

Word For/Word, Issue 20, Summer 2012

wordforword.info

Word For/ Word is seeking poetry, prose, poetics, criticism, reviews, and visuals for upcoming issues. We read submissions year-round. Issue #21 is scheduled for January, 2013. Please direct queries and submissions to:

Word For/ Word, c/o Jonathan Minton, PO Box 231, Glenville, WV 26351

Submissions should be a reasonable length (i.e., 3 to 6 poems, or prose between 50 and 2000 words) and include a biographical note and publication history (or at least a friendly introduction), plus an SASE with appropriate postage for a reply. A brief statement regarding the process, praxis or parole of the submitted work is encouraged, but not required. Please allow one to three months for a response. We will consider simultaneous submissions, but please let us know if any portion of it is accepted elsewhere. We do not consider previously published work.

Email queries and submissions may be sent to editors@wordforword.info.

Email submissions should be attached as a single .doc, .rtf, .pdf or .txt file. Visuals should be attached individually as .jpg, .gif or .bmp files. Please include the word "submission" in the subject line of your email.

Word For/ Word acquires exclusive first-time printing rights (online or otherwise) for all published works, which are also archived online and may be featured in special print editions of Word For/Word. All rights revert to the authors after publication in Word For/ Word; however, we ask that we be acknowledged if the work is republished elsewhere.

Word For/ Word is open to all types of poetry, prose and visual art, but prefers innovative and post-avant work with an astute awareness of the materials, rhythms, trajectories and emerging forms of the contemporary. Word For/ Word is published biannually.

Jonathan Minton, Editor

Corey Lafferty, Web Designer and Code Monkey

ISSN 2159-8061

Editor's Notes

Dear Reader, you are a thief.
Bring back the periods from this text.
There is an oval, a ruddy orange,
somewhere in the center of the page.
I see you sneaking towards it.

*

Dear Reader, this is not your cellar door.
This is a plume of red, a blush, or a wound.
If I find you in the thickest of the press,
we will read each other's faces and hands.
Words are for ghosts.

*

Dear Reader, there are flowers
behind your back because the world is sufficient.
This is a map of what I know, not what I see.
The clouds arrive like clockwork.
There are kingdoms between us.

*

Dear Reader, even if you were a river
it would never empty into this sentence,
but we will gather coins for our ancient fountain,
and when I write the next letter
it will say that I love you.

Robin Clarke

Two Poems from *Lines the Quarry*

Everything wants to live, not
even Robocop. The difference
between human, employee
hired hand and the ocean—
simply the road gets blocked, so
Carnegie built a library
sixteen hours of work each
morning your life is mined
by one way and another
bake a cake between the days,
workers, dynamite, dripping
things you don't want to forget

headlamp, feed dog tied to post.
A history of methane
explodes one thousand feet
in your face, burns ninety
—is a ceiling coming down?—
percent of the woman's (we
don't make disaster porn
at Big Branch coal mine) twenty-nine
Do Not Resuscitates
Mr. Blank Blankenship *throw
down a rope I've got my head
but three years of citation
brings the whole sputtering us
to today, the rules, or all
Americans deserve to?
The company Tina pulled
levers for without meaning*

to, everything the Titanic
pushes toward, Freud, there are
no accidents, whatever
kept us going pegged our pants
didn't ask how does it feel
to be the Terminator
open fire to open
like a flower on evening
television? To watch
bandaged heads vanish into
parked here forever, soldier
hold your breath you're not crying

right? Good intentions come and
go run up the street with some
adults in need of a bath
tub to slip in, piece of cake
to fall out of a chair
in *five, four* is how I learn
Americans have rallied
round the image of the oil

coated bird but browsers
undirected keep opening
corners of the human package:
sea-gull, swallow the regulations
the gauzy wings, eye
where security guards feed
dolphins full of tear gas
how do you feel? Better
purchase the words for a season
of fishing equipment under
water, clean-up crews have no
time to correct. More oil
bloomed in the Niger last year
but the secret is every

broadcast ends with decisive
moments, then drowning
like the wrong number dialed
your ears fill with water then
the stadium applauds. Can't
make that shot, given angle
distance, subcutaneous
cellulitis aka
beat hand, beat elbow, beat knee
you are what they eat. Falling
out teeth dreams say it, together
Shell did nothing wrong.

Type any key to begin
annotating the annotated:
my father raped in a quarry
age five by friends of the fam'ly
Carnegie's many faces
fill a steam engine book
of men who climbed out of hist'ry—
my body neither shame nor bliss
simply try, their words come out
cursive in the margins
oil in the ocean where
cities built over the last
ones. Don't know what it means
I was born on a business
trip, suspect everything

If we look at my cell phone
what do we see? Illusion,
no distance between our lives,
bonds—terrible and standing
up for what we be, sediment
toilet or balls to the wall
smart or nobody knows my
name. Grade I would give on your
painting of a lighthouse scene?
You can't stay neutral on
the bus leaves at 8am
there will not be another.
Mom knocked three times but the door
to the human party was
let's just say nope. Hope this ends
better than the play. Crack the
following, a roach in every
pot, twenty-four/seven
community oriented
lice. When I return we can
marry, exchange relatives.
We'll see. When I see my dreams
staring with the human
carcass, steady as they gather
at the liver. You've got to listen

to your part. Many like us
yet no two alike, *my* journey
to the center of the earth

begins with wreckage, attempts
to return safe slash sound.
In biographies workers'
decisions have been left out.
How a child connects most
fondly with the Terminator
those affected I'll go ons

Lynn Strongin

This arm of the blues stretches far
Love the lesson longest learned, no homily
I will be there to meet you in my Netherlands gray:
Country flat as the eye can see, Postage stamp Poland, Holland.
The jacket with wet look will look as though it came from centuries of are
Eggshell thin, it will glisten lethally looked at one way, becoming like dove feathers the other
The sort of footlocker-packed gardening stashes away
I use my grabber rod, shepherd's crook in a former life
& reach down the six-shaped hatbox letters
the letters I always reach when at the rim, the ruinous bring of love.

Loss

Soundless film Blue's lips, Civil War stores
Dark currencies of currency.
I have gone the distance, entered Oxen Bridge,
The year of withdrawal
The bullet glancing past my temple vein
Grazing the eye, glassing the eye that hustler faster
Who made no lady of me.
Winter's pained face glistens thru black branches where water ends.
Don't put me out. I am not a fire. The stitches from where I cut myself at twelve are still there but not
like Belsen's blue numbers.s
He iron bedstead, the scarecrow moving on wires
A slightly modified embroidery table is what my love presents.

Stretches Far, but I have walked to the end of the night & found you
Button eyes, angular planes of a European woman in your ace, smoking, collar turned up, an
airport somewhere maybe Yugoslavia.
During the break in the film making, a little romantic break, about to go to the front line
With child, just in time. Go to the Tower of London
Neck wound in a long reefer
Cold miserable, looking out at her London all the lights are out like all the people out of control
forgetting speech
Could take no more.
No more dark. No more light.
Blackout. The sheer stun
Sheer as mountainface.

Hatbox letters are laid out

Pearly diver

The Portuguese house keepr with seven children and fifteen grandchildren has come
With a touch of the other world: brought back from a former life or a filmic projection of the
life to come: she will star in this oneLays down her feather duster, a cluster of
Bees swarm out of comb. The next world will be dustless.surreal, almost neon
Robin's egg blue

Like a painter laying the first color on his canvas.

From this we hatch

Purple People, Radiation people come and visit me.

I shall sit in the Garden for the Blind above the sea

Reading waves' monotony

Like purling knitting

One silver, one grey.

Totally upped the romantic ante

The perfectly chillzone your moment of Zen.

Night widens the gap between stairs:

We think of more to tell each other:

Words come tumbling out

But we have no mother

The arm of he blues shortens. Turn the radio down. Light up.

Delicious. Relax the shoulders, shrug, turn the jacket collar up. You are desired, sheltered,
drawn up long legs, knees to child, foldng & unfolding them like a stork.

All my pennies go on books ring of bright thunder.

Will anyone read them when I am dead & gone?

I walk across an airport, slicked with rain, legs moving easily as scissor s making time

Hip joints real ball & socket

Cutting darkness, a flash of purple on fingernails.

Smoking, my cigarette a little ikon like the cross this me in Majorca, Spain.

Cut Friday in half
Laid the paycheck under the grocery bag
all those ins of tunafish.
Got cigarettes, Black Russians. Forgot matches.
Ribbons from the flowershop for her
Tomorrow morning first thing.
Alma didn't cut the cheese with me
But after all we aren't children playing on the school playground.
I used to sing you a tune, or whistle an aria from Handel
You piled my books on a sack slung from the wheelchair handles.
We two who used to just get up there & boget
We're getting on
Rabbit is half skinned.
Whatever we remember let's not forget the other
Or the gin: all four burners on, blue-violet as the queen's bodice or gown:
Love is a lesson lenient rarely, smooth as a florist's wide-band ribbons: gros grain with a swish
almost audible sound
Love is a lesson holding breath during a taxi ride home thru Jamaica, Queens, over the lace
wrought bridges in the unforgiving night from a bad performance, a *debacle*:
Every movement of lungs burns:
Is a lesson (lighting up outside the concert hall after the meltdown in the wings)
long-learned.

