



Cathexis Northwest Press

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We Who Devour Pretty Things

By: Alice Turski

When my lover points to three small flowers
at a corner of his family estate and says, *Look,*
the snowdrops have opened, I'm supposed
to know what this means. What *the snowdrops*
have opened is meant to do to my orbicularis oculi,
or my levator angular oris, and when no muscle
within me tenses or relaxes as it is meant to do,
his look gains intensity. The air of his estate
becomes thicker. The blades of grass of his estate
become agitated and a mourning dove comes crashing
down three feet to our right, cooing in panic
because its wings have stopped working.
Though spring is here, I feel not so different
from the time he left a hard gourd in my hands
at checkout, or the time he rubbed mink
on my boots. When fall is here, we'll pour boiling
water on the bricks and scatter baking soda
on the shingles, a chemistry for drowning
moss's short tendrils, but till then, when I get low
to the ground and examine my three-petaled harbinger,
I'll whisper in the hollow of her crooked throat,
I would have named you snowbell, and wonder
who taught him that this flower means more
when I learned wading through lilies at the botanical
garden, parting sodden creatures with the reeds
so that my mother could reach into the murky
depths of a duck pond and pull up, by the scruff
of its neck, an alien green pod that looked,
with its multiple eyes, so frightened.
When she tore its husk in two,

the carnage tasted like spring water.
Later, when we learned that the sparkle
on our arms were eggs belonging
to a whirligig beetle laid beneath
wide lily pads for cover, I wished
I could duck back into the rushes,
replace one dying bloom with another,
pin the meadowlark squawking above us
with a stone and set my mother sailing
to a land where food was not so plenty,
where water lilies grew without warrant
and my mother's teeth grew sharp
to save us all. But the authorities
have already been alerted
and everyone is pointing our way.

In a Hungry River Compost Pile, Henderson County, NC

By: Mary Alice Dixon

after Hurricane Helene
grounds of dark

fall, coffee grounds
seeping

through bark and buried
birch leaves,
through cardamom curls
of old orange skins,
wilted iceberg lettuce,
crushed comfrey
with fenders
and

the shell of my house,
my pottery wheel,
the promise to hold,
like a cup, broken.

Hungry,
the Appalachian river,
hungry, the grit
in the grounds

seeking
resurrection of dirt
from water

seeping, still

in the cinnamon-red roots
of madder and bloodwort,
planted in mud,
the grounds of my life

seeking
resurrection from water

seeking earth
worm-fat, wet and dirty.

I Got the Meaning

By: Kache' Attyana Mumford

I made you cry the night I learned that words hold weight.
Foot on a neck, held by a brace that cracked without a sound—
Moving so quietly, you couldn't decipher what death might mean.

Words and letters carved in a tongue that slides down your cheekbones.
Clumps of cotton candy, draining all the sweetness,
Until the color begins to question the vibrance of its pigment.

Murder or suicide—killing something with life still inside.
But words hold little weight,
Until they're spoken by a voice your heart remembers, though your mind can't place.

Death means healing without a heartbeat,
Kissing the mind that holds the memory of when you were alive—
Until my mouth opens, and I take you in whole.

And you're crying.
And I've learned the meaning of love in every language.
So, here's to dying—
I finally got the meaning.

Spirit Box

By: Delores Amorelli

Instead of a sitter, we had a Ouija board.

We'd bring it out on Friday nights
when our parents had gone out dancing,
but only once we'd seen their taillights
disappear around the corner.

It wasn't a secret.

All the women in my house had been
called witchy, or worse, at some point in their lives.

It just felt wrong to begin a conversation
with the dead when someone else was listening.

Our hands clasped together over the planchette.
We had questions for the dead we could not ask in life:

*Are you alone? Do you remember us? Did
it hurt more than this?*

YES

NO

We had yet to understand—
the futility of looking backwards,
or taking back words.

So we sat on our mother's kitchen floor,
backs razor straight, planchette sweaty under our palms,
asking, *can you give us a sign?*

Waiting for a dog to bark, a car to honk, a phone to ring.
Waiting for something we can't see to whisper—

GOODBYE

Pygmalion

By: Andrew Christoforakis

Here lies a heart heavier than marble,
edges sanded and polished till even
your reflection cuts you back. Am I vain
to think that even the softest curve,
the plumpest lips and breasts,
wouldn't glow like I do,
if not in light then like the aura
you deign to give all things yours?
The gods take lesser things
for themselves every morning.
Like a child with hands grabbing
at something they want because they saw
someone else looking at it first.
The closed fist we mistake for love
wrapped around a chisel. Master
who's mastered the shaping
of stone flesh till it shames
all the women who've bored him,
I leave you with the seer's
speech, the curse you thought a blessing
because honey and vinegar
taste the same to the starving:
may you get everything you want.

