Cathexis Northwest Press

Sep – Oct 2024

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A race where I am all the runners

By: Veronika Gorlova

When I told my mother I started antidepressants,
she told me about the time she weaned herself off of hers

against her doctor's orders. *I didn't feel like myself.*
I spoke to my therapist about it, said

she should have tried other medications
before deciding this was not for her, said

I was worried she would fall through the cracks
between tectonic plates. I've been on these pills

for over a year, and the earthquakes have stopped.
The lakes in my tea cups are calm, my mirrors anchored

to the walls. I don't spend days morphing into memory foam
pretending to work, when I can barely work my lungs.

I decide to end my relationship and the pain comes in raw—
like before. It's Easter and everyone is with their families,

unable to stop me from twisting myself into drought.
But the day after I'm fine, miss him for a week

then slip into a new life. I remember telling a friend
the drugs were making me rethink all the times I'd been

in love. *Maybe it was just anxiety.* I am my mother's daughter
even when I'm not ready for it. These days I don't feel anything

for anyone, try to rekindle an old romance only to be betrayed
by my body, its resistance to touch. I get a voice note

from an ex girlfriend telling me how much she loves my poetry,
how proud of me she is, and everything below the surface

seals up. The earthquakes are gone but so are all the
spectacles: the sun dogs, the sailing stones, the volcanic lightning.

I don't know how to love in neutral. In order to feel, I ride a motorcycle
without a helmet on a Bangkok highway, run into the Pacific Ocean in February,

forest bathe during a thunderstorm. What if it was just anxiety? I want it back
just for a season, just to feel shaken. Even if it feels like a fire

tornado ripping through my living room, books and flora exploding
into ash. Sometimes I forget to take my pills, don't catch on

until halfway through the day when my mind becomes a race
where I am all the runners. What happens if I do it on purpose,

the forgetting? Once when I was numb, I mistook it for happiness. Once
when I was in love, I mistook it for a diagnosis.

murder

By: David Banach

the crows caws accuse me four of them
flying overhead speaking as if only to me

why aren't you collecting shiny things?
why
aren't you soaring and who would
even
soar
with you? why do you suffer
anything
else above you but the blue
perspicuous sky
and the screaming effulgent yellow
of this
sun we share? why are you?
how are you?
what are you?
so seriously sad and slow
about in this thing
you call a life? Be black
and sleek
and cry aloud your joy! let your
lungs fly
out your obsidian
keratin
mouth parts!
why teeth?
why white?
why so terribly
hu--man? when everything alive
is so so
not.

Neglected Jockstraps in My Bedroom Closet

By: Winnie CT

Seven jockstraps lay buried in a white GLAD garbage bag.
Years ago, this bag had a Mediterranean lavender scent.

Analogous to my indifference regarding the queer novelty of jockstraps,
my bedroom closet's bottom shelf remains indifferent to artificial scents.

I remember the men's underwear store I bought the jockstraps in,
underU4men, in a corner of Seattle's Capitol Hill.

In my early twenties, I would buy birthday presents for my sister in KOBO,
a Japanese artisan shop two doors down from underU4men.

A Japanese shopkeeper in KOBO told me he met his American husband
while walking on a sidewalk in Tokyo. While I lost count of

the exact number of years that passed since he shared his love story,
I still like remembering this love story, of two strangers who decided to

share their lives together after their bodies happened to cross paths in public.
Yearning for a love story like theirs, a love story with origins of happenstance

that managed to last, I bought seven jockstraps from underu4men, preparing
for the Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday

my future husband would slide each jockstrap down my legs for the first time
before we —

In no particular order, I pull each jockstrap out of the garbage bag:

The first jockstrap is black, and its pouch has holes, so parts of the penis are visible when it's worn. The second jockstrap is gray with lime green stitches, and the third jockstrap is lime green with gray stitches. The elastic waistband of the fourth jockstrap says *BLOW ME*, and the elastic waistband of the fifth jockstrap says *POWER BOTTOM.* The pouch of the sixth jockstrap has a cheetah pattern printed on it. The seventh jockstrap has a magenta pouch with one hole, for the wearer's penis to be inserted through like a glory hole.

I hope no one takes for granted any of true romantic love's intimate senses.

Futility

By: C.L. Liedekev

What does this burning anger get me?
Drunk, tongue chafed and isolated
along the rind of receding gums.
The moon skulks down the street, spitting
shadows and soot just above the tree line.
Its light can't touch me, and I stump out of my car

My lips cold as booze's rank
and death crawls into veins, into muscle.
The skin of my stomach opens in a heat blossom
as I stumble onto the edge of the curb, legs curl
under my body, a reverse snail, a dead baby possum.

Like the ones my father found on their dead mother
in the eyelash of woods between our house.
I watched as he plucked the maggots
from their rotten umbilical cord
like the counted pedals from an aster.

I watched as the tweezers pulled the reach of death
closer, I watched as he did not quit.
Twenty, then thirty white stars of hope set
aside on his workbench.

As the darkness sets in and he turns on the little
bulb on in the wood-strewn room.
Its light showed a world I never wanted to exist.

