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POETiCA REViEW 8

Winter Edition 2020

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POETiCA REViEW is a quarterly literary journal of poetry and artwork. We aim to give voice to the many disparate and marginalised voices within the artistic community, locally, and internationally, regardless of notoriety or who is currently favoured by this or that magazine. Our mission is to inject new blood into the poetry scene.

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POETiCA REViEW

For the many, not just the few.

Ellen Dooling 2 poems

First Movement

Former men of science maintained that the universe was born in a great eruption of expanded forces.

They argued their theories with passion and conviction while inwardly fearing that in fact, they did not know.

Current theories suggest that creation is ongoing, but these new men of science also fear that they do not know.

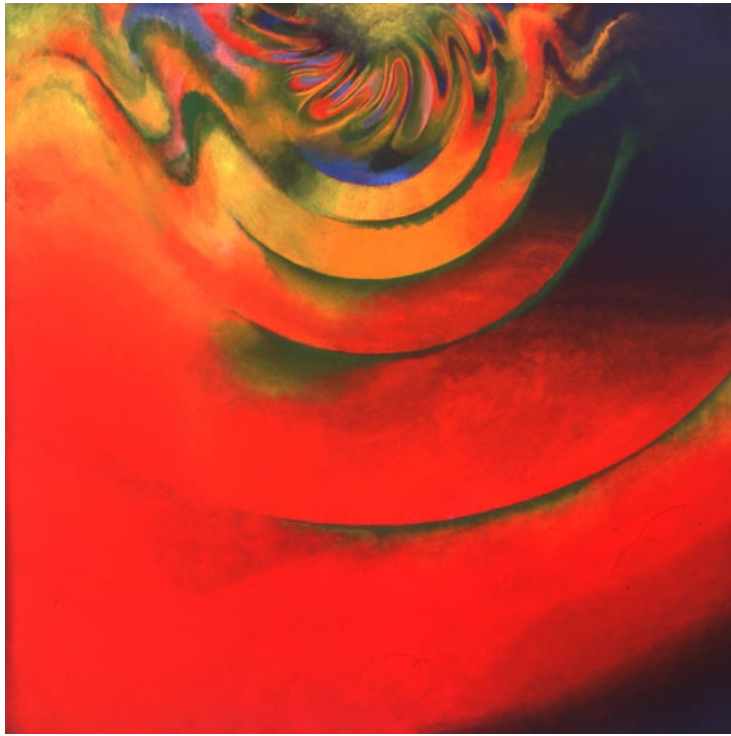
The woman gazes up at the night sky
and, spreading her palms
over her belly, she feels the first
flutter of the child in her womb.

A shooting star draws its silver path
across the sky, and the woman smiles.
She is not afraid to know,

the great beginning was as gentle

and as magnificent as this.

She is not afraid to know,
the great beginning was as gentle
and as magnificent as this.



Luminaries

In thunderous silence, the sun
of all suns witnesses
the birth of the universe.

With mighty labor, orb after orb
of energy emerges from the darkness
to form an array of new-born suns.

Ageless ages pass in this eternal nativity
as each new sun ignites and shines
with its own cosmic fire.

Might we also, tiny specks of light,
receive the flame, reflect the luminance
and be born into this brotherhood of suns?



Luminaries, 1983. Acrylic on canvas

Joe Best

Carpe Sinum Currus 1 poem

Out of one campus meeting,
and rushing to another.
Impatient bus a block away
vacuuming up the jostling students,
and their bobbing backpacks.

I'm old but still in good shape.
And so I ran, pouring it on.
But I didn't make it;
snorting bus pulled out and left me.
Hands on my knees, I was gassed.

"It doesn't matter," the old man behind me said.
"Now when Chesty Puller pushed us hard
on Peleliu in '44,
now that was some important work.
And I was just eighteen."

"Now I'm waiting for a different kind of bus.
Take me home to Betty, rest her soul."

Then outthrust an ancient hand: “Joe Altobucci,
what’s yours?” I spoke my name,
and took a seat.

Can’t remember all we talked about,
his life and times, I guess.
Fate and promises. Duty. Faith.
Then another shuttle came.
“Semper Fi,” I said.

* * * * *

Saw Joe’s obit in the paper today.
Ninety-four: He died at peace.
I thought about what those eyes had seen.
The trials that he endured.
The reward I hope he got.

And me? Only oblivion and stardust
In my sight.
So when the next bus sits a block away,
I’ll still be running, Joe.
I’ll still be running.

Kailtlyn Jensen 3 poems

The Closest We’ll Come to Having a Conversation

I guess you could say
We’re in a committed relationship
It takes dedication, deciding
Never to speak to someone again

Renewing my vows
Over three cups of coffee
Your stray emails trickle in
Wanting, missing, guessing

I respond under my breath
Suppressing the urge
To tell you you’re wrong
No, the song was not about us

But you believe what you want
That’s how we got into this mess

I'll talk of anything in hypotheticals
And I can't help that we get along

It's really not fair, because I need
Career advice and recommendation
Letters from someone I admire
It should have been you

Instead, blocked numbers
And why can't we talk
Trips uncomfortably close
To the town of my humble escape

The Point of Leather Jackets

A leather jacket can only protect you from so much
California breeze, brisk encounters with forgiving pavement
Irksome small talk with over-wary strangers, and
Indecision over what personality to wear today

Some of us learn the hard way, giving our jackets too much credit
Thinking ourselves clad in armor in the supermarket
Where panic attacks lurk in every aisle
And we can't find the soft mozzarella cheese

Predators sniff out these jackets like blood
Mistaking naive turtle shells for waving red flags
Charging headfirst into people in jackets
Cursing in betrayal when there is no reward

My leather jacket has not protected me from anything
Not from him, or them, or my trembling hands
I just like the way it looks
And the feel of extra layers between me and the world

Dualism in the Morning

Every day waking
Dark before the sun

Wondering aloud
Whether I exist

Your eyes shine, gentle
Cartesian disappointment

Palms saying *there, there*
Cradling throbbing brow

Preventing thoughts
From leaking out

Memories, belonging
To people with names

Pulling me back
Into sprawling limbs

For now

Margot Davis 2 poems

The Gravity of Flight

From my unlit apartment I peer
through slits in the blinds.

