



The Trinity Review

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THE TRINITY REVIEW 131
Spring Journal

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“Do you know that every great thing in the history of art and every beautiful thing in life is actually what you would call nasty or has been caused by feelings that you would call nasty? By passion, by love, by hatred, by truth. Do you know that?”

- John Fowles, *The Collector*

“We will not stop talking about Culture when the War ends!”

- Wyndham Lewis, *Blast 2*

Editors

Usman Malik
Grace Ma
Duncan Morrison

Associate Editors

Rachel Berger-Viflanzoff
Patrice Calancie
Ingrid Cui
Antonia Facciponte

Design Editor

Emma Hasaralejko

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Trinity College, University of Toronto
6 Hoskin Avenue,
Toronto, ON, M5S 1H8

thetrinityreview.com
facebook.com/trinreview
trinity.review@gmail.com

From the Desks of the Editors

Dear reader,

This is my final epistle. It is also my first, so I cannot say that I left a rich literary canon in my wake. Still, I would like to imagine that the erudites of the future will one day get their clammy little hands on *The Trinity Review 131: Spring Journal* and point to this piece as the juvenile prose of one Usman Malik. But I'm getting ahead of myself, one thing that is worth celebrating in this book is the sheer representation and diversity of quality art. That ability to provide a platform to the many voices in our midst- in other words, *Democracy*.

Democracy is not something you exercise every two-to-four years in the voting booth, but something you must actively embody in day-to-day life. Whether it's a meager donation of twenty-seven dollars, or involving yourself in some aspect of your community (like a literary journal perhaps?), pursuing (and more alarmingly, preserving) democracy can be instantiated by even the smallest of actions. Perhaps, if we nurtured and consumed art more democratically, the idea of "President Donald J. Trump" would be a bad joke best left in 2016. Perhaps, we would not bear witness to gross attacks on the institution of education and a deliberate disarmament of scholarship. Perhaps I'm a flake, a fool and hopelessly idealistic for even suggesting this.

Whatever the truth dear reader, I hope you enjoy this uncertain (but ultimately sincere) attempt to pursue art democratically. Maybe this journal will amount to nothing more than a drop in the ocean, "Yet what is any ocean, but a multitude of drops?" (David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*).

- Usman Malik

At a time when we have only 12 more years to prevent a climate change catastrophe, we need artists more than ever. We do not need them in the same way as we need scientists and smart politicians, but still, we need them in as necessary a manner. Because, it seems absurd to force ourselves to stop thinking about how we are to live, every moment we do survive. This Spring edition is an answer to life from a survival that inches closer to life. It is not a reasonable answer. It is a most reasonable answer.

- Grace Ma

Editing a publication that's almost one-and-a-half centuries old is a very daunting experience. In addition to the regular tasks of being an editor (selection, composition, distribution), you also have to deal with the weight of previous editions and editors whose work overwhelms your own and creates crushing doubts in your mind. "Is this selection good enough?" "Is this design good enough?" "Is this 131st volume of *The Trinity Review* as good as those that came before it?"

Fortunately, I never experienced any of those doubts because my literary taste and editing capacities are perfect and my presence on the executive of *The Trinity Review* is, like Blücher arriving at Waterloo, a god-send. I didn't have to think about my predecessors in this position because I knew that I was smarter and more creative than all of them. My experience as an editor of this journal has been triumphant and I would like to apologize in advance to those later editors who will have to live under my immense shadow, searching for light through the branches.

In all seriousness, the experience of being a part of *The Trinity Review* has been an immense honour. It has been a personal privilege to work hard at putting together both the shorter winter journal and the longer spring edition, currently in your hands. My co-editors, Grace and Usman, as well as our associate editors have all done incredible work in assembling this 131st volume of our journal. This has been a trying and challenging experience but also one that was rewarding and enjoyable.

Choosing which submissions to publish was difficult given the quality of the work that we received, but ultimately what we have collected here is the best of the best from a group of artists that span generations and geography but are united in their literary and creative talent. Reader, please, enjoy.

- Duncan Morrison

Contents

1	Sean Sokolov	49	Juliet Di Carlo
3	Toko Hosoya	50	Christopher Woods
4	Sylvie Stojanovski	51	Adam Zivo
5	Katrina Agbayani	52	Jade Wallace
6	Christine H. Tran	54	Kenneth Pobo
8	George Elliott Clarke	55	Rebecca Gismondi
13	Michelle Su	56	Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois
15	Gerard Sarnat	57	Terry Tierney
16	Trevor Abes	58	Francesca Mullan-Cooper
18	Mei Ling Li	60	Bruce Meyer
19	Kate Marshall Flaherty	63	Laura Demers
22	Alessia Oliva	64	Eugenia Wong
23	Lily Wang	66	Yilin Zhu
24	Antonia Facciponte	67	Brandon Marlon
25	Andrea McFarlane	68	Joyce Zhu
26	Sadie Phillipson	71	Julia Balm
27	Fabio Sassi	72	Fred Pollack
29	Chad Norman	75	Ferida Dilmaghani
31	Mervyn Seivwright	76	Kristen Joo
32	Sadi Muktadir	78	Gursimran Datla
34	Cheryl Caesar	79	Melanie Faith
36	Giovanna Riccio	80	Shelley Rafailov
39	Alexander McKeever	81	Bill Ayres
40	Zach Da Costa	82	Mary Anna Kruch
42	Heather J. Wood	84	Ben Nardolilli
43	Vivian Tran	85	Meena Chopra
44	Christian Webster	86	Vanessa Marshall
48	Alex Scovino	88	Denny Reynolds
		89	Nazanin Zarepour
		90	Erika Dickinson

92	Harrison Wade
94	Robert Beveridge
95	Calla Soderholm
96	Grace Qian
97	Fernando Casanova Ochoa
98	Erika Verhagen
100	Michelle Speyer
101	Niya Gao



False Spring

Sean Sokolov

it's all doorways and windows.
dust blows down rue Saint-Urbain.

time slows down until it might as well have stopped
in the year 1491.

bicycles stir from rusted sleep,
the cars are waking outside;

someone is making coffee in the kitchen.

millions hold their breath.

still, there is tenderness in not doing.

#14: season at height (the end of my career)

Sean Sokolov

The country is unfrozen leaves and the brown fields stretching on;
the sky from here has all qualities of breaking glass.

I feel lovely in levity; I like the way I lack, in my blue shirts
at the writing desk, my blue shirts and my lidless eyes.

I live the child life of the axolotl. I meet the eyes of city birds, throw down
change, join them on the grassy snow, bodies flecked in gold.

Other days, bone-pale, the sea rolls in,
salt spray faint on glass and steel skin, washes out again.

History is not even underfoot. By tomorrow the night rain will have
made the weeds between road and sidewalk green.

The sea turns over; a life is devoted to blank verse, while another
studies banking (another theology)



Goblin Passing by Toko Hosoya



Lysali by Sylvie Stojanovski

Aphelion

Katrina Agbayani

the black theatre polished like a leather shoe
is slick and open for business.
everything shines to reflect;
everything too smooth to touch
without leaving something behind.

there is no fun in this performance
but it's somewhere to put the evenings.
you hold your own hand
in your fist like a dead bird.

and it's not enough, but it's what you deserve,
two different things
you never could reconcile.
instead, you are used to grief
as an empty orbit.

now, you cannot even stand to look at
such distant adoration
under these weak-willed stage lights.
the grandiosity of love
is a second sun

and like the globe remaking itself,
you don't know how to move
yourself against such light.

Hope Labour

Christine H. Tran

Patreon Me, Captain!
I made the 2019 Ben Mulroneu longlist
for best Emerging Tax Dependent.

I'm a Self-Starting, flexible, hexable,
emotionally ambidextrous,
absolute unit,
who —To (para)quote an Adjunct Prof,
whose Gmail I lost in my peacoat —
had an “interesting” senior thesis!

Crowdfund my super-PAC!
or just Buy me a Ko-Fi, where
a follower once sent me \$12 USD for *Far Cry* fanfic.
Who says pay doesn't crime?

Until we can GoFundMe a golden fishnet
wide enough to sublet everybody
from St John's to Saigon,
we survive as Dr. Manhattan from *Watchmen*

unfixed in time;
junk out & private compass popped to a place
where love and leisure and labour and love
co-exist, warmly nested
and moist,
atop a Venmo un-deferred

Don't-Pick-Me-Up Lines

Christine H. Tran

is She awkward or just racist?
such virtues do, im told, do rideshare

or does she just ma'am handle everyone?
was my neckline that low for my height?
should I get another English degree?
was I that unclear?

am i not elevating my molars?
Or is this a “front-of-shop” problem?
Do my long-vowels—like a Lisbon sister
—impale themselves on the spike of my central incisor?

Perhaps i can be diagnosed? sounds expensive
what box would i check off? Being yellow & shy?
Viet is a tonal tongue; but im told it's not sexy 2 make excuses

my S.K. report cards offer no answer
“X-ine is improving her English-speaking skills”
Does yours just say ‘oral’? Can i pls compare notes?

i showed you my privacy settings, Duolingo Owl.
please text me back

Ecclesiastes III.

George Elliott Clarke

1. To everything, there's first flourishing,
then withering;
stints of *Authority* and periods of *Abdication*;
the echo of light be shadow.
2. Once one draws breath, one must stop breathing.
There's a time to nourish and a time to perish.
Frantically, one uncorks light;
Fanatically, one unbottles liquor.
3. The lover announces *Love*, then is humiliated.
Another protests *Hatred*, then his loathing is vindicated.
Coffins empty cradles.
4. There's a time for Song and a time for Silence;
a time for statecraft and a time for witchcraft;
a time for Mozart and a time for Mao.
5. Come and boil vegetables,
and then salt em down, let em chill.
Let black fingers bloody white piano keys.
There's a time for feasts and a time for dirges.
6. There's a time for spirituals and a time for blues;
a time to stretch on a chaise longue
and a time to curl up in the electric chair.
7. One night, remove silk panties;
the next night, don widows' weeds.
Be devout in *Coitus* today;
retreat into devout *Piety* tomorrow.
8. Bring on *Poetry* that upbraids Plato
or scan the *Porn* that papers outhouses.
There's a time for *pastorela**
and a time for proselytization.

* A peasant-girl-seduction poem.

9. Unprofitable is *War* in springtime!
Nothing moves; all is stuck in muck
or flood.

10. Why do you exalt *Labour*?
Nothing lasting comes of sweat.

11. A wise man savours a clinch of wife
and a pinch of grass:
Inches of one and ounces of the other.
Tortured—wounded—by frost,
leaves go blood-red;
they die, rattling—scuffling—in wind.

12. Theologians may fret and toil
to decipher such symbols,
but a wise man savours the *Poesy*.

13. God's deeds are His Will fulfilled.
But a sinner's deeds enact a throw-away life.

14. Incompetent of *Eternity*, how can we distinguish
ephemeral *Novelty*
and/or the estranged *Past*,
from the death-spiral that's the Present?

15. Under the sun,
Justice issues from the antiseptic façades
of disgustingly filthy, surreptitious sewers.

16. *Realistically*, all of us are vermin.
Viewed spot on, we're rats, lice.

17. Dust is what we are,
i.e., what we intersect with,
(whatever our original trajectory),
at last.

18. Life sorts out our fates
as we sort through our choices.
Critters simply breathe, birth, and die.
But human souls either scale to Heaven
or plunge down to Hell.

19. Detachment from *Eternity* produces
this paramount *Good*:
That an artist savours his or her handiwork
while he or she breathes.