I've been dropped into a theater half-way through a movie

By: Cat Dixon

with a large popcorn in my lap and a soda in the cupholder to my left, so I sip and munch while I consider the film, *I can sort this out*. But the scenes are disjointed, cutting from one character to the next. The settings spin from fishing at a lake to a high-rise board meeting to a space shuttle hurtling to Mars. The snips of dialogue are nonsense, so I turn to the person next to me to ask what's going on, and I'm shushed. I try to stand up, but I'm locked in with a seat belt with no buckle. All attempts to remove the belt are in vain—it won't even loosen. The exit sign at the front of the room shines its red warmth, but it's unreachable. The movie screeches—a plane takes off, a tsunami smacks into hotels lining a crowded beach, a chainsaw fells a tree, a baby screams on an altar. A round of applause erupts. I'm sure the credits will roll, the overhead lights will flicker on, and I'll flock with the crowd to the restroom, but no, it's not over. Another story begins—a financier admires business cards, an angry mother yells at a priest to heal her child, a robot hides in a burnt-out city from its pursuers. So, I shovel in more popcorn and slurp the soda. The bowl and cup are endless. When the movie score quiets, I attempt to yell for help, but my mouth's filled with popcorn, and then vomit, and I'm sitting in my own piss and shit. I've been trapped here for days, weeks, months, now years. I've ballooned to 400 pounds and my skin sticks to the chair. Occasionally someone creeps to the exit, that holy mirage, and the door opens. For a moment, the whole theater floods with white light, but then it slams shut. The whoosh of outside air slaps cheeks, and we're back to the dark theater, the endless movie, the flashing smiles on the screen.

I want to stand up. I'd give anything to walk out, but I don't know how.

The Anatomy of My Debris

This delirious poem is a piece of trash
it has arms and legs a head
a drooling head
its feet clomp from the weight of being
detritus
the body contorts from
the pain of being discarded.

The eyes pressed into this fool face are plastic caps.
The hair on its clumsy head is composite small bits of plastic line
weed whacking line fish line
plastic tabs and pulls and cable ties.

My debris is a work of art.

My debris is an artist with cigarette butt fingers
and gumchew toes.
Sunscreen sluffing skin
Tear off float off sheets of greasy coral-killing skin.
A rain of the artist pilfering resources clogs
Seas and bays and rivers and my home stream
chokes off the ocean of all creation
Shedding bits of garbage from the cloak of its being like Appleseed.

Dear gods can't we burn this body as an offering?
The rank and the poisonous and the forlorn given up to you?
Let our crooked smokes climb to your nostrils through the black ruined air.
Let us be rid of everything.

Taxidermy of trees

By: Tanvi

What shall consume us today?
Heart rot in timbers
Or stem rust of pine
Let's spread *papilio demoleus* on paper
To feel aflutter
A tear in time
While an oak's bark unyields
To what's left of a forest
Before the fortress is breached
By a violent gush of light
What will it be?
The lethal yellowing of palms
Or black knots in trunks
In September
There's room for darkness

Seasons

By: Patrick Malee

1.

The year you died,
winter was interminable.
I remember the burnt orange of its birth,
a mournful blur out the Volvo window,
flat farmland bordered dull gray I-95.

We drove northwest from cold to colder.
By the time we reached you in Minneapolis
the trees, scattered and lonely as city trees always are,
were black and dead.

We shivered hard on our walks from hotel to hospital,
harder going back.

2.

The clock on the stove claims sundown.
A trickle of light makes it difficult to read.

The stove is wrong —
one hour ahead.
A reminder that life,
if left unchecked,
outpaces itself.

3.

The day you died
the sun, beaming through white living room curtains,
was swallowed by the forest green couch
that kept our grief from plunging us
straight through the floor.

It was too late for you,
too early for us.

A Proof of The Existence of Color

By: Judith McKenzie

Wide awake in the middle of a vast and rolling field,
the high grasses wild in a wind unfelt, waving and
rolling on their own, until some unheard cue alerts
the spirits to hold fast and still the power of air
and sun and all settles to a soft upright reaching
for the daylight, and light plays the fronds for fools,
changing the wheat-gold to upright rainbows
bedeviled by late afternoon rays

the color isn't there, that's obvious - no color is
ever really there, but the slight swaying of the
stalks brings memory of the day of blue sand,
when clues were left in a trail along the
beach, like breadcrumbs, leading north along
the broad stretch, and finally around the
outcropping to a deep inlet with a wide
beach, alive with color, where

standing on the opposite side of blue sand and
green, melting and swirling with red and
purple, yellow and colors there is no name
for, smiling and taking a bow, clear eyes
look for approval, just as the first wave
of tide comes in, and the colors all
begin to wash together, and
eyes close, and the wash
becomes a dance, a symphony

and in the field, the same, where arms widen
to direct the dance, spinning and dipping
a celebration, an adoration, a
gratitude for a moment
when real color
is seen.

Vertigo

By: Robert Eugene Rubino

Now that I'm afflicted with it
Hitchcock waddles from behind the camera
mocks my stubborn cinephile's critique
and with fish-eyed equanimity asks
"Still think my masterpiece overwrought
and under-motivated, old chap?"

Now that I'm afflicted with it
Jimmy Stewart ambles into the frame
sniffs at my suspense unsuspended
"You see, pal, it's only far-fetched
when it's some other sap's sorry state.
Different story when it happens to you."

Now that I'm afflicted with it
Kim Novak draws me breathlessly close
puzzles over the unsettling imbalance
inside my head so private
outside my head so public
stirring spookily so unnerving.

A Few Days from February

By: Piper Summer

It's cold out so I'm cracking my wrists,
discarding cautionaries about arthritis.
You tug on the sleeve of my vintage polo
with the skull and bones, all color-blocked.
Chinos turn limited-edition Pollock
running from the rain, and I'm not anyone's
boyfriend but I should refrain from saying
I could kiss you if you'd like just in case.
Two weeks from Valentine's, there's no one
I'm calling mine, but I'm phoning Allie
across the country and hanging up
before it goes to voicemail. We might as well
let the mud stain our white tennis shoes, since
there's six or seven weeks left of winter rain
meaning six or seven weeks until spring
when I'll go back to Boston, and maybe
I'll finally flip my Claddagh ring that's misshapen
from pointing out for so long. I have a theory
I'm not as Irish as my father or grandfather
makes us out to be. My luck's gone stale
so I've resigned to reading the New Yorker
in my bedroom in the company of pennants
on my wall for Columbia and NYU
below a piece of paper on my ceiling that says
GRAD SCHOOL in thick black Sharpie.
It occurs to me I'm waiting, waiting as if
there's not enough here for me. Maybe not
everything good lives on over there: in the future;
or miles, miles away. I know good lives here
when the weather takes a turn for the worse and
I'm allowed to hold your hand this once.