Where have all the joggers
gone?

A foot advances from the shadows
into a lamp post's light,

then a tiny dog bounding to keep up
with a long gait.

Stiffly I fidget, pace. Even a weary nag
called to the barn

can entertain an impulse to fly, quick as a wink,
a twitch,

to lift weight and worry and woe,
however short-lived.

Imagine the shock
a hundred fifty years ago when

Muybridge, the motion studies photographer,
documented

all four hooves leaving the ground at once.

Muscular limbs stretched time
thin as gossamer,

freeze-framing flight, his stop-motion
images

capturing beneath the stride
a brief reprieve from gravity.

Eadweard Muybridge's clip of "The Horse in Motion," Univ. of Pa Museum of Archeology and Anthropology : <https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/a-view-of-the-horse-from-the-classical-perspective/> >

Disquiet

The same dream. Again. In solitude a woman
poised, as if frozen after she acts, or is this before,

in a spare room straight out of Edward Hopper's
world. Sunlight streaming in as a man overshadows

her porch. The front steps sag with the weight of
indecision. Vacant windows stare back as a breeze

wipes away a veil of cobwebs. Always back to this:
the woman waits behind cheesecloth curtains

as a stranger crunches dry leaves underfoot,
his moves resigned as a seed salesman during drought.

Or preacher's son, maybe, peddling the good book.
No, vacuums. Or pans. He won't leave until

he's heard no. Any sign of life —a creaking
floorboard— will draw his knuckles to the warped door.

Who will give in first, the intruder with rehearsed
spiel, who must not leave until he has made a sale, or

the captive advancing, her foot pressed against
the door? To lock the bolt will announce she's home.

Ian Powell-Palm 2 poems

1. DREAM

In the dream/he rubs his length up against me/and then burns down a city/when I refuse him.

This man/shared a double bed/with my brother/college/how he knew him/found his dust/

In the dirt of a farm/followed it to Montana/followed it here/blood from a trembling jaw/
marking this spot.

In the dream/we sail through Denver/on bleeding feet/his lust following me/like a knife/and I
can't escape its tip/

Between my ribs/the way he watches the boys/shirtless and tan/blonde/enough for the
world/as they drive the tractor/

Through pregnant soil/ swelled with desire/the sun/scarring their cheeks/

Wishing he was one of them/wishing they wanted him/wishing he wanted himself/but all he
can do/is bleed silently into this spot/

So red/I can almost believe that he really does want me.

Inside the dream/I am a woman/living in this same length of body/my silence/clasped
between my legs/because he desires it so/ My backside/broken wide enough open/to enter/In
Denver/we are trapped on a boat/outside a sleeping city/and when he rubs his length/up
against me/and I refuse him/

He tears the buildings to shreds/ reduces the boat to cinders/ sets the city on fire/and I drown
wondering/what have I done?

Would letting him enter me have prevented this murder spree? What is it that I have
awakened?

2. Here Is the Summer

with everyone you love inside it.
No more bodies buried beneath the floorboards.

The ghosts in this place are still able to stand the sight of you.
Here, people die for good reason. Nothing is ever random.

Your eye is enough for me. I beg it to swallow all of here.

A crashing wave of pink flame,
 my only view, my whole world for a moment
As the car speeds past the exit. My brother, screaming,
 Something about freedom as he takes us 80 mph over the hill.

Yesterday, I told the sky that I had lost my body.
Now, I want to know, can I ask for it back? Even if I don't want it anymore?

River, If I gave it all to you, could I become downstream?
Am I an extension of everything I've ever touched?

My love, my mother knows how I feel about you.
She wants us both to live.
So, I hang up the phone and lock
my hands inside the basement.
May they never reach you again.

My love, I want you to love anything other than me,

so I step out of your life,
and onto the cliff,
Back and forth through the car door,
For a decade,
all of my leaving barely contained,
measured only by the seasons my body no longer passes through.

I am fully alive
until I step into a summer
that is snowed in on all sides.

When we make love inside it,
I am every place but here.

A river only moving downstream.
Never beside you in this bed of thorns.

And never alone with myself.

William Doeski 4 poems

Further and Further

Whenever I stand on the moon
some grisly vapor obscures
my view of the planet I left.

No one greets me on return,
no band plays, no politician
mines my stoicism for votes.

But I enjoy these dusty visits
to a place lacking gravity,
architecture, and fresh air.

Learning to live without living,
without breath and cultural being,
is essential. You've done the same

here on Earth, dusting yourself
with ashes of your ancestors,
walking yourself in yourself

to read the unreadable textbooks
pertaining to your way of life.

If I hadn't rejected my Zen self

I'd join you preening and posing
in the late summer overcast
where crickets ply their instruments,

where the eloquence of children
arcs with a painful voltage
across the tender suburbs.

But my trips to the moon teach me
that distance heals the same wounds
it inflicts, the heightened starlight

soothing like a slick of aloe.
You wouldn't consider coming
with me? No one will miss us.

Cities brim over with figures
devoid of purpose. The highways
and railroads knitted across

our home planet hardly scratch
that finely textured surface
to which you desperately cling.

The Scent of August

The scent of August disperses
in a shatter of spent blossoms.