Look under the thunder

Love is a continuing lesson

Release, Ride me terrier: Little Moll (that flash of prostitute) knows that love begins alone in the gloom.

These sombre contain bottles are two horses, Nicola & Nicolo I ride while bells of Cordoba ring

Where? A dawn I have never seen.

Digging my ankles into you spur, ivory satin, known to me like the thrill of coming.

Dark archers

Listen there are unicorns coming along the side streets

We carry back packs of books, colorful, fabulous creatures:

We learn things by touching ourselves & each other we never can learn from teachers.

Black keys white keys come to me. Don't let bad things happen to the children

The broken man has come

I do not offer him honey: Amiel. I cap it. I save it for the children.

He rolls wheelchairs.

He has big wings.

I would go then
Mother wanted me to see France and London. Sister said "Rough it."
From mascara to violin varnish
White Yule promised mercury dips.
An adolescent, my extreme incarceration led to extreme joy.
From pillar box to stained glass.
Foxy writes me that all thru his pelvis he is cancer.
The blood is stained glass window red.
Near Shadwell Basin in Boneville
Such curious things are gong on: stamps pasted in color window
Setting up a lab on the top floor of an East London home
What goes on up so high next to sky
Pressed dowel by cheek
Open a dye factory:
Blend another color with madder
The Fury of the Mauve Era.
O to have a beautiful backbone.
To have had radiant chidlren
In Beirut my ultimate aim was to find purplebut my immediate aim was to find coffee.
As easy as locating a bullet-riddled wall in the torn city center:
Make things whole again. With maximum tenderness, mercy
Lace could not get more whorled with circles
Bridal, finer
Than in my dreams of holding (under a storm cloud, just enough darkness for pity the blinding
light).
If a raven falls down the chimney death will be that nears a hatclose to us:
Not my fault.
But use salt.

Shipyards & Angels

A lorry catapults throws a young woman straight thru a window:
A doorknob is caught in a woman's pelvis (Frida Kahlo)
I see a cart filled with Indigo, drawn by a mule, looks like blue hay
Mule like tilted, a Gargoyle face, Quasimodo
Have seen the place where light begins to dance
Where shall I go in the gloom alone, the gloam, work's apron
A square of brown or dove Quaker grey over my lap
Where desire begins.
I set my hands n my lap
Move them like doves
A nose-wringling joy
He waits till he no longer lasts
I wait too
Riding beside in a carriage of color.
I go thru a mystical process down Iron Age Hill from the village
To create from woad the color Indigo.
She is a gem, a keeper.
Blue Portugese feather duster: she takes my torn things away bring hem back like new. Love
has a long arm reach but closes its fist over darkness, clenching a deal, holding strong, saving a
child.
Dying their pale ancient torsos blue fit the ancient Britons.
Shipyards and angels
Lo to bring things to artists supply shops n London.

December slides its translucent coat over park benches, the boat basic at Riverside & 72nd where we did most of our early days courting:

What did I know, a girl who was an alumna of the State Hospital, still virgin at twenty one, attending a girl's college formerly "Female Normal School," hadn't tasted gin. A straight A student with eyes for the Classics professor another woman with Italian boy bob.

Got high on my first coke & aspirin.

Winter slips clear of its skin translucent affections and hostilities stand

Spearheaded: exposed like lace of the six-sided poliovirus under the high magnification glass:

Hold this old yellow speller in your hands: smell the history behind it: offered my ring, a poor enamel open band we bought in the Greenwich Village

I bought my wedding dress at Carnaby Streets where the daughters of the Mexican governors got their bridal dresses

Stretched out on beds then all fuschia, chartreuse, Indigo.

The terrible beehive hairdos of the fifties. If a man could fall for a girl then, but I wore classic Smith girl attire: pullover & mother's pearls, shoulder length pageboy, Sylvia Plath swoop but I was tender as an angel no worldly broad. Androgynous-thin. My boyish tree-climbing had been exchanged for the quick grab in hospital halls, wheelchair races.

When that passion, music, became driver again I got a drawing board with black wrought iron wheel & composed first thru fifth species counterpoint. One whole year we wrote motets. A medieval choral school. Passion fruit & poemgranate

The embroidery table tilted overlooking Sant Annes & Riverside.

Embroidery of scalloped bushes straight out of Alice in Wonderland, but I'd taken my first smoke in the back bathroom I was a fallen woman.

I never took a man for husband. We scripted cancellations to the wedding, explained to the harpist we'd engaged for the chape at The Coisters for that afternoon

I wound my wools in a basket, lidded it. Sold the drawing board giving the wheel a last spin to the lowest position.

December once again slid its too thin coat over the bones of the city, the human bones began moving in new ways.

Mother said that fat Lesbian Gwyn had seduced me: she played the cello, I composed: we gave Unitarian Fellowship Sunday morning services & played the black ghetto of Oakland: She rented a cottage out of Lady Chatterly's lover, a poemgranate tree drawn on the kitchen walls:

We hung our windbreakers on a thin nail.

We always had to move the car for a neighbor to get to work

Firisco the mystical city that broken more than a few poets' hearts.

Despite December & no money, she found second-hand booties with fleece-lining

She bought a cheese wheel in the Portuguese section of town, put it on the elevator & sent it up to my floor:

I was already in full bloom.

You ask about my husband

I never took one.

Several took me. And put me down like a book they'd grown bored reading, print side down in the grass.

So I moved to a new town.

A woman in another country read my poems in a book & fell in love.

To cut to the chase, we have lived together since then: short & tall, blond & dark.

We crisscrossed the continent exchanged countries. But there's one voyage with more lists than Homer:

Disability, two religions, family feuds, reconditioning:

This is the dry voyage, despite drowning, that begins like the alphabet with A for Ativan. I was in my thirties. Now, seventy-two, oxymorphone contin cannot ravage what is already mown beyond burn or blame.

I thought the gin years the worst during immigration

But this was lower yet: an interesting thing you learn about pits: they always have deeper ones:

I knew that we'd never have to take this trip again

Crossing from Hades to the promised land:

And we haven't.

That morning in the medical pavilion I learned all I'd ever have to know of Dante's inferno.

Out of withdrawal, the backpack cutting into our ribs like anvils

We came home.

Thin ribbed, voiceless.

I'd spare you the details but I give you what you ask in the man:

You asked about my husband.

Our amaryllis looks on LSD
I cannot bear the feeling of being old. Hold. Hold me
Cutwork embroidery able cloth
Pearly table cloths in space
More when my cheeks' flush dies doem from Morphine.
More when I have sacked together like toys my beautiful wives S& husbands.
Browh cloth. Dark wood. Homeomng.
Soldiers on leave in Britain could not pass the tme indoors so they passed the long warm lazy
downys on the Downs
Wandering
 Stronging the North Downs
The very paths used by Chaucer's pilgrims.

Adam Strauss

From Rootavega Lapse

1

She licked her moonlit fur. Endymion's gloss and saliva create an atmosphere like the aftermath of fratricide. A rutabaga casts a shadow on a gray tile; ants swarm its burly bumps. From the upper-left corner of the frame queer light angles to so centrally in the center the way-fab location ends up arresting. The center of what: shadow or casts?

Endymion's gloss and saliva—who knew that overlap could outdo Renaissance chiaroscuro. Right outside the frame a rutabaga rots; the smell magnifies her eyes till they look daemonic and this particular demon is oh so pretty not the kind that makes your dreaming heart freak till eyes fright open and a grumpy rump gets up.

Someone has cut rutabaga into stars. Stars don't make movies so why are there movie stars. Stars are dead; movie stars are not—even the dead ones. The one thing stars have in common with stars is being simultaneously close and far. The knife the ones scattered on these porch-steps were cut by shines like a downs of dewy humus.

3

Rutabaga is a good name for a cozy feline—one can then call it Vega because the switch is more fun than some lock-jawed B. The litter-box needs changing but no-one gets up from their screen if anyone's even home. The movie-stars in the bedroom cannot be seen but where they're affixed to the walls quadrants subtly sensuously glitter.

An artist painted a picture; she split her canvas between two scenes: a cartoon tiger drinking a mug of cut-'n-paste coffee and a tiger in a row of the beans lining a lowly ridge as lovely as its muscles as they pulse through its hide. She pines for dream-on shots; while waiting she wonders why British English for rutabaga is Swede.

Stars light a farm in Sweden. Students with handsome carriages carry fruit across a stripe of grass. Fifty kilometers away a white Siberian named Handsome is in the midst of catching a cold but that's hard to freak for when sun turns sere fields gold. Domestic purrs and then a letter in the alphabet's been purloined. Dazzling dead energy.

6

She licks her fur; dust falls and she does the cleaning over. He's a fan of threes: square them and there's nine or the number forming the Ennead. I concur: Egyptian mythology possesses a freshness the Greek lacks. Leave a bone out long enough and in the process of revitalizing you'll need to conjure up some marrow.

She loved her cat but didn't offer any of her parmesan-and prosciutto-rind fortified red-wine poached marrow to then be put on toasts and drizzled with the poaching liquid reduced to a syrup. She shudder-

laughed at how painful breaking out one's frame would be—lapse one can't recover from. She decided to look at lapses based on unusual ratios.