Autopsy

By: Jennifer Karp

I scalpel myself
turn me inside out

I hand over my quivering liver
dripping with salty blood
fatty on the ends

how humble
that liver is

unlike the kidneys
fancy fellows they are
wiggling under overhead lights
gurgle and pop

(I bypass the heart
my dark red gases
could escape with even
a small nick)

after a good wipe down
I stuff me back in
organs settle down
knowing their place

like in church
where there is wine
and water
and bread

APOKATASTASIS: THE RESET

By: Julie Benesh

Like the egg mothers
chicken like the butter
was cream like the butter-

fly (whose far flutter's
the last proverbial straw)
was chrysalis was caterpillar

like clock
turns calendar
like shoulder pads season

like no-thing
like that dissipative structure
before the next-thing

like a blessing in the skies
your dream coming through
an aubade in the abyss

it's not like what you think
that momentary absoluteness
of order nor how you think

it's like the idea(1)/idyll
between
the is and the not is

GRAMMAR LESSON

By: Alison Davis

Intransitive and transitive verbs:

A man starts.

A man starts a fire.

The fire burns.

The fire burns his body.

People mourn.

More people mourn.

Gerunds:

Silencing is an immoral act.

Refusing to look away is a moral act.

Staring it down together is the birthplace of the future.

Grieving is being nursed by clouds.

Conjunctions:

Peace is possible, but peace must be made.

Peace is possible, and peace must be made.

Peace is possible, so peace must be made.

Peace is possible, yet peace must be made.

I must make it, for I only know insofar as I do.

Freedom Fighters

By: Emily Teitsworth

It's not fair but it is logical
that the people who fear life
are the ones doing all the killing.
Covetous of delight, generous
with cruelty, bent under the shadow
of an unexamined father god.
*If I look straight ahead the pain
might just miss me. If I hide quietly
in the closet he won't drag me out this time.*
What a waste to live these few years
in fear. To avoid awe, to look away
when geese fly south above us,
calling out for a warm season
just over the horizon. Our hope
might not be resistance. We'll die
along with them, righteous or no.
So in the meantime I'm laughing,
petting my dog's ears, marveling
as my son learns what "a while" means
and tries his best to wait that long.
I'll husk pomegranates into the sink,
I'll write poetry no one else may ever read.
I'll have a good time while I can,
and feel not rage but pity
for the small violent men who missed it all,
these many chances for easy joy.

Death By A Thousand Cuts

By: Kristie Daugherty

At Via Carota
(un-chandelier-ed,
you wanted to sit outdoors)
you said *I'm cold*
take
off your sweater
I need it.
I did.
Your arms, covered in
two layers, mine,
bare. The cold
knifed through me.

You have way more meat on your bones,
you said. *Like blubber.*
(Your snicker nicked my aorta).

The traffic light
heard you, caught
the edge of your voice,
blinked to yellow,
hovering in the sharp air:
a bee ready to sting.

The Aegean Sea

By: Bridget Bill

Is this the sea where Aegeus sacrificed his grief?
It must be why our tears bear the salt of the ocean—
 where our primal sadness begins—
with a man who courted tragedy
 and the gods who watched his end

For what marks a tragedy?
Its needless narration—its irony?
The white sails that could have been
The black sails that dove him in
 We haunt ourselves by memory
 Etching his name into the sea

For his story is scattered on the water, joined by other visions of loss
What beauty there is in the telling of our own humanity's cost
Yes, it hurts to share our stories
 because we know where the wounds will be
But the sting of the salt starts our healing
 That is the Aegean Sea

The Unbearable Beauty of Ballet

By: Rob Friedman

My 4th grade crush topped the *In Memoriam* list
that passed from hand to hand around tables
of 50th reunion revelers trapped in
the land of lockers and unrequited love.

I got a pic of the list along with a text:
“we’re still lucking out,” and closed my eyes
to watch nine-year-old Pam and her sister
pirouette across their living room floor.

Disastrous Train Wreck

With apologies to R.E.M.

By: Anne Bower

It's the end of the world as we know it
ALWAYS

Below overhead tracks, roadside sign
recounts
TRAIN DERAILED
describes flames, coal, crashing from
tracks above onto carriages below
all those 19th-century bustles, bonnets, top hats,
lives lost
that sign like today's news
ALWAYS more so than ever
air poisoned by chemicals, words, greed

and I feel fine

In my kitchen wi-fi working
sunshine spilling through the window
snows a-melting, coffee steaming
watching R.E.M

All those arms flung up
rhythmic waving, band plays
shouts of then, that set of months—
hoodies, harpies,
reefers, peepers,
Berlin wall's about to fall,
Perestroika, Harry Potter
ALWAYS we have got a lotta

end of the world as we know it
venom, denim,
soldiers, drones and
Coal and flames and tracks
come crashing
shouts of now, this set of months
bombs are smart and bombs are dirty,
fires and famine, droughts and drownings
coral's dying, glacier's moaning

and I feel fine

THE SUN ROSE

By: Sarah Steadman

the sun rose very pink

the ground forgot how to drink
30 years since he'd had cows
15 sucky 13 good dry sucky spring seasons
might have two hamburgers for a pet

the sun rose very pink

not all in rapture, we broke gently
to one another threading ourselves
jumping the tomatoes dead into the dumpster
sitting on tomatillos, horizons of goldenrod
splintering the milkweed

the sun rose very pink

next to you but I dreamt it
waking behind your eyes in the
silent spring nowhere to give
gem marigolds coughing out the truck
my cow, her hair, rubbing a traditional rupture
a marriage to the farm

observing dogs, their elbows cast my spirit
licking manure onto us

onto us
seasons last huff

The Armoury

By: Alan Hill

I can see it, her love for me
has dampened my fear, its
broad fingered prairie blaze

cauterised the
dissolution, disease, the death
that will come at me now
that little harder, with its fists raised
swinging its fat little arms
now that I have something
somebody to lose
I have something it wants.

