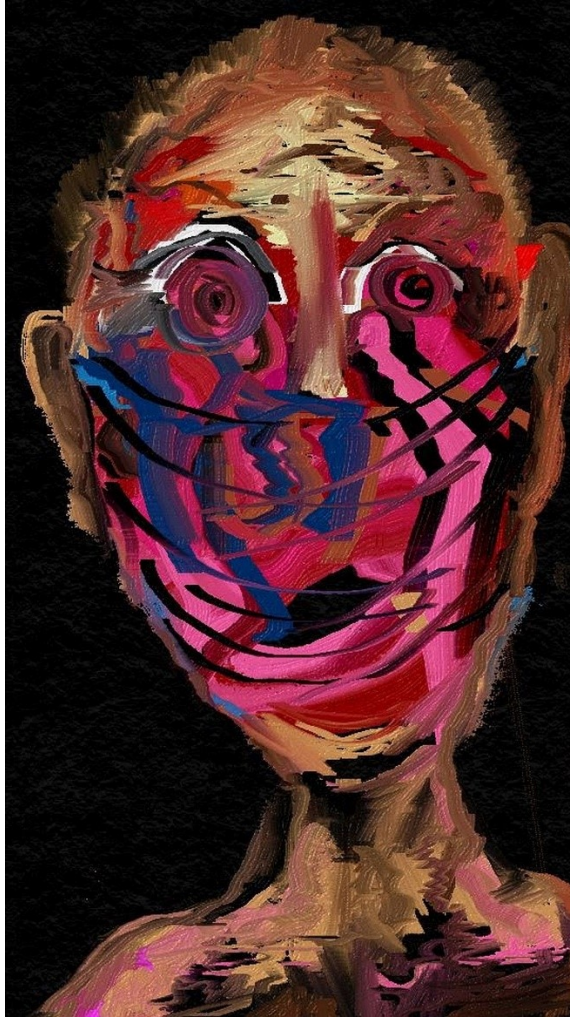


**The Raw Art Review:
A Journal of Storm and Urge**



Fall 2020

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Portrait of Masked Man

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ISBN:



Woman with Persimmon
by Ashley Geiger

Jesus, the trees are on fire

with sunset spreading
like octopus ink
behind them
but brilliant icy sharp
orange-electric rose-licked
September-stoked

Olive-umber finger-leaves
of pin oak tickle, stroke
& rake the cornflower
sky—a last liason

before they let go then cut
back & forth like Poe's
pendulum
down
& down

slicing time
until they drowse—
pale gold stars
filling in the lacunas
of a slick black
pavement-sky

by Taunja Thomson

**For Penelope on Her Second Birthday
(and for all other nieces and nephews of childfree women)**

I am not a hands-on aunt.

I've had enough babies shoved at me since girlhood
with comments, compliments
of my own aunts—*Wait 'til you have
one of your own.*

As a young woman, the comments morphed
into something stronger—insistence, plea, admonition—
*You'll be sorry if you don't have
one of your own.*

Finally, at fifty-two, I've noticed
the absence of remarks. Instead,
only a compression of lips over words like
neurotic unnatural selfish hateful.

Let me tell you a secret, my girl: I love you.

Forgive my distance. Call it a defense
mechanism, not because I really want
little ones of my own,
but because of the self-righteous
refusal to believe
in other happinesses—a sunset
seen from another place, love
for the length of a cat
as he stretches,
verse that rushes like a river—
this denial of my essence by others
has hardened me.

So accept the birthday gifts I give you—
superhero capes & wizard robes,
mermaids & magic wands,
sturdy shoes for climbing & starry tutus,
books of poetry & pictures
of mountains & tigers—

know that they are my wish for you,
that I keep you in the home
at my center
with doors & windows
open.

by Taunja Thomson

Kandinsky makes me want to eat color—

lemon sun blueberry moon lavender mist
punctuated by raspberry exclamation—
cap it off with champagne bubbling teal
& rose.

Mouth waters for flushed slice of wedding
cake paired with a burgundy ocean
of wine flooding the ship
of tongue.

Tongue ship unfurls its flags in sight
of grape mountains & summer-to-autumn
trees with lime & crimson leaves—
heirloom tomatoes bobbing
in an elderberry breeze.

Breeze sheds blades of sage & spinach
shards of radish & twists of hot orange peppers
that fall into mouth while peppered sun glides
toward ambrosia stream.

And then the *bonne bouche*: stream ferries heavy circles—
shiny hard comets of cinnamon & butterscotch
cherry stars on popsicle sticks
green-apple novas—

stained glass candy for eye
& tongue.

by Taunja Thomson



Smoking Gunslinger and Blue Do a Victory Dance
by Dave Sims

Compare Himself to a Dragon--a case of Exaggerated Delusion

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Mr. Wang, a 29-year-old unemployed and unmarried male with a junior high school education degree, was jailed for intentional homicide in 2012 because schizophrenic and exaggeration delusion attacked. He believed that his fate was an emperor who can control the forces of the nature and had a mysterious connection with the universe. He also insisted that he was controlled by radio waves and others knew what he did.

After participating in the brut art therapy organized by the prison four years ago, he was active in creating. The theme of his

creation has always been about the dragon in Chinese mythology. In the work "Dragon in the Black Hole", a giant black dragon with spots spreading its teeth and dancing claws looks extremely ferocious and has the momentum to swallow the sun and stars. It projected psychopathic exaggeration delusions. In the distance is a rotating black hole, representing his helpless fear of losing control of his own spirit and future with no prospect. After several years of brut art creation, it gradually presented a peaceful mood in his later art works.



*Poetry and artwork by Qianrong Liang, Ruiqiong Liang,
Hongzhong Qiu*

A Narrative of Brut Art from a Psychological Patient

Qianrong Liang¹, Ruiqiong Liang², Hongzhong Qiu^{2*}

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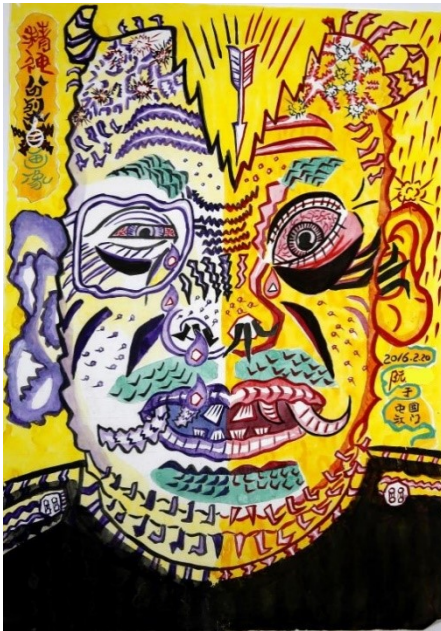
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Mr. Ruan, a 45-year-old divorced banker, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. In 1999, without any obvious inducement, he behaved abnormally and impulsively with emotional instability and indulge in exaggerations. Later, he gradually became depressed. He didn't communicate with others and he was suspicious that colleagues deliberately aimed at him. Three years ago, he participated in brut art therapy activities organized by psychologists. Playing an active role in the brut art therapy activities, he presented various painful experiences after illness in his early works and

optimistic spirit of fighting against the disease lately. In the work of "Schizophrenia", an arrow pierced his head apart. On his blue-purple right face, tears flowed from the eyes, expressing depression and sadness. It seemed that many small ears grew on the right ear to indicate phonism. The red-yellow left face with round eyes and sharp teeth exerted anger and violence. The painful experience of bipolar disorder was vividly presented. After several years of brut art creation, an optimistic spirit of fighting against diseases were gradually expressed in his later art works.



Poetry and artwork by Qianrong Liang, Ruiqiong Liang, Hongzhong Qiu

Americans

You'd think, with the lights flicking on

At sunset, on Boar's Head, and further

Down along the coast, glinting, sparkling stars in the

Distance, Massachusetts, the long arm of Cape Ann,

Blue hills stretching out to sea

Into the crimson sky of sunset, striated clouds above,

Vivid orange pools in the sand

Left by the outgoing tide,

And breakers curling and cresting

A hundred yards offshore, white spume

Crowning the rocky jut of sandbar at the edge of the cove

And the smell of brine so strong,

The laugh of the gulls moving inland for the night,

And the empty beach, the seaweed, the sand,

You'd think I lived in a civilized place,

But I don't. I live among the Americans.

by James Garland

Plunderers

The dog and I walk at dusk
When it's finally cool enough,
Jupiter settled into the west hills,
Lights flickering on across the valley,
and a chorus of crickets
rises, welcoming the coming night,
and all is still.

The dog and I walk at dusk
Along the sidewalks of
This little neighborhood,
Under oaks and fir, silhouettes splayed
Against the deepening sky,
Under pine and cedar, the dog stops to sniff
The trunks of each one,
And I look west, the day fades
Behind the coastal mountains, blue, distant.

We take what we are given
In this life, and we are given
Treasures, so many riches
To squander.

by James Garland

The Death of American Idealism

My grandfather fought in World War One,
 My father in World War Two,
And neither spoke of what they saw
 Or did in their long tours, where they went,
Who they met, who they killed.

My grandfather loved to play croquet,
 My father cards. Every Friday night
Grandfather came to our house for dinner,
 And afterwards, the old maple table was cleared
And they dealt the cards for gin rummy.

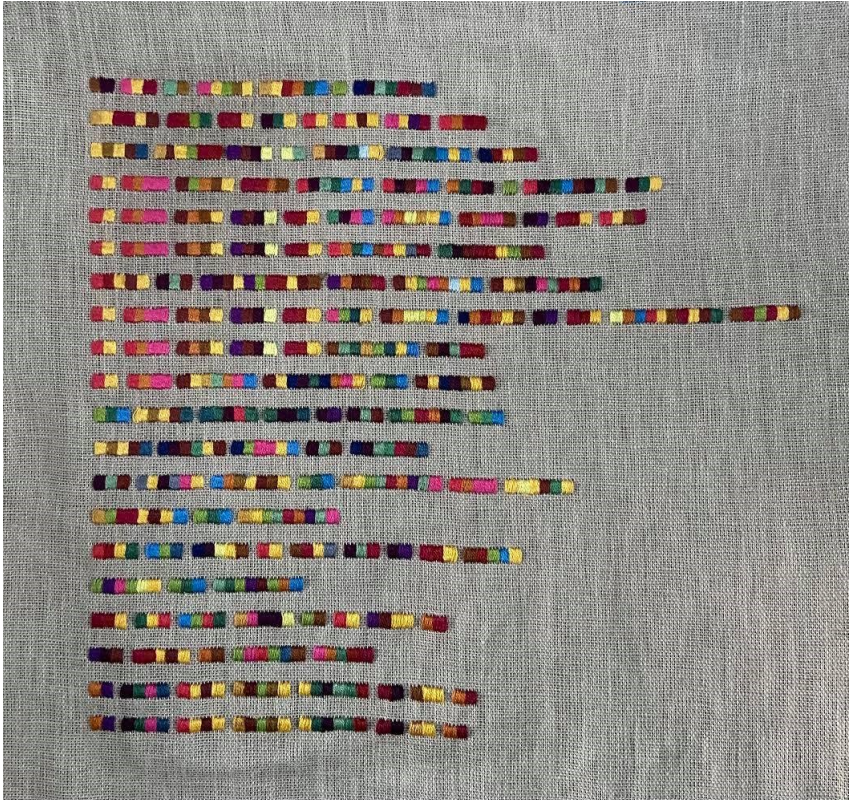
My father was good, my grandfather better,
 All the years of practice with his cronies at the mill,
Those nights after work honed his card-sharp skills,
 And he won time after time, and I watched from the
sidelines
As my father made highballs, and there was much laughter.

They were optimists. They'd seen the worst that is offered,
 Fought in trenches, fought on beaches, survived, and
come home,
And they held some idealistic notions
 Of the importance of family, of right and wrong,
And they kept right on laughing, and smoking and joking,
 And lived their lives large, with compassion and humor,
And they loved their families, and lives,
 And their comforts, so hard earned.

I miss them greatly, all of them now, in these
 Raucous end times, as we lurch toward oblivion,
In this rancorous world they'd not even recognize.
 Would they fight for this? Would they make their
Great sacrifice, putting their lives on the line for this insidious
 And disjointed society?

‘
“Gin!” grandfather would announce, laying down his hand,
 Adding up points. My father would laugh,
Take a sip of his highball,
 And shuffle the deck.

by James Garland



Poem

by Paula Damm

Plot Lines

All good stories start this way:
“There was a girl.”