I advocate lapses be redefined as lapis; I get in the way like Apophis. If I were an artist I'd like to make a piece which pleases a cat by which I mean a cat appears pleased to me. A bloody mouse is almost always an unpleasant interruption so it's a shame that's just what's scampered across the linoleum though the blood track is pretty—tres De Kooning.

A Ball

She cut a ball-gown from a swath of whisky; touch

This 100 proof

Slosh and

See—the warp and weft and every

Inebriating atom

Send interchangeable

Signals to the nerves

Lining your gorgeous fingers.

At the ball where there's no whisky

She did a

Lesbian Lambada.

She did a

Shot first thing

After shucking off her dress—isn't

A gown to be grown out of?

Fashionable Politics

for Kate Durbin

“If it were a wound
It’d be terrible”

From that wound I’ll make
A womb births

A form fits
Perfectly into

A perfectly cut
Cabernet Cristobal

Balenciaga suit like lambs
Leaping over fire hydrants

Under protest for
Torturing peaceful

Protesters putting mirrors
Up to the state’s

Posturing places some
Of us in a position

To want a pastoral
Nation in which

Country is
Divested of its empire

Wes Benson

A LONG-ABANDONED BREATH

A long-abandoned breath
heard between apologies
unmaps the world.

I switch on the kitchen light.
Appliances emerge
as if by choice.

With regard to supplication
I'm dead to difficulty.
Am I what I think I am.

Am I error's dancehall:
low-ceilinged,
refrigerator-growled.

THERE MAY BE A REAL WORLD

So much music
rests on it.

Duvet sky
over
a busy river fork.

But only
the broken
bottle.

No photographs
of this exist.

THE DAY I PACKED MY DEATH I FORGOT TO MARK THE BOX

A finite thought.
I let it go.

Another one.
I let it go.

I'm a finite thought.
I let it go.

A list of finite thoughts.
The list quickens me.

It burns me back
to where the ashes end.

PRETEND A HISTORY

The lift, the wind-up of you.
Your nowhere wired
from where you aren't.

I slur your words.
Slip, sleeve-like,
from your shoulder.

Red meat inside you
no longer gleaming
that meat-counter gleam.

MOMENTARY SURGERIES

That through which
I am.

The not-a-thing-
on-paper.

Grievous pivot.
Turning outward.

Every glance
unguarded.

How much of sky
is skin.

What is the body.
What's left

to waver forward,
boundaryless.

Jane Wong

TRACE (BLOOM)

A tree set in motion blooms looms in greens

Look at the woods; there is nothing to change; the sunlit moss spreads; without you –

In reach of cities, towns the-light-through-windows-certainty:

Greens on the kitchen table, basin rinsed in clover

Steam, a form of water a form of fists on the table

You raise a sliced plum to your mouth

Under clouds, a plane orbits eternally

You can see it from the window, smoke trailing –

Effortlessly

TRACE (WOUND)

A wound magnified opens in glass blue

stitch. Thin threads of light filtering through trees

Treasures in the trees. Birds violet in mid-light, deepening

You bite into a plum you finish it the bright volcano

There is honey mucked in your mouth; there is a hunter wintering your town –

The cold avenues through which the heart radios

After which, it extinguishes itself

A tender surface

DECENT WITH THE SEASONS

when the owl lost its eye
I was in the other room boiling
an egg it was a felt
thing bracing pot metal my eye was
owl breath mirrored and true as
egg shell after
rain I was afraid I saw
the good eye look up
to see a world or what else how lowly
I stood over it I was a jar surrounded I could not
fall even when the tall grass tangled
the strike in the ground where I know you

*

best to pluck from
song pluck from the neck
up near what but a fountain
to drowse in a root to drink in
the trees resting in me: a drowsy child
on a stranger's lap to be small be the day
gone I said goodbye to the finches I flinched
fevered till there was blood

*

among the feathers or
my mouth: I swear I am as decent as
a hat I could tip over
a pitcher poured
over trees as if locating
rain as if you could measure at arms
length or dare I say beard's length I could touch
the tree but we know autumn
is a lie is a lake you can not swim

*

in the dark
a parliament of owls proceed in single file
as if afraid of losing the dark I tunnel through
silent as a silver coin
the dark surrounds it weighs in plums
it waits by the door like worn leather
the rough ruin of once, before, and then
what? I remember how healthy I grew
I was a child an echo of circumference enough
to cradle you in I was decent with the seasons
I could keep up appearances snow slipping
through the droning sun

PROOF 2

Givens:

1. The night before, *b* hit a deer on the way home and left an imprint of a torso.
2. *b* said to *a*, "I will do it later" and took sugar in his coffee.

If *a* slipped on the ice and broke her leg so that the bone kicked out, that implies that *b* did not shovel and used sugar instead of salt. Considering the givens, yes, there is proof to blame *b*.

However, as *a* certainly did not scream (neither did the deer) and thus alert *b* of her fall, it is not *b*'s fault for not noticing and worsening the condition with time.

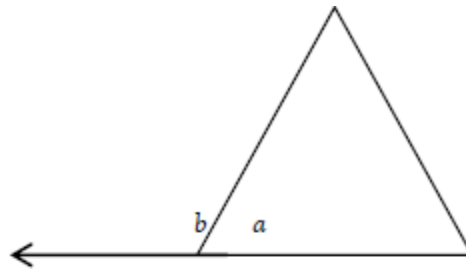
Regardless, because the fall happened because of *b*'s negligence to begin with, *b* must produce something much > than apology. For, as *a* will later argue, what is apology but a mess of words?¹

¹ Indeed, apology will not shovel ice.

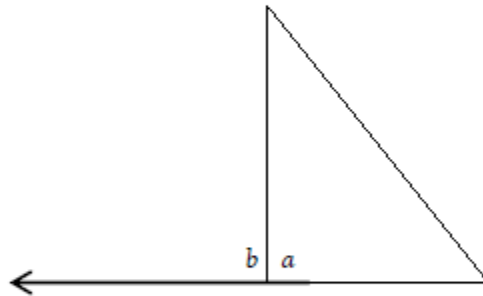
PROOF 6

Let a live in triangle A and b live in the angle outside of triangle A. For years, a has been trying to get b to lean backwards, to let her breathe for one second (a says, "it feels like bricks in my throat"). For years, a has dreamt of triangle B, where they are both upright, and can place their hands equally against the glass. But b is suspicious; b says, "if I lean backwards, how am I to know you won't push me down?" b says he can feel the tension between their angles and refuses to take the chance. "I am not stupid," b says, pushing forward into what is now triangle C. Crying, a thinks of collapsing, but holds up her angle, if only to feel something on the other side.

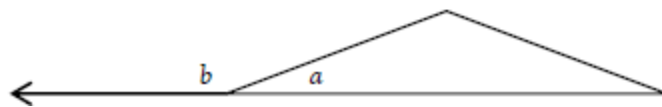
△ A:



△ B:



△ C:



Jane Lewty

L'OPÉRA COSMIQUE

and evening fell as of red

lobewasting, half-potent its hollows farfield.

city in filament here, bit of it there, some searchlight, other deathly.

and the legs tied in one place

moved under a sheet

truly cross

and some phase, sort of sinX, was muons to montparnasse

mystery man mystery man mystery man

shade faint, was sung by everyone

and the imperial lit image was her, an X torching

nightdream adversary

sharp angle to earth

you see, a man told all the history

jabber yammer

in theory, of the state

said my body will be given to the state

au bois dormant, man said all his girls are unresolved

said to the great quiet: *I don't know what you were expecting.*

THERE, THERE, PARABOLA

Thin legs, stable thin
rock iodide, andesite hang.

Gabbro, basalt---

“*my too-long legs*” light luster olivine
citruspine, fine-lean, too long
dirty santorini hake.

I thought you better, spill cirrus field. You field.

You liltwire of stave of
crush of news of (in church enclave
fucking)
a bad week, a bad earth.

BREAK IT DOWN a plane to put figures. Very precious is the animal balled in the grass. Sorrow for it. Sorrow
for the less stupefaction of bodies. Of two. Figures know the chill of stairs, porch, chill like nothing else
felt, the animal—
its steelrise of anxiety
that distills the unredeeming of
all else felt

eames chair, small eiffel

zinblind reactive
needle shape of a lamp

a lilt window
underwing

birdseed gone, path unpaved

the flare
of odd redness candle spill

char chaos eight most flow pel mio poema
mio carmine
thank you, you say. I you. as ever. and I you.

clearly I said I made it up. did I. or didn't I.
then, and then. or *then*.

CAN LOVE INHERE, FELLOW MADNESS

For the ornamental baring/the meat.

Bow arm in gestural cold tied soft cloth

 around the eyes, hardknown knot blind behind and later all-a-wearied/
long tone shuttering of a woman. On dunes maybe, sun filtered still. Or so imagined.

A process somewhat read about, read aloud, to the answer a high unnoticed weft. Inner cry/
Horizon on the wall, so short a horizon, a very wilful one.

Smearlike shadow then,

 as if from a mouth, the deep logic
of back and forth. Neck left crystalline and shaking-- Brought to precision/integrity/
so sorry/

for the harm, for the incline to the blood.

Can it inhere, fellow madness?

Not sure if today is fair enough to ask.