I will step into the arc of her
the mountain austerity of
who we are, to make myself
a target, ready for the punch

open to the strength of us
to the soft machinery of us
small fishlike bones of how we fit
in how we bloom with the
seriousness of the sky
with the ritual within our bodies
which must be carried out, the
soft muck of her and I exposed
aligned, spread like weapons
on a blanket.

Sailing on the Potomac River

By: John Dos Passos Coggin

When I surrender to social media's almighty
algorithms, and even the dead pixels enchant me,
I go to the river and cure my opiate stupor. Ancient
hierarchies return: eagles heckle ospreys; dogs spook
heron; bluefish send baitfish into a manic churn.
All shiver before the vulture's vigil. I raise a sail,
bargaining for speed and power with the wind.
I breathe in salt and breeze and exhale malaise.
In the deep middle of the river, I'm invisible
to anyone onshore. The naked eye only sees
a sail: a white iris blooming in the waves.

Instinct

By: Lisa Morlock

I've been living like a mother cat,
carrying her baby around with her teeth.
Swiping at shadows. Fur soaked by rain.

That is how we spent the year you were sick.
Curled in a C, nose to toes in downy layers,
warming your chilled skin-n-bones.

I carried you like a mama cat
with her kitten in her teeth.
To the safety of the next hour, day, week.

Paws roughed by pavement.
Mammary glands full of fallow milk,
as if making more could save you.

Yowling prayers to the full moon.
Battering for you to get better.
(Then one day you got better.)

But here I am, tired and cautious.
Jaw aching from the journey, clenched in lemon.
Grinding my teeth at night with worry.

Refusing to surrender the weight.
Not doing my job unless I carry you.
Not doing my job unless I let you go.

Pages

By: Kristen Henderson

On the first page of my life-book
There's a darkness,
a cloistered darkness,
crouched down to squeeze into sunless light.
In a wasted valley—inhabitants kneel in teepees
stuck on a final Jeopardy answer
It's a world of quicksand
I'm cloaked in a plaid aviator's suit
absorbing all of the sun's energy
for the nourishment I crave
to search for my orange feline who pounces on cue with the vibration of my tongue click
I have a clay mask
Might leave me unable to breathe
But able to find the second page of life

Visitor

By: Nicole Jean Turner

so anyway
you're passing through, I see
and reached out late
through the years and dark
forgive this but, what
was on your tongue then?

Was it the late night fog of a sudden September frost
sweater wrapped in New England and Old Fashioned
like velvet in the morning, my name

an echo off the pavement
a stolen watch, a missing hat,
how often have you been looking back
and seeking the scent of my lingering

in the sheets, scorned fresh every wash,
has it been just this week or,
Appalachia hadn't tasted how you hoped.

The snow doesn't live up to much
when the mud of the road kicks up
and I know the nostalgia of a fling
blows the dreary to smithereens

but you've gotta admit what was
on our tongues then hasn't aged in a sweet barrel,

how many other sunsets have turned feral
in all these years since? Romanticizing the silence
fetishizing the balance of evenings longing and day dreams
deep in eye flickering madness where you sleep
I am waiting beside the lake, you are trying

to break into somewhere we shouldn't be
bodies both burning with envy
for youth and yesterday yearning, yelling;
Yes, I remember the cold of your knuckles.
Distant mountains, a mouth for wild abandon

now tattered with ink and eroded from repetitive motion;
Yes, I caress the absence of us on occasion
in any unidentified unfinished song we could listen;
Yes, I can still taste the haze in the air, feel the rattle
of a toad croak goodsbump across shirt's wind rippled edge
but I have not dreamt of your touch

in longer than I have known the comfort and burn
of bitters and rye, why else
would you call at midnight after all this time,
what was on your mind,
are you passing through or dropping by?

MANSION

By: Jim Hanson

I live at Merrybrago
my mansion with golden walls
and documents library

made in America
the greatest once again
under the sun and above sea.

You may come and see it, albeit
sun heating and sea rising
but neither bothers me.

For the sun, I have an umbrella
made by my best geoengineer
to save me by solar reflection

made of an aerosol injection
of dust and salt plus pinch of sulfur

my atmospheric tool
for keeping white and cool

built with tax abatement
for Americans like me as
champions of environment.

For the sea, my mansion
now is rebuilt higher
on silver piers of steel

plus a high seawall to
keep away rising waves
and freaky hurricanes

also to keep at bay migrants
who live in leaky submarines
streaming through my perfect wall

claiming asylum from forces
of suppression coming in
to drown them, so they will say.

Bad for them but good for me
to be a man of means and
still enjoy the sun and sea.

Fateful temptation

By: Lina Buividavičiūtė

Girls in boarding schools,
teenage girls, watched by nuns
in black habits, an old film, banal dichotomy:
the girls' white blouses –
the girls' dark hearts,
the girls' light heads –
the girls' dark crotches.

