODOBED

The sky is frothy white with clouds  
like with flakes of sweet cream.  
The lollipop ingot of the sun  
has teased us and gone.  
Now, the darkness of the night  
glows with myriads of crumbs:  
someone has secretly feasted  
on a sponge cake up there.  
The poppy seed crescent roll of the moon  
is fatter this night,  
probably baked with butter  
on this summer weekend.  
Thick like sour cream,  
the moonlight pours down,  
making it so hard to sleep.  
Well, there's nothing to do  
but wait for the warmth of sunlight to return.

*(translated by Sergey Gerasimov from Russian)*

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BIO: Alena Podobed is an author from Russia. A diploma-teacher of history and social science, member of the Union of artists (author's porcelain), she has worked more than twenty years as a graphic designer. Her most recent poems have appeared in *Curating Alexandria*, and *MEOW MEOW POW POWLIT*



# STIFLED

JOHN TIMOTHY ROBINSON

A used book  
can weigh  
as much as a mountain,  
make you feel  
twice as small  
when you don't know the language.

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BIO: John Timothy Robinson is a mainstream poet of the expressive image and inwardness from the Kanawha Valley in Mason County, West Virginia. His poetics was developed in the tradition of James Wright, Rita Dove, Donald Hall, Marvin Bell, Maxine Kumin, WS Merwin, Tess Gallagher and Robert Bly among many others. John's works have appeared in ninety-four journals throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and India. He is also a published printmaker with seventy-seven art images and photographs appearing in nineteen journals, electronic and print in the United States, Italy and Ireland.

# THE BRIDGE

SUZANNE SAMUELS

I was born marooned on that island. My earliest thoughts, ones of escape. The hum of tires on the metal roadway leading up to the bridge. The flicker of light through the latticework of steel. The spine-tingling freedom as the land fell away, and the water appeared.

I remember the leaving, but not the returning. I guess I'd assumed the bridge would always be there, even years later, after I'd moved away.

But this morning, as I steered my car onto the bridge, there was a sturdy red, and white barrier with a ROAD CLOSED sign across the entrance. And another, newer sign, this one flashing NEW BRIDGE OPEN, and directing me towards a wide, asphalt-covered roadway.

I shouldn't be surprised. For nearly two years, massive barges have stood in the river, and on them, floating tractors and spindly cranes. Still, it seemed the new bridge had emerged all at once, like Aphrodite from the sea foam. A sleek structure with soaring twin V-shaped towers and white diagonal cables, vaguely reminiscent of those doomed trade center towers.

This new structure was taller, to accommodate freighters passing beneath. As I ascended, I could see the old bridge below me. They'd begun un-building it, section-by-section, starting at the ends. Now only the center span remained. Detached from the land on both sides, the football field-sized span stood alone in the river. The bridge, not much more than an outcropping of steel and concrete, now an island.

From this view, I could see the rust stains running down the steel girders, the red-orange-brown patches of disintegrating metal against the dove-grey. Funny how I'd never noticed that before. How only now – the bridge nearly demolished – could I see how rotted out it was. Like my old VW Bug, the rust beneath the floorboards only apparent after the battery had fallen through to the street.

I kept my eyes on the wrecked bridge, trying to recall what it looked like before. How had it attached to the Staten Island side? Where had the exit ramp been? How had it wound down the ramp and onto the streets?

This is how memory is. We assume that the everyday details will always lay just below the surface, needing only nudge to free them. But time erodes everything, even steel and concrete.

Maybe I don't remember those return trips because they were so fixed, so unrelenting. But the bridge to my childhood is disappearing, bit by bit, like this old structure. Hidden from view, rust is eroding its joints and undermining its supports.

Soon my connections to the past will be unsteady. The steady ravages of time – the rust, the rot, the weakening of those nuts and bolts – will break those ties. Any attempt to return will be too costly, too dangerous, to undertake. When that happens, I'll be alone, like that old bridge is now. But still, I don't think I'll ever forget how thrilling the leaving was, and how certain, the return.