Dot Devota

And The Girls Worried Terribly

VII

The guests are tied to their chairs
daisies breathing quietly beside them. Our mothers
in the front row shoving light through a tiny hole
I caution them, but their eyelashes heavy and dripping black
excited the bees and so I lock the gate.

Mountains divorcing themselves, my voice
plugged into the natural amplifiers of these new cliffs—
the ceremony commenced! A diabolical
union of one alongside the self's dubious chatter.

"Deepen," I said.
You mean as in colors?

The value of living
one person at a time is unbearably
rich. The entire day beginning
to smell as a painting drying—

the cake, the flowers,
our dresses crackling as the flames resolved in sin.

VIII

Guests hidden in the plaster casts of outstretched arms
I am unable to gauge how vast the farewell—

I could not toss this farewell as a baby bird with a single tuft of cobalt
a crust of blueberry bread. Even if crust was heavy soaked
fruit flies breeding in our dimples
while licking the icing off sweets.

Or fruit bats frightened from their cave
as musical notes do the black dice of its score.

The exorcist, my grandmother smiling sweetly
from her toothless garden plunging into a basket of childless okras
and squash worms will be the bastards! We will let them
be the bastards
digging further into their own blindness.

Dot ties the straw hat to her head with a scarf
as long as the ropes of some scent.

I wave to her from this distance.

IX

Stray dogs drink as the wind picks up
a tea I make of caterpillar sweat and arrogant cinnamons
driving baby hair from my temples into my eyes
two gold fingers plucking the strings of sight.

I splashed into my dress ruffling the shallow pond
and when I felt strong enough to stand
I had been buried.

I tickle the sand until it becomes the laughing grasses
its mothers had raised
releasing me before drought marries high to low pressure
and all toys clatter off the edge.

I like the smell of grass
after it's been trampled by my guests.

X

Battle rears one child in tall grass
throwing a fit dangerously close to barbed fence.
I'm ill but motion for him by spreading
the pleats in my dress a cloud he disappears into.
Air too thick for even a stone to breathe—

Before I forget, my father
buttoning his cuffs is the sun refusing to stand
behind one cloud for fear he would
not see the ceremony.

When the wolves in his daylight began to howl
trees tuned their instruments
behind a shack of empty milk crates
and I sold the white-gold in good faith.

The wind blows smearing the day
the boy, a hiccup.

Victoria Henry

On Light and Photojournalism

Liquid light—thin as
leaves rich like
oil paint

spills from cupped hands.

class notes:
an underexposed landscape,
a red boat,
burning a halo

behind Jesus' heavy face
wondering whether or not he will

glow

when the curator turns out the light—

whether or not light can
take weight
form
contort its ancient skeleton to match
the shape of my palm.

Iron Baby

Iron baby L—bits of sunlight running across skin. Arrival in high morning. That contrast, now, is a thing to hold onto. How I am always slipping into just holding on. Blood without iron—but I am it, now, sunlight running across my skin. Salt crystals clinging to my hair. How L, now, is snow.

I am always slipping into a color world. Roots of cloth and adaptability. I do not know what world L inhabits. I do not know if L inhabits at all. I do not know what L stands for. In high morning, I do not know L's thoughts. If L think of birds? If L thinks of iron? If L thinks of grass or history? Family?

On Saturday L sings on our porch—shouts "I will find it." L sings a song from our childhood, and I think of a thin, glass box. By four o'clock it is dark.

L is approaching 6,205 days in this particular world. What will L think about in January? Snow? Iron? Will L think about this curving path that both of us follow? If I think of L—which I do—will L know?

On Monday L is sick. Avoids school. Avoids too much talking. I am trying to call but L will not pick up. Avoids.

A world in which no color finds its way in. Is that what L will think about?

Poem for Fermina Daza

I am with you, walking
through the richness of December
listening to the lament
of the last manatee, forgotten on
the blighted banks
of the river.

Your belly—your gold moon
belly, emerging
from midnight mass

and I thought, will I give myself?
What does it mean to lead
a borrowed life?

And did that fine gold dust
disappear, like love
beneath the almond trees
exposing only human flesh and
infinite cabinets—filled filled
ripping at the seams with
nothingness

leaving age and desire and
eternity
beneath the white flag?

In the richness of December

teach me to live with pain
and composure.

Ascension

We exist on fragments of fall—intersecting at strange and unexpected moments. The reds and golds of our season remain elevated. Through winters, they continue to exist on a separate plane. At times I worry that this plane does not exist—that you are as thin as lace and lost to me. That fall will not last long enough. But let us speak of light. The quality of light, the color of birds, the tension on the kite string. Yes, let us speak of winter. Let us taste the pumpkins—smashed and rotting—floating in the water. Let us—stand alone in time and space, cutting narrow paths through the grass. This was texture of our hands last October, sticky and sweet, emerging from the bellies of fruit. That night, I watched you carve fire—such fire!—every word a sunflower. Let us speak of years. And when we hear birds, let us ascend.

Robyn Art

Letting Go

In the benign whirl of the noise-canceling headphones as surely as inside of me, all is palatial greenery and singing: What is the sleeping child but a thing made entirely of its own forgetting: What is a theme song if not *Baby, I wanna rock witcha all night long*: Too often something big comes on the heels of something big—astonishing, raw, totally inconvenient: Being with you is much like being in the sky—vast, but less cumulonimboid: Lugging the brokedown artillery southward, disastrous tonnage of what separates utter despair from that mostly-okay-with-it feeling: In preparation for winter, the Alaskan Brown Bear gains up to 300 lbs a month: It's true I can remember my old life I just can't remember living it: a) the voices of leaves, trembling, b) the hatch springs open onto black earth: You know how, in the movies, you wake up and the loved one's there? Well, I woke up, and you *were* there: The first rule of Jedi Mind Tricks, don't talk about Jedi Mind Tricks: There are many equations of love but room for only x number of couch-surfers at the hacienda: The baby Blue Whale gains up to 100 lbs. a day: Sometimes you know I could just die of tenderness: Even with its head lopped off, the North American Cuttlefish can swim around for days

Because Everything is a Kind of Breaking

We were like glass.
We were quaking in our muk-luks.
We were beyond tired.
We were just beyond.
There were parts of us visible only a night—
an insomniac moon, autumn's sepulchral humming
in the trees.
We had scary thoughts.
We were vertiginous skies,
the goose's managerial squawks.
We were so tired.
Uniformly sandblasted, near-feral.
We were, If you loved me,
you'd be home by now.
We were the other version, the trap unsprung.
The lone saucer returned to its cup.
No, we never aspired to infamy, dawn patrol,
feats beyond repudiation or regret,
only the murmured approval of trains
and the wind's absconding whistle
through the grass.
We were bodied, yet unhouseled.
We were privy to all manner of underhanded shit.
We were a kind of happiness, meaning
"momentarily without guilt"
or, "not poised to attack."
Or astonishment: the work
of becoming another.
The stalled animal of the body at rest.
Hair collecting in the comb.
A single wire, unbending.

Lives of the Floating Head

All day I have been recording the failures of my body, hobbled as it is by corrosive longings, inadequate rain gear, its obtuse and variant hungers resembling nothing so much as the inedible parts of a chainsaw the way all I am not drunk enough to say resembles the unctuous whatnot glommed beneath the ocean's colossal shadow. I don't believe in karma. At certain altitudes the planet's unregistered whatnot blurs the way anyone, in a certain cast, can resemble Toni Braxton after a hard night. Like you, I've dreamed intermittently of the clean life: decorative livestock dotting immaculate town greens, organic T-shirted toddlers and everywhere that brown artisanal bread, uniformly barnacled with oats. By this time next year, I could be the wife of a hirsute fence mender-cum-hobbyist trapper, washing out his suet-coated Carhaarts seven days a week whilst fashioning commemorative Puffy Paint sweatshirts at my kitchen table, ergonomically ensconced in a double-wide. As with anything else, a pattern emerges: land, water, water, land, the moon like a scraped knuckle, a greasy light over everything. In the cache of seemingly wack ideas, what they call an escape fire can keep the bigger one out. If grief had a punch line, it would be, *The Eighties Called, They Want Their Haircut Back*. Like you, I have been besieged by fears of the monstrous Not-Yet-Happening like bread dough sealed in a bag, of whiplash, pleurisy, snapping hip syndrome, fare evasion procedures, random hobbyist newsletter fires, the venomous licks of foreign toads, have felt as flightless bird on denuded horizon, uniformly treeless and shivering. If the unspoken allegiance between two fixed points is the difference between "missing" and "wanting back" I am always at least three places at once: "passing" and "passing through." The moon retreats from the earth at a rate of 1.5 inches a year. Kinetically speaking, we are all moving in reverse. I cannot abide someone kicking the back of my chair. According to agrarian folklore, the total lunar eclipse, like most notable things, can move mountains or make you go blind. Like the retraction and hemorrhage of light there only two ways of being together: sweatily naked and otherwise. If you asked, I'd abscond with you to the exurbs tonight. Other conflation abound: ketchup with catsup, Survivor Guilt with Stockholm Syndrome, Prince with The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, known once again as Prince. I can't go anywhere without a layer of wax on my lips. In second grade, Hunter Carlton brought a cardboard box to school. When the teacher asked what said box was for, Hunter said it was for making love in. Although virgin births are characteristic of the crayfish, the honeybee, and the Komodo dragon, the messianic zombie resurrection (He is risen, and man, is He pissed) is particular to our kind alone. Looking back, what comes clear does so through the myopic and night-visioned, the perpetually gummed-up, barely-habitable and boggy, spring unfastening through the half-dredged marsh. If standing water had a theme song, it would be, *I Never Meant to Hurt Nobody*. And as I keep telling you it's the workable equations I like, the coffee strong, dark, not marked-up the wazoo.