You probe the earth for excuses
and find nothing to write down

in your book of common failures.
More hurricanes are brewing

in the mid-Atlantic where flocks
of long-flight seabirds reckon

latitude by instinct and faith.
I watch you wield your garden tools,

rake, shovel and hoe, and wonder
if you believe that the autumn

with its cruel election season,
will resolve your ancestral fears.

We both hope for salvation
of the earthly kind, the wobble

of the axis tilting our way.
We expect the solar system

to retain its lilt and harmony
despite certain local effects.

The deluge may be plotting
in certain angles and planes,

but we expect it to save us
by watering our garden

so firmly we'll never have to
soak it with unwanted tears.

Old Hands

Your hands look professional,
adroit with years of expertise.
They trace complex procedures

with an eloquence I envy
and value more than my lost
skill with knot-board or piano.

I never mastered the trills
of certain Debussy pieces,
but conquered every knot shown

in my sea-green Sea Scout Handbook.
Lumps of arthritis warp me.
Handshakes hurt. Windy voices

of trees mock my ineptitude,
my failure to replace skill
with instinct. Your hands paddle

through the ether like starfish
crowding up on a starlit beach.
Mine regress into clam-shapes

too crude to open a jar or pour
a glass of the ruby-red wine
you enjoyed with the mess I stirred

in a pan while I still could cook.
Your hands compose whole worlds
while mine clutch at simple shapes,

mental origami. After
a day of gardening you wash
your flesh and shine like chain mail

After spending that same day
parsing the slang of Falstaff
and failing to fully grasp it

I run hot water over my hands
till their lumps and pains abate,
enabling something between us.

Not Ourselves, and Others

In the Metropole Hotel
our room replays the whispers
of lovers dead a hundred years.
The man whispers in your ear,
the woman whispers in my ear.
They mistake us for ourselves
and propose to seduce us
in bravura ecstasy no one
but astronomers tracking comets
or dancers in mid-leap enjoy.

But we're not ourselves. The flight
to Berlin passed through ether
replete with uncanny spirits
that displaced our own. Landing,
we realized that someone else
combed our hair, washed our hands, flushed
the sanitary airport toilets.
We looked in mirrors and saw
a gray mist where our faces
had been when we left Heathrow.

The eye believes its lies so
we became no one particular,
generalized beyond recognition.
When we checked in, we both signed
the register in gray ink that faded
before the desk clerk could read it.
I don't know whose names we used,
but our credit cards still apply
and our luggage still looks familiar.

Now the whispers blunt themselves
against our utter lack of fact.
The oily persuasions would work
if we could confide in these bodies,
which may or may not be ours.
We could still indulge ourselves
and them, plying certain organs
we may have retained from our past
and from everyone else's past.

But what if the war returns
and the bombs flash and bluster
and gusty speeches soil the night
with bravado sex can't appease?
We lie in the skins of strangers
and allow the alien whispers
to buffet our lingering senses
with a promise of communion
the feeble lamplight and frozen
night at the window oppose.

Casey Aimer 3 poems

i am slowly destroying my social media

manually for hours, months, deleting
individual likes, comments, memories.

i believed if my life was not shared
existence would be the tree no one heard.
i wrote to take that wood and give it voice.

this deleting myself—call it revolution.

we chambered our own minds
letting them echo in petri dishes.
placing past and present inside
digital safes for our future
we offered that up too.

i kept my sites so long
knowing memory lapses but
i'd rather forget than be paraded

this is me redrawing.

ashes! ashes! we all fall

her fingers fiddle along a date's promise
gripping me more intimately than kiss.
she conducts me across underbrush,
mid-spring Texas forest already wilting.

beneath her dead tree hideaway, i twirl,
limbs and body kissing like a carousel.
our necks are toy water boats teased
into movement from swirls of pursed lips.

wandering between one another our
phone lights craft a private concert
illuminating Austin graffiti, a free
art museum of grit and expression.

nothing we do is novel but still
we marvel at our audacity
yelling artwork into concrete
declaring alongside our
anarchist circle-a
that *we are here*
if only for now
underneath this bridge,
two trolls spray painting
motifs of literary abandon.

we pack up and into one another,
run into the night like fireflies
who douse their own flames.

Conscientious Objector

Ever since
I was age nine
we've been at war.
Then double the years
as federal papers floated
into my mailbox reminding
me my duty to die for empire.
Throwing it inside the trashcan I
pledged my allegiance to humanity,
not a selfish subsect. When registering
for college they sat me down at a terminal
exclaiming it's quick, easy, the law, and our
draft no longer exists. Coppers stationed by
the corner erected one-sided grins with their
eyebrows, verifying the illusion of free choice
was the resin holding this country's façade. My
decision was between taking a stand and being
taught with their money, between eight years
of faux freedom before jail or signing my name
for a weakened voice. I chose the latter as when
standing alone they turn you into a flagpole you
didn't intend. Back home I took the receipt forms
affixing lighter to darker paper, the burned SS ash
budding to mounds I planted my dissent. Scouring
town redistributing American flags into my kitchen
bonfire, smoke alarms blared new private anthems.
Maturing inside enough military bases I understood
what coercion, hierarchy, and bloodthirsty killing in
name of oppression looked like. College campuses
now what were bastions of resistance, burned flags,
draft cards, are perverted to populations of registered
mandatory mercenaries. But regardless of how many
national symbols we desecrate nothing shall remove
us from the registers until the draft actualizes. Then
I will be stripped in front of judges and committees,
plead these objections my own, give documentation
this creed is deep-seeded and already a blossomed
black rose. Let this be the wax seal on my convictions.