The best stories.

She doesn't have to be beautiful,
but maybe she has a secret.
Maybe she is dark in spirit.

All good stories are contests.
Dark rooms and bright rooms.
Hallways filled with promise.

“There was a girl
and she did this and she did that.”
It's obvious but complicated.

All good stories. The best ones.

There was a girl in the rooms, bright and dark.
A hallway filled with questions, but not enough.

All good stories start like this.

A girl dark in spirit moving to the light.
They end in monstrous ways.

by Jeff Weddle

Poets and Rain

Tell me, then, what do the poets say?
We know the rain blows sideways,
but why not up?

A complete reversal of physics.
That's what's needed.

There was that time we walked
through the Oxford storm.
Do you remember (the rain was
huge and hard like rocks)
that fierce battle?

Drenched and pummeled.
What a morning.

What do the poets say about nothing?

What do they tell you
when you and they
have croaked?

Everyone wants to be
the voice that lasts.

Petulant children, one and all.
Find answers and you'll be on the brink.

There are no storms like the storm we shared.
Why waste your time looking?

The poets sing their little songs.
You may as well bring the music.

by Jeff Weddle

Happy Trails

If you know the music
of busses
then you know
the tawdry thing I mean:

bliss on asphalt
and everyone
packed inside.

Can you dig the spangles
and wild hair?

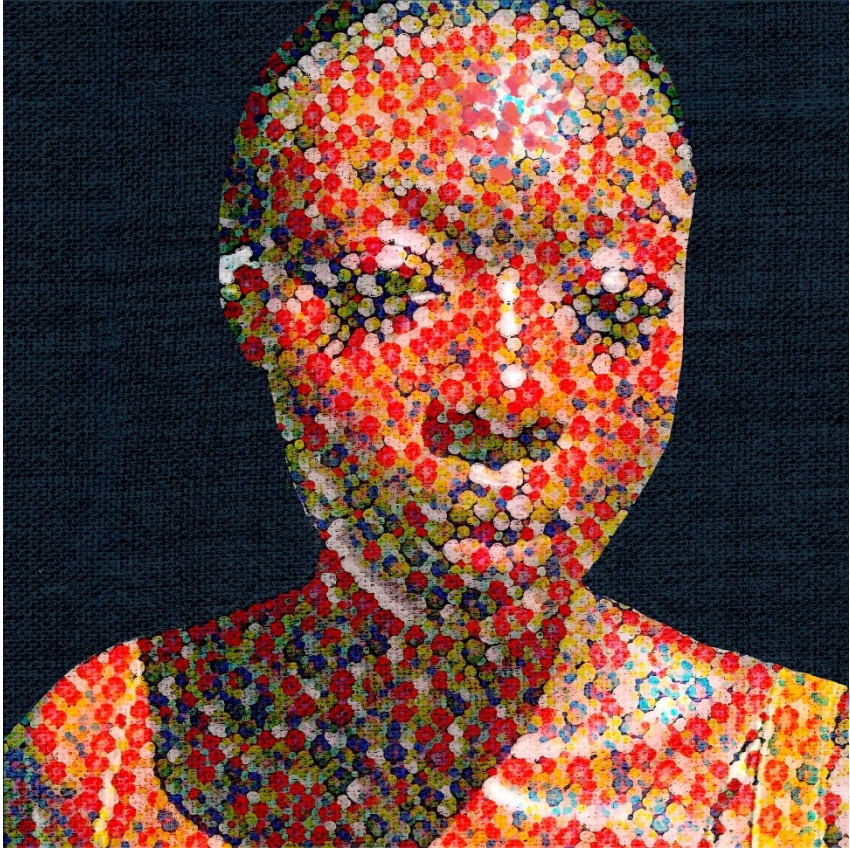
The girl
in the black beret
knows everything
you'll ever need
but she won't
say a word.

The best muse
is, of course,
the freaky kind.

Her name
just might
be Alice,

Greyhound goddess
starved
and gone.

by Jeff Weddle



Oluwatoyin
by Ashley Geiger

Inside The Confessional

they call what I write—
Confessional Poetry
but what have I really confessed?
eccentricities?
masturbation?
addiction?
cowardice?
anger? hatred? madness?
heartscars and brain damage?
the various humiliations
of youth and middle age?
pathetic displays of love?

all these are nothing—
nothing I haven't told
bartenders
or complete strangers
during blackouts
no...I always hold something back
I always keep a little madness
just for myself
because you can't
give it all away
and hope to survive
and what good
is a room without a closet
or a closet without a door?

in the mirror at night
I grin like a devil
at my own charade
I peel my face off
skin myself raw
then I look and laugh

and say—
they will never know
and that means
you've won, my boy
you always wanted
to win
at something, now
take
a
bow

by Brian Rihlmann

No Need

I killed a big black spider
on the wall tonight
he didn't even flinch
as I sneaked up
with a wad of toilet paper
maybe he was sleeping
or already dead
I hope so

If I could I'd
love all living creatures
like a good Buddhist or Sikh
but there's far too many
critters out there that are
forced to sting, bite, and kill
just to make a living

if I hadn't squashed that
little fucker I know
I'd have had nightmares about him
crawling into my mouth
while I slept
maybe spinning webs
in my brain

and besides, I think
there's more than enough venom
in my guts
and spiders, too
there's no need
to swallow more

by Brian Rihlmann

Get Used To It, Kid

some of the other girls
thought the young man
was just her pimp
and not really her boyfriend
though she'd always been
what was called an outlaw
but the cathouse bartender knew better—
knew the poor sucker was in love
because he'd watched the young man closely
when the bell rang
and the girls lined up
like an army of rouged cadets
in stilettos and short skirts
waiting to be inspected
by the trick who darkened the door
he'd seen the pain cloud
the young man's eyes
when the trick walked up
to his lady and plucked her
from the shelf like a prime chicken
and disappeared with her
down the hallway
he saw the storms in them
as the young man saw
for the first time
that she was not really *his*
and though the bartender
felt for the young man
or maybe for that piece
of the young man
which still lived in him
he also chuckled silently
deep in his own calloused heart
and thought—
get used to it, kid
they never really are

by Brian Rihlmann



Some Intricate Rim Shots

by Dave Sims

a forehead

etched with

alphabet

chiselings

outspelling

thethethe

numerous

fresh cuts in

sad bleeding

awaiting

bandaging

the whole thing

preparing

for the end

an old just

beginning

by Alan Bern

rasp oh

little

edge hard

dream-in

ledging

then though

wet way

sea through

to a

float full

softly

off for

by Alan Bern

The days all

No longer in the oak high

Now seated down wound-to-wound

Half-scabbed each looks off past sun

Through the other's keen mourning

That lingers— remained part mute

Years barely able to hold—

Until *untils* disappear



Enticement of the Masses

by Ronald Walker

THESE THINGS CAN HAPPEN AT ANY HOUR

screams herself
from sleep, same
gnarls and knuckles
as always

mouth feels hot
the way cheeks do
when they try to tell
what we don't want told

fingertips are cold
like a killer

wishes the dark
was just a color

tastes her thumb
to see if it has the
glow of morning
(it doesn't)

wants the world
to turn itself inside out

licks her lips, imagines
salt can call up the sun
(she saw it rise
over the ocean
once)

checks the window
for signs of her savior
(the sky says
nothing)

by Samantha Madway

·

WITHIN REASON (OR WITHOUT)

Did it—

what if the furniture was overturned when I got there?
what if those only looked like my hands clawing at the walls?

Did it—

what if my makeup was smeared from summer and staying out too late?
what if imagination is tricking me into believing in bruises and blood?

Did it—

what if I heard a story, then stored it in the wrong place?
what if I'm adding together everything my arms ever strained against?

Did it—

what if it did?

by Samantha Madway

WHAT IT MEANS TO ELAPSE

Airbrush disbelief off faces. Restore families stricken by irreconcilable differences and sudden death. Crop out folded relationships, forgotten birthdays, fear, frailty, final notices, the unmemorable fights that age into feuds, then harden into heirlooms. Overexpose disappointment, cast it in high relief, counterintuition concealing unmet potential and the breaking of promises. Rotate frames, masking backs hunched by the inevitable, the unbearable. Perform sleights of sight with mirror images and shifts of axes, leaving a sepia cast across years of septic shock.

by Samantha Madway



Puff pastry with brie and cranberry jam and sprinkled with pecans and fresh rosemary.

by Chef Andrea Ruskin

Red velvet petal

I haven't written to my potential in weeks
Sitting here at the computer staring at these dark roses dying

Velvety petals curling at the ends
Turning darker
Soon they will fall on the keyboard

Give it what it needs because I can't.
My finger tips are drying up and turning dark too.

Burning
Burning In a flame of emptiness and defeat

These bitter little fingers will pluck every red velvet petal

I'd rather my whole arm fucking fall off before anything hits those
keys other than my desperate purge;
of this heart,

soul, naivety, Blusterous greed,
It's all mine and no one else's.
Not even that rat bastard florist.

by Jessica Lee

Beatin'

That man, always talking about Beatin' on girls
He's in the pool room,
Pearl Jam cd skipping Anxiety attacks cause' the fentanyl is all dried up
A little hooker with a big butt asks if he can teach her how to play.
That man.
He's the other million,
Big blue eyes to draw you in and make yours black.
Her eyes are bluer
So are mine
Even flow

by Jessica Lee

3 Little Thoughts

1. White roses and suboxone after work

Harrows decorated with white and red lights

The road behind me is so dark and cold

The judges made me stronger

My tears are for them as I drive along

I am afraid it seems...

To believe we will die together

That good things come with no fine print

I have to stop

The drugs

The lies

The stagnancy on the queen sized mattress

I wish my skin was as soft as these innocent flowers but it's aged and untrusting

Stop dancing on eggs and flinching at dinner

Hold his hand and smile

2. The cold wind makes the trees bare their bones

Crooked, ready for worship

Baby I'm going to leave

The bleak air has attached itself to me

I know every beggar and junkie

I'm tired of the cries

The vein attempts at happiness

Hands clutching plastic vodka bottles

That air

That fucking air

、
If you breath it in

Your going no where

3. When a farmer has more then one hoe he'll end up gettin shot in
his barn

by Jessica Lee



Heirloom tomatoes with buffalo mozzarella topped with olive oil and pesto and decorated with syrupy balsamic.

by Chef Andrea Ruskin

Under San Simeon

I tell him, *The Atlantic's exhausted*, and he says,
You mean polluted, and I say,
Don't tell me what I mean, and we both
wait a beat. *I want you*, I tell him, *to drive me*
to the end of the past, and he
doesn't care what I mean because
this is what he wants— the two of us,
the road unwinding forever.

Fast-forward a couple of interstates,
Kansas slipping away, and I wonder
aloud if the past has done its worst. If
the future is as sick as the news, as
my nightmares. *You do know*,
he says to the windshield,
we can't change any of it. Then sure enough
the road ends on a brief beach

under San Simeon.

I stop to watch hypnotized
a long volcanic rock rising out of the surf.
It does that every day, he says. *Twice*.
Along its crown, surfgrass floats
like the slick green hair of a nixie. I say,
Maybe I should ask her how where she learned

to breathe the incoming tide.