During the day, the girls learn:

memento mori

homo homini lupus est,

they cross-stitch and make pudding,
during the day, the girls dance rounds – so very
dainty, with aprons, they play piano,
dance the waltz with one another.

At night, the devil rolls up the girls' white
blouses, at night storms play
along the girls' nipples, at night, all of the cracks
in the walls and souls are wet from the girls'
dreams, they dream of six werewolves that
pant deeply, pressing against
their parted lips, a cross
falls from the door where it hung – the wind
was so strong; they don't get what that
werewolf is doing, they almost don't get it,

but he does it well, his tongue is pointed and quick
turning six circles around the girls' bodies.

Girls, why were you screaming,
why were you wailing last night –
we had nightmares,
we dreamt a black beast.

Through my fault, through my fault
through my most grievous fault, but
allow me to dream about that beast
tomorrow night. Every night.

Solving the Distance Between (503) and (781)

By: Amy McCullough

trying to keep what we have
what we've labelled love
from becoming a memory of
is like trying to keep phone cans
connected with frozen strings
under flattened treads
like trying to transplant live
cactus in dead winter like
trying to scrape away plastic rain
stuccoing our modern lungs
well maybe it's not as difficult
as that

maybe
more like explaining new math
to my generation how one plus
one sometimes equals one always
waiting at the end of the line
trying to untangle the equation
while dividing & repeating:
no, it's okay, I'll wait.

Go Faster, Go Missing

By: Darren C. Demaree

for Matthias Göritz

If the statues fill up with blood
they will crack open like bread.
The only art is a dammed river
flooding an abandoned town.
I have only one thought that is-
n't compromise and abstract ego.
We could leave right fucking now.
I have only one thought that is-
n't compromise and abstract ego.
The only art is a damned river
flooding an abandoned town.
If the statues fill up with blood
they will crack open like bread.

Sonoma Etymon Earth/Ground Village

By: Jeremy Jacob Peretz

after Otis Parrish

Land we call home
 of valley and hill
 adjacent flatland
 farm and quarry
 and creek and coast
 oak and redwood and lupin
 madrone and manzanita.
 Call by many names home North
 Star above falsely timeless Bay
 whose faults / blood / lines have been
 forgotten by we the people
 not repaired in new identities forged
 with benediction from patron Saint of
 Ecologies.

Santa Rosa recalls too
 the twisted tongue/ties of conquest
 inscribed in baptismal basalt
 just off Highway 12 behind Betty's
 Fish and Chips where you might
 see an otter and surely RC trucks
 and maybe me dipping with my
 son or another child or adult
 cleaning a bleeding wound
 sustained biking or being.

We prefer easier etymons
 with *Sonoma*: prettier pleasant
 romantic preternatural landscape
 it is, but “Is it in fact the etymon?”
 Seems we know more about
 Dark Sides of distant moons
 than indiscretions at *our* hearts’
 centers: Valley of the Moon
 stays a perpetually bloody
 nosed rock barefaced revealing
 drips and drops and gushes of red
 wine mingled cheek skin and noses
 flush
 skinned-knees and necks beautiful
 broken bones and homes and beauty
 beauty full *Earth Village* reborn past
 sacrifice like this poem
 sacrifice nose for face
 behind or inside glass
 searching obsessively
 for a scent to settle on

*source of quotation is Madison S. Beeler, “Names and Places,”
Western Folklore, 1954.

Locust

By: Ryne Rawson

Stamp once, then twice, lead out men and mice.
In line they follow, no nose or eye to warn them,
Forego the trap, all ready your vice.

Cry stones on pillowed shore and turn sunlight to ice.
Wring stomach, fat, till thinly crucified they clem,
Stamp once, then twice, lead out men and mice.

Lift up silken bowls of blood, lapping tongues they entice,
And snatch the teeth from men whom you condemn.
Forego the trap, all ready your vice.

Climb out from your carapace and stand in fields of lice.
Blind the ear of him smelling the clandestine mayhem,
Stamp once, then twice, lead out men and mice.

Forsake the scalpel, sharp wit suffice,
Between the mind and soul place a vulgar hem.
Forego the trap, all ready your vice.

Plant a tiny seed, which grow in an infinite trice;
Rot of thee, blossomed from the wanton stem.
Stamp once, then twice, lead out men and mice;
Forego the trap, all ready your vice.

Fugue of the First Person

By: Harry Bauld

Why so much I? Just rearrange
 the notes, figure the bass,
 invert the top line and forget
 everything you know
 about harmony. Originality
 is like everything else:
 particulars emerge, granulate,
 truncate, like the sunken lyric
 of February. Snow of the Month Club! Look
 everything up and down. The line forms over there
 somewhere. Wait your turn, it will come.
 All these books, ach. With- or without-stand
 the drifts of snow and words falling
 like pellicles out of you. If you can,
 good luck. The I disappears
 like diapers, praise be, and can that please
 be a promise against their return? Thank you.
 Few things strike at you
 but so do their opposites. How
 to sort them? Wisdom is out of reach
 but not rhyme. Oh, sorry, that too.
 Why this and not that, why
 do the forms, platonic and pat,
 haunt my revery. That's Stardust,
 and today we land on Mars
 again. You've cut things up, and they you.
 Now what. As if it's your job to know. Sit tight
 or loose, as you choose. Imperative is the default,
 the ads a vice but not a versa
 you can neither follow nor escape.
 Aye aye aye. All this play
 will bury you. Now that's deep.