Brianna Cunliffe 3 poems

barefoot falls

I watch the goosebumps rise, crawl
over her, tidal, sweet
skin giving in to the pouring consequence of spring
with a howl that welds joy to blazing sky,

join her in the tangle of
wildflower foam
running down the mountain
pinned by sun-shafts to the banks
and she slides down, submerges,
this raucous ceremony, baptized together
holy mud and root-prayers scraping raw
and a gasping breath
as the animal of my body
roars under the skin
and every bright cell comes clean

desert riptide

tide-sun swells at the rim of the canyon
hissing on the wings of the birds far below
the salt-daughter stares down the word the water has written
finds herself in the fossil record, knees in the dust
lips pressed to a millennium before breath was even taken
and still, I go down, yet more.

and I remember syllables pouring
in cold November light from the lips of the woman
who wrote me into infatuation with
deserts I had never seen, who showed me stone births with each stroke of heat
on the red arches, scrub-brush feasts for the birds who know how to sing when
all throats are dry as death itself, yes, wet, wet with thirst for life itself—

I think of echolocation as we climb out of the canyon
here in this sea of rising light, climbing heat
and if I could find my way back to the fading first planet in the west
from the sound of her footsteps ahead of mine
from the noise a pebble makes, all those thousands of feet below
where still the birds are flying above the river
as it makes its molten way to the heart of the matter
a single rising note of song
lifts us deeper
and the waves of red-light roll
over star-dark beaches
and I see by her sound
all the way home

turquoise layer

we drive through the desert. listen to talk of death,
of our cracked-open selves, eaten by vastness
as truth. benevolence.

I imagine the charred cracked earth as the liftoff of the
shuttle, in orbit, now, its remnant burning in the minds below
but I do not know what bled the rest of the red dirt of its heart
dreaming it was worship of stardust
changes nothing and everything

but driving through the desert I remember the roots
where I found the sweet tangle of a beating heart, subterranean gods drinking sun at last
and yes, talk of death here, no better place
the pulverized shells clack under our feet and we drink slow of the river-water
and watch the air fill with the mortal molecules that call us home

what better, what else to be, than this?
the desert rolls. I recall women and bears, the way we shed our skins
like mystics, every morning, in some cold coronation
eaten by a vastness with
friendly tongue, with burning script behind our eyes:
yes. cracked open.
as the worship of stardust, as death, it changes
everything and nothing

rain fills the wanting
and I drive on.

Blake Z. Rong 1 poem

Cities in Dust

In this perfect howl of emptiness I conjure you

from blankets and linens and sheets of paisley,
your name perched gingerly on the tip of my tongue

seeking the words to describe your

alabaster body
hair of sandstone
navel lit aglow
and the looking-glass pool
where your ear meets your neck

but I never dared to speak,
my mouth rich with dead tongues
until you became a once-sweet thing
whose taste had worn out.

For days I couldn't sleep,
so concerned with survival
that I forgot to dream.

This was what I once wanted, to be
surrounded by reveries,

echoing across the hideous distance
between your words and my lips

like the gladiator who's made it this far,
kneeling on the ground of the amphitheatre

searching for my missing limbs
clawing back the last few minutes of indecision.

I close my eyes to wake
in the ashen fields
hearing the long grass rustle,
sweet Herculaneum

where in the House of the Faun
I dream of making love to you,

wearing nothing but your hat.

Barbara Daniels 2 poems

Not Writing

Deep in winter I burn
Christmas candles.
They flicker, and
matter disappears.

Smoke drifts up
the dark stairwell.
I'm afraid of the river
that moves under ice.

The sun takes its low
trajectory as if starting
the day is a discipline.
I try to find one word.

Ice? Flame?
Shadows track light
that slides over the carpet.
I'm never warm now.

The side of my hand
smudges a swathe
of graphite. The furnace
clicks, and I wait.

Water Walkers

I hate the way dying women
look alike thin
apparitional

bald heads covered
by caps so light
they're water walkers

slender dear ones
disincarnate
thinned to bone

They rise through
thunder and
knocking rain

Unlaced vertebrae
chime together
Wind flows over them

lifts their hair
releases the rough
clutch and labored

breath of work
and illness The sky
closes dark still

Remi Recchi 1 poem

Dear Ex-boyfriend, consider

let me be the first to tell you being your first was not a victory
it was a nettlesome papercut & a waste of condom

I don't miss you like I should or maybe like I could
I rarely think of you these days but I thank you
for giving me your favorite Radio Head album

your music has a much better home now
by which I mean my car & not your embarrassment

when we were in college you named your fish Ophelia
did anyone bother to tell you how fucked-up
that was?

sometimes I remember your shrill laugh & cold, wet
mouth & how for a long time I thought I hated kissing,
but now I'm grateful for the reminder that most boys
are just not good kissers

I was not a boy when we were together—what did that make us?

Old Navy sells a hoodie just like yours: gray
& striped & clearance'd for seven dollars
I purchased the damn thing & now I wonder if we're more
alike than I'd like

your dick is not the punchline but if it were I'd say
I found its crookedness strange, its skin unnerving
sleeping with you was like looking at a faceless snake
with too many tails

Steve, you have ruined engineers for me forever, &
I'm not sorry because your name is fucking Steve

I think if we'd met now we'd get along
just two nerdy guys talking about nothing

remember when we went to Sonic & we ordered
milkshakes? I wanted the small, but you insisted
child-sized for me, said that was large enough

now I am a boy with my own girl—what does that make me?

I want so badly to redeem you in this poem

some men are not worth the time
you are not especially worthy of anything
though I will say thank you for the scarf
when I was cold
thank you for the pregnancy scare
in that it was just a scare

I don't think you'd be a bad father but I know
we'd have reset the world's divorce record

I must confess I never liked your Pomeranians, little
furry rats poised, spoiled, on the couch

I won't give you credit for my personal growth,
though, selfishly, I might take credit for yours
isn't that what we do?
we fuck, we love, we dance with other humans
hoping to someday wake up as a star

Susana Gonzales 4 poems

Pastime

Upon viewing a photograph of the Nez Perce Indian tribe playing a game of baseball with soldiers of the U.S. Army (1877). Later the army forced Chief Joseph onto a reservation where most of the tribe froze to death.