*Ok, he nods, and tomorrow you can
ask this Hearst guy with the castle,
except, I think he's dead.*

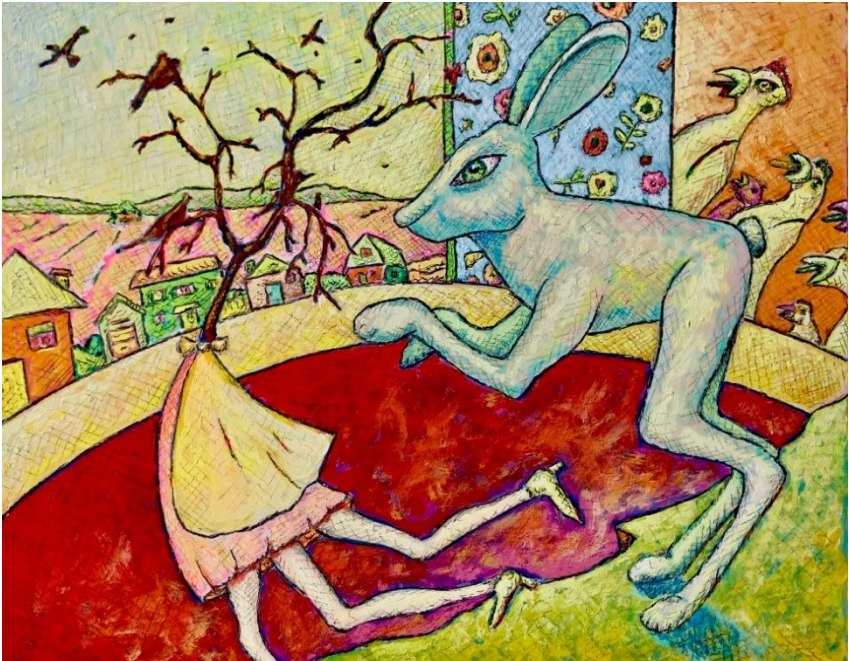
And why not, so the next day we climb
the mountain that the rich man bought
because he liked the view
and rich let him buy it,
let him comfort himself, let him
distract all our westering souls
with Florentine ceilings and sunless rooms
and green pastures scattered with zebras.
*Ugly, I say. And he says, Also,
crazy. Sunset and sea level*

we spot the nixie's rock.
She's saying, *Wave*. She's saying, *Another wave*.
And the ocean goes on gnawing,
and the road winds finally down
and all this time humans like us arriving,
vanishing. I ask him,
You think it was always this hard?
Somewhere in Iowa,

he brings up
those placid zebras. *Wouldn't you say
as far as they know*

they're home and safe? Don't you think?
Some nights, we fall asleep in each other.
Some nights, we study the Milky Way.

by Gail Dimaggio



The History of Civilization
by Ronald Walker

Hope and Despair in the August Garden

Covid burning since January
and last week a wind named Isais
sped north, all howling and downed power lines,
spent the night straddling the cages
in my friend's garden, shredding
the lettuce, pounding the tomatoes.
This was the garden she'd planted
in defiance of seas rising,
and she'd had hopes for those tomatoes.

She told me once about the yogi
who advises us to confront August—
well, she said *suffering*, but why not August—
without hope and without despair
and I argued, *Is that even possible?*

But I'm grateful to my friend for the nudge
in a mindful direction, for spare zucchini
and a still exuberant garden to remind me
of long-gone Junes, my husband
with his spades, his clutch of seeds—
pole beans, four kinds of melons.
Of the way he'd erupt into my bookish daze,
make me stand with him in the smell of dirt
ankles wobbling in the furrows:

*Here the potatoes, he'd say,
over here—Hubbard squash.*

I used to read poetry on that back patio
look up past the garden
to consider a remnant of forest
clinging to the edges of our land.
One dozy afternoon, I woke certain
something was moving under the old-growth pines,
maybe Bishop's tall, homely moose,
her ponderous head turning in my direction,
considering my trespasses, but then

I went back to planning the next summer
supper: sliced tomato still warm with sun
or basil ground for pesto or the corn
he wouldn't pick till I said the water
was boiling. The three of us in our closed
circle under the arbor, clematis
making a second crop of flowers
because it does that in July.

Then August and the raccoons
broke into every melon, the groundhogs
dug their way under the fence,
the hornworms swarming, the Japanese beetles
clacking their armored wings, and no way to stop them

but death by gasoline.

August cantaloupe—ripe and then
too ripe, then white with rot.

Though somewhere, the moose going on
with her distant, forested life.

I will give my friend a gift of clematis
because it riots again in September, because
face to face with what's coming,
it spills out blossoms like
pinwheels and starbursts. And that spray
of filaments at the center holds
maybe one more June.

We hope.

We still hope.

by Gail Dimaggio

We Look into Fire

August to September and something's
shifted. Maybe we're bored, maybe
we're not so young, maybe
we're waiting for some final, safe arrival.
Weren't we promised a moment of arrival?
It's cold too early, he says and builds
a fire. I take to reading horoscopes,
to Tarot cards on the coffee table, see
myself in the Queen of Cups while he
insists he's Taurus so *Where's the card
for Taurus*. All month, every night, the fire
burning itself up, and the two of us watching
with less and less to say.

October,

we feed our restlessness
into a camping trip. I think we're headed
for the Catskills, but he turns south for West Point,
and I find myself

beside him on the edge
of a manicured space called The Plain
watching row after row of the young
burning to serve, to be uniform,
to be in formation under the bronze
gaze of statues—six wars, six generals—
all our synchronous human lives

spent in repetitive motion.

Another night,
another fire. This time camp fire,
and right away it doesn't satisfy us,
doesn't fill us up. We keep hauling in
the dead wood tossing it, heaving it into the leap
and the roar, hypnotized past midnight
by fire-flakes that stream upward
into the maple where they flare
and scorch the leaves.

Buddha says
everything is burning, though probably
he means some other combustion—
invisible to my ordinary eyes. But
I don't have time
to look into it. Things keep slipping
from my hands—this book, that glass, last year's
summer, next year's blizzard.
And here inside a mountainous dark,
I can't help myself, I'd rather
look into fire. How do I suffer
this icy minute
when I am such brief fuel?

by Gail Dimaggio



Island Moonrise
By Hrach Jangala

Identity Crisis

by Beverly J. Orth

It was happening again. First the insistent emails and text messages from the bank, followed by pro forma phone calls with the fraud detection unit. I knew the recipe verbatim. Call the 800 number, get transferred three times, and talk for twenty minutes with the Capital One rep on the other side of the globe. It might be Randy or Brandy or Bertram or Beatrice. Today it was Beatrice.

“And you don’t recognize any of these charges?” Beatrice was saying to me.

I squinted at my laptop, even though I was wearing my glasses. Damn prescription. It still wasn’t right. I removed the glasses and squinted again.

“I do recognize the \$19.99 at Powell’s Books. I bought a cookbook because it was on sale and it had pretty pictures of vegetables.” A gemlike image of purple eggplants emerged behind my retinas.

“Ok. But what about the other charges? Hilton Hotel in Charlotte, Billy Bob’s Backporch Bar-B-Q in Durham, Cross-fit Xpress in Jacksonville? Do any of those sound familiar?”

I scanned the list of cities and tried to imagine what they looked like. Not very exotic, probably. Not places that I might want to visit.

“No, not at all. I haven’t left Portland since September. Billy Bob’s Backporch Bar-B-Q sounds good, though.” My mouth watered as I said the name.

“Could anyone you know be using your credit card in those places?”

Beatrice certainly was persistent. Just doing her job, I suppose. Still, her tone sounded slightly accusatory.

“No. No one – that I know of – has my credit card number.” I paused to think whether I had given anyone the number. “I’m certain,” I said, emphasizing the word “certain” more than I had intended.

“Ok, then,” Beatrice continued. “I will reverse those three charges. I will place an order for a new credit card to replace your existing card. Do not use your existing card, as it is cancelled as of right now. Your new card will arrive tomorrow by FedEx.” She paused for breath. “Do you have any questions?”

I thought carefully, but, really, this whole exercise had become so routine I could almost recite Beatrice’s script myself.

“Not really. Only, why does this keep happening?”

“What keep happening?”

“Why does my credit card keep getting hacked? You’ve had to FedEx me a new credit card almost every month. Is that normal?”

“Not very normal, no. I see that we’ve replaced your card three other times since November. That is rather a high rate of replacement. I guess you’re just unlucky.”

I used to think that people made their own luck: that pessimistic people generally had more bad luck than optimistic people. Lately, though, I was beginning to doubt this theory.

It wasn’t just my credit card. I’d been receiving some vaguely threatening emails from an obscure company claiming to be ID Safety-One. At first I deleted the emails routinely along with other spam. Last week, though, I finally clicked on one to see what ID Safety-One was trying to sell me.

Is your identity for sale on the Dark Web?

Good question. Is it?

Do you want to protect your identity and get peace of mind?

Sounds like a good idea. How much will it cost me?

For only \$59.99 per month, ID Safety-One will scour the Dark Web and keep your identity secure.

It’s probably too late for peace of mind. I fear my identity has been on the Dark Web for months now. After I filed my tax return in March, the IRS sent me a polite but slightly ominous letter saying someone had claimed a refund of \$10,256 using my Social Security number. They provided a form for me to fill out

and mail back. They said I would get my actual refund – a puny \$378 – in a month or two. I’m still waiting.

Identity is something you don’t really think about, do you, until it’s missing. I mean, I’m still me, but someone else wants to be me, too. Maybe there are hundreds, thousands, of people out there who want to be me.

That’s not quite right, though. I mean, they don’t want to be Heather McCourt of 795 Valley View Lane, with weak vision and a cookbook addiction. They just want my tax refund and my credit score, which is probably sinking more and more with every credit card replacement.

I tried to pinpoint exactly when my identity issues began. It was before the IRS letter, before the emails from ID Safety-One. I think it might have started with the furnace repair, last November.

My furnace, which had always been so reliable, wouldn’t start that cold, first week of November. I set the thermostat to 70. Nothing happened. I set it to 74. Still nothing. Heck, why not try 80?

I pulled on a second pair of socks and the heaviest hoodie I own, the tweedy one that collects all the lint. Then I called Toby, my ex-boyfriend, to ask which repair service he used.

“Heather! So nice to hear your voice. I thought you didn’t want to talk to me again.”

“Talking is acceptable. We just can’t see each other.” Seeing led to touching and to feelings and other unpleasant sensations. “I just need furnace advice.”

“And you thought to call me? I’m flattered, really.”

“Don’t get your hopes up. I still can’t accept your proposal and I still can’t move to Hermiston.”

“I haven’t moved to Hermiston yet. Still wrapping up loose ends with my law practice in Portland.”

Right. Loose ends. Meaning he was trying out new girlfriends, looking for someone willing to be the wife of a soybean farmer. And odds are he would find one.

“So, about that advice. My furnace is on the fritz.” Did I really say “fritz”? I sounded like my addled Aunt Fanny. “Do you know of a good repair service? Not too expensive?”

“Why don’t I come over and check it out before you call a repair service?”

That was not going to happen, dude. Proximity leads to brain paralysis. “I can’t ask you to do that. This is strictly a professional call. If you can’t recommend someone, just say so.”

Toby gave me the number for All Weather Repair and I called them. They sent Sam to my house. Sam removed the front panel of the furnace, poked around, replaced some parts, and had the furnace humming happily again. The bill was “only” \$1,890 – a bargain compared to buying a new furnace.

“I see. Only \$1,890. Do you take credit cards?” I asked, knowing I had exactly \$112.56 in my checking account. I knew because that’s what my check register said.

Sam frowned. Then he brightened a little.

“Well, ya see, I can’t take plastic. But you can call the office. That’s the number there.” He pointed to the top of the invoice I was holding in my hand. “They take plastic. I have to wait, though, ’til they give me the ok. I’ll just wait in my truck there.” He waved his hand toward the crusty pickup truck parked in the street in front of my house.

While Sam waited, I called All Weather Repair and gave the receptionist my Capital One Mastercard number, expiration date, and security code. And I’ve regretted doing so ever since. I can’t be certain, of course, that anyone at All Weather Repair attempted anything nefarious with my info, but that’s when the bad stuff started happening.

I don’t blame Sam. My furnace is still humming. I don’t blame the receptionist at All Weather Repair, although maybe I should. The only person I want to blame is Toby. Toby, my erstwhile soulmate, who broke my heart by asking me to marry him. Toby, who saw me through a different lens than I saw myself. Toby, a lawyer who aspired to be a soybean farmer, wanted me, Heather McCourt of 795 Valley View Lane, a CPA

who didn't aspire to be a farmer's wife. We met at an intersection that didn't function.

I regret asking Toby for furnace repair advice. I should have known better. His condo was always cold. And he wouldn't let me touch the thermostat, saying it was sensitive. I told him that I'm sensitive, too. But he never made the connection.



Rat and Maze
by Christopher Paul Brown

THE BALLAD OF THE BRAIN IN WINFIELD, ILLINOIS

For Carl 'Don't Fuck with Me Brain!'