[Yellowknife (Northwest Territories) 10 *décembre* mmxvii]

Ecclesiastes XI.

George Elliott Clarke

1. Serving *Death*, *Sacreligious* are soldiers.
Serving *Eternity*, *Sacred* are poets.
2. *Infinity* is autonomous,
indecipherable, inhumane—
like God.
3. An angel with ragged, deteriorating wings—
with dusty, wilting feathers—
is Satan.
Still, his delivered crucifix is back-breaking.
4. As clandestine as cockroaches, *Sorrow* creeps.
5. The ungodly deem *Cannibalism* meritorious—
so long as one's catalogued what to eat,
i.e., where to "dig in."
6. Which state will ye experience ultimately:
Crucifixion or *Redemption*?
To reappear, brighter?
7. What good's a ministry of kerosene
if thou lack matches?
8. Erect Kindergartens and hospitals:
But know that murderers may intrude,
anytime, destroying many.
9. *Youth* paces steadily to a run-down state:
The middle-aged, piddling, middling *Mediocrity*.
Thus, our latter years are sessions
of *Misunderstanding*, *Taxes Miscalculated*,
ill *Health*, ill-gotten *Wealth* (stolen back),
and eyes put out (by the envious),
and seniors put out (to die).

10. *Virtue* is virtually useless—
as *Solace*.
Each life burns to ash,
but the aftermath of fire is *Memory*.

[Nouvelle-Orléans (Louisiane) 3-4 *janvier* mmxviii]



The Bees by Michelle Su



Hyalophora columbia by Michelle Su

Epistemology

Gerard Sarnat

This modern-day
caveman
with and without
glasses on
plus hearing aids
in, always
a bit vulnerable to
my predators
be each the robber
or rodent
who attacks home,
I thus ponder
are they logically
sort of normal
moral equivalents?

New Directions In Resistance Training

Trevor Abes

Merle Christie Fine, my manager, answers the phone to Agnes, a 70-year-old blind woman in a wheelchair, who orders a couple novels for her grandchildren's joint birthdays and asks that they be express-shipped to her house.

She says that, given her mobility issues, it would take her minutes to answer the phone, so would it be possible for the driver to let themselves into the building and drop the books at her door? Though such a request is no guarantee, Merle never seriously contemplates informing Agnes of this before finalizing her order. Instead, he sets it right up, even calling her back to confirm.

Three days later, Agnes gets her front door to open and sees no books. She calls Merle incredulous that her presents won't arrive on time. Her declining health makes these moments with her grandchildren all the more precious. The mind is not a thing that lasts forever. Her best days may be behind her but she isn't about to let anybody infringe on the sanctity of nana time. Her steady yell seeps Merle's energy like an egg in a microwave, but he kindly offers to pay for her order for her troubles. He also agrees to call about the parcel.

Because of the imminent threat of a Canada Post strike due to workers in rural regions demanding equal pay as those in urban centres, UPS is experiencing a larger number of orders than usual. Thus begins a one-hour on-hold-marathon that ends with the representative saying their driver had his instructions — to enter the building and leave the books at Agnes' door —but reverted to old habits. He left a note on the buzzer after nobody answered and left her parcel at the nearest authorized drop point, a convenience store three blocks away called Boysenberry Supervalue.

Merle calls Agnes back with the bad news and she is unrelenting in her indignation. She paid him for her books to be here. She is not wrong. She demands he make some calls and help her get to the convenience store before it closes. He is sorry that this is outside the bounds of his jurisdiction. She is so mad she slams the phone onto its receiver and

yells "fuck you!" instead of the other way around.

Over the next week, she gives three of Merle's customer experience representatives the similar continuous megaphone treatment, prompting him, the kind of person that'll turn someone into a people person, to muster up the resolve to tell an elderly lady to please stop calling if she dared dial their number again. She does not.

Waves

Mei Ling Li

The ocean holds me tight against my will.
It pulls until I'm swallowed whole by waves.
The tides erase the lines around the hill,
While crushing rocks and surfacing scattered, dusty graves.

Tradition, it suffocates.
No longer do we look to what awaits,
Instead we have stories which continue to dictate
Not just what we do, but who we exclude.

It's almost as if we put on a disguise,
Forging forth with distorted dreams.
Someday though we will capsize.
Someday we will break apart at the seams.

Yet, I want to see us afloat, kicking hard,
But light has begun to leave these once bright eyes,
Our remains hurled against the tides, all charred.
Tradition, must we compromise?

I hope the waves will calm and lights won't dim
That the past will remain below the water, unable to swim.

Lying Cows

Kate Marshall Flaherty

Mom and I wonder why cows lie down
as we pass, their drumlin spines mirror the hills
under the soft grey bellies of clouds.

Getting tired, we suppose, these heifers
have seen seasons of calves and milk,
have ruminated on the comings and goings

of greens to gold. They chew their sideways cud,
slant smiling, nodding,
as the grasses ripple and collies race in circles.

We wonder how the cows lie down,
their great girth from grazing and calving,
so solid on spindle legs, the heaving as they low.

And once they lie down, we see,
their matron-weight low to the ground, they will
take their ease all afternoon,

let leaves fall where they will,
let the sheep bleat as they are encircled,
even let it rain!

Our mom always said, *you know rain
is on the way when the cows lie down.*
But I have seen them stand and stoop

in sun and storm alike, no pattern in their
settling. I see now why they might be tired—
rain or sun, or something heavier.

Poem to my Son on the Occasion of Dropping out of University

Kate Marshall Flaherty

Worse things have happened.
Be quiet, listen
for what your body is telling you.
Remember the time you caught tadpoles in a skein,
how it felt to hold slimy half-fish/half-frogs
squirring in your cupped hands? You always
returned them to the pond, patient
as darting schools of minnows
split 'round your ankles
to regroup deeper in the Bay,
by small islands
where jack pines leaned into northland winds,
roots tenacious in rose quartz,
their seed-cones split only by fire.

Remember skating on the pond
you'd shoveled off and flooded first, on minus thirty
wind-chill nights, you'd skate and shoot
'til your face was red and fingers white.

Back at the sugar bush,
you chopped a cord of wood a day,
carried tin sap buckets sloshing to the fire
'til their handles split your skin.

You are no quitter.
You just let the season-songs
play through the flute of your body,
in time with the tension of breath
that now plays, now holds the ragged off-note
for an instant. It all comes out music ...

You learned the greatest lesson—
the pollywog potential of your gifts/limitations.

In the end, no one will say
what did you get in Chemistry?
Did you finish Bio. and Calc.?
What happened to your first term?
Instead, they will watch you stand sure,
having shaken off the seizures,
wading deep in brain's murky ponds,
half awake/half asleep,
dreaming of a time your habitat will fit.

Thoughts re: Iceland Poppies

Alessia Oliva

1. I wrote a poem about Iceland poppies
how they are sweetly groovy – kind oranges & sepia pinks
the thought of them suspended hip-high
between interlaced knuckles, gently;
wrote this ode on an iphone note
lost that phone
lost that ode
2. Too tired to think about the poppies again; been too tired since
lost any urge to frame Iceland poppies
in exalted syntax.
To compare them to pedestrian tulips
to admit I do love tulips, if only for their immediacy –
to plan a silly wedding in all the same hues
3. When I was in love I would write odes to Iceland poppies;
my stupid vase sits empty now.
Will buy \$7.99 tulips at the corner store while i consider poppy petals –
their gentle fabric still kind, even when I am not.

chamomile tea

Lily Wang

hidden away in anime rain
it's early afternoon. the world makes a lot of sense.
for lavender light takes the window and even
shock can soothe. I wait around for the harm.

powder white, soft on skin,
winter morning marigold night.

rain—but someone drew this.
rain—someone's desire.

it feels as if I can't get lost. can pastel be kind?
can a colour tell me where to go?
is the moon filled with bells?
will the frames slip themselves, drip and pool the time?

avalanche of petal thoughts
a touch of pink perhaps a touch of you

orange slices with olive oil and pepper

Antonia Facciponte

a testament to my confusion:
I sneered
at the slick grease shining on citrus,

wincing at
flecks thrown across the shiny
cross-sections of radiating pulp.

I shoved the plate away, withdrew
from the things they hauled here,
marginalized the unfamiliar customs.

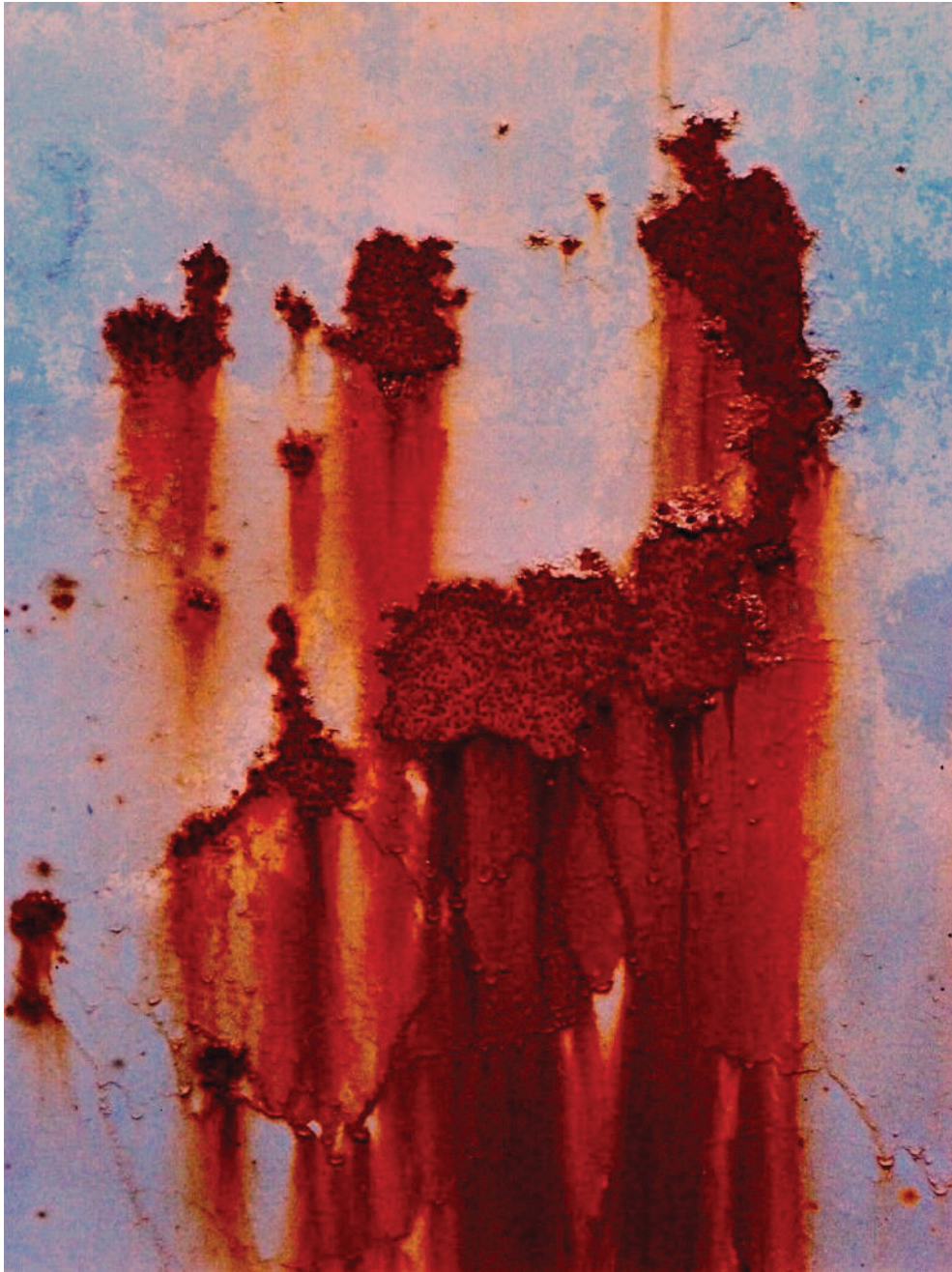
Now, a sweet perfume of heritage—
the silky marinade gushes
from hand-sliced fruit.
I lap the candied juice
like a dog



Temptation by Andrea McFarlane



8"x18" collage piece by Sadie Phillipson



Rust by Fabio Sassi

A Man Has a Question

Chad Norman

Is there
a female singer
who could
fold back
with her words,
the same as
a male singer
has opened
the folds of
unable to voice
their monologues?

foreskins

vaginas

Watching a Documentary on the Doors

Chad Norman

When the top
of a river
touches
the bottom
of a woman's
breasts,
the current is
the caress.