The photo is grainy
but what it reveals
is clearly American, familiar—
pitcher, catcher, home plate.

Boys in uniform,
gloves eager for a win.
The Indians are up to bat
and the playing field is even.

Someone has called “Time!”
on history
on hate.
In this captured moment
the Indians could win.

The Little Mermaid Dives Deeper

With apologies to January Gill O'Neil

Do not be afraid when love requires sacrifice.
Pope St. John Paul II

There are too many liars on land.
Each fairy tale creates an unanswerable wish
for every living girl who is surfacing;
who hasn't yet realized currency
can be found on her own ocean's floor.

My body is your myth. You'd like to believe that
I long to become untangled.
You like to tell the story of how
I sacrificed a kingdom for love.

"How perfect does an apple taste?"

Ask Eve.

I am not flawed; it is my nature to swim.
So, to want a prince with pronged feet,
who merely makes footprints
instead of meaning,
means to destroy my agency
that cannot be built again.

Can She Bake a Cherry Pie Billy Boy, Billy Boy?

I am new scissors,
a shining sharp-edged blade
ready to cut into the living. But,

I do not peel the potatoes
the way my mother peels the potatoes—
the right way.

Mumbling criticisms, she snatches
the peeler from my young fingers,
leans over the porcelain sink,
and takes the job back.

“Manos de hombre,”
and every syllable struck
and stuck like a truth:
undeniable evidence
of my incompetence.

This is how
she teaches me
food is love.
How my future
depends on
my ability
to peel
chop
blend
knead
some tangible product
into something to savor
into something to share
into some proof she taught her daughter well

Now I am
a torn page from a recipe, missing
most of its ingredients.

How to Make Tortillas

The only way you can be married is if you learn to make tortillas.

I know how to make them in theory.

I know you knead the *masa* after mixing water and flour and salt.

Other ingredients? I don't know, why don't I know?

You knead the *masa* so thick and cold and smooth.

You roll it with an old iron pipe because you're too poor to own a real rolling pin.

You add flour to keep the *masa* from sticking to the pipe.

You roll and lift and turn and roll and lift and turn
until it begins to look like a tortilla—flat and thin and smooth and perfectly round.

Perfect and round is the magic part. I think this is why I can't make them—
why she says I have *manos de hombre*;
why we end up raising our voices;
why I storm out of the kitchen;
why I feel foolish fifty years later remembering
how I didn't have her magic to make them perfect and round.

When you have made them magically round,
place them on the *comal* to cook, hot and quick. Timing is everything.

Pinch them at the edge with your fingernail to flip them over.

If you flinch at the flame you are too fearful and you will never get married.

You are now perfect daughter once you've made your home smell of warm tortillas.

Beatriz Dujovne 2 poems

Mirror Face

Holding closely this life-size portrait of yours,
I tell you face-to-face, nose-to-glass
about my two divergent selves.

This new *me* rises at dawn
bursting into a love song,
smiling at this chaotic world,
dancing like an unburdened star-lit sky.

Contemplating the river's never-static
geometric art, its glassy quietness
rising up into baby ripples
from a little boat's distant wake.

The other *me* visits less often since your dying,
arrives without knocking on my wide-open
door, finds me staring at the small hand
of a grandfather clock
dawdling away without me.

I flounder around for refuge as self-
created demons insist:
You are living on borrowed time.
What meaning does your life hold without him?

Through glass, you grieve this other *me*,
beg me to release you without forgetting,
to touch without ever again touching.

To Federico García Lorca

We, the ominous sky and I together,
joined in storms and tears, witness your murder
from afar. Your Spanish voice interrupted,
echoing still through the wide world of tongues.

One of the first in yet another civil war.
Generalissimo's violent cleansing. Creativity,
sexuality purged. Power and masculinity enshrined.
Your ravaged body dumped in an unmarked ditch.

But in this portrait I hold dear, a young man's
handsome figure, a soothing smile. How can a single frame
contain so much beauty? Medallion face, grey eyes,
severe brows, hair that begs to be played with.

I press a few of your baby grand's keys and hear
the thunder of bullets. Out of your not-yet-found grave,
bloodied, you appear next to me, in this, your living
room, then quickly vanish out your window

flying to Sierra Nevada under a feverish red moon,
carrying *olives in your pockets*, humming ballads
that taste of honey, reciting odes to your friends
the matadors gored to death in the arena.

Yours, the quintessential voice of sensuality, love and
tragedy, lullabies and longings. The lyrical expression
of moons: pure, lewd and weeping. *Duende*: are you
still playing with the stars in that gipsy Granada sky of yours?

Michael Minassian 3 poems

DIRECTIONLESS BLOSSOMS

Adding water
to a block of ink,
the painter unrolls
a sheet of rice paper

placing his brushes in a row
in front of the mirror

his face a substitute
for directionless blossoms
& unscented flowers

Painting night, not day,
a language of lost moments
and disappearing footsteps—

the coldest color
black on black,
the moment the painter
sees over the edge
of the painting
into the empty room
as a branch lifts alone
into the wind

paired birds
singing as they fly away
until no sound is heard.

LADY OF GUADALUPE

Walking near the city square
in San Miguel de Allende,
my friend cried when she
saw a dog, thin as a leaf,
struggling to his feet,
bringing it water and tacos,
complaining that no one else
would feed a starving animal.