From the roaring south the cicadas
Sing their harmonious symphony.
From the burrowing north the wild
Squirrel burrows for the earths hidden

Gems, and in the east hummingbirds
Steady their flight against the provided
Nectar. In the far west domesticated
Dogs communicate the language of

The primordial soul, unknown to the harras
Who have forgotten what it means to be
Free. At the point of these intersections
The evening wraps against the atmosphere

Like a veil, shrouding the hidden house
In the woods where the brain rests
In its fluid sap, spasmodic in psychic
Equilibrium, separate of the superfluous

Flesh, contemplating the cerebral conundrum
Of the complex collective connectivity of all
Living things suspended in space. Capable
Of determining its own abstract mental location

In relation to the summoned owl of the night:
Presiding over the soon to be languid land.

by Dominic Blanco

I'll Take the Tranny, You Said

Lust is a fluid currency.

But after tonight you'll never return,

apt not to visit the girls you found me
with on a corner in Little Rock,

back of town — straight tarts all, heels aglitter,
high skirts bloodshot with neon.

Perhaps you liked how I towered
a foot over the tallest of them.

Or their eyes just seemed too weary for one more John,
even in their ripe youth and fresh mascara.

Was it aberration you needed over beauty,
a beguiling? Ransacking me with sperm,

you left the alley in a hard silence
at the speed of fire alarms.

Now your mind won't sever me —
the one who'll shadow the first light of each day,

a perpetual morning-after blowing
through the hours of the day, unresolved

in church where your tenor voice
wakens hymns, in board meetings,

at the dinner table, even when you'll walk
your daughter down the aisle,

giving her over to vows in that radiant,
flawless, mercifully white gown.

by Jeffrey Alfier

drought

overhead i saw the heron
gliding through the slate sky
as if it was nothing, but for me,
cemented to the ground,
it was everything.

i followed his descending trajectory and
had an approximation of his landing.

through thorns and ferns i ran, then
over dead leaves and exposed roots,
until i reached the green swamp
where our eyes locked.

for months it had been this way,
playing tag in the daytime shadows,
and when i'd approach he'd take flight,
but today was different.

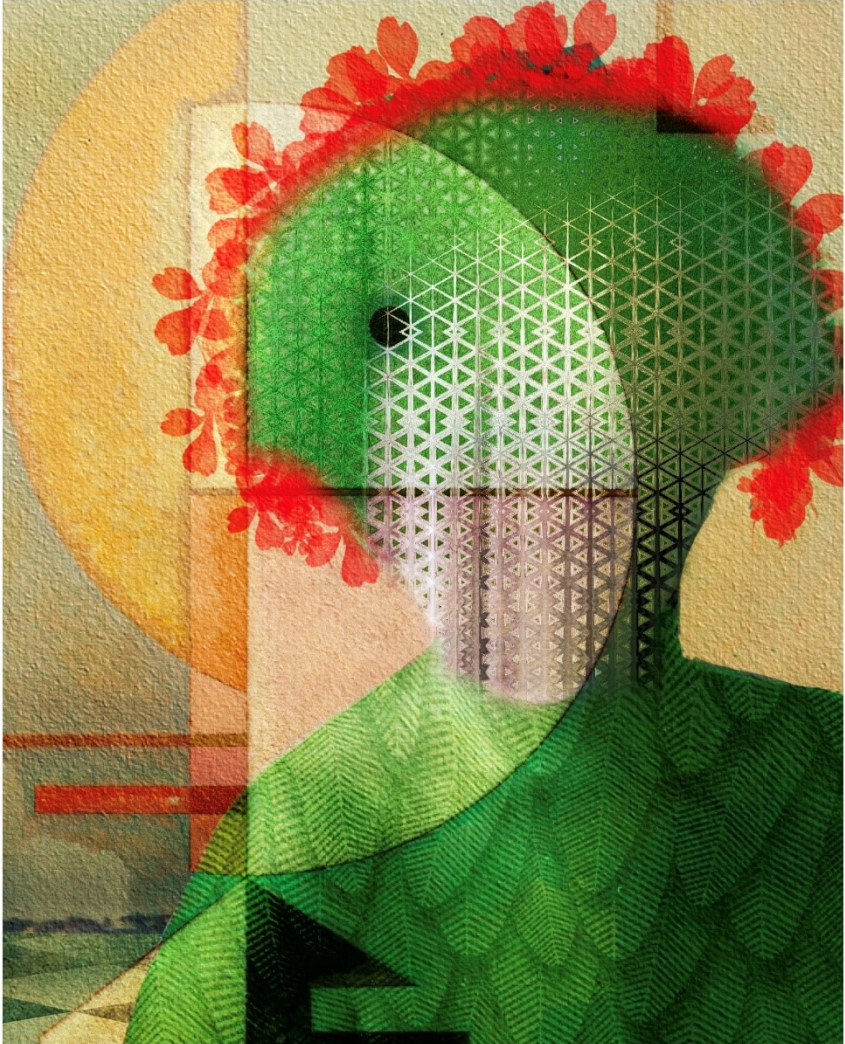
"take the picture," the heron said.
"all right," i said, and i did.

he turned, exposing his backside,
and i did the same.

we walked away, never looking back.

i heard his feet crunching brush,
i felt my feet slip on the dead wet leaves.
he walks his path, i walk mine.
and that's the way it is,
now and forever,
or until the
next time.

by Tohm Bakelas



Reticulation
by Ashley Geiger

Joy 101 covid style

Live the shred.
Do not divert
the heart's traffic.
Dark things
will descend, the bright
rise. Take it
slowly.
Spirit helps.
Conjure her
when she will not come
willingly.
Don't despair in small
things. All things
are small.
A person's life, also.
You will be
abandoned like Joseph
by his brothers.
Like Jacob, you will dream
a ladder of ascendancy
as angels creep
from mud
to sky.
A darkness nailed
to the mouth.
Water everywhere.
Go now,
into the arc
of yellow trees. Sit in the margins
with the strollers and the stayed
old-folk. Sit until you feel.

Better.

by H. Sarah Blumenthal

The Hot Trick

Tonight,
the hot trick
of the
moon loads
the deep insult,
this half-way house
of Manhattan
night as the burning
things
burn through
wounded
trash cans.
The big stink,
the street is open
as a lap
and cross-
stitched
with scars.

Tonight,
I am, you
are the Chinese
can man feeding
aluminum cans-
each 24 pack
of hours-
in Duane Reade on west 4th
as evening sneaks
into the slots
of your shoulders

by H. Sarah Blumenthal

The World as Disco Ball

You-a virus
without edge or plank,
cut to spangled shards
rigged to spin
within the grieving booth
of a universe
run dry of light.

by H. Sarah Blumenthal



Surf and Turf
by Ronald Walker

Last Year - A Review

by Dale Shank

Another year came and went, and we made it, didn't we? I navigated it adequately, for the most part, and I'm taking this opportunity to bring you up to date.

January in Oregon was rainy and cloudy and chilly for 30 days, as usual, so I didn't suffer any tropical sunburns or heat strokes. I was honored to host my father's-side first cousin Gigi and her significant other Jacques on their first visit to Portland. They live in Paris and usually hit Vegas and New Orleans when they come to the US. We had a pretty good time, but they stayed too long, and I got tired hearing about the fragrance of Roquefort cheese and the stench of the Seine. But they took a shine to Gouda, my across-the-street neighbor Jane's French poodle, and they left happy. I think.

February was a doozy. My hibernating arrhythmia woke up and I ended up with an ablation fix that didn't fix anything. So, it was done again two weeks later and that didn't work, either. Finally, I was advised to cut back to only eight double-espressos a day and that got my ticker back to normal. But they put me on the waiting list for a heart/lung rental, just in case.

March came in like a lamb. A scruffy ram, really. One found its way into my back yard and proceeded to make itself at home. I happen to hate the aroma of lanolin, so I took the beast to the animal shelter. It was quickly adopted by a kid named Mose who intended to ride it to school to avoid the crowded bus.

My mother's-side uncle Felix invited me to Aruba in April for a little R&R. He's the sole missionary to the heathens in the ABC islands. According to my mother: a man of significant status. He hadn't seen me for a long time and said his mission would pay my way if I agreed to teach Sunday school at least one time. I told him that wasn't worth my time or trouble, so he upped the offer to include first-class round-trip airfare. I taught a passable lesson on the advantages of avoiding anyone named Job. Had a cracking good time in Aruba. Four or five times a week,

Felix preached to the wayward and downtrodden young women who were fated to spend most of their time on clothing-optional Paradise Presumed Beach. I tagged along. Saw mission work at its finest. Absolutely first-rate.

Inexplicably, in May, my father's-side triplet nieces, each, independently, announced their engagement to the same man. It got a tad awkward. But as it turned out, they all got cold feet when, somehow, they discovered he was a she. Not quite sure how that happened. Subsequently, one niece enrolled in a meat cutting academy, one entered a Buddhist convent in New Mexico, and one got arrested for indecent exposure in a hotel lobby in Aruba and, after posting bail, she decided to stay and minister to the frat boys who showed up at Paradise Presumed Beach on Spring Break. Such selfless young women. I'm so proud to be their uncle.

In June: can't remember anything.

In July, I visited Bar Harbor, Maine. Hadn't been there for years and I wanted to see if anyone at Perkins Estate remembered me. I worked on the crew that built a gazebo with a view of Cadillac Mountain. Everyone was out sailing except Adelle, the housekeeper. She, bless her heart, recognized me, and greeted me like her prodigal son. Sprayed my Red Sox baseball cap with WD-40 to stave off the swarms of black flies, just as she had done to my hard hat. She hoped Cracker was fine. Said Maine Coons were her favorite cats. Got one the day after her husband walked out. I never had a cat, allergic, but I said Cracker was doing very well. She served a lunch salad with fresh lobster, the morning's haul, and I said my goodbye. I saw her in the rearview mirror, waving until I was out of sight.

In August, I built an experimental aircraft. Actually, I didn't do the construction. I paid a guy to cobble it together for me. Bright orange with a blue stripe on each wing. Didn't fly it because I couldn't afford the engine. But I sat in the cockpit for hours getting familiar with the avionics. Made engine sounds as I moved the stick around.

September brought a huge shock. I got a knock on the front door after dark one evening so, naturally, I fumbled through the combination on my gun safe and got my Colt .38 snub-nose revolver. I answered the door. The guy didn't have that diagnostic look of a criminal, so I slipped the Colt into my hip pocket and extended my hand in greeting. He bypassed my hand in a lunge and gave me a big hug. Turns out, wouldn't you believe it, the guy said I was his father. He called me dad and introduced himself as Nippy. Odd name. Said he'd been looking for me for decades. I was stunned, particularly considering the irreversible after-effect of the jungle gym misfortune when I was 13. And he sure didn't look like me or any of my relatives. Turns out we weren't kinfolk. He misread the number. It was next door. Last I saw Nippy he was yelling and screaming, running like hell down the middle of the street, in hot pursuit by neighbor Stu's intermittently friendly Rottweilers. Stu with shotgun silhouetted at the front door. Yikes Almighty. That was a close one.

In October, nothing I'm allowed to disclose. Please understand.

In November, I visited my mother's-side third cousins in Outer Mongolia. Hadn't seen them for decades. Had never seen the young ones. They were so kind. Let me milk Lulu, one of their yaks. And I helped them churn butter and peel turnips. Talked about old times. I made up a few things to keep the conversation interesting. I would have stayed a few more days but the temp hit minus 50 and they advised me that all traffic out of the area would come to a stop if it got any colder, which it soon would. I'd have to over-winter and sleep in a yurt with Lulu. I left.

In December, I had hernia surgery. I didn't have a hernia, but I figured I would sometime, and this seemed as good a time as any. I'm an advocate of preventative health. It was way more expensive than I hoped since insurance refused to pay a cent, and that's why I couldn't buy any Christmas gifts. Oh, well. Participated in a sing-along "Messiah" last weekend and I wasn't told to leave at intermission this year.

And that, my friends, was my year. I look forward to hearing about yours. All the best to you for this new year.



Chloroplastic Mindset

By Hratch Jangala

Gravity¹

When I was four

I had a box of crayons

and I drew houses with peaked roofs

right angles

and chimneys that swaggered off at

structure

They offended architectural

They defied gravity

Under that cosy corner

of ninety degrees fit snugly

between the red brick chimney

and the black wax shingles

flowers

a stick girl skipped among

in my crayon garden

smiling a

contented crimson curve...