Mothers' Shadows

By: Lina Buividavičiūtė

The dense foliage of wide-spreading branches
of mothers casts a long shadow.
Their raven hair contains small bright
daughters tangled up within, almost unseen

such a perfect woman: a teacher and a beauty –
such an inelegant, clumsy, incompetent child –

stiff dresses, starched collars,
painfully tight braids:

don't slouch, don't smack your lips, don't talk back –

fatalistic she-birds with well-groomed feathers,
a horde of men in orbit, laughter, shattering dishes, it's time
for You to sleep, my ugly little cygnet, born to a black swan,
Your minutes don't matter, everything happens in a flash when
You pose for family photographs, then it's off to the governess.

Whatever You do, mothers do it better, they divide and conquer,
oh, how archetypical I feel having birthed a son, placing
a weak white body in the shade of my crown.

The Wasteland

By: Jim Reeder

Sometime last April
We drove out to the desert
To check on the mines
That had weathered the winter

Near the old mill
Now covered in spray paint
Tagged by young artists
With cartoons and slogans

We find the old boneyard
Filled with lost decades of
Cast off equipment
Rusted, half buried

I find an old Lincoln
Stately and weathered
And a couple of pickups
Beaten down and forgotten

Big drums of road tar
Abandoned by Caltrans
The last place on earth
For society's castoffs

Some are reptilian,
Lizards and rattlers
Some of them human,
Skin, weathered and lined

Decades of searching
For a lost El Dorado
Digging and scraping
The rich quartzite veins

The world battles onward
In struggle and turmoil
With no clear awareness
Of this corner of desert

Where lizards and desert rats
Vie for survival
Fevered dreams of vast riches
In a wasteland of failure

Cyanide and arsenic
Thorium, dysprosium
Form the radioactive engine
Of the green revolution

A dystopian dustpan
Where bones of coyotes
And bones of old miners
Watch for the future
And wait for the end

Home / town

By: C Crow

I do not remember maps

When I dream, I dream in 199 character tweets.
Sometimes, there are roses, but there were no roses.
A man walks on the curb. The sidewalk is broken.

I think it will remain broken.

I miss the azalea bushes.

They bloomed like a grandmother, but not my grandmother;
Like me, like my family, she does not / has never bloomed.
Once every ten years, the city repaves the roads.

The butcher still sells meat.

The gas station still sells gas.

The only famous person to be born here died alone.
A gravey
The population decreased by ten thousand last year.

The forest makes a sound.

Sometimes, I hear an airplane.

It's destination is never here nor there, but somewhere
Else we deceive ourselves as we deceived ourselves.
A florist sells paper flowers between a bank and a McDonalds.

Fold. Unfold. Fold. Unfold.

Three cuts in the middle of the night.

I am still dreaming. They do not sell paper maps anymore.
Google Maps is not the same, though, I cannot touch it,
I cannot feel the uneven streets beneath my fingertips.

The smell of gasoline.

The smell of diesel.

Once upon a time, the air smelled of azalea flowers,
But we paved over them with asphalt, a black river
With no mouth or voice. The bees have gone silent.

The church steeples.

The welder's shop.

There is value in scarcity, and yet I do not understand
The value of metal or stone. I am told they are expensive,
But no matter where I go, I see them in some state of decay.

Parking lots always full,

But roads always empty.

Where do the cars go? They start at the used car lot,
And they end on Craigslist, and somewhere in between,
Only bumper stickers and license plates exist.

Sunshine State.

Orange Blossom.

Every afternoon, it rained, and I watched the ground,
Puddles ripple like prisms in potholes older than I am,
Somedays, this was all there was to do with oneself.

Empty cigarettes, smoking beer bottles,

Used bullet casings, empty condoms.

Bicycles rust in the garage. Rich people drive cars.
Everyone else walks. Don't mind the broken glass.
Autumn leaves crunch beneath your feet, a form of enrichment.

This is an enclosure.

You will never leave.

The Day-to-Day Thing

By: Anthony Alegrete

I haven't had the time
to think of my routine.
Or at least to claim it.
And to me, these are different
things. I used to make two
scrambled eggs and a protein every morning,
smothering it in hot sauce and sometimes
cheese. I forgot to go to the grocery store yesterday
or more truthfully, I gave myself another excuse not to.
Driving home after being gone from it for fourteen hours
makes the store another job, and I'm getting tired of those.
Some people recommend a check list,
telling me about how good it feels
to cross items off it.
And I don't know how to tell them that I'm terrified
of the length of mine. That seeing it, will
cause my crumble.

The bottom of the barrel
is how some days feel. Other days feel like the whole barrel. On rarer ones,
I am the barrel. Don't ask me what this means, I'm tired. Of thinking.
Of finding meaning.

"How fascinating", others say.
"How lonely", I say back.
But I don't say it, I think it
very loudly until I realize I'm just screaming to myself.
And so I guess, to answer your question,
that's my routine.

Loss Sunny Side Up

By: Dayle Olson

There is still time, say the eggs frying in butter.
He is on his morning walk,
so the eggs and I can have this conversation.

But the day is fine, and there are noisy men
with leaf blowers across the street
intent on dispersing what they've trimmed.

My mother taught me to cook eggs in a Revere Ware pan,
in butter with a little salt and pepper.
In two days I will help move her
to a care home.
She knows something is happening,
she's just not sure what it is.
Her only question: where will your father be?