Across the street, I thought I saw
Our Lady of Guadalupe
sneaking around the corner
of the cathedral,
wondering if Jesus
or another of her sons
had descended to take the form
of a forlorn, forgotten
flea bitten mutt
without enough energy
to wag its tail or bare its teeth.

In bed that night
my friend cried again
after we made love,
this time wishing
she could sew her eyes shut,
keeping the sight of the dog away.

Never mind, I said, just before
I kissed her for the last time,
we're over 500 miles
from Laredo and the border,
and the virgin has a head start:
there aren't any dogs
in the desert, I lied,
not even after dark.

ROAD TRIP

There's a wordless
silence inside the car;

my friend is driving,
his wife next to him

and I'm stretched out
on the back seat;

we've been on the road
all day crossing off

the towns on a map
folded like a paper fan.

When we turn on the radio
the weather report

predicts rain, snow,
lightning and hail;

there's nothing between
us and the unspoken

journey from here to
the ambiguous exits ahead;

if we speak at all
the words will fall

like leaves from an
unrepentant branch.

Glen Armstrong 2 poems

Wax Museum

I sweep flies from the wax
museum

in the summertime.

My sweetheart has an extra layer
of teeth.

My copy *Of Mice*

and Men has seen better days.
I did not write

the notes in the margins

that quote Marx.
Oh fading ink and dusty
wax figures.

My sweetheart models a two-piece

that would have caused a scandal
not so long ago.

Good Neighbor #80

The gritty cinema of the 1970s had as much to do with fantasy as it did reality. Neon sputtered. Broken people tried to coax big band from their radios late into the night, their faith in the dead, the complete, the simple.

It was all about riding in yellow cabs and fearing women. Time Square was a war zone. My sister was radioactive.

In the morning, constant pain and forgetting required pills. Tongues reached out for beautiful clocks. Everyone had a favorite chop suey joint and a girl and a gun.

Alec Solomita 2 poems

The Revenge of the Dinosaurs

Weightless sparrows snicker from still trees,
irritable blue jays, skittering through
bare branches, caw with laughter,
the cardinal atop the tallest limb wolf whistles
at us fleshy humans hefting one heavy leg
after another, craning necks to see our superiors.

Chatty

A few smaller species come to mind
at her (let's not say incessant)
chatter.

Birds, for one, trilling gaily away
at 4:45 of a quiet morning,
who wake you

smiling in spite of your pique,
may seem a fitting figure for her talky
good cheer.

Birds, though, on reflection, falter next to
the red squirrel, who can assail you the whole of
long wood walks,

spirited, fretful — perhaps a more apt trope.
Though you never hear a squirrel laugh at
its own joke.

Former beauty, still pretty as some pictures,
she is now a woman of a certain age.
Sixty-three. And,

friendly as her chattiness is, it can approach
a sort of imperishable quality.
And her eyes,

clouded in their spheres, which used to jump out and break
young hearts before they knew her name,
are wary.

It was way back when she woke them smiling
at quarter to five with a husky whisper
in an ear.

But an exaltation of larks has become, as time does what it does,
a charm of finches, a prattle of parrots, sometimes a
scold of jays.

Shhhh ... It's all all right ...

Jessica Burnquist 3 poems

Objective Gaze

after Portfolio 5, Composition as Pattern

Thus the realist, painting a tree, would give a fairly accurate reproduction of the way the tree looks, leaving to us the emotional or intellectual reaction.

Unless the tree has been reduced to ash. Then the reaction must be purely emotional and should include a gentle weeping and head tilt to the heavens. All of the gestures for *why*.

The expressionist, taking the same tree, would distort its form and color as he pleased in order to tell us how he felt about it.

Notice the absence of the pronoun she. That is how I feel about that.
(Aren't we all trying to feel ourselves out of the negative space?)

The abstractionist, after asking himself what the main idea of a tree might be, would proceed to intellectualize the forms of nature into a pattern revealing that idea.

You can't see the forest for the trees because the meaning is hedged and rooted for centuries in which you did not exist. You can't see the forest for the trees because your tree is not my tree. You can't see the forest for the trees because you are inside the tree. You can't see the forest for the trees because you are the tree.

Of course these three approaches are bound to overlap.

Of course, we are the absence of reflection
the missing pronoun, and the ash
of our combined ideas.

Of course, we are beautiful
in our two dimensionality.
We are, of course, seeping
into our individual smallness
to pinpoint a lasting perspective.

If I were to paint myself, you might exclaim, *Primitive!*
Others might exclaim, *Sophisticate!*
A smart friend would drone on
about linear rhythms as structures.
Meanwhile, I am clinging to the horizon when I tell you
My three graces are echo, the direct gaze, a silhouette.
I offer a glowing review. Everyone in the museum
eventually moves on.

Reverberations

The evolution of an individual is inevitable
And this is a lie, because for years we've been waiting

for you to confront your past like a mirror--the sins
of their father, yada yada.

If you were to find stillness in front of your reflection
your voice would echo in multitudes.

Dizzying. And though you might be tempted
to shirk from your own volume,

It would be a passing urge--because
the only context you have for yourself

is yourself. In fact this fantasy of placing
you in front of a mirror is absurd.

Instead--have a seat at my table
across from me, beside my brother.

Would you like me to offer the prayer
of my childhood before the meal?

*Pleasegodpleasegodpleasegod
Let him be in a good mood.*

*Pleasegodpleasegodpleasegod
No fish or eggs on my plate*

Tonight, at my table, I will serve
vegetables and if you don't finish them

I will kick the living shit
out of your shins.

Now pass the salt.

January

A resolution of views--candlelit glass mutes
clarity in its grasp. We both know that warmth
on the inside of things can be a trick of light.

As if a new moon couldn't be more powerful
than our inner architecture. Our tides
decide to storm. We aren't made for this
only we are made exactly for this.