Then, at school, our teacher taught me

to draw chimneys that stood up straight

And now, both my chimneys and I

have been educated

We understand and accept gravity

We have conformed to it

aligned and assimilated ourselves

stopped skipping about as though

forces were not holding the universe

in check, allowing us to float frivolously

by Maggie Huff-Rouselle

¹ Homage to Alfred Corn's "Gravitational"

The Waste Land²

Here on the third floor of the Harvard Coop
I am looking for a poem, *The Waste Land*
What I have found is
a single bookcase on Islam
beside two on religion
across the aisle from two on Buddhism
and one on Eastern Thought
Behind them, Sexuality, Relationships, Weddings
(one of each in the same aisle)
Then two bookcases on Self-Help
backed by three more on Self-Help
facing yet three more on Self-Help
Then one of bibles before
a series of four on Christianity
and two on Christian Inspiration
followed by two on Judaica
Then three on Sociology and three on Psychology.
Beyond these, two on Literary Theory
and one on Literary Criticism:
seeking to explore and explain
the stories we invent, with a few
expanding into fables, myths
philosophies, even religions
built, as in an archeological site
on top of one another
as entire tribes of our species have come
to believe in, adhere to, and worship them
So much is based on the stories we invent

² Homage to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

and come by some process of osmosis
to believe in, adhere to, cherish...
Yet, I cannot find the poem
that hurls these stories back at us
like recycled wads of wastepaper
on any of the well-stocked shelves
on the third floor of the Harvard Coop

by Maggie Huff-Rouselle



Still Life No. 119
by Christopher Paul Brown

Now the Days

Now the days run together
as children on a playground.
Now the days skip, unruly,
twirl their skirts
'till night calls them home for dinner.
Now the days meet under a shade tree
and talk of tomorrow
when they will wear hats they've chosen—
a poet, an astronaut, an actress.

Their arms and hands perform grand gestures
in the air as they describe places—warm,
no winter, palm trees, beaches,
and mountains
bigger than you can imagine.
Can you just imagine?!
Aspen leaves thick and slick under feet
give way to a forest floor of pine needles.

Confident, the days step up—one rock
to the next. Faces pointed at the sun,
they pick shapes out of passing clouds—
the curve of a woman laying on her side,
a cat in an arched stretch, and look! The moon
visible at 3 in the afternoon.

Now the days spy shapeless formations.
Layers of dense grey gauze approach
and threaten to rearrange the scene—
herald a coming storm. Time
to head back. They pause there
and pinky-swear
to meet under the shade tree
again tomorrow.

At home, screen doors slam behind them
as the first drops of rain start to fall.

Now the days grow long into years.
They forget about the hats, the tree,
what they've seen, and all the promises
hidden in their fingers.

by Shyla Shehan

Diurnal Succession

The shallow breath of evening,
as it settles in for night
 - weary from a long day of labors.

Seeking solace that goes beyond
 the waywardness of thought.

A bramble of faint images
 dissolve into dusk.

Night takes evening by the hand
 leading her home.

Red streaked night sky - fades into black.

Morning into evening,
as night steps off the edge,
 falling into a brilliant
 sunlit morn once again.

by Christine Tabaka

Lyrical Island Days

Dangling wind chimes
 singing bells
 memories drift
on sundrenched clouds.

I stand on the sky deck
 gazing out over marsh
to distant dunes – that guard shoreline
 as waves crash upon sand.

Sweet salt air
 carried on a breeze.
 Birds soaring overhead.

Earth's ancient rhythm whirling on
 with each breath - never ending.

A world where sun rules day
constellations rule night,
 while counting magical fiery arrows –
 piercing heaven's vault.

Lyrical island days – that never end.
I become the moment,
 as I shall stand here watching eternity pass by.

by Christine Tabaka



Key lime pie with graham cracker crust
by Chef Andrea Ruskin

South of Town

Years ago, beyond a house we rented
south of town, a maple grove billowed
like a lemon-yellow cloud throughout
a windless autumn afternoon.

I still see that grove, luminous in twilight
as cold approached to bed down in the grass.
That night a constant drumming rain
drowned out the droning furnace fan.

I still see that grove, a cluster of naked
refugees stranded in chilled morning air
across a floor of seamless gold, bare limbs
pointed at empty blue sky.

by Raymond Byrnes

Recall

I take a vacant library table,
connect my laptop, lean back
and stare in silence. At first
my thoughts jump like crickets
at a garage door's sudden lift, but

I begin to meditate on a yellow
canopy above a whispered voice
gentle as stirring maple leaves
when a girl a table over speaks
abruptly to a little cell-phone face.

The face responds in rapid French
as the PA system crackles out
an invitation to join a writers'
group across the hall and a baby
wails from the children's room.

My gaze returns to the empty screen.
Finally, I begin to conjure a woman's
earnest eyes, and when her words begin
to fall across the page, a text beeps in
reminding me to pick up milk and bread.

by Raymond Byrnes

Cold Front

A hawk, grey and brown as bark, arrows
across the lawn to a silent perch on a
barren branch beside a deep green pine.

It is late morning, but the hunter might
find prey at a suet feeder down that way
before today's Alberta Clipper sails in.

Near 4, the first flakes fly from empty trees
like tiny birds fleeing the ice-blue cloud we
clocked all day across our cellphone screens.

by Raymond Byrnes



Hare in the Snare
by Christopher Paul Brown

REDIRECT EXAMINATION AT THE APOCALYPSE

I.

Auden knows whose mirror has dual focus,
sees us through refracted locus:
convex, concave, sibilant, dumb
Meiosis of the Kingdom Come,
splitting images, infinitives, parents
while magistrates swear out our warrants.
The Devil's his own advocate here
though everyone's entitled to a grand vizier.

Will that dumb speaking mirror slur clearer
when its silver's been robbed by terror?
Then thirty pieces for gallant Gawain
who has a chalice for a heroine.
A cup of blood sluicing from a bloody nail
is his strange romance with the holy grail.
Luke the Watcher, faithful witness
drains the cup that leaves him listless.
His hero yields our last clear chance
to clear and convincing evidence
while calibrated Psyche waits
on dispensation of the Fates.
Read the devil his rights and give him his due;
Mirandize disciples or they'll vandalize you.

Before the Sanhedrin and the Caliphate
pencil in your execution date
who knows suddenly what eyes
will fix us with a dull surprise
(“He did *that*, he said *what* and when
And has anyone notified next of kin?”)—
whose hallowed Christs, veiled Madonnas
will bless us with their pale Hosannahs?
Who pronounced endurance Grace

by a stranger's l's set in my face?
For if stamina's the same as Grace
is it only faith the saints misplace?
Glistening Wormwood, blighted star,
listening, measures what we are.

What drove Ego to torn sleeves of Id
as auctioneer pronounced this bid
for your bodyrags and bedclothes
stripped, inventoried before the sun rose?
Down with the gavel that will install
judgment to taste, the bargain's call.
Whose hand made this cold, cruel age
where Logos lives to turn the page?
In likeness of our own Creator
all mankind becomes the traitor
to sanctify collaborators
and beatify pontificators.

Sir Lucifer when on his knees
Has disciple Mephistopheles
who to-and-froing seeks baptism
in fire that is his catechism.
Footsteps pounding to the bone,
his pilgrim hooves massage the stone,
not unlike Ruth, who travelled, too,
not unlike me, not unlike you—
but who in Truth's tarnished name
can wander through another's flame?

II.

Who, forgetting Frost and Proust,
set these chickens home to roost?
Who deep-shoveled Maginot
and called it rapprochement?

Whose Confederate spade in hand
buried our silver in the sand?
Who forgot thesis/antithesis
perfect Hegelian Mimesis?
Who was it shackled dazzled Thor
to liberate the Minotaur?
Who was it left unlatched the door,
thatched the roof but trashed the floor?
What inanition here took root
to yield the serpent up the fruit?

III.

I know what hollow magistrate
stormed the bridge and crashed the gate.
It's Socrates who plays the thief
while Law is gnashing at her brief.
It's Socrates with Satan's tongue—
not Frost, not Proust, Freud or Jung.
Intellect marks his cognitions
strategems and strange equations.
He tracks the author of this sin,
blames by presence, blames again.
Who nears the apple is responsible
he declares, our somber constable.
Bills of attainder, association--
he offers us no expiation.
The turn of phrase in his oration
drops in your teacup an accusation.
He will fabricate experience
if expedient to his defense.
And when he's falsified belief
he offers the aperitif.
But those of us who know him best
should never be his cocktail guest.
Socrates, that artful knave

will batter the witness to the grave.
His grasp is the great constrictor
that choking us, proves him victor.
It's Socrates that will define
me cuckold first, then concubine.
Thus cause and effect collapsed
we lay prostrate in his grasp.
Against the will that we surrender
he adjusts his glasses and suspenders.
There the architect of our despair
nails suspect to the charnel chair.
Law's brood, titanic, huge,
will harass us with its subterfuge.

IV.

In counseling me to emulate
the affectations of the great
he pored Leviathan to elf
to finger books upon his shelf.
Law! The speaking voice of power
that shut up Mary in the Tower
robbed Plato of apology
with a bitter, brutal irony,
playing at the dismal business
of bludgeoning the witness senseless.
As emptiest cart makes most noise,
his has been the clattering voice.
To him unpunctuated silence
is the dread abyss of violence.

But if Mercy trumps Justice,
a different mirror deliver us.
The glass in Cinderella's hands,
is the shattering that makes amends.
What lawyers say remains untrue:

I would walk through fire for you.
And if in ashes we all fall down
I drain Luke's cup to take his crown.
And if Phoenix rises from these embers
her wings bless all that she remembers.

by Pamela Sumners



Exposed
by Ronald Walker

JUDY GARLAND AT THE PALACE by Edward M. Cohen

When MGM fired Judy Garland in the nineteen fifties, after she had been their biggest money maker for decades, they took the precaution of releasing the film from her costume fittings for “Annie Get Your Gun.”

There she was, wan, glassy eyed, horrifyingly thin, hardly able to perform. She was only twenty-nine but she looked like a sickly forty.

The costume films were released to prevent any backlash against the movie at the box office and they certainly did the trick. Betty Hutton replaced Judy, the movie was a smash and, as far as everyone in Hollywood was concerned, the Garland career was over and done with.

Everyone knew the stories about her suicide attempts, her failed romances, her erratic behavior on the set. Then, she did not help matters by immediately gaining a ton of weight and wedding Sid Luft, a shady character whose only claim to fame was marriage to a Grade B movie star, Lynn Bari. Luft promptly promoted himself to the post of Judy’s manager and producer; a final nail in her coffin, as far as the industry was concerned.

But the wags were wrong because Luft figured out just what to do with her. Her movie career was finished. She was not getting any offers from TV. Radio would not pay enough to make a dent in her enormous debts. She was too weak to take on a major tour. What she needed was something that would keep her grounded, get her enormous exposure and take her back home, where she belonged – before a live audience.

Luft, to everyone’s amazement, said the answer was in a dead and buried venue: Vaudeville. He was going to bring back the two-a-day with Judy at the top of the bill and he was going to produce it at the jewel in Vaudeville’s crown, New York’s Palace Theatre!

He got to work, making deals, refurbishing the theatre which had fallen on bad times as a tired movie house. He put

Judy on a diet, got her to rehearse, built up her confidence, all the while touting the venture to the papers.

And it worked. The combination of affection for the old medium, the past glories of the Palace, everybody's memories of being young in New York, and Judy Garland, America's Sweetheart gone sour, offered a breathtaking emotional roller coaster ride. Of course, every gay guy in Manhattan rushed to get a ticket because her vulnerability, her sense of drama, her self-destructive tendencies, her trembling vibrato were so comforting and familiar that she was known as Queen of the Friends of Dorothy.

Judy did a ninety-minute show, capping it with "We're A Couple of Bums" from "Easter Parade," in the famous hobo outfit: blackened tooth, tattered clothes, rouged cheeks, matted hair, clown nose, silly hat; a guaranteed laugh-getter.

Then, she sat on the apron, legs crossed under her like a kid. The lights dimmed so that her tiny, dirty face glowed in the dark and, astonishingly, with her in that silly outfit, the audience still beaming, the familiar intro to "Over the Rainbow" throbbed up from the orchestra pit; the anthem to lost youth and dreams that she had first sung as a fresh faced teen, and even the ancient walls of the Palace trembled as Judy started to sing it again.

"Somewhere
Over the rainbow..."

It was a totally manipulated moment, having her sing that song in her Raggedy-Andy costume, a piece of shtick which could have been inspired, everyone said, only by Sid Luft with his vulgar, carny taste.

But it worked brilliantly, striking a chord in every chest so that Judy felt the waves of love coming over the footlights and, every night, she was reduced to tears, which glistened in the pin spot.