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BIO: Suzanne Samuels is a novelist and essayist, and her work has been published in Snapdragon, Six Hens, Cyclamens & Swords With Painted Words, Swimming World Magazine, Daily News of Open Water Swimming, Life in Ten Minutes, Red Eft Review, and Mothers Always Write, and forthcoming in Please See Me (Inaugural Issue, 2019).

# LIFE AS NORFOLK PINE

JEFF SCHIFF

Green with you know  
    cliché  
        that the bedding plants

and hedge boundary  
    that front me under the *Alcazaba*  
        will erupt into periwinkle blossom

into the *wha wha* of yellow trumpetbush  
    into the blistering  
        white for a moment thornapple

while my canopied symmetry  
    and yard arm rectitude  
        the towering watchtower

I provide for gulls  
    and beacon for wayward Mediterranean dinghies  
        counts for next to nothing

to those who expect  
    the seductive dalliance  
        of high rouge and pouty floral cheeks

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BIO: In addition to *That hum to go by* (Mammoth books, 2012), Jeff Schiff is the author of *Mixed Diction*, *Burro Heart*, *The Rats of Patzcuaro*, *The Homily of Infinitude*, and *Anywhere in this Country*. His work has appeared internationally in nearly a hundred periodicals, including *The Alembic*, *Grand Street*, *The Ohio Review*, *Poet & Critic*, *Tampa Review*, *The Louisville Review*, *Tendril*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Carolina Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *River City (The Pinch)*, *Indiana Review*, *Willow Springs*, and *The Southwest Review*. He has been a member of the English faculty at Columbia College Chicago since 1987.

# EVAPORATE

AMY SHEA

As a child, I spent most summer days outside. I relished getting out of the pool and running over to flatten myself out on the gray slab of sidewalk that sat to one edge of our backyard. I'd lie down without a towel so there was nothing between the sidewalk and myself. Then I'd close my eyes and stay as still as possible while the hot cement sucked the water off of my skin, which in turn sucked up the heat from the cement. I'd feel the grainy bits of sand cling to my arms and legs. When my bathing suit was the only thing left damp, I'd jump up to see the imprint my little body had left behind; like a watery chalk outline that I imagined would be drawn by detectives if I'd died and not stood back up. Within minutes of being upright, all the water would evaporate and my outline would vanish.

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BIO: Amy Shea is an essayist, working on a collection of essays exploring inequalities in death and dying for those experiencing homelessness. Her work has appeared in *Spry Literary Journal*, *Fat City Review*, *From Glasgow to Saturn*, *Cemetery Travels Blog*, *Sociology of Health & Illness*, *U of G's End of Life Studies Blog*, and was long-listed for *Msllexia's 2014 Women's Memoir Competition*. She likens her PhD experience to that of her climb up Mt. Kilimanjaro.

# STARFALL

MORGAN SMITH

Darkness tugs us up and the stars fall down. The sky bends down to kiss the earth, the earth disappearing under skyfall, under stardust, under clouds made to be tread upon leaving so many wandering footprints.

I wonder sometimes whether I am the sky, or they are.

Tonight is one of those nights where time wanders, the prismatic light reflecting through so many fractals of white, night becoming an endless twilight as moonbeams get trapped between the here and the there. They dance through the falling snow, goofy with happiness, grinning ear to ear as they trip and spin, making their own ballet over the skittering ice. So close to being grown, so close to heading out into the world, both here and there, but still they smile at the sound of snowflakes pattering on the hood of my jacket. It makes me wonder sometimes whether we ever truly grow up, or just get better at hiding.

The darkness grows more complete now, snow closing in around us, suffocating us, suffocating me. They dance away into the shadows, unafraid of the end of the storm, unafraid for the snow to stop, unafraid to face the brilliant dawn that I know will come too soon.

I want to stop this, this moment, and keep it suspended like a paused snowglobe, neoprene flakes suspended in glitter and cheap plastic in a souvenir store. I want them, here, now, with their coat thrown back and the snowflakes melting on their collarbones and their hair wild and tangled. They are alive, alive, alive. They are here. And I want it forever.

*Come*, they say, reaching out a gloved hand, beckoning me to come inside. Back to the dorm room, back to the fluorescent lights and the linoleum floors and the long hallways and the sickening rush of time spinning forward forward forward, never stopping, never pausing no matter how hard we beg it.