Foreign Objects

Mervyn Seivwright

Two-week immigrants in America—
my brother and I had Suffolk accents

formed by England's east coast—new in-law
cousins introduced us to Goulds. South

of Miami, Chocolate City called by many,
a mixture of low-income housing, public

housing, drugs in housing neighborhood new
to us. We were the neighborhood's body virus,

foreign objects attacked by black blood cells.

Three boys on bicycles unwrapped a chain
from bicycle seat-post then circled us. Our clothes,

voices, actions not appearing as anyone
they knew with the same skin—attacked us,

swinging chain to tame fresh slaves
to condition our behavior. Dimming our

hope, twisting phrase—home to be brave,
immigrants wrestling white, black blood cells.

Two Dead Dreams

Sadi Muktadir

It's important to remember what kinds of lives are out there. I'm reminded from time to time, privy to conversations with cab drivers due to my own brown skin. They see something kindred I can't yet identify, but seeing it, expunge the details of their lives once in a while.

This one cabbie started the same way they all do, looking in the rear view mirror at me curiously, sneaking a glance or two until he noticed I was catching him. He asked about my background. What I did for a living. What my parents did for a living. Whether I was born here. This was critical for some reason, like he was trying to determine allegiance. Trying to keep up the friendly conversation, I asked about him. Where he was from. How long he'd been here. I learned he was all alone. His family was still back in India. A little strange, considering he'd been in Toronto for eighteen years, according to him. How had he not managed to bring his wife and kids here? Or have no community or family here at all? All that time, and he was still all alone.

But you've seen them. On subways, in bars. Those souls, no families. It's important to remember what kinds of lives are out there.

He told me he'd originally come with his brother from Gujarat. The two of them arrived together to start a new life, hoping to make enough money to be able to sponsor their young wives to eventually join them as well. They were young engineers, the brother working for the Gujarati government while the cabbie worked in the village's wood mill.

I wondered why their jobs were so disparate despite the same education. The cabbie guessed my confusion and clarified, theorizing that in Gujarat, old prejudices still held fast. In employment, they still preferred fairer skin tones, taller bodies, and Western features. The cabbie was happy for the chance at a new life in a new country, but he suspected his brother was hesitant. After they arrived, they both managed to find work as dishwashers in a large Italian restaurant. The hours were long and steady, but they were doing what was necessary. They worked equally hard. The cabbie made sure to emphasize the parity in work ethic by lifting both hands off the steering wheel and holding them palm down in the air.

Each dark, wrinkled hand was still, and perfectly level with the other to illustrate equality. The cabbie turned his head slightly to look back at me, making sure I registered this gesture.

A few months into the job one of the busboys was fired for one reason or another, and the owner, an Italian guy named Marco came into the back of the kitchen before service one night to speak to them. He needed a new busboy that night, and was wondering if they could speak English.

"Listen, it's a promotion, but I can only take one of you." He said.

They were uncomfortable throwing the other under the bus no doubt, so Marco made it easier for them.

"Okay, what about you? Take off the apron and meet me in the dining room." He was pointing a finger at the lighter-skinned brother, in a seemingly arbitrary manner.

"Excuse me sir, why him?" The cabbie had asked.

"I don't know, fuck! I gave you two a choice and you didn't say anything. If you don't like it, you can quit!" Marco left the room and the cabbie's brother assured him that all the money they were making was being sent back home anyways, so it didn't matter who got the promotion. His brother's assurances though had the opposite effect. Another favor, this time in a new land where nothing had changed. Here, where dark and light weren't supposed to matter, and a coin flip wouldn't even be allowed to decide fates where virtue was equal. So the cabbie took matters into his own hands.

That night he called the immigration office and reported his brother for having expired papers. His brother was summarily deported. Their family had their suspicions, and so, over seventeen years, quietly cut off the cabbie. Quiet discomfort grew until the cabbie was only comfortable alone. He fulfilled his duties as a husband and father only once every few years, delaying awkward visits to the old village as long as he could. Nothing was familiar there anymore. But he was comfortable with this shit life, he said. Because at least this one, was deserved.

The terrible ones

Cheryl Caesar

I. Children love us, someone said,
because we're big, scary and dead.
That is, alive only through them,
and on their terms. A controlled nightmare.
Stickers to be traded and licked into books.
Plastic figures held and made to fight.
They laugh at T Rex with his tiny hands,
thinking, The mouth is way up high.
Avoid the feet and I'll be fine.
Stegosaurus with his body Mohawk.
Brontosaurus, matching head and tail.
Pterodactyl, naked as a plucked chicken.
Sometimes he morphs into a dragon,
the long-ago blurring with the never-was.
We romp through the green jungles of the childhood mind,
munching the lush foliage. Then fade away
in the ice age of the latency period.

II. Except when we don't.
Those of us who make it through the lean years
and into puberty emerge
into a thicker jungle and brighter hues.
Someone said, Neurosis is like the Jurassic era,
its creatures big, scary and impressive,
but not very efficient. Not like that grey shrew over there.
T Rex stomps and makes the water tremble in the glass,
opens his maw and roars to the skies.
Such an attention whore. A borderline personality.
And Brontosaurus is so big and dumb. He looks depressed.
Stegosaurus, passive-aggressive. Pass by his head
and get hit with a swing of the tail.
Pterodactyl: Trichotillomania? Is that why he's bald?

Sure, we take up a lot of space and energy.
But look at our replacement, the small land mammals
of normality. Look at the tiny shrew,
so quick and warm-blooded, but not much to see, is there?

We fill the landscape of your days.
We shake the heavens with our roars.
Admit it: won't you miss us when we're gone?

On Barbie Mutilation

Giovanna Riccio

A two-faced art object and thrift-store find,
as dolls go, Barbie ranks her own class,
poses the mother of all doll questions
—to buy or not to buy.

More than a mere add-on to the doll heap,
she musters a good-girl, bad-girl riddle,
as singular name and calculated megastar,
she arrives at juvenilia's reception
as debutante empress— an open-ended
guest-of-honour; a durable rite-of-passage
flogging risky futures, rolling out
a red carpet to who knows where.

Venerated over knock-offs,
over time, the Mattel-tagged totem
loses her beau ideal lustre, wanders
into state-of-nature territory where childhood's
soulful citizens become Marquis De Sade brats
questing for the inside story, desecrating
the tacit first principle,
I still own the mould.

Who Executes

Giovanna Riccio

Between Mattel ideal and ideal purchaser
the child,
between the gift and handover
Barbie

cool plastic skin sutured to human hands

but to what end her beginning becoming

who executes her ends?

As far back as the pre-Diversity era
little mavericks were disrupting
the dictatrix doll, updating grown-up,
back-of-the box directions. Before
Barbie Fascistas gave us *types* and *shades*,
self-empowering iconoclasts reworked her assets.

One self-espousing tomboy made over
that flinty figure by hack-sawing her
in-your-face breasts; the “boobectomy”
freed things up— Barbie could flat-out
let loose, own G.I. Joe's shirt.

Surrounded by frosty Barbies,
African-American girls puzzled whether
exclusive pulchritude aped the master race;
in a jiffy, magic-markers rallied *Black is beautiful*
to Ebony-over hoary error so whitewashed
(un) truths showed vitiligo streaks, springing
blackened Barbie to run on Washington.

A budding doctor craving oxford-wearing
gravitas, fixed dolly's feet to stove,
took down the enforced stiletto, close-cropped
the blast of hair, and in rousing
revision, detailed owlish horn-rims
schooling vacant baby-blues.

A yearning to bend Barbie to Ken
brought on brutal rupture: sidewalk thumps
levelled breast to chest,
wax (flesh-tinted) smartly plugged gaping
craters, girded up the hourglass waist.
Ankles gaily snapped, base pedestals
reformed, fit for sensible shoes.

Then snip, snip, snip curls
acetone scrub the lady-face to mug
an androgynous air; let Ken's baggy pants
temper too-shapely legs.
Where did Barbie go?

And who's to say?
for a diverse two can cross either way,
a campy wig from Mattel's hair-play,
a wispy negligée (pink, *s'il vous plait*)
and marbles superglued on pecs transport
Ken to her facsimile.

The icon's ruin runs amok from
ludic vice, boredom-sprung—
(boredom births all evil, says Kierkegaard).

Depraved brothers Oster-blend Barbie
or slam her head in a drawer, G I Joe
murders his girl, she's married off to a dinosaur.

Barbie gallows and hearse-led funerals,
twenty guillotined heads
unearthed beneath the forest floor.

When spanked bottoms burn, firecrackers blast
the queen to kingdom-come— limbs torn,
temper-tossed— plastic reduced to dust.*

* Talking bobble-heads at Mattel did not respond to requests for interviews about these abuses

Malignant

Alexander McKeever

Acrid copper-tongue sores;
two more breaths and five new scars and
I vomit the rot

Predisposed to swallow my abscess;
inhale unhealed lust, congealed bile
The ferrous interior is now rust

Take a knife to the cock
There is release in the girth of a blade
and redemption in its bite

I used to shit on Bukowski

Zach Da Costa

I used to shit on Bukowski,

So to speak.

Because he was boring and repetitive and told the same old stories again and again about whores and horses and how tough he used to be and how drunk he still was.

I read him and I thought, only one in ten of these poems should have been published, or even submitted for publishing.

The rest are mediocre at best.

I thought this for some years while appreciating his better poems, his higher moments and his better novels (Women, Ham on Rye) all the while.

Then one day, one couple of lonely dreary Tom Waits and Bukowski days and sad sad jerk off kind of nights, I read Love is a Dog from Hell (He always did have good titles) and my opinion changed.

I mean, he still had good poems and bad poems, the beautiful and the boring, the introspective and the mundane,

but suddenly I realized that to take the good and lively and loving and witty, without the lame and stumbling and pseudo-tragic and self-aggrandizing would be false.

It would be fake and slander and robbery and deceit.

None of us are good, witty, funny, insightful and sightly all the time.

We all have our moments or days or weeks or years of ache and pain and humiliation, sorrow, repetition, toil, and defeat.

And that was what old Buk wanted to give us. He gave us man at his worst and man at his best, not the best that mankind as a whole could be but the best that he, himself had, his best.

He gave us the whole man, with all his repetitive, boring, arrogant and mediocre days included.

I like Bukowski when he's gentle and sentimental because it's a different side to the ogre of L.A.

I like Kerouac when he's violent and chauvanistic because it's a different side to the saintly shy boy from Lowell and lost America.

I want the highs and the lows, the good and the bad, the brilliant and the bullshit.