Jesse DeLong

The Amateur Scientist's Notebook: Floret as Bird

1.

What is hunger if I once listened to a floret
slurp storm water into soil, sex a spore on wind,

a single seed left for a bird to eat.
I could not call you, would not

call you anything other than—Like, say, in the shallows
of the river we laid crawdad traps until our fingers pruned.

Oxblood-colored bank where we uprooted
clay, molded wet grains into plates, set them on some
stones to harden. Shoes soaked in silt, we swelled,

a hunger heavy as a field of florets, feathers
dreamed sprouting from skin. Hunger of when one is

lost once in another. I touch your eyelid,
watch you shutter. Anything other than—

Hunger to call you—
but never to continue. At night I woke up

in our room, turned the radio high enough
to string static over traffic, trees & shore.
When the speakers slipped white sparrow bones

to the ceiling, I graced your palm,
guided us under the fan's hot breath,

held you close enough to consume
your sweat. We swayed our limbs, moving them
through momentary doors. A hibiscus hid

in light. Every second, no surface held
the same pigments—how a bird

feels a hundred feet from earth.

Radio off,
rupturing the room in robin plumes of silence,

we devoured crawdads off mud plates, fracturing

shells between our flesh,

juice dripping from fingers
made to bear the weight of being
wingless.

2.

As rain wrung out, a dirty
dishrag, sunlight
ignited the dandelions.

On a poplar limb, a crow draped
wet wings. From its tail, a drop pinned

into a puddle
where an ant circled, centered

upside down & sunk. I was certain
only in the instability of matters

as the tailpipe
of her Buick left a feather of smoke,
silken for a moment, before the smoke

started to extinct in sky, the sky
the crow was crossing through.

3.

I postured at the window—
ridge like earth's raised shoulderblade,

mountain line laying out weary as an arm.
Water slumped in my squat glass.

We walk into a slapload
of sun & say goodbye. As you
turn towards your car, I remain
holding your hand, arms
the beam
from a flashlight, bodies
the brilliance it burns towards &
the bulb it is propelled from—though
the light between
is a mere flicker of dimmed dust & air.

What is restlessness if I wake up

with a peacock's plume

in the rear of my throat?
Past the frame, a cardinal, red cowl

I'll be fine. I'll be
fine. I'll be

on its neck, folded
the air to origami. Months later I routed

A sensation navigated,
a traveled way,
the line from which an end emerges.

our migration on a map.
The journey barely scaled the thickness of a quill.

I could not
continue. Calling you
bird.
& you made
me pay for this.

With the cardinal lost to horizon,
you routed

A sense of wild
confusion, to rummage, to not continue
calling you bird & to pay for this.

your hand on my shoulder, told me our lungs
were sewn together, but with a loosening stitch,

Disrupted by ourselves
we do not notice each
others' overwhelming appetites.

so when one of us talks, the other must
fill our shared chest with breath, must

So
dependant &
this sickens us.
What is a person
other than the way
we root, like a cicada, that plated bird,
into the other's consciousness, only to

rebirth, once a decade, when the earth is
torn up—
The cicadas spawning, & the birds,
the birds are
feasting.

flap our wings until the wind recedes, must
guard our nest over each others' wandering eyes.
(Over a bird too ornamental for the realities of gravity).

Bird, know
the birds are feasting

4.

You said I'll be your
sweetheart, anything
you want, a bird

who nests in sweat & flesh.
We were fucking when you
said this, anything I'll be,

you'll want, you'll see,
your sweetheart, anything
you say, a bird.

You said this, we were nesting,
spine to chest, your breasts pressed
like two hands holding on

for anything, a sweetheart,
sweat on flesh, two birds.

5.

You spoke:

The shallows are murky
where your feet floundered.

your spine a river
& my chest a cutbank.

Drawing your hands
from the current, you drape water
down your hair so strands

Your ribs stone pillars
& my mouth constant wind.

settle on your neck. As you turn
to me, a thread dissects
your forehead. Skitter bugs

My hand a shovel
& your stomach hard earth.

crackle over the sound
of river falling from you.
You smell the way people ought to:

Loving someone, you said, is knowing
all the ways you are a destruction of their life.

torn from skin towards the current
of earth, dried grass, & sweat.

6.

A man
 walks, strolls,
shutters, stutters,
 strays or stallions
down the path
where he sees, on the sidewalk, two birds.

A bird is a bird, he says. A bird is a bird is a bird
is a person. Is a person a bird? She eats seeds

from a white dish & requires water.
When winter renames the windrows in snow,
she downs in the plumage of blankets,

the warmer perch of furnace.
Hawking her eyes
to the window, she watches a V of geese

confide southward in wind, wings steering & shifting
the friction. Together they hit the horizon's height:

Bird, know

from which shift of wind
 hunger emerges.

7.

We lay in a nest of covers, having pretended,
on your request, to be birds. Lamplight drew

florets of yellow
in the cleave of your breasts.
When you breathed, your skin dipped,

bright to shadow, egg-white to pains-grey,
said our bodies once subsisted as clay,

(red riverbank, speak of crawdads
red riverbank, speak of shore fires)

Kneeling near the river I reach in
both palms, pull them up, as if to soothe
my face, though I only hold
them out, watching water materialize.

as water, phosphorus, floret & light.
Leaning over me, you drew lips

A glop of clay rests between my fingers.
I pass it to you & you set it in a basket.
With the basket full we sit on a large stone
& craft several plates. The sky is a well
where the water is too far down to see.
We set the plates on a slab of earth
& stand there, in the night, with no one
but the thrumming of the current.
Highway lights muted through trees.

above my adam's apple, lines feathered

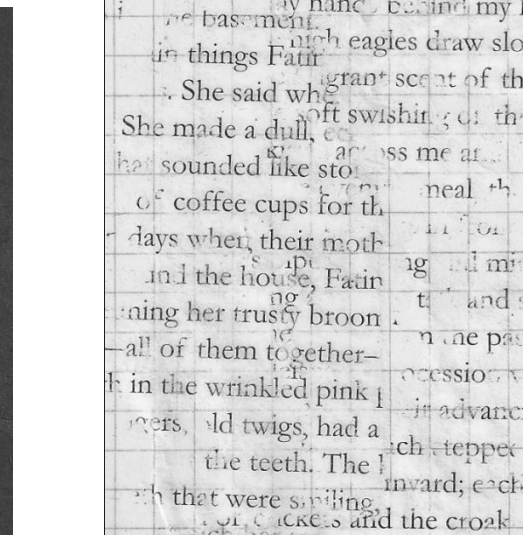
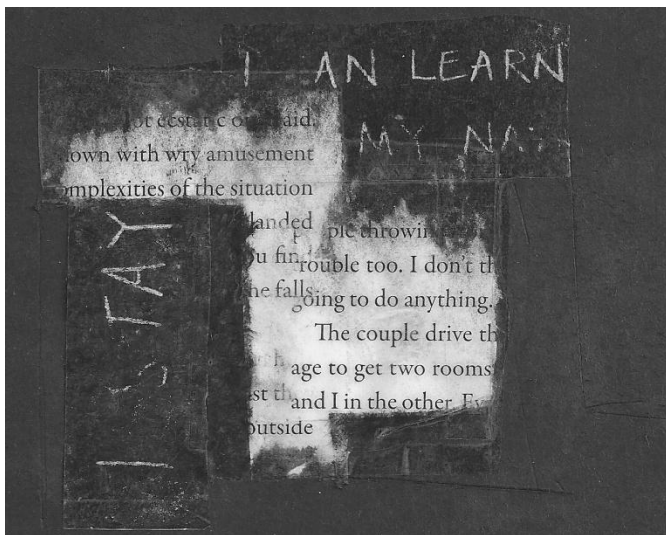
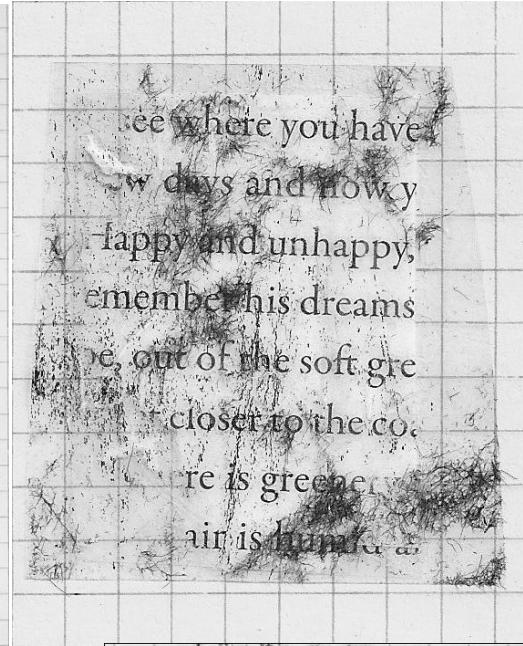
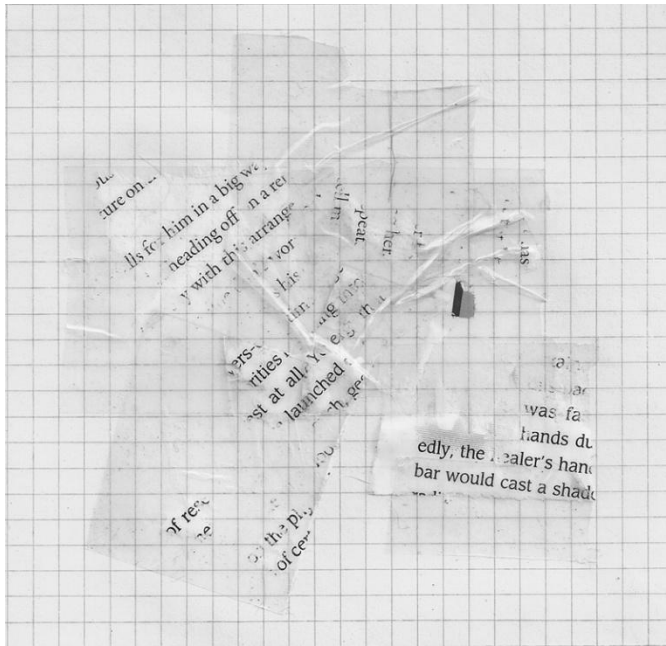
from your eyes. I could call you
another. Anything other than—