Flip the eggs.
The new stick of butter on the butter dish
has a diagonal chunk cut off one end.
That's how my husband slices butter.
Maybe it irritates him that I cut
uniform squares from the opposite end.

He didn't know the names of birds when we met.
Now he loads a wire basket with suet
for Townsend's warblers.

The butter helps the eggs slide onto the plate.
I think Julia Child said,
"With butter, anything is good."
I hope there is butter where my mother is going.

We will pack Mom's clothes
and a few framed pictures on Saturday,
then drive to her new place.
My sister the nurse is holding everything together
for all of us.
When I was a child, I asked my mother about death.
She answered me honestly, and I said,
"But I don't want you to die,"
as if that might change things.

I wish I were the osprey hovering above the river,
sun glinting below on silver fins
with three eggs in a nest.

The Gospel of the Walls of My Home Church

By: Riv Wren

In the fullness of time, the developers saw
that the fields were fertile
for subdivision

and that the land around the fields of houses
was fertile for houses of worship
named like subdivisions.

Therefore, the planters of churches
clearcut a canopy of oaks
and called their church Oakview.

And since the soil could not breathe
beneath the planters' trucks
the planters brought in fill dirt

and in that dirt, planted grass
cut weekly like contrition
and watered weekly like forgiveness.

For sanctuary walls, they chose a fill dirt color
and the walls grew high despite the lack
of stained glass light or even windows.

The light of lyrics shone on giant screens
and the people sang the ancient shepherd's song:
I lift my eyes up to the mountains

Where does my help come from?
And eyes did lift, though not to mountains
but to overhead projections.

And wherever we looked, at school or work or home
we squinted through the pages of the pastor's bible
and its chapters and verses footnoted our fields of vision.

And our fathers followed sloping aisles down
and our fathers took the dishes of the elements
up the slopes to plush and salmon-colored pews.

And instead of broken bread, I took a jagged cracker
and instead of wine, a plastic thimble of purple juice
which I dripped into the empty glass inside my chest

next to the rotary saw, its rip blade, and its screech.
And I cannot tell if I dropped out or graduated
when I left Oakview, having only imagined oaks.

vaso

By: Emily Perkovich

a glowworm severs at the underbelly
I con a cardinal from the hospital bed, pin the feathers at my crown

I thrash in synthetics

a wire to the temple
fairy-saddle-buckled-bridge
vinca umbilical

how the cradles only empty

a blood that pulls at ribs
finger crook baits the hook
& with lightning at the nerves

I search a flame
Birth a beak, sharp with milk-teeth
Feed from chemical skin

I hunt a dappled light
mourn the thrum of full

Honey-cracked sheets
Honey, soft palate
A bee with no sting

I Believe in Voices

By: Pat Phillips West

When the news speaks of more turmoil
erupting in an already aching world,
another war—
for all our clever inventions,
we haven't learned a better way—
I turn to the garden.

I believe the strangeness of that peace
found in something to tend—
the heirloom tomato known as
Cherokee Purple, that straggling
zucchini hiding under leaves
the size of bicycle tires.

I believe in voices rising and rising
from the garden, an ancient dialect
praising a solid-blue sky, air tart,
just beginning to turn toward fall.
I believe the fierce good luck
of that secret something

at the edge of impossible,
a not-so-fussy volunteer pumpkin
hunkered down, in the whiskey-stink
of the compost pile.
When I prune a constellation
of leaves and stems,

I want to believe
such tending creates
a connection to the universe,
that there's more
than just sore empty
space beyond the stars.

My father doesn't believe in retirement

By: Esther Sadoff

My mother says she will die at the piano and my father will die at his desk
though this is something I don't want to contemplate.
Life is not about reduction. Life is about reconstruction
and we build with the materials we've been given.
Now my father washes a mountain of dishes.
He has more time for cooking in the kitchen.
He meticulously measures everything and dinner is (sometimes)
done before my mother finishes the last piano lesson.
I can't think of any place I'd like to die or any activity
I wouldn't mind dying at, my eyes applied to one sole task,
my mind turning for some true purpose. My mother spends
all day at the piano recital and when she gets home,
she's on the phone talking about piano *again* and I'm happy
she's so occupied. I'd like to feel my heart reaching out
for something instead of reaching *away* from something.
My mother gives my father a list of tasks to do and he swears
that he relishes those tasks, in addition to the things he learns to fix
around the house: a broken knob, a door off its hinges,
a bit of rotting wood. If this is ambition, it lowers me a notch
because my only ambition is to separate myself from *myself*.
Maybe I don't believe in ambition. I believe in reaching,
reaching to turn myself out of myself — that one day I'll wander
so far that I might see us for who we truly are.

Kaleidoscope Symbolism in Recurring Daydreams

By: Andreea Ceplinschi

In one dream you're making stained glass art
and I don't have to ask you if you like me
you've imagined me and I exist, far from flawless
but real
in a world where every body is a home
iron-soldered together, hanging
in your South-facing window
I am beautiful and full of fear

nothing ever gets shattered

In another dream I write about you
meet you in the mouth of summer
the world stops burning
for the one second our hands touch
over the only flawless avocado in the produce aisle
and the avocado is free to everyone, it's priceless
I always let you have it
humidity index dissolving
the turns in your naked shoulder as you walk away

In one dream you don't exist at all
and the small sacred mammal
hungering in my chest
works 9 to 5 and happily retires at 62

In another, I don't
and you have nothing to dream
there's nothing on the news
no bourbon, no white noise, no ink

In another dream we grow
avocado blossoms in our mouths
unbody together facing South
the world doesn't end
we mirror soft words to each-other in sign language
and turn

in another
kaleidoscope
stained glass
illuminated

Coding region of o2 (*opaque-2*): [1]

By: Adam Doniger

exon-1:

vitreous kernel, soft soft-eye, you dangle outside your
socket like a wind-chime clicking against yourself and
everything you touch; that is, against

exon-2:

stomachs spread like jam on

exon-3:

soil, on *silk*, rough becoming bone on
bone in the bend, and *ears* grow like sponges on the abattoir
floor, soaking up the sound the body makes when
it learns

exon-4:

its dying; and under all this, you remarkably
do not shatter, instead one
by one, you fall like starchy hushes

exon-6:

into baskets woven from your blades like the way rippled water makes
silence, and in that motion, there is rest, you can see it
lying in the stover, after a day of labor, when you, kernels
are closer to mana.