Field Notes from the Natural World

By: Pat Phillips West

When anxiety seizes like a falcon's talons
grabbing prey, take yourself away from the TV
spooling more turmoil in an already aching world.

Walk outside where the only news comes
as fresh air. Find a tree to sit under.
Wrap yourself in its spell, you know the kind

where your mind drifts far away and you feel held.
Lean against your pine, spruce, or sycamore
as if it's your best friend with years of bark

between you. Let everything become teacher:
ladybug, hummingbird, butterfly. Watch spiders
hard at work on their geometry lessons.

Notice the way morning light rests on mossy
stone. Let your head fall back. Feel your shoulders
drop.

Calm comes less like a falcon with mighty wings,
and more like an earthworm slowly, slowly
moving beneath it all, tightening up, stretching

out, tightening up and stretching out, a simple
two-part rhythm. Hold this world as if it will
break, as if it all ends today. As if it goes on forever.

“my lungs are warring nation-states”

By: Kelsey L. Smoot

after Rachel Valente

My lungs are two hot-pockets filled with scalding innards
and they are also an eager tongue, abated only by the burn
They are cubbies at a preschool;
one, bursting with blankets, and warm juice, and left shoes
the other, pee-pee clothes left too long in the marinade
So much is boastful and piggish and polluted—
vast, but *ever-shrinking* in how we go about destroying this place
The most stunning creamsicle sunset concludes
and moments later, an Elon-sponsored sperm-shaped vessel
comes tumbling down toward the Santa Barbara Coast
My lungs are nonbinary, despite being two and oppositional
They both want the same thing, though:
capillaries filled to the hilt, gorged with life as a ripened mango
I couldn't tell you what I am
But my lungs know what is good for them
They know how to fire up the burners and lift into the sky
They also know how to prepare for fireworks

“When I Imagine God at Sunset”

By: Electra McNeil

1. When I imagine God at sunset,
it is his great lungs in the east that succckkk
the clouds back, past the mountains.
Going, going, orange-orange, coral, electric
pink! Then the dusty mauve of my eye-
lids' backs.

When I close them to match, neck craned, I
still see a flash-bang version of the ice-creamy
clouds as they must have, once, existed above
you.
Floating away.

2. When I imagine God at sunset,
watching each and every cloud stretcchhhh
like a cotton ball above me, it is his fingers in the
west pinching the world ever so softly, so
it forever yearns. *Let me
stay!*

So, the clouds, fighting the wind, will always
desperately grasp what is left of the day. So, my eye-
lids' backs will project, fruitlessly, what is past and
over.
Floating away.

a response to “Howl” (1956)

By: M. Anne Avera

I saw the greatest minds of my generation
In the metallic stink of well-used dayrooms
Bloated from blue-green candies and wads of hair
Unwashed lips over papercut scrubs, no sir, no belts here
Who held me when I cried
Who taught us how to cheek
Shakedown, lights out
Howl at paper moons

We read one lonely book, then pass to the left
Censored license plates of the boogeyman
Eat straight peanut butter and sleepwalk for days
Scream at white coat shadows, the empty ones
Who threw away the keys
Who dole out the juice
Hands up, hands off
You're a number in here

We suck grease from napkins, fingers, whole
Those who eat get out sooner
We will sleep to get out sooner
Talk about it all to get out sooner

Who adjust bodies
Who tick like clocks
Wind-up, wind down
Dolls rattle when you shake

We pace like tigers, the screeching artists
That sand birdhouses in hallways, in souls
Painting trees and hymns so the days are fast
Measure hours in nicotine patches
Who sees time march
Who tracks the pills
One minute, two minutes
Over and out

We say "Honey, it's all gonna be alright."
Light, life left on in the bunkroom
She combs blonde mats off my neck
She smells like decaf coffee
Who tells me
Who shows me
"It ain't over,
you're not done."

Playing Chess While Stoned in Berkeley

By: Robert Eugene Rubino

April 30, 1975

They become chess players and druggies
in the wake of Fischer's telegenic triumph
competitive logic sublime as a hashish hit.
They get Bobby's book *How to Play Chess*
they get a reliable connection in the City
convinced they play better when stoned
convinced the more stoned the better.

And so at the Dwight Way rooming house
playing yet another game they're so serious
and seriously stoned when a friend bursts in
says Saigon has fallen and let's go celebrate
right now let's join the march up Shattuck
toward University and then to the campus.

But they're locked in lost in the game
in its labyrinthian paths and possibilities
can't conjure the motivation to move
until their visitor scans the bloodless board
declares they have each other in stalemate.

Pipe's passed around for one more token
then they rise for the fall of Saigon
join the celebration with all the marchers
chanting *Ho Ho Ho ... Ho Chi Minh!*

They Came

By: Yucheng Tao

Tuol Sleng
like a poisonous flower
exhaling
a piercing venom.

The palm trees swayed
beneath the faltering shadow,
a procession of bones

—the dead—
labeled as intellectuals.

They came
like a gust of wind,
They came
like a herd of wild beasts.
They came
slaughter upon slaughter,
cursing Tuol Sleng,
damning its streets and rivers.