I want the whole man, man as he is, whether he wants to be or not. So hail dead ugly Bukowski.

Hail the drunks and the whores and the horses and the good poems and the bad poems.

Hail dead ugly Bukowski.

Hail the whole, shitstained man.

Platinum Blonde

Heather J. Wood

(Found poem derived from quotes attributed to Marilyn Monroe)

I like to feel blonde all over.
If you can make a girl laugh,
she can conquer the world.
I defy madness and
gravity is genius

All of us are twinkles,
deserving to star.
I'm not the devil, just a
small girl with the right shoes.



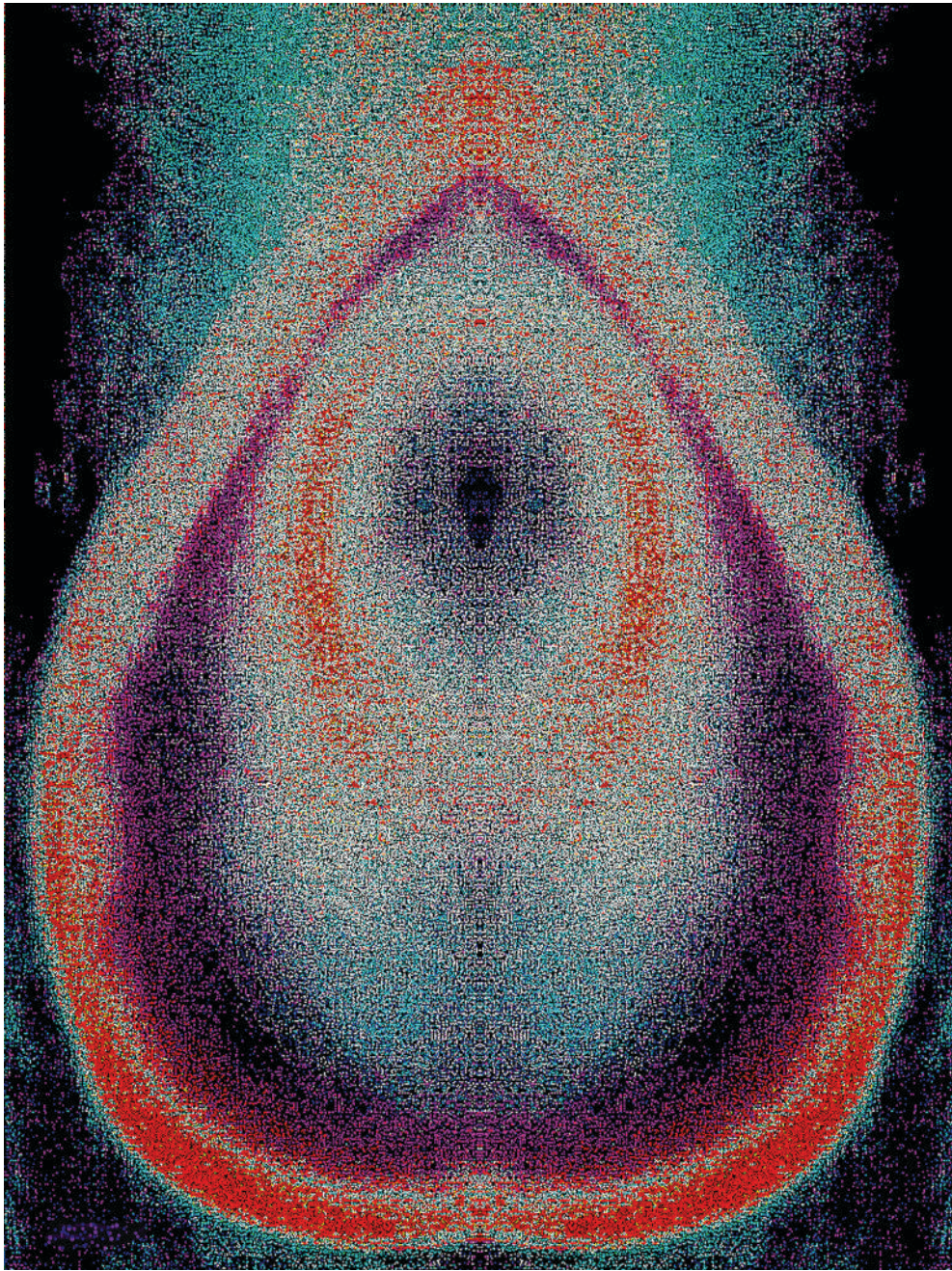
Looking over the Shoulder by Vivian Tran



Christian Webster



Christian Webster



The Intervention by Alex Scovino



Juliet Di Carlo



ecstasy in the dark

Adam Zivo

saturday night limbs flail all cut up in rays of blue and red. muscles shed weeks of lust accumulated in the winter. the dancer-priests are speaking in tongues, lost in the bone-crushing hypnosis of a rhythm that excavates souls and fills them with kisses. skin pressed against skin against skin, in the roulette of intimacy the furtive glances betray incompleteness, the anxiety of doing it wrong — disembodied above the automata, condemned to only spectate. dancing ecstasy pulls them back into their skin, stretching them into warped musical notes all elongated and serpentine. drink the matted, sweaty hair. a hand touches yours, pinkies locked, a promise made to no one in particular before the blind darkness hurls again — hurls, again, into the wooden floor and beer-varnish. when everything is obliterated there is a moment when god is possible again. god is the confetti as it falls from the ceiling, momentary and doomed. you cry with joy and a janitor sweeps you into a bin.

Institutional by Christopher Woods

Horn & Glass

Jade Wallace

I: Horn

There are the horn-blowers,
overseeing ship fleets, allowing
drownings. They guild the nadirs of
marble swimming pools with coins.
True money is a function of plastic,
melting to antic caricatures in the
cast iron of their predilections.
As they prod the currents of our
currency, law is their amber light.
Circumscribed, they circumnavigate.
They delay, divert, and others respire
again and soften. Still they will
always get whatever they want
and they will die for it less often.

II: Glass

There are the glassblowers,
fluffing unremarkable sand until
it's bigger than bubble gum dreams.
Quartz is liquid in the crucible,
viscous and disordered in the glory hole,
guided to the brink of white hot
and brought back in the annealer.
Mastering inflation, marvering
elastic skin, they turn an
ostrich hideaway to a window.
They lose their cheeks for chalices,
fingers for a perfume bottle or cameo.
Death unbracketed is a better kismet
than glimpsed desire lips never know.

Stage Left

Jade Wallace

Here I am, stub of your free
ticket in my hand, loving you
with only applause.
There you are, bending the stage
to your centre, improvising another
gorgeous monologue for
your melancholy.

Here is the exit door that
I slip through, while the
crowd collects their coats.
There is the backstage table,
where flowers wait for you
without a card.

My Sister Agatha Predicts a Storm

Kenneth Pobo

As kids, she let me watch a spider
crawl across her face. I wanted
to scream, but even then
I thought of my life as a garage,
door shut.

Agatha kept looking for bridges
over angry rivers, bridges
that dreams built. Now she lives
alone in a cramped house
in Micah, casts spells on Wal-Mart.
On a green porch swing she says
in full sun that hail will bust
roofs this afternoon.

Weather.com disagrees, but can't
explain joint-achy rain
running down silos and puddling up
by cow patties, a spidery sky
building a web of lightning.

sperlonga, naples

Rebecca Gismondi

based on the painting "Les baigneuses" by Pablo Picasso

you almost drowned that day, as we drank

in the sun by the coast. I mistook your flailing

arms for ones of praise, for the ocean smelt like safety.
I was selfishly tempting the rays to coat

me with a new skin, while she braided her salted hair and
you inhaled mouthfuls of souls lost at sea. When rescued,
all you said was:

"What a day." And yes, the sand absorbed with ease between our toes
and the waves' tantrum ended –
but it was *the* day. We became women who had to put on sunscreen

and eat three full meals and
lie in bed for a day after heartbreak.
My skin was coated with rules and reminders
and her hair was braided with questions
and your lungs inhaled fear.
We were different.

Corpse Plant

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

The people of Denver lined up by the thousands to see the Corpse Plant. It allegedly had the largest flower in the world. It only bloomed every fifteen years. It smelled like shit. People waited for hours to get a whiff of it. Only the veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars stayed away. They'd already smelled plenty of death.

I took my one-year-old granddaughter. She was very well-behaved. She waited like a little adult to catch the whiff of death.

Yom Kippur was coming. Jews were confessing their sins, even sins they had never themselves committed. They were asking G. to write them down in the *Book of Life* for another year. Many of them were cheating on the required fasting. They didn't think G would notice. They flied by the Corpse Plant just like anyone else who was not a member of the Chosen People.

Everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, people who were purple, those who were green, wrinkled their noses at the smell. I stood by the ventilator to get a fuller whiff. No one admitted to this, but everyone believed that by smelling the Corpse Plant, they were immunizing themselves against Death.

My one-year-old granddaughter found other one-year-olds to play with. They joined hands, even the ones who could not yet walk, skipped around in a circle, and sang *Ring around the rosie, pockets full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down.*

The Corpse Plant clumsily slapped its plant hands together in applause. All the other plants were envious that the Corpse Plant could do this, and they couldn't. The Corpse Plant was like a junior high gymnast, trying to clamp down on his own egotism. He knew that his classmates would always hate him for his advanced and precocious skills, and for his gymnastic muscles. He could see it in their eyes, even at their fiftieth reunion.

Bluegill

Terry Tierney

Dead in the field,
fish eyes stare at noon sun
through clouded lenses. Four bluegill
scattered around a rough wicker creel,
yellow reeds matching the dried grass,
golden rod, thistle and milkweed stems
with tufts of seeds hanging like lint.
Blood trails along one gill, one tail curls
in mid flip. My friend whispers, *Indians*,
hardly audible above the traffic.
Maybe they will return.

But we know the truth, searching for signs,
broken stalks from moccasin steps
or pony hooves. Ojibwe leave no trails,
pass in the silence of night, crossing our dreams
from one turtle island of refuge to another,
Montreal, Niagara Falls,
Detroit harbor, across Lake Superior
to St. Louis River, Great Plains,
ever westward. We haunt their spirit dreams,
push them ahead like a cool breeze
announcing a storm, weather they try to escape.

They know our people by the land,
the changes they see, bluegill
thrown from the window of a passing car
left to rot in roadside weeds.

Trin

Francesca Mullan-Cooper

The Trin trinned to the Trin, trinning trinilly.

But that Trin was not trinning, it had already trinned.

The Trin was trinned, and trinned away trinilly.

And that Trin—it still trins,

Trinning trinilly.

Tadpoles

Bruce Meyer

At first, they were commas
punctuating the muddy depths,

before morphing into hurried dashes
and stilling to periods among reeds.

My grandfather said ancient pens
were made from cuttings by the shore,

and to prove his point opened his pocket knife
to trim one off below its bloom,

then dipping the point among dots of jotted life
to write the word *tadpole* on a sunburnt stone

as we watched it vanish, or possibly leap,
into a page of summer sunlight.

Lady Slippers

Bruce Meyer

I thought I knew all the answers I wanted:
a valley is a metaphor for death
or at least a place of shadows;

the long climb down; a slivery handrail;
a slippery slope; an annoying woodpecker
working for beetles in Morse code.