---

[1] opaque-2 is a Maize gene. It has 6 exons or regions that code for protein. In genes, the exons are separated by introns, the latter of which are spliced out of the final mature messenger sequence (RNA). A mutation in this gene leads to a more nutrient rich kernel. The gene is called opaque because when mutated, maize produces endosperm that makes the kernel appear opaque. A mutation in opaque-2 also creates an inedible kernel but can be combined with other mutations to create a nutrient rich edible maize. This is an example of the kind of plant breeding humans have been doing for millennia.

How to Make a Buffalo Burger

By: John Dos Passos Coggin

Buy a pound of ground bison
from a farm abundant in sweet
grasses that a one-ton bull can smell
through a foot of snow. Not a blend
with beef—pure bison cast into a red
ingot. Magisterial soul fused to flesh.
What the Lakota tribe calls tatanka.

Place patties on a medium hot skillet,
then season bison with another ancient,
authoritative flavor—like red wine
or rosemary. Sear both sides, cover
skillet, and cook to your preference.
Take a bite. Revel. Number the riches
of Earth. Conjure, if you dare, the
orchestral boom once made by thirty
million bison on the Great Plains,

each with the speed
and grandeur of
a Roman chariot.

The World is Cold Today

By: Molly Smith

The geese can see their breath.
I wonder if it smells like the carp
along the banks, their cold blood
tasting like icicles. The fibers of our
gloves catch on the worn wood
of a park bench.

You ask me to bring your dog back to life,
to create something from ashes. But I can't,
I'm dissolving with each exhale, like fog
with no choice but to sink and seep
into the frozen, dead grass.

Although the world is cold, it is still alive.

We sit beside the river, where the hard
packed earth rests beneath splintering
wood chips on the playground.
You had something to tell me, we are
together right now.
Don't let your coffee get cold.

They are born through the lines, the words

By: Michal Rubin

"...the dead can only respond late: 'It's the right of all victims to defend their screams'."

Mahmoud Darwish

Translated by Josh Calvo

There are days that I am dead.
Without screams. Silently dead. All the screams are locked. A small prison nestles inside my body. They are safe. The screams. They grow old, in their prison. They wilt, become feeble and hoarse.

There are days that I am dead.
I become a cemetery. A field of headstones. I water flower beds. Roots are embroidered around the buried howling. Colors mask the silence. Visitors lay small pebbles. Reminders. Faded names have no voice.

There are days that I am dead.
You visit. I offer apple tea. You sit. I sit. My scream stranded in the shadow of yours. You unfold your poem. Lay it on my headstone. I unfold my poem. Lay it on yours.

For Holly's Birthday/A Rainbow

By: Dick Altman

The water glistens,
shimmers
in morning's
waking sun.
Your damsel fly,
nearly real,
in your fingers
hatched,
takes wing
in your back cast,
dawn's light
glinting off
its jewel-like
translucence.
Your arm,
drawn back
as if a bow string,
releases
its arrow of a fly,
targeting
currents
just upstream
of boulders,
whose roiling water
downstream
dances
with rainbows.
I picture your lure,
jiggling violently

on the wavy
surface,
igniting
a fierce strike.
Your rod,
feeling
its own surge
of hunger,
whips backward
in turn.
So the duel begins,
a delicate balance
of strengths.
Until weary fin
and arm
meet in the net,
for a joyful release.

How a dog laughs

By: Ocean St. Amant

I want to go nowhere if not the nights lace of language
Where my body rendered prayer like that of a ragged angel
Where the thing reaching for my shadow is the thing on fire
Where it speaks the song of names
Where hell recognizes itself
And laughs how a dog laughs

The Empty Stretch

By: Benjie Salazar

You are the prairie moon over the bush-fire,
You are the opening of the sky in the exhaust from a tail.
You are the knee-long jean shorts resting on the hidden river and the grazing cows drinking for their sons and daughter.

You are the infinite lawn, and the burning wood.
You are the orange stove light.
You are the living room window where the moon sits and reads khaki pages, with the falling rain on the street light, yellow with baking gloves, and the painted walls with a ventilation system wrought of an uncle's lost hair and morning eggs.
You are coffee-grounds spread along the granite counter, with shavings of our hand-oils, and the disappearing star where the nebulous crawls into the crevice of the red plateau.

You are wild mint on the dirt road with purples of mother, and the open wine bottle in the middle of the wood table, wound tightly between a calloused hand.
You are the draping white sheets where a ceiling might be, and the roof tiles on the aspen leaves, shaking with the might of our land.

You are the lemon leaves hung with the strings of our knotted chests.
You are the soil of colored peppers, and the seeds in-between my fingers.
You are the hum in the night.

You are the empty stretch between a bar corner and a bed covered by the black sky swallowing our bodies gripped tightly to one another.
You are asphalt under dogwood, and the plates left out to dry where we tongue drawings of ourselves and make for the water rolling down the glass.
You are the silver refrigerator.
You are the water canteen in-between my hips in the car seat, where we have throats of cemeteries and blankets of cold air from the Pacific, covered in a jacket that keeps me safe.
You are the rose drawn quilt and eyes over printed lettering and warm socks in studio playtime, moving with the swiftness of a leaf.