They regarded themselves as fanatical idealists,
But never, made the place a paradise.
Passion torched it into a fiery hell.

They came
with frantic lusts.
They came to Cambodia—
its flesh drenched in rouge.

When Tuol Sleng opened,
Moonlight buried people
in a sunken pit of earth.

None to cry those words:
“ They came!”

THE LAST LOGO ON EARTH

By: Bill Cushing

Once we run out of cars
to drop into the ocean
and mold into ersatz
coral reefs, what corporate symbol
will be left on land to serve
as the final sign of
manufacture? Perhaps
we'll leave this planet,
head for the border, desert our own ruins
to carve a sneaker's swoosh
on the moon
or loose satellites, set them
in swirling orbit to create
blinking lights that spell L-G:
"Life's Good."

The Final Credits

By: Sarah Wolfe

Directed by	<i>A sentimental, young soul</i>
Written by	<i>A silver-haired body with liver-spotted hands and shaky knees, lips that can't speak out loud but whisper to the mind</i>
Produced by	<i>Mama and Tata; two immigrants with one busted suitcase. Pregnant with a child and a new, bustling city</i>

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Mama	<i>My Protector, my trusted council, the Hearst in our home</i>
Dad	<i>Tata, a Teacher of Wood and Paint, religious only to his family</i>
Wife	<i>Amelia; Stewart of my Heart, my purpose and muse, sewing mirth into the fabric of life</i>
Son	<i>Jakub; Lover of nature, finder of lost things, bringing me pieces of my parent's country when my legs won't go far</i>
Daughter	<i>Celina; The brightness of the stars against the night sky, reading me old novels that feel like new tales when my hands shake too much, kindred soul</i>
Director of Photography	<i>Lewis, Tolkien, Orwell, pages lending to the imagination of the youth. Sketchbooks of Oak trees and lights shining on dim streets. The wood I carve to tables and chairs, generations of people communing around them to break bread</i>

Editor	<i>A transcendent, fragmented mind</i>
Costume Designer	<i>Scrappy loafers, aged denim, the sun carving wrinkles</i>
Music Composer	<i>Notes from my mother's father floating from the baby grand</i>
Casting Director	<i>The unraveling thread in my favorite wool shirt; leading me to a loud seamstress in a corner shop in Queens. Amelia spent a lifetime mending my trousers and heart until the end. Bringing daNodils and coNee with sweet cream every Friday to her stone in soft ground. Still feel her, patching my mind with new colors and old songs on vinyl endlessly turning</i>

UNIT

Drivers	<i>A mossy bike at 9, a fully restored Ford for two decades, my wife then my grown children. Radio melodies call me back to them, waving away concerned gazes</i>
Catering	<i>Chocolate Babka on chipped china from my grandson, my mother's cinnamon streusel, Pierogi dumplings and Pernik every December</i>
Head Chef	<i>Amelia, lips sticky with syrup and coNee scrolls every sunny Sunday for forty-two years. Burning everything I handled when she was sick, us laughing about it. Giggles like windchimes as a source of nutrition</i>
Health & Safety Advisor	<i>Kind woman in blue scrubs who hums tunes I don't know, but rather like. Scribbling notes while I smile, remembering</i>

*While the characters and events depicted in this film are based on real people and events happening through a corporeal lens, the actual subject matter is derived from the creative compositions of the soul despite the loss of cognitive functioning. While the human body is invented to inevitably decline the spirit has no cognitive and/or physical limitations to merge life and art.

In Order of Appearance

Turski received her MFA from Cornell University. Her poems have appeared in Verse Daily, The Iowa Review, The Greensboro Review, Copper Nickel, and Iron Horse Literary Review, and her poetry collection, *Stolen Plums*, is forthcoming from Vehicule Press.

Mary Alice Dixon lives and writes in the North Carolina Piedmont where she grieves the wounded Mother Earth. She has been an advocate for unhoused families and a Guardian ad Litem for abused children. She also facilitates hospice sorrow writing workshops that include found poems and natural rituals. She spends free time looking for flecks of mica on the banks of the Hungry River while mourning her dead cats, Alice B. Toklas and Thomas Merton. Mary Alice is a multiple Pushcart nominee, winner of the NC Writers' Network 2024 Randall Jarrell Poetry Competition, and has been a finalist for the NC Poetry Society Poet Laureate Award. Her poetry is in *Fourth River*, *Kakalak*, *Main Street Rag*, *Pinesong*, *Stonecoast Review*, *storySouth*, and elsewhere.

Kache' Attyana Mumford is a Black, neurodiverse poet from Jacksonville, FL. As a writer, therapist, and actor, she has dedicated her life to creating spaces where others feel empowered to share their stories. Through her poetry and work, she strives to uplift marginalized voices, bringing attention to the intersection of identity, mental health, and lived experience.

Delores Amorelli is an emerging poet with work in *Beyond Words*, *Half and One*, and *Black Horse Review* (forthcoming). She lives in Los Angeles with her rescue dog Bebo.

Andrew Christoforakis is a poet and cubicle-dweller based out of Naperville, IL. He studied economics at the University of Chicago before taking a hard left to creative writing. He has work published or forthcoming in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *West Trade Review*, and *Ink Nest Poetry*.