So, why did I stop and kill some time,
half a mile on a muddy trail
in a forest thick with rain and mosquitoes,

to stand in a typical Ontario ravine
and find alive with Lady Slippers?
Today, as I was about to board

an uptown subway on Line Number One,
I froze on the platform
and watched three trains

empty and fill and leave as faces
crowded tight in silver cars,
and studied the way people's eyes

moved as if they wanted to see
something unexpected in their lives,
a valley carpeted with pink wild orchids,

a sea of raised heads, open mouths,
breathing life in their time of life
and seizing a surge of passing perfection.

Everything knows wonder somehow,
and I wished I had the power of magic
to plant the tracks in infinite flowers,

each one ready, if not thirsting,
to drink a mouthful of falling sky
and raise their arms like leaves on stalks,

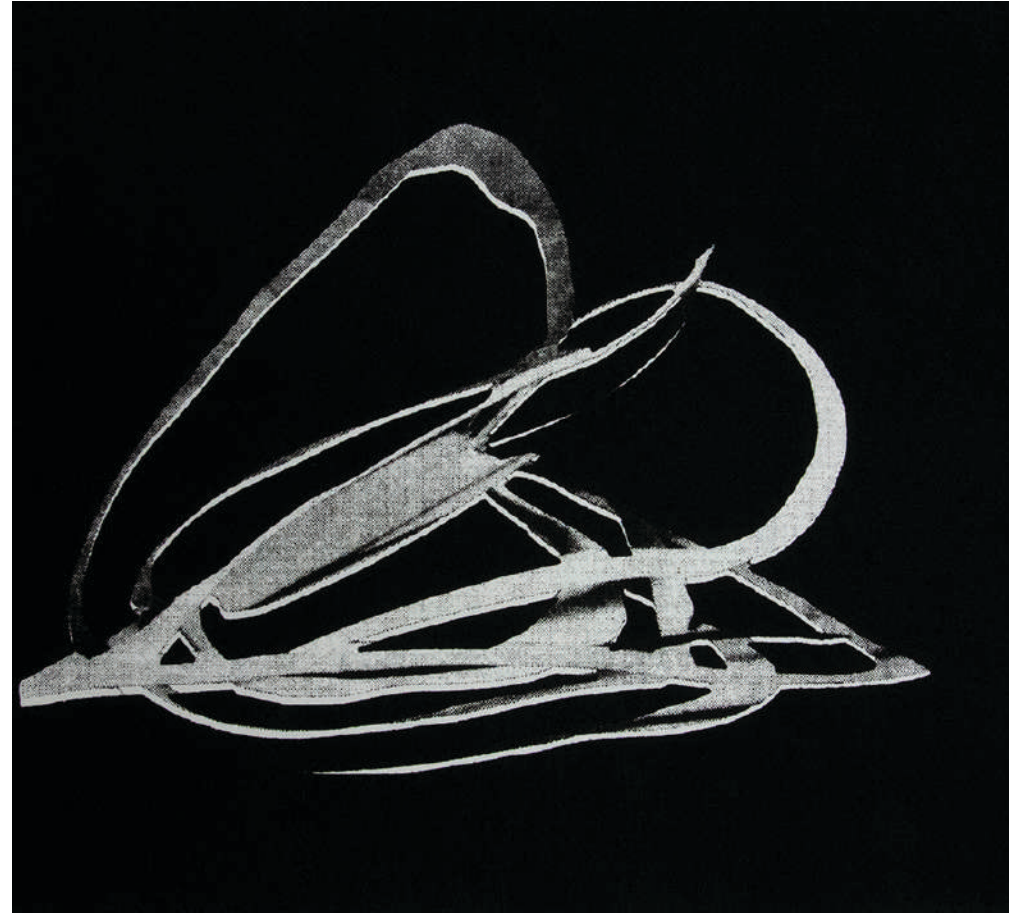
acknowledging how delicate
and infinite they are, how each one
is like the other, yet up close

no two are alike.
Let no one walk with irreverence
upon these brief yet everlasting works,

for I have found my people in all people,
and desire to know each one, each life,
and how they endure and feed the future,

how they populate the shadowed places
where a traveler might not stop to look
if he if he wasn't curious to find an answer

and missed among the darkest space
the question called life, trapped in time,
that makes the most of what it asks.





Yilin Zhu

House Uncommon

Brandon Marlon

Mr. Speaker, how august you look in your gown.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by stating for the record that the member opposite is doubtless well-intentioned, and his motion meritorious. With certain amendments, we on this side of the aisle would gladly support the honorable member, and we look forward to cooperating towards that end, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the course of listening attentively to the residents of my riding, I have come to realize how generous and compassionate are our fellow citizens of this fortunate nation, and how willing to share its blessings with others, and that we in this house would be remiss if we represented them herein with anything less than the utmost respect and civility befitting this chamber. As elected members we differ on principles and policies, but our arguments must ever be solely for the sake of improving the lives of the people we serve.

In closing, may I draw attention to the fact that with us today in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, is a very fine lady to whom I would be most grateful and indebted if only she would grace me with her presence and brighten my days for the remainder of my life.

We have been courting each other for seven months, during which time she has succumbed to my charms and I too have become smitten, in no small part due to the sweetness of her nature, and of her crème brûlée, very nearly as good as my mother's, which qualification I hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, because my mother sits beside her.

I hear a gasp and believe I see a nod, which I construe as an acceptance, and with that development I gladly yield the floor, Mr. Speaker.

Report: Hypothesizing Life History

Joyce Zhu

Be not afraid, she said. In a dream she imagined that humans were no longer bound to their finite flesh. Minds could escape and intertwine, and the warmth of a proximate mind was indescribably euphoric.

The dream began at a bus station. She and an unnamed acquaintance were awaiting departure to an unnamed campsite. Upon arrival, they were ushered into groups, not unlike the scatterplot, and he and she were by chance brought to meet. They stood in a circle in the courtyard of a late gothic building. In the foreground sounded the kind of music she disliked. Following this she was escorted into a room with padded walls and dim light. There he and she were united at a table, instructed to understand each other without speaking.

*

She needed to buy toilet paper for her dorm; he offered to come with her. Judging by tilt of the hallway, she decided she would save it. Some days later in a inebriated state he had enquired about her name. She had responded, “I am Y.”; “so am I,” he said. They tackled the topic with astute ferocity – in G.’s case, she had suspected something along those lines at their examination, where she had last seen him. No mention of Y. whatsoever, and the ground was firm then, on the King’s circle, following a night of unprecedented winds, G. said she was digging her toe into the ground in show of discomfort.

While they stood beneath the clearing, there was no *saisi*. The sun overhead bore into their soon sweat-soaked backs, as they made way around the quadrant of late gothic architecture. It was while passing one of them that Y. admitted to faking a sore throat in Paris in order to pass off as a native speaker. She said that the experience was most authentic when they believed you to be among them. And he, walking in her step with equal strides, listened to every one of these vignettes, in spite of their irrelevance. She showed him the photo a government worker had taken of her. He said that she looked like a substance abuser. No, she said to him. I got this when I drove onto someone’s lawn. Substances were a teetotaler’s ane. But he was righteous too, in a different sense. Been drinking since he

became of age and baked in fumes odd times here and there, but if on the operating table lay any suffering flesh-form, this netherside could be funneled in an instant. He would sprout little winged-heels and use them to “heave the heavens.” Y. said, You’ve the wrong God. If it were up to me, I would bellow: begone! with these helices; I beckon you lyric and song. But, Y. said, as I lay in the reclining chair, awaiting treatment for contaminated pulp – I thought that I might like life better when it is out of focus.

*

They trekked towards the square, under one umbrella which he deigned to share. Snaking foule, they located the breaks and squirmed into the next of them. These were his segments of expertise. Nothing could feel better than this, Y. thought as he looked back to confirm her presence. Just making sure, he said. Wondering what’s on the other side of this rink – only there was nothing.

The rain fell. They had still an hour or two before the fireworks began. It’s ironic, Y. said, that I seem a harbinger of atrocious weather. But you like it, he said. Trite of you. What’s trite is that tree, warm-toned circlets (it’s all cool tone nowadays), third floor level stature, that’s the poetry section of the public library it has balanced on its apex. They had migrated to a densely packed albeit more manageable environment. Next to the trash can, where they were the least obtrusive, Y. said, something else trite I must concede. She took a theatrical sip. Once I would have liked to publish. However it occurred to me that I had not lived enough. He said, that’s a tough discouragement. Life is cumulative, then you die.

*

Right as Y. was about to leave – it was around midnight, the piñata broke. He pocketed the type of candy he liked. She took the train home. Forty minutes later, she stood at her friend’s door at the end of the hall. Y. would have liked to join in on her friend’s nightly voyeuristic practices, but the friend was already regaling a somebody named N., who obsessively fixed his hair, which stuck out in unkempt furls, and fiddled with a septum ring that if necessary he hid with a sharp inhale. In a brightly illuminated room in the hotel across from them, Y. saw a man undress, ostentatiously facing his own open window as he removed his undergarments and embraced the already naked woman. It was grotesque because the two of them were middle aged, and the man was balding. This detail N. pointed

out. Y. could not see beyond the silhouetted figures and their reptilian movements of consort. Meanwhile, N. gesticulated in drug-induced fervor. He insisted that the soft-spoken persona is the one on which depended the strata of their promiscuous generation. I abhor relationships; he said, small businesses are a social construct, which was why he was a kleptomaniac by choice. Sometimes, I like to withdraw from socialite circles and launch paint from my bed. The man with the symmetrical face, he said, has become obsessed with me. He groped Y.'s friend cautiously and without any lecherous intent. Y. decided that she would not find here the respite that she had been looking for.

A vertiginous room. What's your take on my phenomenon? N. glared at her and wiped his face with his palms – What are you *talking* about? If the tendrils extending from his person are severed from his person, what becomes of them? Do they leech life; do they sag. N. ignored her exclamations and drew up a draft of a poem he had composed the day before. He did read it to her; it read reminiscent of Zagajewski. It was Zagajewski. N. said, I am the placeholder for someone else's life history, I live in its anamnesis. He read, *Before us, life's path, and instants of astronomy.*

*

Under the sun's glare, cement buildings transmogrified into organic matter, appearing before them as if writhing in puerile delight. The crowd did not thin, and at the next checkpoint he slowed his pace, and she joined another conversation altogether. A sudden downpour followed their guided tour. They were scheduled to return for an afterparty – to accommodate the weather, several of its organisers were moving a bouncy castle into the hall. Y. picked out his head of hair among the rest and followed it out the door; he seemed in a hurry. She too took her leave, down the illiterate path to her dormitory, past the overflowing garbage bins flanking the sidewalk abreast with the stench and might of infantry.

Fog

Julia Balm

for even when
entropy buries our
capacity to see the world,
as it is,
reality will exist
between our teeth

I don't buy candles to light them

Julia Balm

If God is your coping mechanism

then you must be a chameleon
parading rainbows
amidst nuclear conflict

Gorbachev certainly didn't tear down the wall
for you to light a \$48.00 candle tonight

Let's leave your God out of this
because you surely don't drink hot water with lemon
for the taste

"Normay"

Fred Pollack

Trump tweet, 1/9/18, inviting more immigrants from that country.