You are the stack in the corner of the room, and the resting of an organ at twilight.
You are dusk.
You are dawn.
You are the nestling of a song.

Reading Mary Barnard on What Would Have Been My Mother's 66th Birthday

By: Joshua Bott

Cat days of summer.
Recently constructed web between
two porch rails bending in the
July wind not yet breaking.

Mine is rolling on the one shaded portion
of the porch— cat, not web,
and following the light reflected from the
cover of my book.

The four-leaved pattern of a quarter hour
unfolds its conundrum; What is mine?

The fact that it would have been her birthday,
or, that it still is and always will be—

She is on the move now, the cat, not my
dead mother, and saunters indolently to stick her
head through the warm railing. If she were a hunter,
she would be a master at energy conservation.

If each leaf represents a quarter hour, then the four
leaves comprise one full hour. But that's not what she said.
She said the four-leaved pattern of a quarter hour—
arithmetic has no place in poetry.

What when the bells ring evening, will we remember?

Certainly not this.
Lazy summer Tuesday,
cat lolling shade covered, eyes welling,
web dancing, not quite breaking.

This will not echo in the stroke of all hours of forever:

Just like the words to our last conversation flutter
for a moment above the unstill waters of memory,
wings beating furiously against the winds of decline,
then dive.

Sunrise Bound

By: Jodi Morton

I'm here for the breath.
The sharp exhale and inhale
of morning's first swim;
the stink of rotting fish
before suntan lotion
and Jimmy John's subs
camp out and overrun;
the few minutes reading
beach bag books
before twinkling lights
faceted on glass
beckon me to dance;
the moment my feet
leave warm sand;
glide into brisk water;
breath suspended
as I dive under;
cleansed when
I rise up, resurrected
of the night's transgressions.

The Laureate

By: DB Jonas

The deepening need for words…, makes us search
the sound of them for a finality, a perfection,
an unalterable vibration.
Wallace Stevens, *The Noble Rider*
and the Sound of Words

I turned the volume of his meanings down
for grins one summer afternoon, the way
we'll hope to read in countenance and gesture,
undistracted by the blandishments of voice,
the silent evidence of decency and candor
in the body-language of a politician's pitch.

It was the peculiar frequency of his sonorities,
his vibrations, I was after, but for the life of me,
found no compelling cadence there, or startling
evidence of song, no dispatch from the border-
lands of singing's mother tongue, no news fit
to print beside the earnest dronings of sincerity.

In all that dogged diligence of type there had to be
some urgent riff at work, I figured, an audacious
logic in the line-breaks and happy happenstance
of sly adjacencies, some driving impetus for words
arranged just so upon the page, for some deathless
sound, some noble rider's hoofbeat on the road.

Náměstí Míru (Peace Square)

By: Hailey Pope

I need you to remember
the red couch, the lamp warm
against the cold before
but too small to light up the room,
my flatmates quiet in their beds, your face
between my legs.

Or: the first kiss in the elevator
I can't stand to ride in anymore,
the squeak of hydraulics and my
blue coat breathing when you leaned
your weight into mine.
                Did you hear it?

I need to you to remember
what you receive from my voice
if not the giggle of Czech pilsner on tap or
the chirp of those three March mornings
when you let me sleep,
wasting you.

Or: before we first made love,
we took the number 16 tram to mine.
We stood between the cars, that accordion
you loved. As you steadied me
against momentum and sweat,
the tram twisted me
toward your skin. You spoke
too loudly for the culture,
and I never told you so.

I need you to remember the later,
on the streetlamp-speckled Vltava,
your arm around me while we waited
for another-numbered tram.
We were both hungry on the way,
and I pretended to forget of food
to get you faster to my bed.

I need to remember the dip
in the center of your chest, your grin,
my limbs becoming fawnlike
in your undoing of me.

The last night before your leaving,
you splayed across the orange sheets
and said, *We probably could have*
fell in love. I turned my face away,
jaw loosened, and echoed, *Probably.*
Could have. I take the stairs,
and that red couch tosses me back,
like a map.

Uncanny Fable Under a Cloudless Azure Sky

By: Elly Katz

Wings of a blonde child bathe in the sea,
an ideal white page grief hasn't warped.
She perches in foam, sand walking into
the volume of a strawberry swimsuit.

She scoops shells she doesn't eye as shards into a red plastic tub
that's its own landscape emptying at her thigh.
Her radiance transfixes time lolling there like gilded purple
fish dilating galaxies at her toes.

She's unconcerned with her lost collection, its flickering
heartbeat crabs wade into, invaders she doesn't
perceive, nor does she the soft fragments as having an owner—
as being a thing that could own things.

She's memory she doesn't identify as her memory.
She's prayer, but she doesn't know any prayers yet—
that her prehistoric body might be one, an orbit that echoes in my ear, my throat,
that the past is a brilliant piece of music misheard in sorrow's reverse gear.

She doesn't know solitude while she's in its center—
communicating with elements she doesn't other as elements.
She doesn't know she's real, that she's sleeved in skin,
a dialogue with erosion, though the sun strikes her neck.

She's fluent fluidity: organs, tissue and blood
seeing through bright blue architecture.
She's her own fairytale she doesn't need reading for,
out of mortality's flood, shores off

from the sinew of days, the waves of thought rolling
through her, maybe on mute, the light adventuring to her from far isles,
pages away from the cobalt desire for poetry to plug
the holes in her personhood she, surrounded in imaginings, never could've imagined.