I shake my head. I dance away into the snow, into the open field, until there is nothing but sky forever. They wrap their arms around me, nestling their face in my hair, cold breath puffing out like cigarette smoke and whistling away on the breeze. The drifts wrap around us, muffling every sound, reaching out with tendrilled fingers to rip the soundwaves from our lips. There are no words here, no equivocations or promises, no talk of what's to come. It is just me

and them beneath the frozen sky. I turn around and try to take it all in- the freckles on their lips, the snow in their hair, the way the flakes catch in their lashes and drip to their cheeks like teardrops.

*It's getting late, they say, their breath catching, frozen in their lungs.*

*I don't want to go.*

*The snow will still be here in the morning.* They take my hand and lead me inside, away from the yawning dark of the sky, away from the dripping stars, away from the snow globe glitter of fading night, back to the warmth of tangled sheets and whispered promises trailing from lips that trail down and leave nothing but shadows.

*The snow will still be here in the morning.*

But spring will always come.

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BIO: Morgan Smith is a novelist, playwright, and freshman at Bryn Mawr College, where they are double majoring in Creative Writing and English. Their short stories have been published in the US and the UK, and they review upcoming books for *Simon and Schuster*, *Random House*, and *Harper Collins*. They are currently in the process of getting their first book published. Their first musical is in development.

# APRIL'S COMPULSIONS

SUSANDALE

Life budding and expanding. Arrays of stars tossed by the fistful of night ... to the moon's obsession. The earth rotating to conception and birth. To the ocean currents heaving to roll in, roll over, roll out. This is April's promise. Again, until tomorrow, it will be kept. Earth's renewal: a vow that moved Rita and David in the wind's ferocity.

'Throw yourself into spring's impulsiveness! Miles of sand are stretched out before you. Waves crash the shore: upsurges of foam: volumes of crescendos.

In the trees, myriad nests are woven through; in and out, and around. From swollen buds, emerge fleshy flowers from which bees dip and nestle. Rhubarb stalks push up from a strained earth cracking open ... to carpets of flowers. Flowers, so many, so lush, they are falling over themselves. Willows of pale green fronds, ferns unfurling: all are springing forth under buckets of rain nourishing a fecund earth.'

Caught up, they were to be whisked away by an April compulsion that grasped them in its ferocities.

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Achingly-helpless to desires swelling within, spring pushed off her winter lover: old now and melting. Spurned and furious, he stormed off in one last, gusty, fare-thee-well. Bolts of lightning being the swords he thrust into the sky. Bellowing from shore to water, he swirled and surged the currents into surly surf that stormed the shore, even as he wept tears of rage. Fervently, futilely, did he wish that, but once more, he could be like the young lovers he watched romping on shore.

He sent forth battalions of tempestuous winds to taunt the lovers: naked, as they ran across the shoreline. He spun their bodies together in this raw-new night: a spring crescendo of wild winds and white sands. He churned the waters to wash over them with curls of foam. The lovers, a pink and gold goddess arching under a dark force. She felt that it was the black night itself that mounted her.

Clinging; one into the other, they undulated, unable to break apart. Yet fused, unmindful of the pouring rain beating down on them, uncaring of the waves washing over them. It seemed to them, he and her, that they were being returned to earth's earliest womb: a cavern of darkness and waters.

# MARCH: 2019

SUSANDALE

March, a meagre fire on a far-off hill  
Seen through the lead-glass windows  
Dusted with snow dreams

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March, a pale child of bones  
and thin promises  
A will-a-wisp on tiptoes  
Coaxing spring home

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March of misty rainbows  
And pilgrim birds

She sighs the warm breezes  
Of April's homecoming

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BIO: susandale's poems and fiction are on *WestWard Quarterly*, *Mad Swirl*, *Penman Review*, *The Voices Project*, and *Jerry Jazz Musician*. In 2007, she won the grand prize for poetry from *Oneswan*. *The Spaces Among Spaces* from [languageandculture.org](http://languageandculture.org) has been on the internet. *Bending the Spaces of Time* from *Barometric Pressure* is on the internet now.

# WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES

ELIANA SWERDLOW

When I close my eyes,

we are out in the sea.

No books, no faith.

We run up and down

the boat's length,

playing tag until dark.

While you trace my body

with your fingers

and pull up the dress strap

that's fallen down my shoulder,

I listen to your breath,

its rhythm the same

as the waves around us.

Come morning,

this is not enough

you remind me

because we live on land.

I ask you to come with me

to a brave place.

I cannot tell you

why or how, but I know

our boat will not sink.

# IN THE EVERGLADES

ELIANA SWERDLOW

While floating down the everglades,  
we counted the alligators resting  
in the few slivers of sunshine.

We laughed and admired their content,  
their oldness too. Retired, bellied  
men basking on the beach.

We were careful to churn the water quietly  
with our oars, to not interrupt these peaceful beasts  
breathing heavily, breathing full.

Away from the swamp, I turn towards you  
in bed, whispering, "Alligators, alligators."  
and you half-open your eyes to me.

They are lit only by moonlight.  
With a soft laugh, you pull me into your chest,  
where I feel you sigh "Alligators, alligators."

# WILDFLOWERS IN AUTUMN

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ELIANA SWERDLOW

I did not know you were trailing behind me  
while I deadheaded the wildflowers.  
But when I turned around to follow my path  
of flower heads home,  
I saw you maybe five hundred feet away  
picking up each one I had dropped to the ground—  
resting each head in a wheelbarrow.  
I could see you thinking  
about your own death. How you knew one day  
you would return to your helplessness,  
unable to carry yourself to your end.  
You would just have to wait for someone  
to decide it was over, as casually as me  
snapping dead flowers with my thumbnail.

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BIO: As an undergraduate at Yale University, Eliana Swerdlow is a Human Rights scholar studying English. In New Haven, Swerdlow serves as editor for the street publication *Elm City Echo*, and her work has appeared previously in *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, with poems forthcoming in the *Gordon Square Review*, *Panoplyzine*, *SWWIM*, *White Wall Review*, and *Yale Literary Magazine*.

# THE RAIN CALM

BENJAMEN N. TABER

The calm rain falls.

Stationed in a booth with my partner at the local Thai restaurant, looking out at the rainy morn, I have a strong desire to sit on a covered porch, gently rock, and read poetry. Why this feeling? Stress and production have defined my week, and the inertia of my emotions often retards such a switch to a state of relative ease.

Perhaps this feeling stems from my roots. Though several generations removed from my and my family's livelihood being so intimately entangled with the state of nature, there is still a farmer inside me. Sometimes the farmer is a small voice, hoping that the January budding I observed is not followed by a killer frost. Sometimes the farmer is more active, keeping a weather eye on land and surveying ripe locations for an orchard. But there is something deeper, a more fundamental worry of the farmer that becomes more pronounced as climate is uncertain. The anxiety of dry. When will the rains come? Will the rains come? Will the fields taste the liquid of life, soothing the aching earth, or be left to wither and with my fortune, die?

As we have lost our intimacy with the world we have forgotten that we are a part of, not distinct from, nature. The child raised in an urban jungle who has never seen the Milky Way brighten the sky, heard the wind skip through the forest, or smelled the rain moisten the earth is inherently missing a part of her humanity. Nature's essential truths still exist in us as seeds in our electronic age, but these seeds require germination. Without open sky and open land opening heart and mind these seeds lack nourishment and—through never living—die.