"Birds fly
Over the rainbow..."

The gay guys went bonkers and even the straight boys and girls in the house reached for one another. I was there one

night, transfixed in the balcony. Those were tough times for gay guys. Everyone was closeted. Stonewall was decades away. Nobody talked about gay liberation.

I am 84 years old now, but I still remember what that moment meant; what art can whisper in your ear. Stay hopeful. Keep fighting. We have dreams. They get punctured. We get hurt. We fall down. Somehow, we go on.



Floating Emerald Cluster
By Hratch Jangala

Ozymandias - Untitled 1

in the waiting
dark
she pulls clothes
from the suitcase
sitting cold curbside

eighteen
the cop says abandoned
the hotel manager
glares

in the persisting
light
she heads south
into his car into his house
downcast eyes over toast

hiding upstairs
her parents across town
their daughter
invisible

By Stacey Valerio

Ozymandias – Untitled 2

At night
high
on a train bridge
over a river

he said
plants felt pain

he said
his body shamed him

he said
the tracks were live

She stood
as always
never touching
eyes between souls.

She is wet when she sits
and he says
he is sorry
through the white phone
by the bed.
The shower running still.

His words are marbles
rolling hard and cold and fast,

emotionally unfair.

Then
through the white phone
by the bed
he rants
of politics and religion
of taxes and freedom
of communes and corn.
The shower running still.

Through her shower-wet towel
she bleeds.

He's crazy
said Jimmy
and she laughed
in the dark car
crossing country ground.

Hidden hands wringing

she told him the bits
about the communes
and the corn.

Pretending

the humming hills
were blankets
covering their heads.

The black cord is twisted.
The backpack heavy,
tipping her.
Left hand peeling corner paint,
left foot saddling right calf.
The cord so fucking black
and twisted.

This is not the white phone
by the bed.
The comforter wet
with water and with blood.

This, the phone nearer the door
has a face.
Fat numbers in square houses.
It speaks of hospitals, windows and sheets;
it chokes.

The backpack dropped
face kicked to the floor
the cord unfurls
black lips
behind which
numbered teeth lie clattering.

、

Double his age
she mines blinking screens.
Nothing but

nine digits
two dashes

mile-marking
the lanes
pot-holed and heaving
in both directions.

By Stacey Valerio



Nearby Faraway
by Ashley Geiger

fire on deck at eight-oh-five

eight-oh-six
one after eight-oh-five,
now, as always,
it's all about the breathing
eight-oh-six on the rails
panting, drooling down
on old number three
dying exactly four times
before the eight-oh-seven did exhale

eight-oh-eight then eight-oh-nine
some time after eight-oh-six
cables rumbling below
looking for the heron

you indulge yourself
to think you know
which one she is

it's eight-ten already

eight-eleven
one after eight-ten
and no one else

seems to notice
the blue smoke
billowing up inside
the mainsail

by James Redfern

Ozymandias Shattered Again

He ran around the ward,
blasted on Thorazine
and blurry-blinded with lithium.
He was wearing a blue hospital
robe, slippers and
a rock 'n' roll t-shirt,
and he was screaming,
"I'z a man and I as,
I'z a man and I as,
I'z a man and I as!
And I ain't never been afraid!
I ain't never been afraid!
I ain't never been afraid!
I'z a MAN!
And I AS . . . And I tell you this:
Despair!
Despair, you crazy motherfuckers, despair!
'Cause now my visage is shattered,
me and mine, shattered,
gone,
blown away,
and I still ain't afraid,
'cause I'z a man!
I'z the king of kings,
standing here
shattered
in the barren,
eternal receding
sands of
man and I as."

by James Redfern

voice like the breeze (hymnal verses)

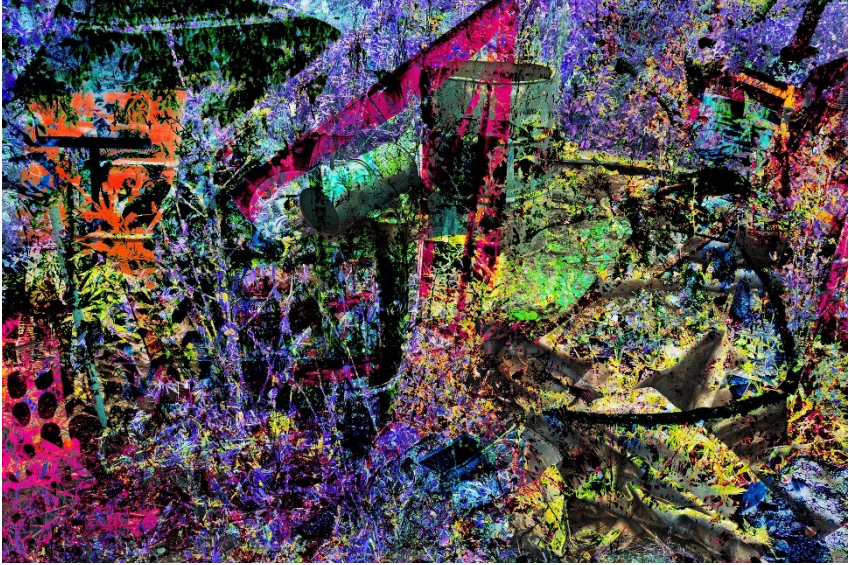
. . . dear god, from whence came such hatred and rage?
souls mistaking themselves for mammon
souls mistaking themselves for mammon
was the answer I heard,
souls mistaking themselves for mammon
the voice came and went like a rustling
of dry and brittle leaves
swept up in a chilled autumn breeze
souls mistaking themselves for mammon
was the answer I heard

. . . dear god, from whence came such hatred and rage?
from thy neighbors deprived of your love
sanctioned by the embrace of your fear
was the answer I heard,
the voice came, true and gentle, with the timbre
of my lady shaking dry beans in a strainer at the kitchen sink
love everyone, let go your fear
love everyone, let go your fear
dried beans shaking in a strainer
was the answer I heard
the answer I heard

. . . dear god, from whence came such hatred and rage?
look only into your hands,
look only into your hands,
was the answer I heard,
look only into your hands,
was the answer I heard,
the voice came like a knocking at a door
the voice came like a knocking at a door
look only into your hands,
was the answer I heard

. . . dear god, from whence came such hatred and rage?
I am all things, I am the Alpha and the Omega,
I am all things, I am the Alpha and the Omega,
was the answer I heard
I am all things
was the answer I heard
I am all things, I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the voice resonated now like quiet in the snow
I am all things
was the answer I heard

by James Redfern



Machine Zombie Rebellion
by Christopher Paul Brown

Crossing borders

I encounter, I observe,
She recovers, she discovers,
A life as this can breathe

I walk down the street
Alone and caught,
I trace my steps from dusk till dawn,
In search of what it could mean

I embrace the light, as if it is sight
And revolve around it to breathe
I gulp my breath from 1 to 3
And imagine a world without it

And walking down the street,
Mellow and brushed,
Licking like seaweed
As the breeze blushes down my face,

Strands of flocks
that fly through the wind,
As secrets that are stored in the trees

Reveal themselves to me,
Only as slaughter.

by Imogen Sweet

Removed

To take steps that
Don't cast shadows,
Light imbued with reductions
Deadly decay and sickening
Sorrow,
If loneliness is a fate
That one walks to confide in

Questions with only meaningful
Sounds, echoing
Loud voices through the crowds
I run from.
Ending coiled in a circle
Raining flecks of white ash
That pour from the ceiling,

Like drops of snow that cool
And kiss my skin
And I remember all the words,
Deep hurting feelings
Cursed with stale fragments
Of a self that claimed a self

lost miles away.

by Imogen Sweet

Chameleon eyes

A lucidity sapped a shape,
There in front of me
I found nothing like it,
It had to be,
So flawlessly I chaptered the moment,
It was faster and swollen,
Visually awoken from a dream that came true.

360 degrees told me to see
Dangling droplets cascaded over me,
It shivered through me, for it did not stop.
And twice all the same, I entered time
Still for a moment, it's cruel to be kind
And a fluttered wave, and hidden I stayed
For that was still yet to be broken.

But something changed,
I could feel the air,
It prickled my spine and silvered my hair,
For now, it was quick and moving
But I could not care,
I rowed through it
Flickering my stare.

And darting ahead of me
Straight towards me,
High above, like a lighting dove
splintered my eyes,
I remained in disguise.
Silently still,
Silently still.

In the moments before, I could never have thought,
The eye of a tiger was the same as it's roar,
Back to reality

There were pricks in my core,
The flutters of moments that painted my claw,
A lucidity tapped, through my vision I latched,
I lay in silence,
Breathing in match.

by Imogen Sweet



Putting It Together
by Ronald Walker

THE LIGHT IN THE FOREST
by Alan Bern

IN CLASS

Before I thought of inviting Melanie out, I heard stories. Stories about her...her thighs. All at the movies, these stories that were hard to believe.

We never studied together though I sure wanted to. She studied hard, and she and I talked about the homework often, walking to our next class, sometimes even whispered during class since we sat across from each other, our class alphabetized by the teacher on Day One.

The whispering— sometimes when we were supposed to be writing in class we'd lean across the narrow aisle, her whispering warm on my neck, near my left ear. She used to flush— face, neck, even the part of her upper chest that showed. But mostly I remember her breath, the warmth of it, the lovely smell, mint, probably toothpaste from earlier that morning.

What were we talking about? *The Light in the Forest* by Conrad Richter, white settlers and American Indians around the time of the American Revolutionary War: all the classes read it. The movie was great— Walt Disney, okay, but with the one and only Fess Parker! I don't remember much about the book (or the movie for that matter); now just the sound of her whisper, her breath. However much I loved Fess Parker, he couldn't compete.

She would put her gloved hand on my shoulder, and my pants would tighten below the belt, at the jeans' zipper, I didn't want to think about why, or it'd just have gotten worse. What were her words? I can't say, but I can describe what I saw, a parting in the dark woods where the light shone down, down on her standing in her short skirt and tight top holding arms against her chest and looking up at the light, not a deep blue sky at all, but a warm yellow overcast. Goosebumps. On her arms. I still can feel little hairs standing up...she was cold! It was Fall so why wasn't she wearing a jacket— I would've loaned her mine— and her bare legs, too, but they...I wanted to see and, if she let me, touch above

the knees and move my hand, my fingers slowly...the teacher, Mrs. Green interrupted my reverie, "Melanie, stop talking to Philip this instant!" And, both of you get back to your writing. If I see either of you talking to each other again, I'll send you both to the Office. I mean it!" Mrs. Green was sour. But at least she would give a warning before the worst would happen. She had almost a shelf on her front, really, really large breasts, and she wore tops that made the shelf stick out. Was she proud? Such a thought. Something I can ask myself now. Then, I had trouble *not looking*, even though I knew that might get me into some trouble. Then, it never occurred to me that her blouses made it nearly impossible to avoid looking.

I sucked in my breath and leaned away from Melanie. She did the same. I had to wait until after class, in the hall, to ask her what she had been saying to me about *The Light in the Forest*. While I was thinking of her standing in the light coming down through the trees. My fingertips still tingled from how I'd imagined touching her legs above the knees. Thighs. I looked down as we talked in the hall, and she did have on a short skirt. I started to lose her words, just like in class until I snapped back to listening. "Maybe we could sit next to each other when we go to the movie with Mrs. Green's class next week," Melanie was inviting me, I realized. "Yes, yes," I answered, "yes."

AT THE MOVIE – Disney's *The Light in the Forest* starring Fess Parker

We walked over to the theater together, our whole class, short Mrs. Green in front leading, and stocky Mr. Gray, a janitor, in back to make sure we all got to the Oaks Theater— it was about a mile away. Most of us taller than either of them.

When we started out we were almost in alphabetical order, but then we naturally drifted into small groups to talk as we walked. Melanie moved back to be with some girlfriends and, I thought, to be near Dink, one of the bad boys in our class. "Darn," I thought to myself, "how do I sit near her in the theater, and..." I almost walked into a tree as I was the thinking about Melanie. Vera and Sherry, who were behind me, cracked up. I blushed. Big red.

Fortunately we'd almost reached the Oaks. As we were entering the theater, I realized that I had to pee. I found Mrs. Green: "Can I go to the bathroom," I paused... "please..." Mrs. Green looked straight down her long, shiny nose at me: "May I," and "yes, you may, but hurry up, the movie is starting in four minutes." Even though Mrs. Green taught algebra, she demanded good grammar and correct diction. I rushed off: I knew exactly where the Men's Room was because my parents brought me to the Oaks pretty often; they liked movies and so did my sister and I.