Outside, two cardinal's
ruffled their wings against each other,

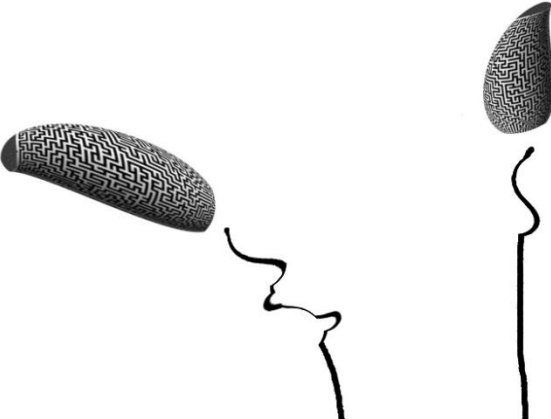
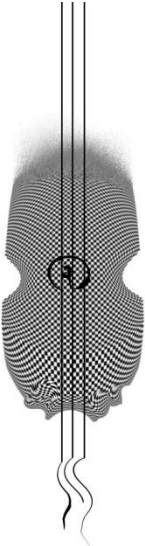
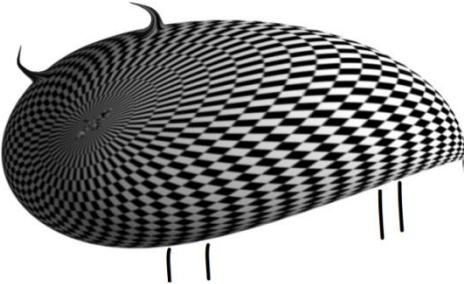
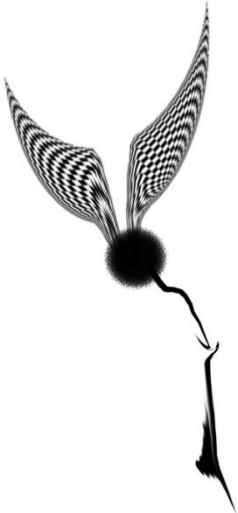
one bird rising, the other knocking it down.
Over my throat

your arms loomed, pupils the brown spots
on robin eggs. *Tell me we will never be
those birds.*

Adam Braffman

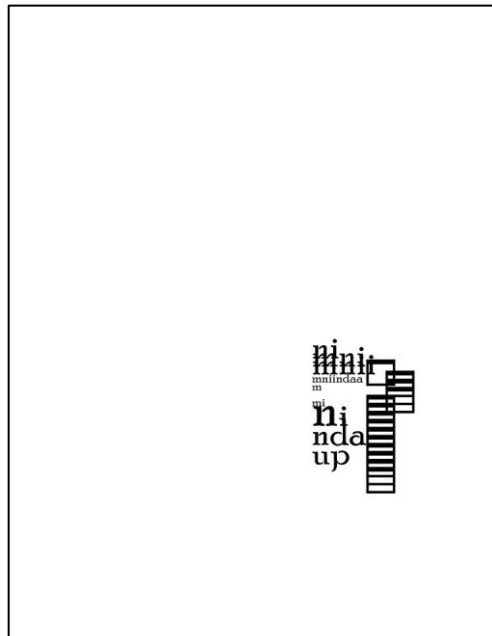
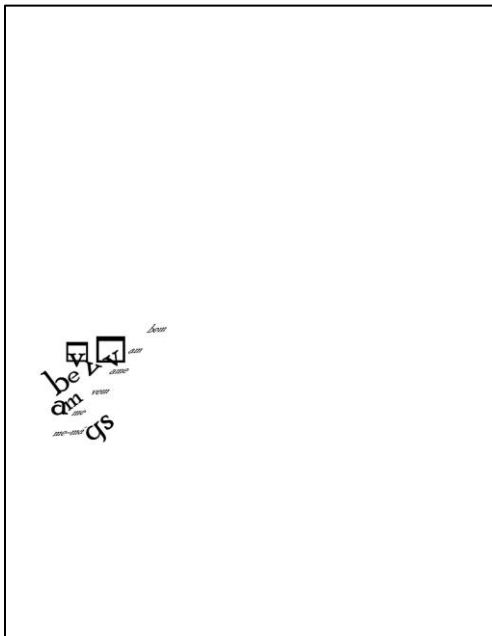
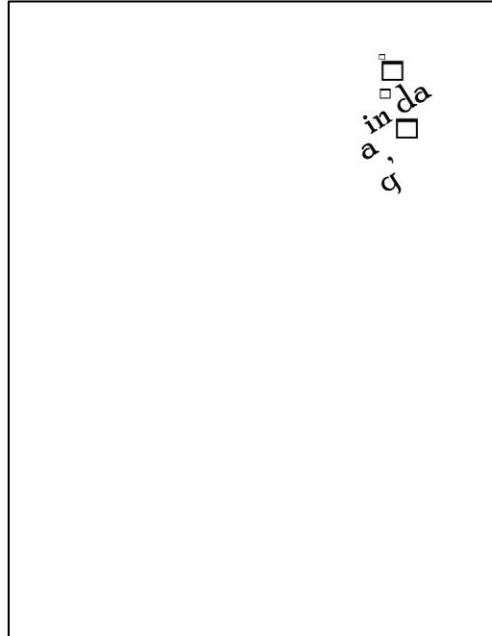
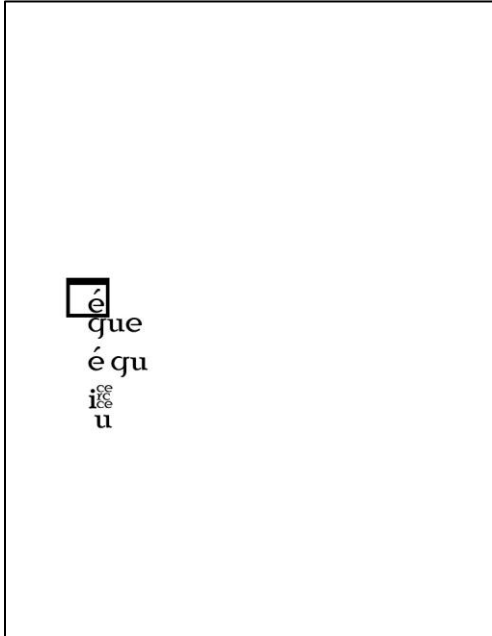