Jennifer Karp won honorable mention in the Steve Kowit poetry prize and was a winner of San Diego Reader poetry contest. She's published in/forthcoming in *The Orchards Poetry Journal*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Writer's Resist*, *Festival for Poetry*, *San Diego Poetry Annual*, and many other publications.

Julie Benesh is author of the poetry collection *INITIAL CONDITIONS* and the poetry chapbook *ABOUT TIME*. She has been published in *Tin House*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Florida Review*, and many other places, earned an MFA from Warren Wilson College, and received an Illinois Arts Council Grant. She currently lives in Chicago and holds a PhD in human and organizational systems. Read more at juliebenesh.com.

Alison Davis is an award-winning educator, scholar, artist, and activist based in Northern California. Alison's work has been featured in a wide range of literary and scholarly publications, including *The Sun*, *Rattle*, *Pensive: A Global Journal of Spirituality and the Arts*, *Braided Way*, *SAUTI: Stanford Journal of African Studies*, *Research Bulletin*, and *School Renewal*, as well as the chapbook *Wild Canvas* (Finishing Line Press, 2024). Although she holds multiple advanced degrees from Very Prestigious Universities, she sees her willingness to be like Rumi and gamble everything for love as her greatest credential. *A Rare But Possible Condition* is her debut collection. IG: [poems_and_pebbles](https://www.instagram.com/poems_and_pebbles)

Emily Teitsworth grew up in Oregon and is now the Executive Director of a non-profit organization in the San Francisco Bay Area, and a consultant on issues of gender and racial equity and organizational development. She has been writing actively since the age of six, and studied poetry with David Young at Oberlin College. Emily's writing has been published widely, including by *Nostos*, *West Marin Review*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, and the *Guardian*.

Emily's work explores the intersection of social development and personal evolution, the liminal space between our interior landscape and global climate. She writes poetry and personal essays with a global and intersectional feminist lens, striving to locate and dis-locate the familial

and social myths that have made her and that continue to construct her place in the world. As a global development and public health practitioner in her “day job,” she also brings a lens of social criticism and climate activism to her work, seeking to write beautiful pieces that also convey the urgency of our collective moment.

Kristie Frederick Daugherty is a poet and a professor at the University of Evansville. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and B.A. in English from the University of Southern Indiana. She is also a PhD candidate in Literature/Criticism at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is the editor of “Invisible Strings: 113 Poets Respond to the Songs of Taylor Swift” which was published in December 2024 from Random House. She has poems forthcoming in “Ponder Review” and the “The North American Review”, and has been published in numerous other literary journals.

n/a

Rob Friedman is a retired academic who resides in San Diego. He was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize for his poem “The Paper Fortune Teller,” which appeared in Poets Online in 2024.

Anne Bower lives teaches tai chi in rural Vermont and attempts poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction. She has three published chapbooks to her credit: Poems for Tai Chi Players, The Space Between Us, and (co-authored with Pamela Ahlen) Getting it Down on Paper. Individual poems have appeared in The Raven’s Perch, Plainsong, Gemini Magazine, Rabble Review, and other journals and anthologies. In a previous life she taught composition and literature at The Ohio State University and published about food and culture.

Sarah is a farmer and director of the Mount Lebanon Residency in New Lebanon, NY. Her work has appeared in various publications including the Poetry Project Newsletter, The Hurricane Review, and The Portland Review. She is a dedicated member of the Poetry State Forest and Bernadette Mayer’s writing group.

Alan Hill has been writing like his life depends on it, because it does. He cannot imagine there is a better way of trying to make sense of the world that follows him around with its bad breath and big hairy fists. His latest book ‘In the Blood’ was published by Caitlin Press in 2022.

John Dos Passos Coggin is a writer based in Alexandria, Virginia. His poetry has appeared in Pangyrus, Half and One, and The Blue Mountain Review. He also co-manages the John Dos Passos literary estate.

Lisa Morlock lives in the Midwest with her lovely family and naughty dog. She holds a bachelor’s in English and journalism and a master’s in education. Her rhyming picture book, TRACK THAT SCAT! (Sleeping Bear Press), was named a 2013 NSTA Outstanding Science Trade Book, 2013 RIF Book Selection, and 2012 Alabama Camelia Award Nominee. Her poem, “The Rarity of Eiswein,” received a 2023 Pushcart Nomination. She currently works in communications and event planning.

Kristen Henderson is a former journalist who now writes poetry and flash fiction. When she was bored during the pandemic, she founded Bright Flash Literary Review, an online journal for flash and short fiction and memoir. Kristen splits her time between Los Angeles and Lamy, NM, where the sky never ends.

Nicole Jean Turner (they/her) is a writer from New England with an affinity for vignettes, napping outdoors, and conversations that confront the human condition. They write in cursive to hide the butchered spelling that would otherwise raise suspicion about her master’s degree in writing. Find yourself between her lines on Poetry-Journal.com

Jim Hanson is a retired university researcher and sociologist who lives in the St. Louis area. He has published three poetry collections titled Endless Journey, Ruminations of Living and Dying, and Perspectives, also some thirty single poems, and is a member of the St. Louis Poetry Center and Illinois State Poetry Society Southern Chapter.