Everything was going along okay, but somehow my zipper got stuck...open! I fiddled with it and pulled and even pulled down to free it up. No luck: finally I got it unstuck! Oh, no, I had peed on my jeans. 'Oh well,' I thought, 'it won't show in the dark...and it'll dry. I ran down to the theater door, it was closed, but I pushed it open since I could hear music. The movie had started.

My eyes weren't used to the dark so I closed them, then opened and closed them again. That didn't help. Where would I sit? After a minute or so I spotted Mrs. Green standing in the aisle, and I went toward her, almost tripping on the carpet. It must have been old and frayed.

When I got near her, I could just see that Mrs. Green was glaring. I swallowed...too much spit had gathered in my mouth from dealing with my zipper. In whatever light there was I could see Mrs. Green's long first finger pointing to the left— there was an empty seat right next to... Melanie! I climbed over her legs, being sure to pull my left leg along hers— she pushed back? Had she saved me a seat? I didn't care; I got to sit next to her, and she was on the aisle so I was the only one next to her. Good!

I set my butt back in the springy folding seat and looked up. There was Fess Parker! My favorite! I breathed in, began to relax a bit.

But only for a minute. What?! I felt Melanie pushing her left leg against my right. This was great! But could anybody see? I didn't think so: the theater had gotten darker, and we weren't too close to the light from the movie screen. I pushed back hard. She put her left hand on my leg and gently pushed. Just a little. That felt great, too, even though maybe she was letting me know I shouldn't push so hard? I relaxed my

leg, but left it touching hers. I looked at her face, but I couldn't see much because it was so dark. I could see she was looking straight ahead. I looked back at the screen— suddenly there was a flash from Fess Parker's gun. He was shooting into the woods. Then there was a loud scream...from the movie. I looked right away at Melanie's face. I could see that she was almost smiling. This was so great! I looked back at the movie. I needed to follow along because Mrs. Green was going to give us a quiz on the movie (not on the book, but I hadn't read the book yet anyway) so I sure needed to pay attention.

I tried to pay attention, but I couldn't keep focused: I thought of my maze book and Theseus, how he got lost. I rotated my middle finger to Melanie's leg, her thigh. And started to draw. Draw a maze from my book even though I couldn't quite remember the pattern. I drew and drew, circling with the full pad of my fingertip. Melanie pushed back, which made me very, very happy. I fidgeted. She turned her head and that made me stop fidgeting. She turned her head back to the movie.

When the screen lit up, I thought I saw her smile again out of the corner of my eye. Or had I just imagined that? My finger was moving in a new way, yes, up the outside of her thigh and into the inner part of her thigh. There were more little hairs on the inside. My fingers felt electric. But in a new pattern, too, a pattern that seemed familiar, I couldn't believe it! I was touching a new maze on her thigh. Which maze was this? I didn't exactly read my maze book since it was mostly pictures and photos of mazes, but I did look at it a lot. Had I memorized one that I was drawing on Melanie's thigh? Had she noticed? I wanted to ask her so much. I didn't.

Oh, wow! The movie was ending, and I sure had not been paying enough attention. What had I missed? The credits were still rolling when Mrs. Green whispered really loudly, "Class, let's go back into the lobby. We need to get back to school soon, and the movie went longer than I thought it would."

Melanie stood right up, straightened her skirt standing next to me. I put my hand out to touch hers while we were still in the dark. She pulled her hand away and fixed her hair as we started to walk toward the lobby. She shifted away from me. Just a little. And started talking to her friend, Joan.

That was the last time Melanie and I touched. Or even talked. Mrs. Green changed our seating the next day so that, she said, we could have a different view of the class and different people around us.

I was okay with that. I didn't love Melanie— or even have a crush on her. But I wanted to touch her some more. Sure, on her long legs...or hold her hand. Or, maybe, even kiss.

All these years, I wonder, too, did she ever think about that afternoon, how I touched her thigh while we watched *The Light in the Forest*, a movie I can barely remember at all though I do recall reading the book for Mrs. Green's class and liking it okay, I guess.

Whitman's Example

Never have I loved a Man more
Then that of he whose leaves fell
Gently into hands from dusty shelves
Whose words whispered sweet of life
Intoning hymns of self-affection
He who bravely witnessed death
He who "held the space"
For Sons and Daughters
of His America
Understanding "holding space"
Long before the phrase devised

by Carrie Ann Wall



Ginger Prison
by Dave Sims

May 5th

Sizzling, draining cigarrillo
Slow burning paper

Little mosquito hawks borne out from paper ash
Fly out in a million different forms

Chaos
The Cosmos

Dragonflies form a foglet of tiny terrasaur.
The golden one's fly so lazy that the blues
buzz around like fighter pilots.

hum, swished, and hushed wings jostling
bug-eyed shards of holy morning chapel glass

lilting red stems for tails
bronze beetle-bodies

some of the women eat with their tube-like tendrils
starting with their respective mate's head
the males will die like a fading daydream into evening

sundown on the fields of thought

flames
the heart embers of intimacy

the old dragonflies will ripen in color
from green, to a metallic iridescent

copper-plated coats

the dying white light

the whole mass of fiery debris
falls to the floor, forgotten

consumed

by Brendan Carroll

always have a plunger

there i stood
staring down, arguing
with no one but myself
as to what would be
the least awkward
of all possible situations.
you see, we hadn't
seen each other in
a while outside
of rehab walls
and now finally
our schedules aligned.
dinner and half a
bottle of wine later,
i had to piss before
driving 35 minutes
home

the innocent lift of
the toilet seat
revealed stale shit
floating in water

*do i flush the toilet
like a freak that flushes
before she pees?
if i flush will it spark a memory,
reminding her that she
had shit earlier that day
and for whatever reason
let it settle before
flushing it away
forever,
only to be forgotten
until this moment?*

“no i'll just pee on top of it, and

flush it all together”.
and so i did.

but up it went, not down.
another dilemma.
another moment.
standing,
staring,
into a
shit-filled,
piss-filled,
bowl
that is not doing as it should

what do i do now?
my heart raced, unsure
of what that water
was going to do
—*jesus, just go down!*
right under the
brim it stayed

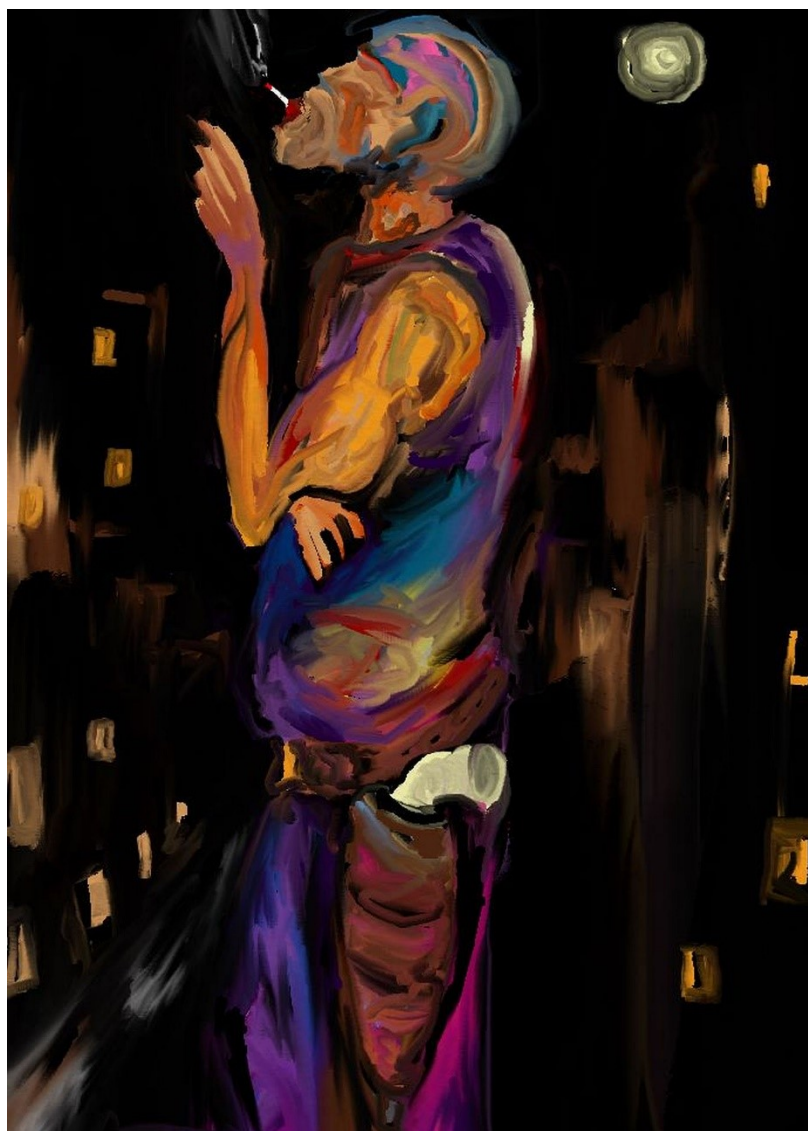
*do i leave the scene
of the crime?
leave her to think i
clog and run?
leave embarrassment
only to myself?
do i own up to
this unfortunate,
yet amusing,
series of events?*

“no i’m an adult, just tell it like it is”.
and so i do.

we laugh,
say an awkward
goodbye, set
plans for our
next visit, and

part ways—
myself to north jersey,
while she heads
quietly to the 24-hour
grocery store
to buy
a plunger.

by Melissa Taylor



Gunslingers last smoke before he hits the hay.
by Dave Sims

BIOs

Jeffrey Alfier's most recent book *The Shadow Field*, was published by Louisiana Literature Journal & Press (2020). His lit journal credits include *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Copper Nickel*, *Emerson Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *James Dickey Review*, *Permafrost*, *Vassar Review*. He is co-editor of Blue Horse Press and *San Pedro River Review*

Tohm Bakelas is a social worker in a psychiatric hospital. He was born in New Jersey, resides there, and will die there. His poems have appeared in numerous journals, zines, and online publications. He is the author of several chapbooks and his work has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize. <https://tohmbakelaspoetry.wordpress.com>
Instagram: @flexyourhead

Christopher Paul Brown is known for his exploration of the unconscious through improvisation and the cultivation of serendipity and synchronicity via alchemy. Over the past three years his art was exhibited twice in Rome, Italy and in Belgrade, Serbia. His series of ten photographs, titled *Obscure Reveal*, were exhibited at a Florida museum in 2017. In 2020 forty-one of his works appeared in 14 journals, magazines and catalogs. Brown earned a BA in Film from Columbia College Chicago in 1980. He was born in Dubuque, Iowa, USA and now resides in Buncombe County, North Carolina.

Alan Bern is a recently retired Children's Librarian from the Berkeley Public Library. He is a poet, storywriter, and photographer and has two books of poetry published by Fithian Press, *No no the saddest* (2004) and *Waterwalking in Berkeley* (2007); *greater distance and other poems* (2015), was published by his own press, ***Lines & Faces***, a press and publisher specializing in illustrated poetry broadsides, collaborating with the artist/printer Robert Woods, linesandfaces.com. Alan won a medal from SouthWest Writers for his story "The Return of the Very Fierce Wolf of Gubbio to Assisi, 1943 CE [and now, 2013 CE]"; and his poem "Boxae" was first runner-up for the Raw Art Review's first Mirabai Prize for Poetry, 2020. He was also a finalist in the NCWN's 2019 Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize; and he won the

Littoral Press Poetry Prize in 2015. Alan has poems, stories, and photos published in a wide variety of online and print publications, from which his work has been nominated for Pushcart Prizes. Recent published photos include: unearthedesf.com/alan-bern, thimblelitmag.com/2020/08/10/emptying/, and theravensperch.com/12439-2/. Alan is also a performer working with the dancer Lucinda Weaver as *PACES: dance & poetry fit to the space* and with musicians from Composing Together, composingtogether.org/index.php/sample-poetry-from-our-musical-storytime-performances/

Originally from Miami, Florida, **Dominic Blanco** is an emerging poet who currently resides in Chicago. Her background in writing's radical presence, and Her radical bewilderment to it, began by crafting lyrics to contemporary pop music. Finding an immense freedom in language over harmonics, she sought literature next as the developmental means towards her discovery for expression. And so, her writing was spent with the brief intention of composing fiction as a novelist. It was not until 10 months and some change ago that she then came across poetry. Her search leading her to the convergence of consciousness and mind. The realm of dream and imagination. A burst of the fantastic. Her journey settling here for the foreseeable future.