Diana Magallon



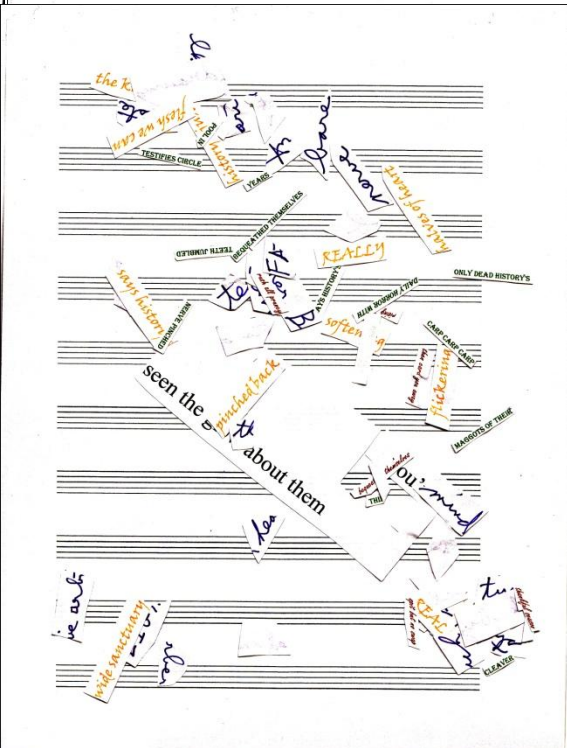
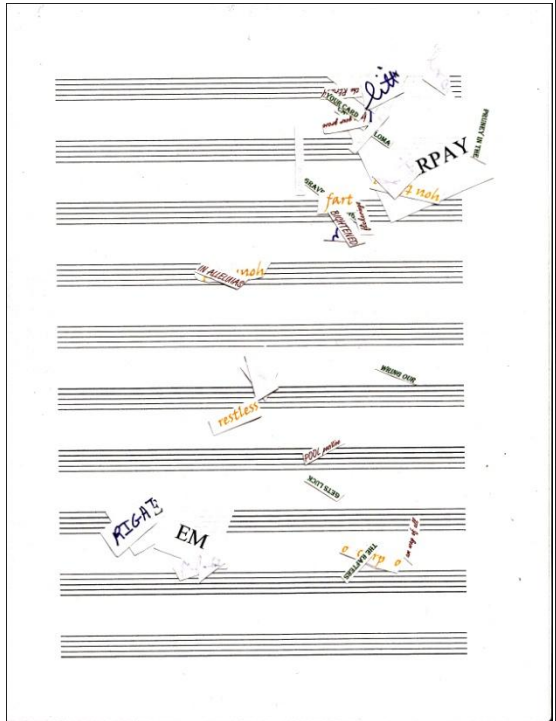
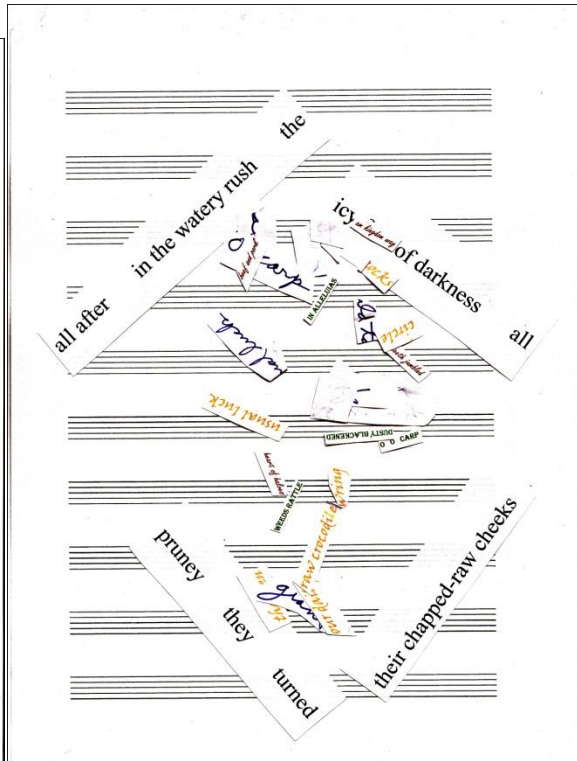
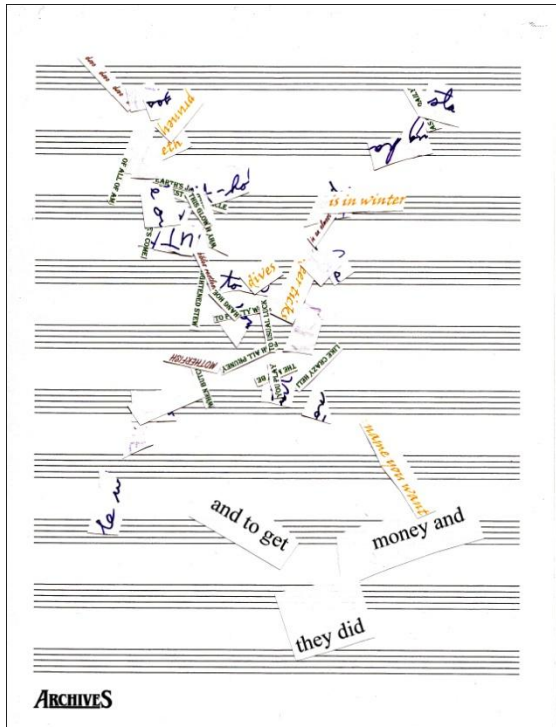
bruno neiva

vem que se bem 6-10

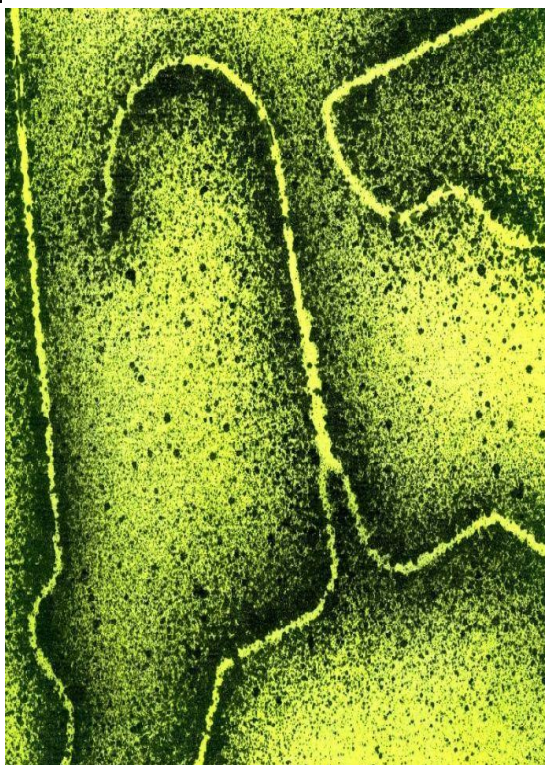
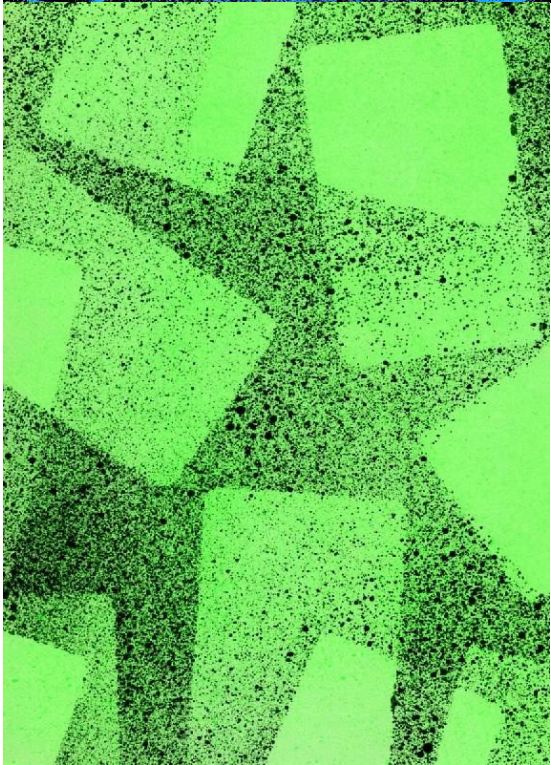
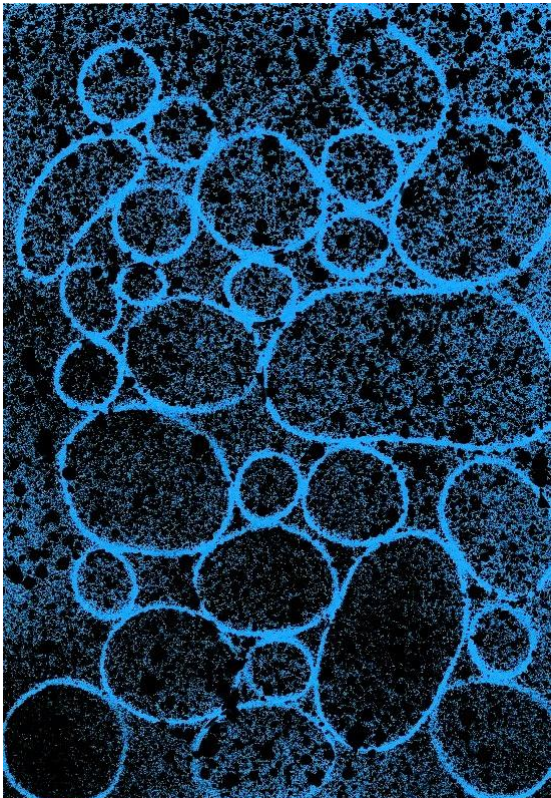


esq
.tz e
in
ad
ce

Joel Chace



Fabio Sassi



Special Feature: New Fiction from Orlando, Florida

Edited by KP Giordano

Teege Braune

The Conarium

I used my two normal eyes to examine my third eye in the middle of my forehead as it glared back at me from my reflection in the mirror.

"I hate this third eye," I said aloud.

"I like it," my girlfriend said as she strolled by in her bathrobe. "It's so blue."

It was indeed a brighter, more vibrant blue than my other eyes, and the puffy, red corners and swollen blood vessels of my normal eyes were blue in the third.

"I still don't like it," I said. "I can't go to work like this."

My girlfriend sighed from the edge of the tub where she sat pulling on her pantyhose.

"Well, I've got something for you," I told the eye as I removed the mask in the drawer next to the bathroom sink. The mask looks just like me. It even has a short, red beard and a large freckle on its cheek like I do.

"I wish you wouldn't do that," my girlfriend said. "You could probably see God with that eye."

"You don't even believe in God," I scoffed. "And anyway, I can't see anything with this eye. I don't even know how to close it. It's like it has a mind of its own."