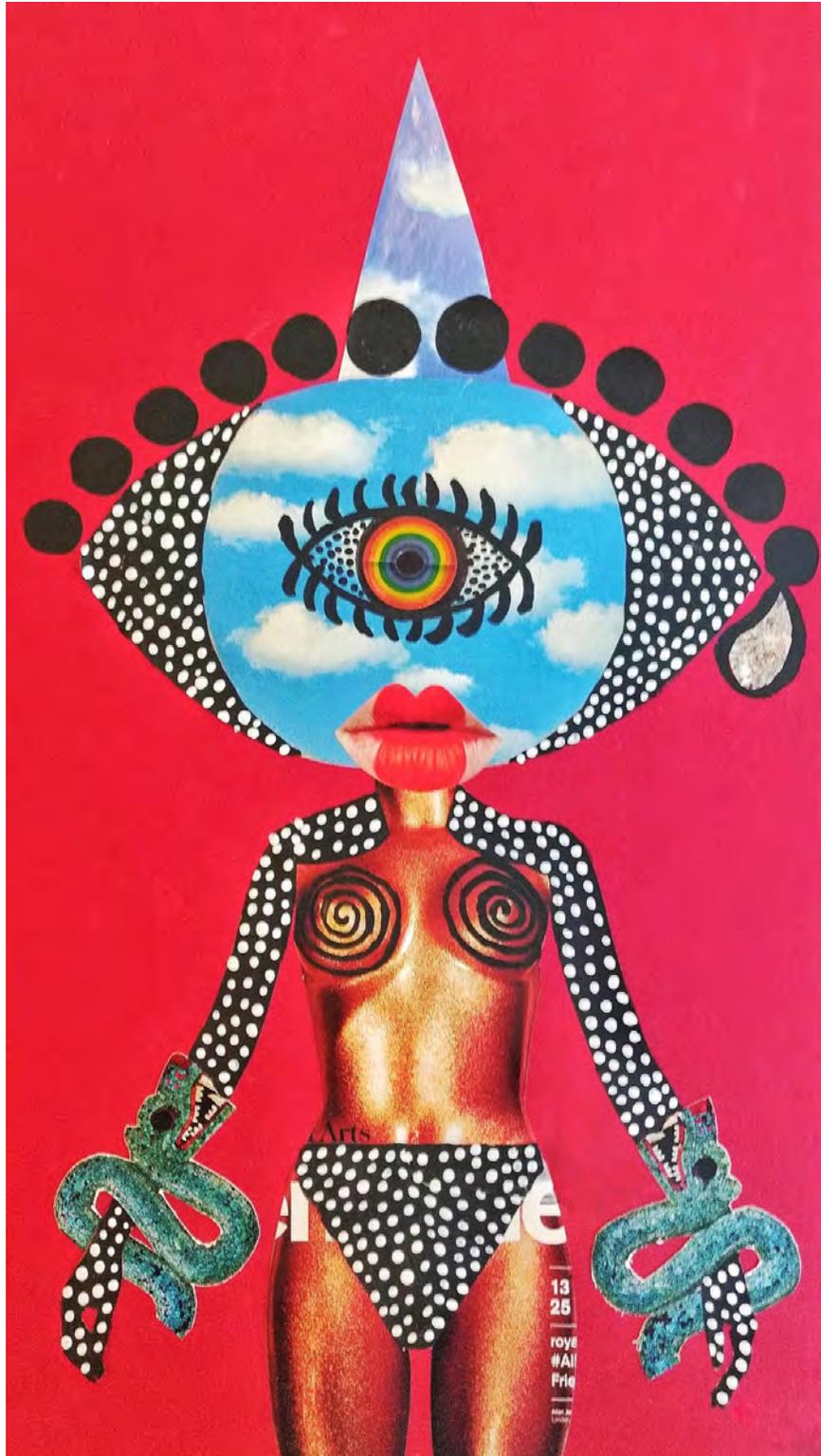
We return home. As the rain continues to caress the Earth I breathe the fresh air of new life. The prior week had been dry, filled with conflict and setbacks that seemed so large at the time, and yet in reflection seem insignificant. Now that the rains have returned, I am relaxed. There is no field work to be done when it is raining as nature is providing something beyond my capability. I walk on to the porch, and in the distance, I hear the trail sing a lonely solo of a wolf, beckoning me to join.

Instead of reading poetry, I pull on my shoes to run. I head in to the forest to share the falling drops with the trees and the ferns, living the poetry of the moment.

The falling rain calms.

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BIO: Dr. Benjamin N. Taber is a quantum technologist who probes chemistry and manipulates matter at the limits of space and time. He has worked in government, industry, and academia, and enjoys exploring the world by foot and by bicycle. He lives in Oregon with his wife and their dog.