In Order of Appearance

Veronika Gorlova is a queer, autistic, Jewish poet and writer living on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, also known as Vancouver. Her family immigrated to Canada from Ukraine when she was 5 years old and she has lived in many parts of the country. He writing appears or is upcoming in Emerge 22 and ARC Poetry Magazine, and she was shortlisted for the 2023 Kingfisher Poetry Prize as well as the 2023 FBCW Poetry Contest.

David Banach is a queer philosopher and poet in New Hampshire, where he tends chickens, keeps bees, and watches the sky. He likes to think about Dostoevsky, Levinas, and Simone Weil and is fascinated by the way form emerges in nature and the way the human heart responds to it. You can read some of his most recent poetry in Isele Magazine, Neologism Poetry Journal, Passionfruit Review, Terse, and Amphibian Lit. He also does the Poetrycast podcast for Passengers Journal.

Winnie CT (he/they) is a trans non-binary gaysian who's proudly an MFA in Creative Writing student through Pacific Lutheran University's Rainier Writing Workshop. His writing has been published by several remarkable journals, including Big City Lit, SHARK REEF, Hot Pot Magazine, Buah, The Institutionalized Review, and Ruminate. Their published work has been translated into Spanish, and has appeared in journals across three continents. He has participated in consortiums & workshops through DreamYard Project, Orion, and 92NY. Interests that complement their love for art include health, social sciences, and comparative theology & philosophy.

C.L. Liedekev is a New Jersey expatriate living in Conshohocken, PA, with his real name, wife, and children. He is a two-time nominee for Best of the Net, with his poem "November Snow. Philadelphia Children's Hospital" being a finalist in 2021. His poem, The Hungry, was a 2023 Inaugural Plentitudes Prize finalist. His work has appeared in numerous print and online journals, including Humana Obscura, Red Fez, River Heron Review, Marrow, American Writers Review, In parentheses, Bindweed Magazine, Feral, Hare's Paw, Alien Buddha, Marrow Magazine, Poppy Road Review, Tiny Seed, The Schuylkill Valley Journal, amongst many others.

Cat Dixon is the author of What Happens in Nebraska (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2022) along with six other poetry chapbooks and collections. She is a poetry editor with The Good Life Review. Recent poems published in Thimble Lit Mag, Poor Ezra's Almanac, and Moon City Review.

Henry Stanton's fiction, poetry and paintings have appeared widely in online and print publications. His artwork has been used for a number of Book and Album covers. Most recently his artwork has appeared in Holy & Intoxicated Press, Paper & Ink Zine, The Tiny Seed Journal, Closed Eye Open, Wild Roof Journal and Poet's Espresso Review. Henry Stanton's latest book of poetry, Ishango Bone, will be published in 2024. His poetry was selected for the A3 Review Poetry Prize and was shortlisted for the Eyewear 9th Fortnight Prize for Poetry. His fiction received an Honorable Mention acceptance for the Salt & Syntax Fiction Contest and was selected as a finalist for the Pen 2 Paper Annual Writing Contest. A selection of Henry Stanton's paintings and other artworks can be viewed at the following website
www.brightportfal.com
<http://www.brightportfal.com/> . Henry Stanton is a regular illustrator for Black Petal and Yellow Mama Online publications

Tanvi is a New Delhi-based communications professional who engages with poetry as a means to experience and process the feelings of grief, loss and existential angst in their fullness. In her free time she can be found dabbling in paints or mothering her tuxedo cat.

Patrick Malee is an emerging artist who was born in Chicago, Illinois and lives in Portland, Oregon.

Judith McKenzie holds a Masters in Creative Writing, and has taught writing throughout the Northwest before becoming a full-time faculty in Oregon. She has traveled widely, but is always drawn to the Rocky Mountains as one place that feeds her soul. Writing is her home. Her

poems have appeared or are upcoming in Calyx, Plainsongs Magazine, Meat for Tea Valley Review, Clackamas Literary Review, and over 40 others. She has published novels and textbooks, and has recently won and placed in two short story contests. She is a wee bit of an Irish curmudgeon, but her friends seem to like that about her.

Robert Eugene Rubino is the author of two poetry collections: "Vanity Unfair" (Cathexis Northwest Press) and "Douglas Knocks Out Tyson" (UnCollected Press).

Piper Summer is a writer and undergraduate student studying philosophy at Reed College. Her work has appeared in a few publications such as Lavender Review, and she has teen guest edited twice for Inlandia: A Literary Journey.

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 poem is translated from Lithuanian by Rimas Uzgiris.

Jim's poem Steed of the Gods and songs Texarkana, Late November, '65 Impala, The Girl Who Loved, As Eagles Fly, and Capistrano have appeared in UCLA's literary journal Westwind. His song Black Dancer appears in the November issue of Hare's Paw.

C Crow: I am an author from the Southeastern United States with a love for Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Poetry. I like stories that are more about the journey than the destination. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing from Florida State University, and my fantasy and science fiction short stories have been published in several small presses and online magazines.

Anthony Alegrete (he/him) is a Japanese American poet and writer born and raised in Western Washington, writing from Orange County, California. He is enrolled in Chapman University's MFA in Creative Writing program. His work has previously been published in 805 lit+art and The Santa Clara Review.

Dayle Olson (she/her) hosts a poetry open mic on the Columbia River just across the water from Raymond Carver's birthplace. She is founder of River Writers, a monthly conversation with creative folks on KMUN in Astoria, Oregon 91.9. Dayle was the April 2024 Northwest Voices guest writer at Lower Columbia College and Longview Public Library. She also makes poetry zines and illustrates them with poorly drawn birds. X (Twitter) @daylejean

Riv Wren is a Canadian poet and musician who lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. His writing has appeared in Lamination Colony and Fiction at Work. He holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an M.Ed from Xavier University.