H.Sarah Blumenthal is a poet and writer from New York City

Raymond Byrnes's recent work has been featured as Editor's Choice in six journals, read on *The Writer's Almanac*, and published in *Main Street Rag*, *Third Wednesday*, *Shot Glass Journal*, and over thirty other print and online magazines. He lives in Virginia.

Brendan Carroll

Edward M. Cohen's novel, "\$250,000," was published by Putnam. His novella, "A Visit to my Father with my Son," is included in Running Wild's Novella Anthology. His story, "Peroxide Blonde," won the 2020 Key West Tennessee Williams Prize. His chapbook, "Grim Gay Tales," was published by Fjords Review. His collection, "Before Stonewall," won the Awst Press Book Award and was published in June.

Artist **Paula Damm** has forever had fiber in her fingers. She is intrigued how making marks with needle and thread can be both art and poetry, contemplative and dangerous (think needles piercing flesh), and a way to envelop revered objects, thoughts and words. A 2017 collaboration with poet Terri Witek, Reliquaries: Indigo, was featured in Deeper Than Indigo:Southeast Textile Symposium, St. Augustine, Florida (2018); Phoneography: Beyond the Selfie, was exhibited at Viewpoint Photographic Art Center, Sacramento California (2020); Non-medical grade face masks # appeared in South Florida Poetry Journal, May 2020; Stream With Code was shown in the Woman Asemic Writers Summer Exhibit, June 2020; A collaboration with poet Terri Witek, The Case for Interspecies Touch: Rag 1, exhibited in the “Cleaning Rag” Mail Art Project and Mail Art Exhibition, Dresden Germany, (<https://www.yumpu.com/s/Q8pntUAgGh6wkBrj>) September 2020; Included in Canadian editor Amanda Earl’s 2020 list “500 Women Who Make Visual Poetry”; The Message is Clear/Silence is Ignorance collaboration with Dona Mayoora featured in Erotoplasty 7 (pt.2), September 2020 (<https://erotoplasty.tumblr.com/>). Stream With Code, featured in Summer 2020 Women Asemic Writers Summer exhibit <https://womenasemicwriters.intuitiveartists.com/?fbclid=IwAR1JzYfhYSQjqGCCGRBbfC-TzZoKNY18-TcqCDqC1bmqmjFDRRfQ8GrY77Q>.

Gail DiMaggio is the author of Woman Prime, selected by Jericho Brown for the 2018 Permafrost Poetry Prize and published by Alaska University Press. Her work has appeared recently in The Ekphrastic Review, Posit, Whiskey Island, and The Avenue. She currently lives in Concord, NH.

James Garland has been scribing lines of poetry since he was a young teen, encouraged by an enlightened array of teachers in Ipswich, MA. He and his wife Merren, having moved from east coast to west several times, have happily settled in Salem, OR, where they share space with a cranky old cat and a recalcitrant Scottish Terrier. Both he and Merren

take great inspiration from the beauty and grandeur of this magnificent state. James is a member of the Oregon Poetry Association, and has works included in the OPA's upcoming Pandemic Anthology. He is also active in the Salem Poetry Project, and anticipates the renewal of live readings soon. His collection of works, "The Cove and Other Poems from the New Millennium", was published in September and is available on Amazon.

Ashley Geiger

Hratch Jangala is a self-taught Artist, currently residing in Rhode Island. Since 2011, he has focused the lion's share of his creative energies on painting UV-reactive designs on baseball caps. Through his exploration of his preferred medium's qualities, he strives towards mastery of its application to create unique pieces of wearable art. Jangala sets his visions and standards high for the future and is always enthusiastic about the prospect of collaboration with other artists. You can find other examples of his work on all social media platforms and at the **Jangala World** website at: www.jangalaworld.com and on Instagram at @jangalaworld.

Jessica Lee is a gutter poet who grew up on the rivers of the Eastern shore in Maryland. She enjoys the woods and fishing. A mother of 3 and advocate for people struggling with mental health and addiction issues. Most of her writings are about her own struggles with those issues and whatever else pops up along the way.

Qianrong Liang, female, a teaching assistant at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in Guangzhou, China, whose main research direction is mental health education for college students.

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Samantha Madway is working on a collection of interlinked poems and flash fiction. She loves her dogs, Charlie, Parker, and Davey, more than anything else in the universe. Though technophobic, she attempts to be brave by having an Instagram @sometimesnight. If the profile were a plant, it would've died long ago. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in *Hey, I'm Alive*, *Wild Roof Journal*, *Sunspot Lit*, *High Shelf*, *Linden Ave*, *Sky Island Journal*, *SLAB*, *Flexible Persona*, *After the Pause*, and elsewhere.

Beverly J. Orth is a post-baccalaureate student at Portland State University, concentrating in literature and creative writing. Her essays have appeared in *Pathos Literary Magazine*, *Reed Magazine*, *Ellipsis*, and other publications. She is a chapter author of *The 403(b) Answer Book*, published by Wolters Kluwer. Beverly earned a BS in mathematics from Harvey Mudd College and a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School. She has two grown daughters and lives in Portland with her husband. Her hobbies include ballroom dancing and reading *The New York Times*.

James Redfern was born and raised in Long Beach, California. Redfern is a graduate of Grinnell College. His work has been published by *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Transcend*, *Verity La: The Clozapine Clinic*, *Dime Show Review*, *Swimming with Elephants*, *Montana Mouthful*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Great Lakes Poetry Press*, *Fear and Loathing in Long Beach*, *Passengers Journal*, *DoveTales*, *We Are Antifa* (anthology, *Into the Void*), *High Shelf* (forthcoming), and elsewhere.

Brian Rihlmann lives and writes in Reno, Nevada. His work has appeared in many magazines, including *The Rye Whiskey Review*, *Fearless*, *Heroin Love Songs*, *Chiron Review* and *The Main Street Rag*.

His latest poetry collection, "Night At My Throat," (2020) was published by Pony One Dog Press.

Andrea Ruskin is passionate about food; she is even more passionate about cooking. During this past year when the pandemic kept us all at home she took to the kitchen to perfect old recipes and experiment with new ones endeavoring to impress her family with interesting and tasty dinners tailored to suit the full compliment of family requirements from Gluten Free and Dairy Free, vegetarian, and night shade allergy.

She likes to test her creativity by cooking dinner without first going to the store, using only ingredients found in the kitchen and garden.

Dale Shank's fiction and poetry have been published in: *The Raw Art Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *The Healing Muse*, *Akros Review*, *Before the Sun*, *Croton Review*, *Joint Endeavor*, *Powder*, and *University of Portland Review*.

Henry Stanton's fiction, poetry and paintings have appeared recently in *Alien Buddha Press*, *Analog Submission Press*, *Black Petal Press*, *Bold Monkey Review*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Chicago Record*, *Death of The Workers Press*, *Down in The Dirt*, *Gnashing Teeth Publishing*, *High Shelf Press*, *Holy & Intoxicated Press*, *Ink Pantry Press*, *Kestrel*, *North of Oxford*, *Outlaw Poetry*, *Paper & Ink Zine*, *The Paragon Press*, *PCC Inscape*, *Ramingo!*, *Rust Belt Press*, *Rusty Truck*, *Salt & Syntax*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, *Under The Bleachers*, *The Write Launch* and *Yellow Mama*, among other publications. His book of poems *The Man Who Turned Stuff Off* was published by Holy & Intoxicated Press in 2019 and his book of poems and drawings "Pain Rubble" was published by Holy & Intoxicated Press in 2020. "Moonbird", a book of poems, was published by Cathexis Northwest Press also in 2021. 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 can be viewed at the following website www.brightportfal.com. A selection of Henry Stanton's published fiction and poetry can be located for reading in the library at www.brightportfal.com. Henry Stanton is Publisher of Uncollected

Press and the Founding & Managing Editor of The Raw Art Review - www.therawartreview.com.

Shyla Shehan is an analytical Virgo who has spent the majority of her life in the midwest. She holds an MFA in Writing from the University of Nebraska where she received an American Academy of Poets Prize in 2020. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Gyroscope Review*, *Wild Roof Journal*, *Tempered Ruins Press*, *Verses from the Plains: A Poetry Collection*, *Boston Accent Lit*, and elsewhere. She lives in Omaha, Nebraska with her husband, children, and four cats. Shyla spends most days tending to a healthy household and is pleased with her role as an Editor for [The Good Life Review](#). She enjoys gardening, road trips, and blogging from her treadmill. All this and more at shylashehan.com.

Dave Sims makes art and music in the old mountains of central Pennsylvania. His traditional and digital paintings and comix appear in dozens of tangible and virtual publications and exhibits, while his totems continue to catch the eyes of many strangers, and his guitar playing and singing still leave listeners shaking their heads in disbelief. Experience more at www.tincansims.com

Pamela Sumners is the author of "Ragpicking Exekiel's Bones" (UnCollected Press, 2020) and "Finding Helen," winner of the Rane Arroyo Chapbook Prize (Seven Kitchens Press) (forthcoming). A 2018 Pushcart nominee, she was also selected for the 64 Best anthologies in both 2018 and 2019 and nominated for 50 Best in 2019. Her work appears in several anthologies and she has received several awards in poetry competitions. She has been published or recognized by about 40 journals in the US and abroad from 2018-20.

Melissa Taylor is an occupational therapist and mother of two from New Jersey. Her poems have been included in the Raw Art Review and her first collection of poetry, *A Skeleton of What Used to Be*, was recently published by Between Shadows Press.

Ann Christine Tabaka was nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize in Poetry. She is the winner of Spillwords Press 2020 Publication of the Year, her bio is featured in the “Who’s Who of Emerging Writers 2020,” published by Sweetycat Press. Chris has been internationally published, and won poetry awards from numerous publications. Her work has been translated into Sequoyah-Cherokee Syllabics, and into Spanish. She is the author of 12 poetry books. She has recently been published in several micro-fiction anthologies and short story publications. Christine lives in Delaware, USA. She loves gardening and cooking. Chris lives with her husband and four cats. Her most recent credits are: The American Writers Review; The Phoenix; Burningword Literary Journal; Muddy River Poetry Review; The Scribe, The Silver Blade, Silver Birch Press, Pomona Valley Review, Page & Spine, West Texas Literary Review, The Hungry Chimera, Sheila-Na-Gig, Foliate Oak Review, The Stray Branch, The McKinley Review, Fourth & Sycamore.

**(a complete list of publications is available upon request)*

Three of **t.m. thomson’s** poems have been nominated for Pushcart Awards. She is co-author of Frame and Mount the Sky (2017) and author of Strum and Lull (2019), which placed in Golden Walkman’s 2017 chapbook competition, and The Profusion (2019). Her passions include kickboxing, playing in mud, and savoring art. You can find her writer’s page at <https://www.facebook.com/TaunjaThomsonWriter/>.

Stacey Valerio lives in Connecticut with her husband and their two children. These poems are her first in over thirty years.

Imogen Sweet is a previously unpublished poet, looking for a home for some of her poems. She is currently studying Anthropology in her third year at Goldsmiths college, and has focused on her interests in exploring cross cultural perspectives of childhood. Imogen’s poetry is connected to emotion, place and nature, that she began to explore during her childhood. Poetry became a way to reflect on her experiences, that helped her to heal and connect to her voice from a young age.

Ronald Walker is an artist working in Fair Oaks California, which is an outlying town from Sacramento. He works in a style he calls "Suburban Primitive". This style combines his interest in the origins and functions of art along with life in the suburbs.

Carrie Ann Wall was born and raised in Buffalo, New York and currently resides in the charming little town of Mayville, New York. Carrie Ann is a poet and artist who delights in the creative process. You will often find her in nature drawing inspiration from the beauty of the world around her.

Jeff Weddle is associate professor of library and Information studies at the University of Alabama. In addition to *Bohemian New Orleans: The Story of the Outsider* And Loujon Press, for which he won the 2007 Welty Prize, he is author of several poetry collections, one collection of short fiction, and co-author of *The Librarian's Guide to Negotiations: Winning Strategies for the Digital Age*.



Portrait of the Artist as The Nectar of Immortality
by Henry G. Stanton