Pythia, the Oracle, 2016  
Andréa Acker  
Collage and acrylic on paper  
15 x 27 cm

# SEMIFAITH

AHREND TORREY

Even though the lights went out, I hear  
the barred owl, the frogs' ribbiting  
across the river.

I sit on these steps: smell the pure  
organics of earth, all that once was, now  
the sweet scent of earth.

Though the lights are out, I brush the  
tender tops of the tulips, wet, with  
evening dew.

I stroll through the night, strong and  
hopeful, having never laid eyes on  
Spring.

# JUST AS YOU ARE CONSCIOUS

AHREND TORREY

So is the stork standing next to the manmade creek,

poking her needle-beak

down through thick grass,

as you might've gazed into the mirror this morning,  
scrubbed your teeth, stroked your hair,

so does she

look through zoo-wire, stare at your face,

watching her own reflection blink  
back.

# FOR WHAT ARE THE BLOSSOMS REACHING?

AHREND TORREY

As you too might wonder, I wonder who is God.

Does She have a name, does He not? Is It a thing

like the penny or bottle cap? Do They exist

like the llama or quail, or not?

I lay back-flat to Summer grass. A canopy

of branches above me, each thick

with tender leaves and fragrant magnolia blossoms—

reaching their awake petal-arms

for that warm mysterious light, from the sun

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BIO: Ahrend Torrey is a creative writing graduate from Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. When he is not writing, or working in New Orleans, he enjoys the simpler things in life, like walking around City Park with his husband, Jonathan, and their two rat terriers Dichter and Dova. Forthcoming this year, his collection of poems *Small Blue Harbor* will be available from *The Poetry Box Select* imprint.

# FORTRESS

ANN E. WALLACE

John lived alone in a house too large. A beautiful house built by his own hands for the family he no longer had. A house silent but for the strains of his violin—vibrant and haunting—newly learned, to fill the vacant living room.

I remember his bewilderment, the betrayal, over the wife who left. The bewilderment paralyzing, he did not follow her, but stayed and constructed a home for her return. But she was gone, raising his children with another man a few miles across their small town, the distance unbridgeable for one who would not budge.

I remember his sadness as he pored through the local paper for his son's image, reading of his feats on the football field. John followed his son's high school career from afar, unable to drive a few minutes to the stadium to cheer his boy on.

I remember my awe that this man with a terrible limp built *a house*—a 6,000 square foot house—after his family left. He said it was an investment, that he would sell it. Yet years passed, and he never put the home on the market. The upstairs bedrooms wait empty still for the now nearly grown children.

I listened to his stories, heard his unspoken unwillingness, years ago and still, to fight. I imagined the wife, the children, who might have yearned for a husband, a father, who fought back, for a man who went after them. I wondered if a simple assertion, *you are mine, don't go*, might have held them to him. Years into a marriage, patterns seemingly fixed and immutable, such a claim might have come too late for his wife. But his boy and his girl—oh, how could he have let them go so entirely, yet with such regret?

I hold John's memories with me, a reminder that even the strongest man, capable of building beautiful things—music, food, homes—might be undone, crippled, by grief. A man able to build a sprawling house where he stood, yet unable to get in his truck, drive to the high school stadium, invite his son, his daughter, for dinner.

For it is the builder, the muscular if hobbled man who created immense beauty out of loss that I first saw. At first impressed by his resilience and resolve, I was intrigued and wanted to learn more.

But as I watched, he limped with his cane through his empty house. Reminiscing as he cooked pasta at the six-burner stove, pulling out books with marked passages and reading aloud, rocking back and forth as he played the violin, layer by layer he exposed the scars that had calcified within him. And what I saw was an aching man locked up in a house too large, a man who had built a fortress of loneliness around himself.

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BIO: Ann E. Wallace's poetry collection, *Counting by Sevens*, is forthcoming from *Main Street Rag*. Recently published pieces in journals such as *BloodSugarPoetry*, *Wordgathering*, *The Literary Nest*, *Rogue Agent*, as well as in *Metafore*, can be found on her website [AnnWallacePhD.com](http://AnnWallacePhD.com). She lives in Jersey City, NJ and is on Twitter @annwlace409.