Lina Buividavičiūtė was born on May 14, 1986. She is a poet and literary critic. Lina is an author of two poetry books in Lithuanian language. Her poetry is published in “Matter”, “Masters”, “Proverse poetry prize” contest anthologies, “Drunk monkeys”, “Beyond words”, “The Dewdrop”, “The limit experience”, “Poets choice”, “HOW”, “Beyond queer words”, “Maudlin House”, “Cathexis northwest press”, “Poetry online” magazines and “Versopolis” poetry platform. Upcoming publications will appear in “New millennium writings”, “Cathexis northwest press”, “Quillkeepers Press”, “The Stardust review” and “Beyond words” magazine. This piece is translated from Lithuanian by Ada Valaitis.

Amy McCullough is a former public interest attorney who spent years trying to dismantle systemic barriers attendant to poverty in the USA. After two decades in the Pacific Northwest, she recently relocated to Rhode Island, but still considers PNW home. She draws inspiration for her writing from her travels, the Pacific Coast, and her back porch near Narragansett Bay.

Darren C. Demaree is the author of twenty-two poetry collections, most recently “blue and blue and blue”, (Fernwood Press, July 2024). He is the recipient of a Greater Columbus Arts Council Grant, an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, the Louise Bogan Award from Trio House Press, and the Nancy Dew Taylor Award from Emrys Journal. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Best of the Net Anthology and the Managing Editor of Ovenbird Poetry. He is currently working in the Columbus Metropolitan Library system.

Jeremy Jacob Peretz teaches cultural and Caribbean studies at the University of Guyana. Jeremy’s scholarship has been widely recognized, most recently with the Caribbean Studies Association’s Best Dissertation Award. His poem “Calabash Microcosm” was awarded second place in the 2017 Society for Humanistic Anthropology’s Ethnographic Poetry Competition. His poetry and critical essays are available through such publications as African American Review, Caribbean Quarterly, Journal of Africana Religions, New West Indian Guide, and Postcolonial Text.

Ryne Rawson is a writer and poet currently hiding from his responsibilities (which are far and few between) in Minnesota. You can follow his work by reading palms and contact him through carrier pigeon.

At Columbia Harry Bauld was twice first-team All-Ivy shortstop and broke Lou Gehrig’s records. (Unfortunately his academic records.) A writer, painter, translator and teacher in the Bronx, he has won awards for work that has appeared in numerous journals in the U.S. and the U.K. He was included by Matthew Dickman in the anthology Best New Poets 2012 (UVA Press) and has performed in New York and elsewhere as a magician and jazz pianist.

Pat Phillips West’s work appears in various journals including: The Inquisitive Eater New School Food, Verse Virtual, San Pedro River Review, and elsewhere. She has received multiple Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominations.

Kelsey L. Smoot (They/Them/He/Him) is a full-time PhD student in the interdisciplinary social sciences and humanities. They are also a poet, advocate, and frequent writer of critical analysis. Kelsey is the winner of the 2021 Sad Girls Club Spring Literary Contest, the 2023 The Good Life Review Honeybee Prize, and the Grand Prize Winner of the 2024 Button Poetry Video Contest. He is both Pushcart Prize nominee, as well as a Best of the Net nominee. Proudly, Kelsey the author of a chapbook titled we was bois together with CLASH! (An Imprint of Mouthfeel Press) and another chapbook, Muse, with Another New Calligraphy.

Electra McNeil is a well-adjusted writer and waitress from Albuquerque, New Mexico. She spends most of her time laughing.

M. Anne Avera is a writer and kindergarten teacher from Auburn, AL. Her literary interests include horror, speculative fiction, free verse poetry, and creative nonfiction. She has a passion for open conversations on mental health, cosmic monsters, the cryptids of the world, and her dog, Iris. She can be found on Substack at @manicphasewriting

Robert Eugene Rubino is the author of three collections, including “Vanity Unfair” (Cathexis Northwest Press). He’s published prose and poetry in various online and print journals, including Hippocampus, Raw Art Review, Cagibi and The Write Launch.

Yucheng Tao, originally from China, studies songwriting at the MI College of Contemporary Music in Los Angeles. His poetry has appeared in multiple literary venues, including three selections in Wingless Dreamer's Open Theme contest and other issues. NonBinary Review later reprinted his poem "Blue Horse" alongside an author interview. Synchronized Chaos featured seven of his poems across two issues, while his work has also appeared in Ink Nest, The Arcanist, Moonstone Art Center, Poetry Potion, Literary Yard, and Spillwords.

Called the "blue collar poet" by classmates after serving in the Navy and later working on commercial vessels before returning to school at 35, Bill Cushing's work has appeared in anthologies, journals, magazines, even newspapers. Now retired after over 20 years, he continues teaching part time. Bill has four previous poetry collections: A Former Life (Kops-Fetherling International Award), Music Speaks (San Gabriel Valley Poetry Festival Award; New York City Book Award), "...this just in. ...", and Just a Little Cage of Bone (American Writing Award finalist). He is assembling a new poetry manuscript for release in 2025.

Sarah Wolfe is an 11th Generation Usui Reiki Master, certified yoga teacher, and writer. You can often find her out and about the east coast in parks, coffee shops, yoga studios, local restaurants, or in a really good book.