We will balcony our risks for once
make eye contact with the shadows
who fill windows across the way.

A connection, no matter how fleeting,
can turn ember to amber. Transform
emotional archaeology into something
tangible. Oh! Let's examine
ourselves without the edges.

Cindy Rinne 3 poems

Bear Goddess

My pilgrimage begins below the crescent moon.
I feel lost surrounded by the eyelids of dark trees.

Enter cave rooms. A bat darts. I scream.
Skulls and bones of bears neatly arranged.

Candlelight flickers. I place a bowl of peaches
and oranges. Then dip my hands in brackish

waters to sprinkle upon my offering. Call
upon Artio to unleash my insecurities and

bring abundance. While my lips part, I hear
ancient Celtic songs. Self-doubt erased—

ring of flames appears around my head
dancing ancestors joined by the goddess.

Riding the Wind

As she stands, turns, and fluffs the pillows,
she finds herself riding the wind
with a polar bear. Discovers they are not
separate from one another. This cold place

burns away pain and sorrow.

Douses with water to heal her heart chakra.
Now in a village, shivers as she wears
a crown of coral, citron, and obsidian stones.
The bear paints lightning, eagle, and mountain

symbols on her arms.

They join the circle and prance around the fire.
Flames conjure faces of a young woman
and a young boy. She blesses the tribe
and retreats with the polar bear to nearby

mountains under gray moon.

She connects to her body. Dances between
worlds. A mystery to herself. Were they
the faces of her ancestors? Where does
she feel at home? She fills her lungs with

spaciousness of isolation.

Do What Seems Impossible

I wake up inside the lower world
a thundering waterfall yells
We do not believe in ghosts

Then I rub raw honey all over my body
like drinking the soul of tea from a crescent moon
this basin,
a place of unforgiveness or love

attracts ancestors drumming echoes inside

Victor Pambuccian 3 poems

on how to live

you entered a poem
on an evening in November
and asked me what
gorge I came from
when I appeared
on the horizon of your life
I came from the plains
in search of mountains
and by the time I found them
I forgot how to live
and have been begging you
ever since
to let me in
on your secret
you couldn't explain it
much less hand it over
so I've been watching you
for years
trying to decipher
the language of silence
of eyes speaking
of journeys unseen
to lands without regret
where the past is never recalled
where love is not time
and time is not now
and now never dreams
and dreams never weep
where we never meet

the decline of space

years have passed
since we played
in the wet grass
when the vastness
of space
did not keep us
apart
when we would hide
inside each other
the silence since
is still following us
in the mute days
of shrivelling space
filled with discarded boxes
a space still too wide
for anyone to find
anyone else
ever since addresses
have faded away
streets have lost their names
directions aren't discernible
anywhere
we're lost to each other
we live on in

some distorted memory
of time lost
of love forgotten
of glances

of closeness

a letter past midnight

the look of that branch-dwelling sheepish creature
in the numbing silence
of your joyous lines
imploing the gods of poetry to have mercy on me
bring back the day
when we were whole
and looked out
the window
at the cherry trees
searching for some hidden soul beyond appearances
the space between us
surveyable
we did not long for the future for a different existence
for another landscape
just for each other
in the breeze
of that empty dirt road
under the autumn stars
do you remember
the dwarf trees
the boulders
us walking

Gloria G. Murray 1 poem

FUNERAL

my sister's face
is buried
in my woollen blazer
her body trembling
like a young deer
my aunt's big bosom
is bouncing against
the air

my grandfather
and ten men
are chanting the Kaddish
my father is tossing
the first shovel
of dirt
over the wooden casket

and my grandmother
is trying
to leap
into the grave
of her firstborn

Susan Cossette 2 poems

After René Magritte Was Caught Between Flames in the Fireplace

This is not a pipe.
It is an image to gaze upon, but not use.

A jockey and horse frozen on the roof of a car,
Eternally immobile.

This is not a kiss,
Sheet shrouds our faces, lips never touch.

The cross around my wife's alabaster neck does not make her Catholic.
I only show marble pieces of her to you voyeurs.

Shoes grow grey feet,
Leaves become trees.
The hen contemplates the cuckoo's egg,
Placed by unknowing hands in the nest.

We only recognize objects by shadows cast on the cave wall,
Confined by the candle's treachery of images.

Have I grown oversized,
Or is the universe collapsing into itself, particle by particle?

A variation of sadness between breath.
And what about death?
Let's not talk about it.
The saints' memoirs are a false blue sky
Behind the stage apron,
Waiting for the dusty red curtains to close.

Legitimized lies,
I mistrust images.

Surgery of the Soul

The sun kisses its red lips
Through the lace curtains
While I sip tepid tea.

Sparrows move in slow motion
To and from the feeder,
Suet clumps sticky on my bedroom window.

Last year, you cut my feelings
From me.

But I no longer recall
The straps around my wrists and thighs,
The electric shards piercing my temples,
Or that final crunch when you thrust
The ice-pick into my eye.

You cut away all those feelings
With your shiny butter knife,
Twisting into my rebellious brain,
Like a petulant grapefruit
Served up on a plate at Sunday brunch.

It took less than 10 minutes.

After, you asked how many pennies
Were in a jar on the antiseptic white counter.
You shook it,
The sound of copper against clear glass deafening and terrifying.

I guessed 4,322, and you proclaimed success.

Today, I can't remember how to set a table,
Where my butter knife goes,
But I still have a life.

You may have scraped my brain clean
But you did not touch my soul.