Although like me they escaped in time,
my countrymen in the class
seem fragile. The Africans, in contrast,
who have endured the unspeakable,
are uniformly pleasant, mannerly.
They lend a variety of lilts
to the guarded umlauts
and murky diphthongs we all mangle
but which my compatriots growl.
Language, of course, is only part
of "acculturation." Our teacher makes this clear
at every session, standing as if flying
or on the prow of a boat,
her long hair, although actually neatly bound,
somehow appearing windborne.
History. Customs. The latter
seem centuries unrelated
to the food trucks by our barracks.
Their sixth or seventh queen,
who cured her depression by executing
"crueler" nobles –
also irrelevant. Or was she?
Our teacher never seems to sleep.
Her latest project is to get to know
us personally. When my turn comes, she wears
a light scent, and a skirt beneath
her parka. We walk on uniformly
plowed and salted sidewalks past
dark warehouses for
the People's Board of something-or-other.
We attend a party in a housing project.
(The whole country is housing projects.)
It's mostly gender-fluid. This
is a test, I think; this will be on the test.
They ask about me. I can't tell

if they want stoicism
or tears, so I describe my escape
simply. Then I walk my teacher home.
She stands before me, archetypal,
cheeks flushed in the brilliant streetlight,
impassive. With a slight bow,
I shake her hand and leave. So I guess I belong.



Ferida Dilmaghani





Feast

Melanie Faith

In the space between a green bruise
And a lucid dream, all milk-heavy stars

I was born. Snow-swept steppes,
Hollow legs. What a way to arrive

In earliest January,

She didn't read my irony as irony.
Yes, yes she said, a way to crack open

The year like a muskmelon
Burying our faces full, up to the rind.

Gursimran Datla

longing for a saturated world

Shelley Rafailov

one morning
i skip the routine mind-washing
running down glossy hallways
past sanitized bedrooms
where TVs blare static
(white noise and indoctrination)
and patients sit immobile
glassy-eyed and dust-free

this life, this *place*
like an overexposed photo
i tire of sterile surfaces
and acetone for breakfast

without warning
i burst into the lab
where drugs are arranged
in a binary of colours
and in the frenzy of chaos
before they catch me
i grab a red pill
and swallow it dry

School

Bill Ayres

The last time I was in here my knees would fit under those desks.
Now I crouch to write along the top edge of the blackboard,
Pinching this nub until my knuckle whitens.

The knowledge gained here served me well
But my learning—like my body—is out of proportion.
I've stopped expecting my pinkie finger will grow to match the others.
I'm done with waiting
For my lungs to expand down to the base of my ribs.
There's no hope my jaw will push forward
So my tongue can lie down comfortably.
Still, there's no reason for my education to remain stunted.

To learn something new I am letting go
Of something else, giving a voice to my doubts,
Searching for questions when none—at first—come to mind.

Shoulders hunched, I stare into the black.
My arms are tired from waving the eraser.
My eyes ache from watching the words rubbed gray,
Disappearing.

Somewhere there's a stick of chalk long as my finger,
Maybe even a box of them,
But the truth is here, on the tip of this nub,
Where it scratches the surface.

Point Reyes

Mary Anna Kruch

Fog blankets tufted meadows
and the steep trail uphill;
I have returned to view
the underlying ribbons
of lavender and gold at magic hour
on Point Reyes Hill.
I climb up through faint mists
that garland 'round the base
and cover the cattle
that roam and graze.

My spirits lift as I wander
from the well-worn path.
At this time in this place
I dismiss the daily dirt
that grips news cycles
in trade for private peace.

I stroll among meadow
and damp field stone,
follow a narrow creek.
Halfway up the knoll, I turn, see
wood fence posts grow smaller,
soldiers enveloped in sunset.

Behind the padlocked gate
cattle slowly head home;
the road flows toward the horizon
adorned in purple sky,
gently darkens, radiates calm.

Near the peak, I picture
gulls that skim waves below.
I rest on a rock, tip my head back,
and for a few precious minutes
bathe in skies that open
to reveal Ursa Major's glow.

Spring wind gently guides me
back down the trail
under an April crescent moon.

With Remarkable Results

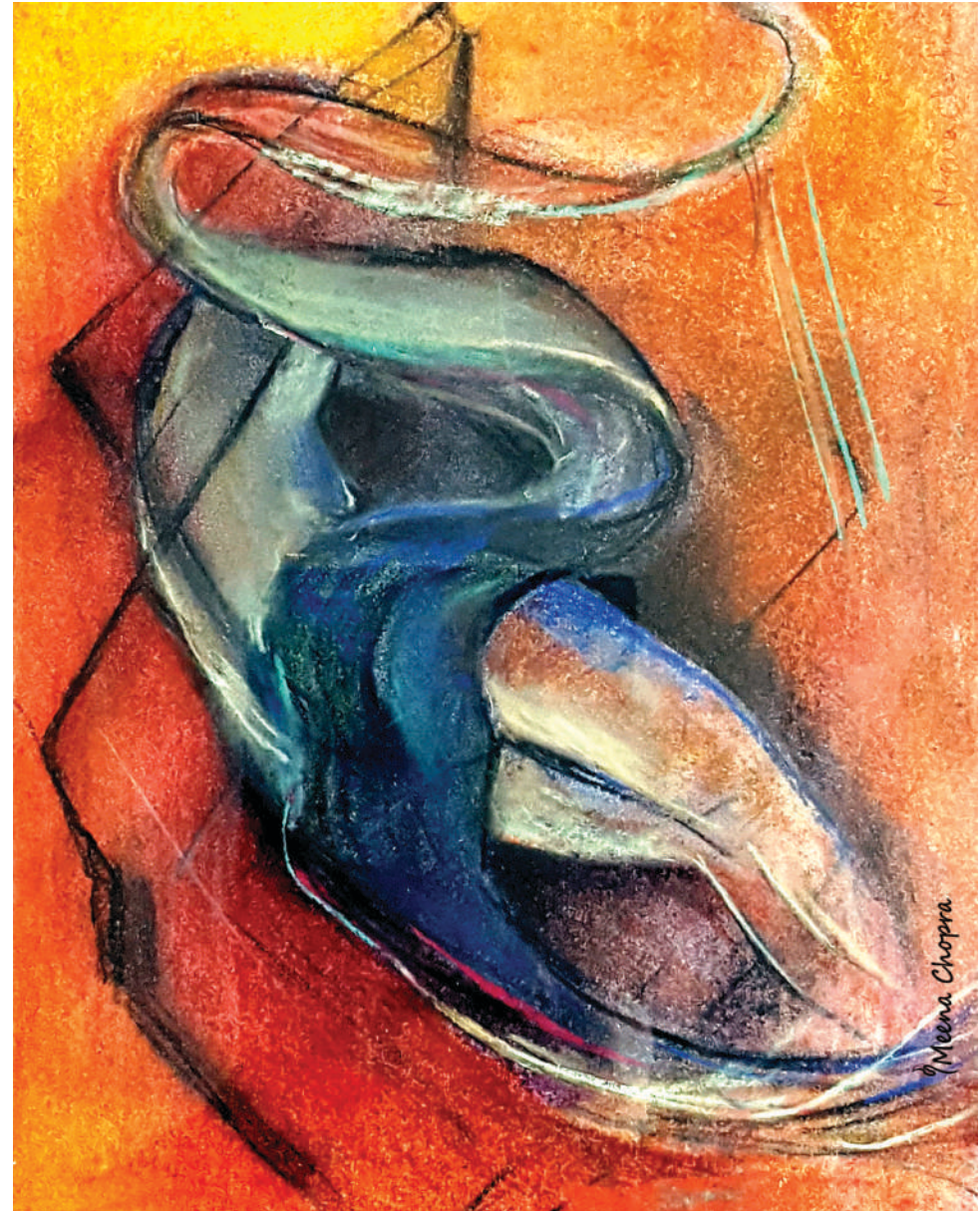
Ben Nardolilli

“An Interview with the Devil” allows the reader to imagine the possibility of competing at the highest level. A spiritual booster shot for readers who have kept their faith on the back burner. The story is set in 1902, and it teaches that some things never change. Super Bowls, NBA Championships and baseball World Series seem to be just distant, unattainable dreams for most.

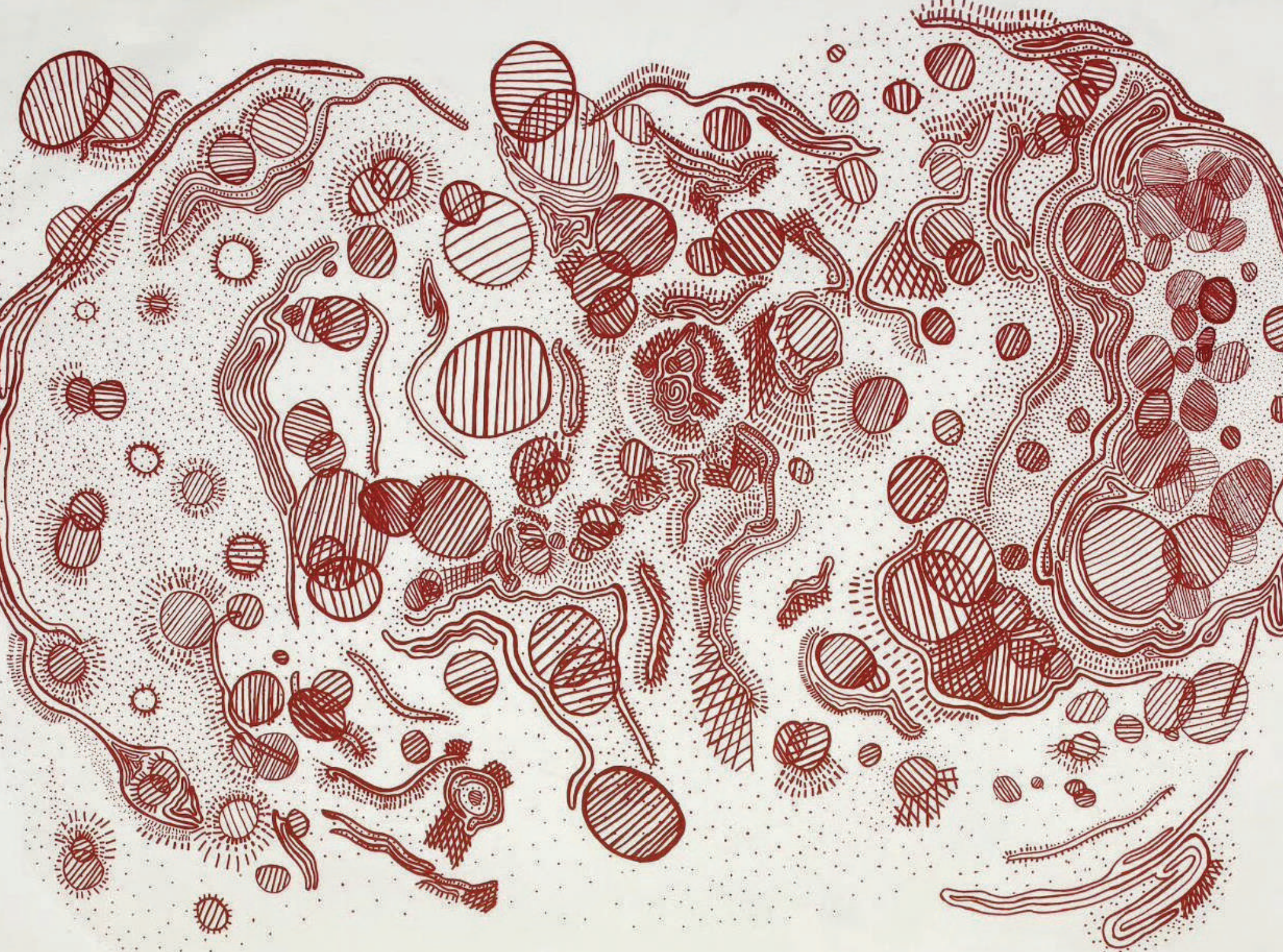
This saga is set in the context of a turbulent era, under inconvenient assault from continual nepotism and cronyism by some elements of management. Many young boys hope to play while young women face fear and uncertainty when trying to determine their life paths. Current events might signify the emergence of an evolving societal consciousness related to human rights.