# BLOOMING

BRIDGET WEIGEL

It starts innocently enough.

“You can eat that clover, you know.” And I do. It tastes of lemon and makes my teeth buzz like they did the Halloween I only ate sour.

“What else?” I ask.

“That one—the roots taste like parsnips. Over there, they taste sweet if you suck on the blooms.”

I do and venturing out on my own I pluck blades of grass and chew them. They taste like bitter spring, but it has long ceased to be about taste.

I want to turn my insides green.

I pluck a flower, *Kniphofia rooperi*—lava hued, dripping orange to yellow and shove it whole into my mouth. I can’t swallow, so I gnash my teeth, blending the colors on my palate. It isn’t enough.

I pick a flowerless strand and chew on brimstone. I shove my mouth full with purple allium and choke on the umbels. I follow it with violets to turn violet, and Valentines to fill the love empty spaces. Petals coat my throat and muffle my voice. When I breathe, it sounds like the wind in reeds.

I will not stop.

I feed myself *Hedera helix*, a vine unending like a magician’s handkerchief. That is when the shift begins. I feel lighter, like I lost something that I did not know was weighing me down. I am now a hollow that can be, must be, filled.

Snaking ivy fills my abdomen taking the place of long winding organs I pulverized with flowers. Out from the pores of my greening skin, leak the last of the meat red bits that make me fauna. I open wide my flora mouth to the sky, letting rain feed the flowers in my belly and the bulb in my chest. They have taken the place of the heart I killed with golden rings of *Narcissus poeticus* and purple bells of *Digitalis purpurea*. There is so much less of me than there was before.

But I can grow.

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BIO: Bridget Weigel recently graduated from Lesley University with an MFA in creative nonfiction. In between jobs as an English professor and pet care professional, she is currently writing a memoir about being Boston’s smallest bouncer. Her most recent work was a *Silver Needle Press* nonfiction contest winner. (Blooming is a piece inspired by Aberglasney Gardens in Wales.)

# METAFORE MAGAZINE STAFF

## DYLENE CYMRAES

*Editor-in-Chief*

Dylene Cymraes is the Editor-in-Chief of *Metafore*. She is a graduate of the BFA in the Creative and Professional Writing program at Maharishi University. Born in California sunshine, she has also lived with the pine song of the Rockies, limestone-fed plains of the Midwest & the hustle of the NYC-Baltimore-DC corridor.



Dylene is a novelist, professional writer, & editor. She is interested in short form fiction & finds inspiration in second-hand stores, cast off diaries, graffiti, lies & truths spun at campfires & homeless shelters, & chance encounters on planes. She enjoys online & tabletop gaming, camping, museums & classic movies. She revels in textile art, great food & simple living.

She has published four novels, & her poem, “[Writer's Portrait, Too](#),” was published last spring by the American Journal of Poetry. [Carrying Water](#) was published by Sink Hollow. Favorite Writers: Cormac McCarthy, J.R.R. Tolkien, Antoine de Saint-Exupery, David Sedaris

Contact: [metafore@mum.edu](mailto:metafore@mum.edu)



## BRIAN STAIR

*Editor*

Brian is a senior editor for *Metafore* & a BFA graduate in the Creative & Professional Writing program at Maharishi University of Management. Hailing from the Buckeye State, a westbound freeway left him at a pit stop in Fairfield, Iowa, where he continues to sharpen his sense of adventure & creation in the expression of the pad & pen.

Brian writes from the observations of our chaotic world backed by the soundtrack of his acoustic guitar. He is interested in music, history, law, & wholeheartedly promotes the freedom to be true to yourself & express who you really are.

Favorite Authors: Stephen Crane, Ron Chernow, Ernest Hemingway, Robert Frost, Stephen King, David Sedaris, Jane Austen, Lena Dunham, Sophia Coppola.

## CANDICE RANKIN

*Editor*



Candice is a senior editor for *Metafore*. She is a BFA student in Creative & Professional Writing with a second major in Consciousness & Human Potential. Born in Southern Indiana, Candice has spent the better part of four decades studying performing arts in NYC & traveling the world before returning to her Midwestern roots to write about it.