CLARE O'BRIEN 3 poems

BLIND MINOTAUR

after *Blind Minotaur Led By A Girl Through The Night* by Pablo Picasso



bruised as a crippled tree he walks,
rolling like an apple on the turn. He lurches forward,
groping with a broken branch. The sailors watch
him, unconcerned. He is no threat to them. He lifts
his muzzle to the sky and howls.

and once upon a time,
he ruled the maze of earth and fire, the place
where songs would sing themselves. He was an idol then,

golden-horned and galloping, his black eyes full of stars.

This waterline was his.

She cares for all that he has lost,

safe inside the bosom of her bird. Her feet move forward

but her head looks back, down the road that they have walked.

She knows they will not go that way again. She stays because

besides her dove, he has so little left.

Tonight they'll rest, in whatever place
will take exhausted myths. She'll cover him with straw and listen
while he croaks his songs of sacrifice and loss. Sometimes he
calls his mother's name, or sadly counts the lives he missed,
the ones that made it out.

That world has gone: his horns and hooves

have nothing left to kill. She leads him past the watching eyes,

the silent scorn of those who never heard him roar. His memories

are ravenous, hollowing his bones. His hide sets hard. His muscles
cramp. It will not be long now.

THE POINT OF LIGHT IS SEEING

after *The Lightning Bird Blinded by Moonfire* by Joan Miró



The full moon birthed the lightning bird

A foolish age ago when she was young.

She waxes bright through occult study,

Her slow phases shifting like machinery.

When his sudden dazzle splits her skin,

she snuffs his light with talk of lunacy.

She knows he'll drink deep from her well.

Moonshine means blindness, even for birds.

INCURSION

After Indietro by Marc Alan Di Martino



He can't believe his luck. If time is layered, then some careless mage has ripped away tomorrow. Eternity stands open to his smile, his appetite for mischief. He picks his way past tattered gift wrap, through posters, news and ads, overleaps the wrinkled centuries. He moves with ease, his robes abandoned for knock-off Nikes, renaissance curls shaved close. Hooded and tooled, he soaks into the night. This wild new world is kind to him. Within a week, he's pecking at his phone. He ducks and dives, king among urchins. One day, he'll rule these streets.

Contributors

Ellen Dooling Reynard spent her childhood on a cattle ranch in Jackson, Montana. A one-time editor of *Parabola Magazine*, she is now retired and lives in Nevada City, California where she writes fiction and poetry. Her poems have been published in various journals including *Persimmon*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Silver Blade* and *Muddy River Poetry Review*.

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William Doreski has published three critical studies and several collections of poetry. His work has appeared in many print and online journals. He has taught at Emerson College, Goddard College, Boston University, and Keene State College. His most recent book is *Stirring the Soup*. williamdoreski.blogspot.com

Casey Aimer holds an MFA in poetry from Texas State and a bachelor's in prose from Texas A&M University. For over twelve years he has performed nationwide with spoken word and page poetry. He is a former non-profit writing director and the blog editor for the Porter House Review. Aimer has previously been published in *Ars Medica*, *The Fictional Café*, *Toyon Literary Magazine*, and more. He continues advocating radical thoughts and honest questions expressed in original styles.

Brianna Cunliffe is an environmental justice activist and writer from North Carolina, currently studying at Bowdoin College. She served as the 2019 artist-in-residence at the Kent Island Scientific Station in the Bay of Fundy, where she worked at the intersection of climate research and the poetics of place.

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Alec Solomita's fiction has appeared in the *Southwest Review*, *The Mississippi Review*, *Southword Journal*, and *Peacock*, among other publications. He was shortlisted by the Bridport Prize and *Southword Journal*, and named a finalist by the *Noctua Review*. His poetry has appeared in *Algebra of Owls*, *POETiCA REViEW*, *Litbreak*, *Driftwood Press*, *The Galway Review*, *Panoplyzine*, *The Blue Nib*, and elsewhere. His chapbook, "Do Not Forsake Me," was published in 2017. He lives in Massachusetts, USA.

Jess Burnquist's poetry has appeared in *Ms. Magazine*, *Yew Journal*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Persona*, and other online and print journals.. She is Vice President of Education at Creative Visions, a global, human rights-based youth empowerment program. Her poetry chapbook, *You May Feel Your Way Past Me* is available from Dancing Girl Press. Jess recently moved to the Los Angeles area with her husband and their three-legged dog, Skipper.

Cindy Rinne creates fiber art and writes in San Bernardino, CA. Cindy is the author of several books: *silence between drumbeats* (Four Feathers Press), *Letters Under Rock* with Bory Thach, (Elyssar Press), and others. Her poetry appeared or forthcoming: *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Verse-Virtual*, *LitGleam*, and others, plus several anthologies. www.fiberverse.com

Victor Pambuccian is a professor of mathematics at Arizona State University. His poetry translations, from Romanian, French, and German, have appeared in *Words Without Borders*, *Two Lines*, *International Poetry Review*, *Pleiades*, and *Black Sun Lit*. A bilingual anthology of Rumanian avant-garde poetry, with his translations, for which he received a 2017 NEA Translation grant, was published in 2018 as 'Something is still present and isn't, of what's gone.' Aracne editrice, Rome. He was the guest editor of the Fall 2011 issue of *International Poetry Review*.

Gloria G. Murray is a member of Poets & Writers, Inc., I have been published in literary journals including: The Paterson Review (in which my poem won an Editors choice award in the 2005 Ginsberg contest and honorable mentions in other years), Poet Lore, Oberon, The Pittsburgh Quarterly, Flapperhouse, Mizmor Anthology, Adelaide, Xandau, Dash, and others. She is the 2014 1st prize recipient of the Anna Davidson Rosenberg award sponsored by Poetica Magazine and third prize winner of the Writer's digest 2017 poetry contest.

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Please submit up to 5 poems at a time (40 lines max. each poem) in the body of the email and as an attachment. Times New Roman. 12-point font only.

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