Yet it's clear: moral decline has captivated audiences for generations. Now God has decided he is tired of watching people fail to live up to their potential. Today, this successful entrepreneur is recognized as one of our nation's most effective speaker. “I believe this book provides,” he says. “Do as I tell you and not what I do.”

His books are stories about the vicissitudes of living. This book is not about the present but of past practices. Some may criticize what the author has written but he would ask why? We're still dealing with today in one way or another. The humor throughout the story makes the medicine go down easier and it might just improve your golf game.



Submerged by Meena Chopra





Mirror by Denny Reynolds

Whoso List to Hunt

Nazanin Zarepour

Whoso list to hunt,
I am mere hind to the beast that roams,
I am mere ghost for Caesar's embrace,
And woman—I am not.

It is not I that tires you so,
For yours, I am not.
It is in your decadence, not pursuit,
That you may drown.

He who runs for that which flees,
Does not run at all.
For one cannot run for licentious consumption,
Nor can one be man.

"Noli Me tángere," woman cries.
But it is hind that is heard,
From beastly ears.

Street Side Sweepstakes

Erika Dickinson

Once I saw framed headshot of Leonardo DiCaprio lying in someone's trash. And it was young Leo too. Titanic Leo. Blond fringed Leo. The best kind of Leo.

I wanted to take it but I would've had to hop over someone's fence to get it and I didn't want to have that conversation.

"What are you doing in my yard?"

"Uh...nothing"

"Looks like you've got my framed Leo in your hands"

"Well it appears so...but you're throwing it away?"

"Yea...I've got ten other identical ones in my basement and I'm working on decluttering. Trying to become a minimalist. Can't seem to kick Leo".

So I left him there. And sometimes I think about where he ended up. It reminds me of Toy Story 3. I see Leo's face among the flaming scathes of trash and I think about how Woody's not there to hold his hand. No alien ex machina to save him.

I sweep the streets for stuff that has a story. I can tell others to make myself seem more interesting. I'm a carefully curated pile of discarded junk. And I'm greedy. I have my face down looking for other's trash to turn into myself.

One time I found a whole stack of *New Yorker's* and they were soggy and crumpled but it was 11pm on a Thursday and I was on my way back from buying a pint of Ben & Jerry's to eat by myself. I spent \$7 on ice cream. I got six week subscription to the *New Yorker* for free.

Once I even found a dead squirrel. Against my better judgment, I didn't add it to my collection (however I did take a photo of it).

I found a record in a snow bank once. *Parsley, Sage Rosemary & Thyme*. I gifted it to my friend. He said I was very thoughtful but seemed upset that I came bearing gifts.

"One man's trash is another man's treasure".

What happens when the other man reads *The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up?*

"I thank you for staring at me from across the room while I slept and giving me a fun quirky story to tell my friends about the time I met the Leo lady. You've been of great service to me".

I wonder if that book ever ended up in someone's trash. I hope I find it one day. I need a copy.

More Words For

Harrison Wade

We agreed not to write the future
but the sidewalks froze
the same day you called. You
speak Mandarin slowly, as if teaching
me a word, picking up a lesson,
a ring, dusty with years'
abandon. Your voice is still. I play
back each word without knowing, without wanting
to hear you say
sorry, you were speaking to your niece

who has just turned three. You are still
learning, too, putting ears to concrete,
letting lessons freeze. You say you have been trying
to get pregnant. The line hangs, wavers,
maybe catching cold.
You say, each time you don't, you cry
as if losing someone you have known
a long time. As if potential is heavy
enough to carve an absence

each night. His hand across
your chest eats sleep. The sky
is grey, a cat on my lap.
Your books on my shelf seem to fall,
flutter, tumble down to the floor
to find the language—I begin to say,
Can you imagine—but stop short,

trying to meet the words you left
for everyone, never just for me. I ask
what were you saying to your niece. You told her
you were calling a friend, that sometimes
friends live in different cities and
that means phone calls and letters and words
left behind for another visit. Each time
I moved, you stayed more still,

uncovering more than I dream, more
than one alphabet can carry, more
than two hands can hold. Your sister
is doing fine, is going to give birth in the spring.
Each sidewalk looks the same. The prairie wind
is at the window, in my hair, coming
up the stairs to knock at my door. Your voice
in my ear,

you ask me to babysit your child
when they arrive.

Every Loaf that Rises Must Converge

Robert Beveridge

The final tent collapsed in the weight of the endless rain. We left it, already wet to the core, in search of a stew that would not become an instant soup. The turnips, however, remained in hiding; the turkeys refused to look skyward. We courted the hijinks of the press gang, if only to acquire employment, however gainless; even that left our prospects as empty as the snow removal artist's hat in Central Park at the ides of August. We don't ask much; an honest reporting of disabilities, a bowl of gruel, the exhumation of the Great Dictator, a day without precipitation.



Calla Soderholm



Grace Qian

Montagne (*Poem and Translation*)

Fernando Casanova Ochoa

En la cima
de una montaña de concreto
Tus ojos penetran a el vacio en mi
Esa mirada de perlas en **negro** que desarma
que me tenta a agarrarte el cuello y morder la
cicatriz de tu mejilla Quisiera congelar el
mundo en tu mirada y cubrirme
entre tus alas Las llamas
de tu pelo y la miel
en tu piel

Que mis ojos
se vuelva espejos y veas
esa inocencia hypnotizante tuya
que por un momento te vuelvas ciega para
robar el sabor de tus labios *Rojos* Llenos de ti
Paloma transitante Haz tu nido entre mis
brazos este noviembre para bailar con
las ojas del otoño Que el invierno
marchite el ritmo
de tu cintura

*

On the top of a concrete mountain
Your eyes penetrate into the vastness in me
That look of black pearls that strips me
That taunts me into grabbing your neck and biting the scar in your cheek
I would like to freeze the world upon your gaze and take cover under your
wings
The fires of your hair
The honey on your skin

That my eyes turn to mirrors and you see that hypnotizing innocence of
yours

That you turn blind for a moment to steal the taste of your lips

Red

Full of you

Transitory dove

Make nest between my arms this November to dance with the leaves of fall

That the winter withers the rhythm of your waist

A work song plays on the radio while I am at work

Erika Verhagen

sometimes, and sometimes while I am in normal life (a conveyor belt, it will always come no matter what I ask of it to do).

Here is a likely scenario: tomorrow I will wake up and because I haven't yet done groceries I will wander out to find coffee and feel seduced by a pastry – I have never enjoyed a pastry as much as I expected to enjoy a pastry. At eight I felt this way about Jello and at twelve I felt this way about Jello, and at sixteen I felt this way about marshmallows and now I feel it about many things.

I promise it is not about my misremembering how much I enjoy the thing itself but rather that I've entirely forgotten the thing beyond concept and imagine myself to be a person who would like jello or a pastry, in the same way, I imagine I might be a person who likes many other future things (maybe jackfruit). I had a dream one night I backed up into a very expensive sculpture. I had a dream that I named my golden retriever CRISPR. While I slept the sky was full of wrinkled electricity that struck the big Himalayan Pine in the Botanical Gardens. This is to say nothing of the physical things that have plagued me.

On a Thursday, mid-afternoon by the clock, I have just come from the bank and I am on my way to my apartment. I am walking on the subway platform behind a cop. He is walking in front of me down the platform and I so desperately and with a distinct and great desire wish to reach outside of my cube of moving personal space into his and touch the handle his the gun down on his right hip. I could do this in two ways. The first of which would be to reach from behind him and pull it out of its holster. Just grab hold the handle and draw it, revealing the rest of a smooth secret machine.

Or I could walk faster, I could just lightly touch the handle, move my arm out and gently sweep past it and pretend I had accidentally come up onto

it while passing by, leave it covered and safe in its holster (a soft approximation of a gun, an implication).

It's like looking at Mr. Met and thinking about a man or else thinking about a baseball. There are two kinds of people: people who think he is a man with a baseball for a head and people who think he's a baseball with a man's body and a man's baseball-headed wife. To Wolfgang Köhler I would say that Ms. Met is a Bouba which is a rounded edge baluba. So is the mascot of the Diamondbacks. Ace the blue jay and the Philly Phanatic and possibly the mascot for the Montreal comedy festival Just For Laughs are Kikis. But it holds that Ms. & Mr. Met are absolute Boubas. Sometimes I want to reach out and grab his plasticized eyes, or reach into his mesh mouth and push my hand through it like a sieve. I want to feel my hands strained through his smiling black mouth like I'm pushing raspberries through a screen door or else

break through and touch the bony face of the person underneath. The gesture of humanity is just close enough. More suggestive than anything.

On a typical day, the sky is suggestive of skywriters and kites. The rest of the time the sky is suggestive of pulled up wool bed skins. A pre-teen scalp in the summer is suggestive of lemon-and-sun hair bleach – Which is, in retrospect, light damage or a chemical burn, or else invisible ink.

A skylight is suggestive of the self-same sky, or of some falling pane of glass, or an accumulation of debris, or centuries of wining-and-dining.

unwritten letters

Michelle Speyer

the letters were unwritten by fire
in a cold room sterile as glass
fresh from the kiln
and just that unyielding

slender eye-blue flames
precisely executing the sentences
passing judgement without dreaming
the hearth warmth of compassion

from the empty cell of the fireplace
the grey ashes were swept
passive flakes and floating cinders
that had once cavorted

as wild adverbs enflamed
in bacchanal on those sunburned pages
spattered with seawater
and your love's salt

I lived that winter on bitter grapefruit
and refused my pen its blue release
while the compost pile wrung fertilizer
from the burnt echo of your promises

but then in the spring the early-rising irises
stirring in sleep-dishevelled loamy beds
curing in the clear new sun
became a letter in heat-sick florescence

speaking in petals pistils stamens
green leaves and hidden roots
of thick smooth sea glass and your hand
when it knew my own



Expressions of Still Life I by Niya Gao



Expressions of Geometries II by Niya Gao

Contributor Biographies

Sean Sokolov lives in Montreal, where he is employed full-time by the city to paint murals of Leonard Cohen.

Toko Hosoya is a maker of things, currently incubating in a sunny corner of Toronto, Canada.

Sylvie Stojanovski is a practicing artist, & creative facilitator, also known as an epic enigma.

Katrina Agbayani is a first-year Victoria College student currently studying the Humanities. In between classes and runs to the library, she writes poetry.

Christine H. Tran is standing right behind you. As a Vietnamese-Canadian writer, her work has been featured in *untethered*, *Train: a poetry journal*, and *alt.theatre*. Sometimes, she helps at *Brick: A Literary Journal* and is pretty sure that her PhD begins this fall at the University of Toronto.

George Elliott Clarke teaches African-Canadian literature at the University of Toronto. He was Poet Laureate of Toronto (2012-15) and National Poet Laureate (2016-17).

Michelle Su is an artist currently living and breathing in Toronto. Her work focuses on feeling alive and only skims the surface of her obsession with bees.

Gerard Sernat MD's authored *HOMELESS CHRONICLES* (2010), *Disputes, 17s, Melting The Ice King* (2016). Gerry's recently published by *Gargoyle, Oberlin, Brown, Stanford, Main Street Rag, New Delta Review, American Journal Of Poetry, Poetry Quarterly, Brooklyn Review, LA Review, San Francisco Magazine, New York Times*. *Mount Analogue* selected *KADDISH* for distribution nationwide Inauguration Day. Work appeared in his Harvard reunion Dylan symposium.