Candice favors memoir, flash non-fiction, & personal essay. Her search for the deeper meaning of existence often lead her philosophizing in a dark café by herself & talking to a bottle of red wine.

Favorite Authors: David Sedaris, Calvin Haul, Monica Drake, Augusten Burroughs.



## MEGANN KAMMERMAN

*Editor*

Megann is a senior editor of *Metafore Magazine* & a graduate of the BFA in Creative & Professional Writing program at Maharishi University of Management. Though she has lived in half-a-dozen states, she recently hails from the mountains of western Arizona. For four years she has spent most of her time in the Midwest.

She is a novelist & short story writer who specializes in fantasy & science fiction with a recent interest in cross-genres, such as gaslamp fantasy and steampunk. She has worked as a freelance writer & artist & is currently a tutor at the MUM Writing Center.

Megann holds a 2nd kyu ranking in the martial art of Aikido & is president of the MUM Aikido Club. She also loves camping under the stars beneath ponderosa pines, reading to the pitter-patter of a gentle rain, & watching *Lord of the Rings* on lazy Sunday afternoons.

Favorite Authors: Brandon Sanderson, J.R.R. Tolkien, Jim Butcher, Kristen Cashore, Becky Chambers.

## MAGGIE VENTSIAS

*Editor*



Maggie Ventsias is a senior editor, art editor, and layout artist for *Metafore*. She is a graduate of the MUM BFA program in Creative Writing & is completing her BA in Fine Art at Maharishi University in June of 2019.

Maggie's writing style has been described as snarky spiritualism. She is known for holding opposing paradigms in balance, while gently dissecting belief systems into their core elements. When not writing, Maggie is reading, meditating, arting, or teaching.

Favorite Authors: Sir Terry Pratchett, Maya Angelou, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Emily Dickinson; however, asking her to choose favorites is like asking her to choose a favorite child. Favorite Artists: Of course, Vincent. Post-Impressionists FTW, but Post-Modern Contemporary is a close second.



## LEAH WALLER

*Faculty Advisor*

Leah Waller is the Program Director for the Department of Media & Communications & an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Maharishi University.

Leah's work has been published in literary journals, magazines, newspapers, & anthologies. Her book, *Under the Cedar Tree*, had a soaring debut in Amazon's top ten best seller list for poetry & continues to be a popular favorite among reading circles.

Leah received her bachelors in literature & writing at MUM & went on to achieve a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Northern Arizona University.

Currently, Leah is working on a collection of poetry and nonfiction which explores her many travels through Europe & the Southwest & is honored to act as the faculty advisor for *Metafore* as well as the MUM Queer Coalition.

## JAMES R. DAVIDSON

*Editor-in-Chief Emeritus*

James R. Davidson is the founder and former Editor-in-Chief of *Metafore*. He holds a degree in Creative Writing from Maharishi University. Though he is currently held captive amongst the cornfields of Southeastern Iowa, he still hears the wise, misty whispering of the Great Smoky Mountains in his native East Tennessee. As a poet, he is interested in work that takes a contemporary approach to transcendentalism. He finds inspiration at the intersections of queerness, spirituality, & ecology. The surrealist, imagist, & symbolist movements are also major influences. His poem, "[Lithosphere](#)," was published by *Oyster River Pages* in 2018.



## DANY HILLMAN

Dany Hillman is a proofing editor for *Metafore Magazine* and is in the BFA in Creative and Professional Writing at Maharishi University of Management. Dany has published a short story in *Revista Llave* in Mexico and a short memoir in *Crack the Spine*. Her favorite authors include Isabel Allende and Naomi Shihab Nye.

## LYDIA HICKMAN

Lydia Hickman is a proofing editor for *Metafore Magazine*, majoring in Creative Writing at Maharishi University of Management. Lydia is teaching herself to play the harp in her spare time. She is also a painter of miniatures, using acrylic paints.

## EARL NEEDHAMMER

Earl Needhammer is a proofing editor for *Metafore Magazine*, finishing his BS in Business. Earl also served as an editor on the WWII memoir of Frank Kravetz, *Eleven Two*.