Emily Perkovich (she/her) is from the Chicago-land area. She is the Editor in Chief of Querencia Press, a poetry reader with Split Lip Mag, and on the Women in Leadership Advisory Board with Valparaiso University. Her work strives to erase the stigma surrounding trauma victims and their responses. She is a Best of the Net nominee, has participated in several SAFTA retreats, and is previously published with Horror Sleaze Trash, Harness Magazine, Rogue Agent, Coffin Bell Journal, and Awakenings among others. She is the author of the poetry collections Godshots Wanted: Apply Within (Sunday Mornings at the River), The Number 12 Looks Just Like You (Finishing Line Press), baby, sweetheart, honey (Alien Buddha Press), & Manipulate Me, Babe—I Trust You (GutSlut Press), lamb/&/slaughter (forthcoming, Fifth Wheel Press, 2024) as well as the novella Swallow. You can find her on IG @undermeyou or Twitter @emily_perkovich or at www.emilyperkovich.com

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

Esther Sadoff is a teacher and writer from Columbus, Ohio. Her poems have been featured or are forthcoming in Little Patuxent Review, Jet Fuel Review, Cathexis Poetry Northwest, Pidgeonholes, Santa Clara Review, South Florida Poetry Journal, among others. She has three forthcoming chapbooks: Some Wild Woman (Finishing Line Press), Serendipity in France (Finishing Line Press), and Dear Silence (Kelsay Books).

Andreea Ceplinschi is a Romanian immigrant writer, waitress, and kitchen troll living and working at the tip of Cape Cod. She writes poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction. Her work has been featured or is forthcoming in Solstice Literary Magazine, Hare's Paw Literary Journal, The Blood Pudding, Wild Roof Journal, The Quarter(ly) Journal, Minerva Rising Press, and elsewhere. Find out more about her at poetryandbookdesign.com

Adam Doniger (they/them) is a poet, plant scientist, and science communicator. They live in Ithaca, New York.

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

Molly Smith is currently a graduate student at Middle Tennessee State University for English. She received her BA in English and Creative and Imaginative Writing at Cumberland University. She has previous publications in Wild Roof Journal, Radix Magazine, and Novus Literary Arts Journal.

Michal Rubin is an Israeli, living in Columbia, SC. The impetus for her writing came from the years-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a psychotherapist, a Cantor and a poet, she brings forth the challenge of distinguishing truths from myths, awareness vs. denial, conformity vs. individuation. Her work was published in Psychotic Education, The Art and Science of Psychotherapy, Wrath Bearing Tree journal, Rise Up Journal, Topical Poetry, Fall-Lines, The Last Stanza Poetry Journal, Waxing & Waning: A Literary Journal, South Carolina Bards Poetry Anthology 2023, Palestine-Israel Journal, The New Verse News, and a chapbook published by Cathexis Northwest Press.

Dick Altman writes in the high, thin, magical air of Santa Fe, NM, where, at 7,000 feet, reality and imagination often blur. He is published in Santa Fe Literary Review, American Journal of Poetry, Fredericksburg Literary Review, Foliate Oak, Landing Zone, Cathexis Northwest Press, Humana Obscura, Haunted Waters Press, Split Rock Review, The Ravens Perch, Beyond Words, New Verse News, Wingless Dreamer, Blueline, Sky Island Journal and others here and abroad. His work also appears in the first edition of The New Mexico Anthology of Poetry, published by the New Mexico Museum Press. Pushcart Prize nominee and poetry winner of Santa Fe New Mexican's annual literary competition, he has authored some 250 poems, published on four continents.

Ocean St. Amant is a writer living and writing between NYC and WA state.

Benjie Salazar (They/he), is a queer latino poet residing in Austin, Texas. They have been published in LA Miscellany, Drifter Magazine, Stance on Dance, and the upcoming issue in Beyond Queer Words. They received their BA in English from LMU and continue pursuing poetry and dance in-between different spaces, people and cities as they move through the world.

Joshua grew up on the Oregon Coast, and studied poetry and philosophy at Linfield University. He teaches English and Creative Writing in Portland, Oregon.

Jodi Morton is a designer and poet based in Evanston, IL. She holds a BA from University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MBA from Loyola University-Chicago. Her poems have appeared in Beyond Words Literary Magazine and other journals.

DB Jonas is an orchardist living in the mountains of northern New Mexico, USA. His work has been widely published in journals throughout the US, UK, Europe and Israel. His collection Tarantula Season and Other poems is available on Amazon, and a second collection, Flight Risk, is scheduled for release in 2025. Further work can be accessed at jonaspoetry.com

Hailey Pope is a poet and essayist based in Colorado. A graduate of the University of San Francisco, she has been featured in Ignatian Literary Magazine. Her work explores themes of desire, embodiment, and the relationships between humans and landscapes. She believes that a cold beer after a swim in the river on a sunny day is the closest thing to heaven.

Elly Katz suffered with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS), a connective tissue disease, for much of her life. In October 2022, she went to a doctor for a mundane procedure to stabilize her neck before pursuing a doctorate in genetics at Harvard. That supposedly innocuous set of injections instantly transformed into a personal nightmare. Upon waking from anesthesia, she began searching in vain for the right half of her body, from head to toe. She was rushed to intensive care in a state of limbo; her oxygen saturation nosedived, her heart slowed to a near stop, and numbness spilled from her spine throughout her right limbs. Somehow, she survived what doctors surmised was unsurvivable: a brainstem stroke secondary to a physician's needle misplacement. Her path towards a career in the sciences, among other ambitions in her life, came screeching to a halt.
As a devout writer, she feared poetry, too, fell outside her possible in light of her inert right fingers. But, in spite of this unfathomable plot-twist sustained at age 27, or, more aptly, because of it, she had to find a new mode of being. In the wake of tragedy's swift switch, she found a foothold in poetry once she recognized the pen in her vocal cords and the bounty of metaphor.