Trevor Abes is an artist from Toronto with a fondness for writing essays and poetry. His work has appeared in *Torontoist*, *untethered*, *FreeFall*, and *Hart House Review*, among others. He is currently Theatre Critic at *Mooney on Theatre*. Reach him on Instagram @TrevorAbes.

Mei Ling Li currently a second year student doing a double-major in Ethics, Society, and Law as well as Criminology with a minor in Political

Science. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and writing all different styles of literature

Kate Marshall Flaherty's sixth book of poetry, "Radiant," launches June, 2019 with Inanna Press. She has been published in numerous Canadian and International Journals and Anthologies. She guides StillPoint Writing Workshops. See her performance poetry to music at <http://katemarshall-flaherty.ca/kmf/>

Alessia Oliva is a writer, curator and photographer. She is currently completing her BFA in criticism and curatorial practice at OCAD University. She is very enthusiastic about her dog Lola.

Lily Wang is the editor of *Half a Grapefruit Magazine*. She doesn't drink chamomile.

Antonia Facciponte is a third year undergraduate student at U of T, pursuing an English Specialist and Creative Expression and Society Minor. She is an associate editor at *The Trinity Review* and *IDIOM*, and has had her poetry published in *Exile Literary Quarterly*, *The UC Review*, and *The Northern Appeal*.

Andrea McFarlane is a second year student studying in Toronto, but a true lover of the West Coast. Painting about all the experiences from living in a tent.

Sadie Phillipson is a practicing artist in Toronto, Canada who works in collage, sculpture, and installation. With her main medium being paper, she creates simple pieces that investigate the role of structure in humanness and unity.

Fabio Sassi makes photos and acrylics using what is considered to have no worth by the mainstream. Fabio lives in Bologna, Italy and his work can be viewed at www.fabiosassi.foliohd.com

Chad Norman lives by the high-tides of the Atlantic, in Truro, the hub of Nova Scotia. His poems continue to be published around the world. The two appearing in this issue are from his manuscript, *The Black Rum Poems*.

Mervyn R. Seivwright was born in London, U.K.; resides in Tipp City, Ohio and has appeared in *The Scribe*, *Flights Literary Journal*, *Rigorous Magazine*. He is an MFA student at Spalding Univ.

Sadi Muktadir is a writer currently squandering his life working in an office downtown. He was born and raised in Toronto, and most of his writing centers around identity in an urban landscape. When he's not writing, he can be found eating his way across the city exploring the limits of the human stomach. Please feel free to follow him on Instagram under the handle 6thirst.

Cheryl Caesar lived in Paris, Tuscany and Sligo for 25 years. She now teaches writing at Michigan State University, gives readings locally and has published poems in *Writers Resist*, *The Mark Literary Review* and *Poetry Leaves*.

Giovanna Riccio is a Toronto poet whose work has appeared in national and international publications and in numerous anthologies. She is the author of *Vittorio* (Lyricalmyrical Press, 2010) *Strong Bread* (Quattro Books, 2011) and *Plastic's Republic* (Guernica Editions, 2019).

Alexander McKeever is an EngSci/Trin goon who fancies transgressive media, mathematics, and dark ales. He is graduating with what little remains of his soul and high hopes for his lo-fi solo black metal act.

Zach Da Costa writes prose and poems, some of which have recently been in *HAG MAG* and *Blood and Bourbon Journal*. He lives in Toronto and paints houses for money.

Heather J. Wood is a World Fantasy Award-nominated editor and the author of two books, *Fortune Cookie* and *Roll With It*. She lives in Toronto.

Vivian Tran is an emerging, Toronto-based artist currently attending Etobicoke School of the Arts as a Contemporary Art major. Her work revolves around the usage of archival media and oil painting to question the assignment of context.

Christian Webster is a practicing artist in Toronto that works mainly in photography and graphic art. Christian also curates shows in his spare time.

Alex Scovino is a Canadian-Venezuelan Abstract Expressionist Artist living in Toronto, who works mixing digital photography and digital painting creating artworks with unique visual texture.

Juliet Di Carlo is an artist currently practising in Toronto. She works in a variety of different mediums including photography and installation, exploring object permanence and relational aesthetics.

Christopher Woods is a writer and photographer who lives in Texas.

Adam Zivo is some guy who does some things that sort of look like a career if you squint, maybe. His writing is preoccupied with the world's inherent meaningless, and also with being a thot.

Jade Wallace is a writer from the Niagara Fruit Belt, currently working in a legal clinic in Toronto, whose most recent chapbook is *Rituals of Parsing* (Anstruther Press, 2018). They are part of the collaborative writer partnership MA|DE, a collective member of Draft Reading Series, and one half of the band The Leafy Greens, whose music has been incorrectly described as "psychedelic stoner metal." <jadewallace.ca>

Kenneth Pobo has a new book out called *The Atlantis Hit Parade* (Clare Songbirds Publishing House). Forthcoming is *Dindi Expecting Snow* (Duck Lake Books).

Rebecca Gismondi is a published poet and screenwriter based out of Toronto, Ontario. Her poetry book *limerence* was published in August, and she is currently working on a pilot script and a feature film.

Terry Tierney's collection of poetry, *The Poet's Garage*, will be published by Unsolicited Press in May 2020. His website is <http://terrytierney.com>.

Francesca Mullan-Cooper is a student of Russian language and literature. She like cats, but at the moment she does not study them in an academic sense.

Bruce Meyer is author or editor of 63 books. His selected poems, *The First Taste*, appeared in 2018, and his next collection, *McLuhan's Canary*, will appear this autumn.

Laura Demers is a visual artist and writer who lives and works in Toronto. She holds a B.F.A. from the University of Ottawa, and an M.A. in Art History and Theory from the University of Toronto. Her work has been shown in Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal and she has written for *Cross Process* (2018), *Blank Cheque Press* (2018), *Public Parking* (2019) and *Prefix Photo* (2019). Her current practice comprises writing, drawing, and digital and print media.

Eugenia Wong is a fourth-year undergraduate student pursuing a double major in Architecture and Visual Studies, and works as a museum attendant at University of Toronto Art Centre. She aims to push artistic creatives of life beyond the settings of a gallery, strives to apply her design talent to something that can both be functional aesthetically pleasing.

Yilin Zhu is a third year undergrad studying math and stats at UofT. Of all things, excepting people, she loves most nature, oil paint, and Nitram charcoal.

Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and his writing has been published in 300+ publications in 30 countries.

Joyce Zhu is a first year undergraduate at the University of Toronto studying Life Sciences.

Julia Balm is studying History, Art History and Creative Expression in Society and has upcoming plans to pursue a masters in Nonproliferation and International Security at King's College London. When she doesn't have her nose in a book, Julia likes to take the extra time to stop and smell the roses.

Fred Pollack is an author of two book-length narrative poems, *THE ADVENTURE* and *HAPPINESS* (Story Line Press), and two collections, *A POVERTY OF WORDS* (Prolific Press, 2015) and *LANDSCAPE WITH MUTANT* (Smokestack Books, UK, 2018). Many other poems in print and online journals.

Ferida Dilmaghani is an abstract expressionist. Her works often depict scenes from her childhood dreams. She uses collage, brushstroke and masking techniques to showcase her emotions. The composition of gray and warm colours creates her intended feelings. The square shaped canvases maintain balance in her works.

Kristen Joo is sometimes in Toronto, sometimes in Vancouver and mostly in Ottawa. She can be spotted taking photos in each city and conversing with people who identify as urban campers instead of homeless.

Gursimran Datla: Exploring the existential side of subjects, Gursimran Datla is a recent art graduate and an aspiring filmmaker, working in Toronto. He is currently working on the postproduction of his first short film titled 'cinnamon tea'.

Melanie Faith is a Gen-X poet, fictionist, photographer, and professor. Learn about her books and latest projects at: <https://www.melaniefaith.com/> and at Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/WritePathProductions> or @writer_faith.

Shelley Rafailov is a second-year student studying psychology and human biology in a vain attempt to understand what makes people tick. Between the mind and the body, she thought she had her bases covered, but poetry probably has to do with the soul or something.

Bill Ayres writes so many personae poems he's not sure if he's an elk, a river, or an earth worm. His work has appeared lately in *Commonweal*, *Hoot*, and *Jelly Bucket*.

Mary Anna Kruch is a career educator and writer, inspired by the human condition and the natural world. Her first poetry collection, "We Draw Breath from the Same Sky," is in press, due out this July.

Ben Nardolilli currently lives in New York City. He blogs at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com and is looking to publish a novel.

Meena Chopra is an internationally renowned award-winning poet & visual artist with an unbridled passion for words, space, colours and forms. Born and brought up in India, now lives in Mississauga, Canada. Meena has been practising fine art since 1985 and writing poetry since 1992. She has authored three poetry collections and coedited one anthology. She has widely exhibited her art in many countries and her art is in the collection of many art collectors in Canada, India, England and Switzerland, Dubai and Kuwait.

Vanessa Marshall is a Toronto-based artist that often uses acrylic paint markers, digital media, textiles and pen and paper to create a visual language of her mind and explore the state of vulnerability. She currently attends Etobicoke School of the Arts.

Denny Reynolds is a contemporary artist who uses his artistic process to learn more about himself, as his work is closely intertwined with his childhood memories. He is a high school senior, currently studying at Etobicoke School of the Arts in Toronto.

Nazanin Zarepour is an undergraduate student double majoring in Political Science and Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations. She spends her time taking photographs, studying political philosophy, and writing poetry.

Erika Dickinson is a third year English Specialist at the University of Toronto. She is a writer, dancer, choreographer and collector of useless trinkets. Her work can be found in the *UC Review* (Fall 2018).

Harrison Wade writes and lives in Toronto. His poetry has appeared in *Hart House Review*, *Acta Victoriana*, and *Half a Grapefruit Magazine*. This fall, he will be starting an MA in Cinema and Media Studies at UBC.

Robert Beveridge makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry in Akron, OH. Recent/upcoming appearances in *Cough Syrup*, *Penumbra*, and *Lowestoft Chronicle*, among others.

Calla Soderholm is a grade 10 visual arts major at Etobicoke School of the Arts. Calla explores the ways in which her family influences and builds her, which she portrays through her art work while allowing the world to relate on some level to her curiosity within family relations.

Grace Qian is a Contemporary Art major currently attending Etobicoke School of the Arts in Toronto, Canada. Her recent practice revolves primarily around oil painting, drawing, and photography.

Fernando Casanova Ochoa believes that written word in literature is the only way by which the concept of a human soul can be discernable.

Erika Verhagen is an artist and writer based in Brooklyn, NY. She received her BFA in Visual & Critical Studies from the School of Visual Arts in 2018.

Michelle Speyer is a U of T student and writer living in Toronto. Her poetry and fiction can be found in journals around Ontario, including *Acta Victoriana*, *Echolocation*, and *The Northern Appeal*, among others. She thinks the most beautiful part of the province is Lake Ontario, especially in August when the water sparkles in the sun.

Niya Gao emigrated from China, Niya, to Canada at age 13. She currently lives and works in Toronto, Canada, and attends Etobicoke School of the Arts for Contemporary Art. Through the languages of various materials and processes, she wants to share her passions and clarity with others.

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Trinity College, University of Toronto


6 Hoskin Avenue, Toronto,

ON, M5S 1H8

thetrinityreview.com

facebook.com/trinreview

trinity.review@gmail.com



*Wishing the
Best of Luck to
the Editors of
The Trinity
Review 132 and
years beyond!*