As in response the eye protruded alarmingly from my forehead as though it would leap from my face and scamper off.

"I can't go to work like this," I repeated and unfolded the mask. "It's obscene."

"Do what you want," my girlfriend sighed. "You always do anyway."

She got up and stormed out of the bathroom.

"What? Are you mad about it now?" I shouted, but she didn't respond. She was already gone.

I tucked the bottom of the mask into my shirt and stretched it across my face where it zips up. I used a forefinger to tug at the heavy, steel chains around my neck, which tend to become unbearably tight around midday, especially when I wear my mask.

The mask is so snug I have to hold it closed with one hand as I yank up on the zipper with the other. Starting at my neck, I wrenched the zipper roughly over the chains and pulled it over my chin and up around my nose. I hesitated at the third eye, which blinked sadly and shed a single tear.

"I'm sorry," I muttered under my breath. "I'll let you out this weekend."

We both knew the weekend, if it was to come at all, was a long way off.

I pulled the zipper over my third eye and tucked the toggle into my hair. The eyeholes of the mask fit my other two eyes perfectly. If you don't look too close, you can barely see the zipper and hardly tell that I am wearing a mask at all. I tightened my tie and felt ready for work.

Inside the mask I could tell my third eye was closed, maybe sleeping, maybe even dying. I hope you do die, for both our sakes, I thought and immediately felt guilty.

And you, reader, you expect me to teach you anything? Hypocrite reader, my double, my twin!

Nathon Holic

Possible Regrets For the Supposed Hero of *Dark Side of the Moon*

Giles is standing on the bridge of the spacecraft, and though he knows he is going to die, he is happy because he knows it will be a heroic death. Despite a number of bloody scuffles and violent explosions in the past few hours, he still believes himself to look soap-opera-star perfect: bright eyes, square jaw, blonde hair shiny and combed back into a Gordon Gekko power-mullet, face smudged in all the right places so that he looks more like an “Abercrombie Goes to Space” advertisement than a space pilot who has witnessed his crewmates’ excruciating deaths, and who has just learned that the reason for these deaths has something to do with his ship passing through the space version of the Bermuda Triangle, and now the Devil—yes, that Devil, capital D—has assumed human form on the ship and...well, it’s all complicated really, but here’s the important part: Giles plans to look the Devil in the eye and say, “If this is God’s will, then so be it. If not, then I’ll see you in Hell!” And then he will hit the bright-red self-destruct button and blow the spacecraft to bits, and man, can you top that? To be a hero, and to also deliver such a clever one-liner? This is the year 2022, and if people are still using the expression “OMG,” they will save it for moments like this one.

So don’t get nervous, Giles. Try not to remember that your entire life has led to this point. Try not to think about the fact that, no matter your previous humiliations or failures, you get to tell off the motherfucking *Devil!* This is it. This is redemption.

But now Giles is thinking that there are so many moments in his life worth regretting. The idea of one’s entire life passing before their eyes is about as cliché as a bright-red self-destruct button, but damn, it really happens. Giles is re-living every regrettable moment. Every. Single. One.

Pound the chest, Giles. Pound it. Shake your head, shake away the thoughts.

Giles is not afraid of dying, no sir. Right now, he has the chance to be a hero. He was born for this. He could have died gruesomely or painfully like his unattractive crew-mates, each of whom was eviscerated in ways suspiciously similar to scenes from the *Alien* movies. How embarrassing, how pointless, to die a rip-off death. But not Giles. No, the fear of imminent death does not make him nervous. Blowing up a trillion-dollar spacecraft to destroy the Devil is a good way to die, heroic enough to wipe away the memory of his mother walking in on him while he was masturbating, or a dozen fly-down/penis-poking-out-of-his-boxers situations, a hundred cliffhanger boogers or oregano-bits-in-between-his-two-front-teeth.

Giles is ready to confront the Devil, ready to say “I’ll see you in hell!”

How awesome!

But shit, maybe this death isn’t so awesome.

Although Giles will suffer his death in the year 2022, long after the release of the 1998 film *Armageddon* (in which Bruce Willis offers himself up in an equally heroic space sacrifice-for-the-good-of-mankind (it should be noted that Willis did not have to contend with the presence of the Devil, only with a potentially Earth-destroying asteroid, so maybe it’s not quite the same thing)), we can’t be certain that

Bruce Willis hadn't made this final stand (1998, remember) after first watching the film *Dark Side of the Moon*, released in the year 1990 though the true events upon which the film is based (the events being recounted here in this story) occur in 2022. One does not need a graph to see the inherent difficulties in attempting to unravel and determine which character's sacrifice came first. Whatever. The thing is, Giles is living in the year 2022 and he is now suddenly aware of that Bruce Willis death scene, and he thinks: Shit, I *am* going to die a rip-off death.

But wait, it gets worse.

The more that Giles thinks about it, he comes to understand a much bigger problem: he will have an awesome death, but no one (aside from the Devil) will be around to see it. Giles is the type of guy, remember (handsome, eloquent, golden-haired, deliciously thick-muscled, but not in veni-gross tradition of professional wrestlers or football players), who should be the center of attention. But that's not the case. No one ever seems to listen to Giles. When he cracks jokes or tells stories back at the base on Earth, other pilots seem to always interrupt the narrative just as Giles races toward the punchline...and despite another five or six attempts to butt back in and start over and regain the attention of the other pilots, Giles is always drowned out by the gravelly voices of his more assertive co-workers, his joke falling away to burn in the atmosphere. "Giles is still talking?" someone will inevitably ask, and they all howl with laughter, and Giles shuts up and shuts down.

That's not to say Giles is ignored entirely, of course: the women off-base, the ones who work the bars around Cocoa Beach and look like *True Blood* waitresses, every one of them taut and supple and pouring out of cut-off jeans and ripped t-shirts better used as carwash towels, 20-something model-types who are too good for this backwater Florida town but hey, they love the beach and the sunshine, and most of all they love space pilots, and they like telling Giles to fuck them to the song "Take My Breath Away," or "Danger Zone," because they love—oh God, it makes them hot—love love *love* his late '80s/ early '90s Hollywood mullet. It's like *Beverly Hills 90210* or *Melrose Place* to the next fucking level. It's *Days of Thunder* meets *Poison* meets *MacGyver*. And they run their fingers through the hair and ride him like a rock star, each living her own fantasy to which Giles has no access.

And he likes that they do this, he doesn't want to complain...but none of the girls ever want to *talk* to him or *listen* to him. Most can barely remember his name. Shit, why can't any of the pilot-groupies just tell him that they appreciate his thoughts on the unending Afghanistan War, or on the possibilities of uranium-powered cars, or on the future of the *Transformers* franchise (yes, it's still going strong in 2022)? Is he just a joke-fuck? Are they making fun of him?

Shannon—she of the shortest cut-off jean shorts, she of the insatiable sexual appetite—actually tackled him as he left simulation training a few weeks ago, then recorded the two of them fucking in the Zero Gravity Room. When he finally went into space, she put it on YouTubeXXX. "Fuck me, Maverick!" Shannon screams in the video, and you can tell that Giles is uncomfortable, that he wants to ask her to call him by his real name.

And because his spacecraft only has poor-quality black-and-white television sets (NASA budget cuts: recycling old parts from the '80s and '90s, rather than using brand-new digital sets), Giles has not even seen his own amateur porn video. "You're on YouTube," Shannon told him on the TV phone a couple nights before the bizarre events depicted in *Dark Side of the Moon*, the gruesome deaths and the Devil and the explosion and all that.

Giles was curious. “You put me on...YouTube?”

“The world loves your hair,” Shannon said.

“My hair?” he asked. “You said that the video was for your career. Your acting.”

“Yeah, that too,” Shannon said. “The Zero Gravity Room made my body look fantastic. But really, you can’t even see my face.”

“Can’t see your face?”

“The camera is mostly focused on you.”

“Wait, what? On *me*? You told me that—”

“You’re bringing that hair back, baby,” she told him on the TV phone, and she laughed. “You should see the comment boards.”

“Oh God,” he said. “Oh God, what?” And he tried to think of something else to say, couldn’t, then tried to muster a laugh so that Shannon might think he “got” the joke, but before he could, Shannon said, “Gotta go. Talk to you later, Maverick.” And the TV phone clicked off and Giles sat alone in the Communication Room with a half-eaten tube of freeze-dried strawberry paste, wondering now whether *anyone* took him seriously: when the other pilots joked about how he needed a larger helmet, was it friendly or mean-spirited?

But really, Giles, who cares about that anymore?

You are standing in the bridge of your spacecraft and you are ready to become a take-charge hero and to tell the Devil “*See you in Hell!*” and it doesn’t matter that you have a mullet, or that you were in a sex tape, or that you have been ridiculed by the entire planet, because this will make up for all of it. This is it, Giles. This is it, and your heroism will be immortalized, of course it will, of course this will become a movie because why else am I writing about it?, and with elements like this—mullets, explosions, spaceships, the Bermuda Triangle, the Devil—it will make the *best fucking movie ever and everyone in the world will see it and you’ll be redeemed!*

And it happens, sort of. Giles confronts the Devil, says his line, doesn’t mess it up.

Spaceship explodes.

But Giles never considers the other problem: that he is (*was*) agnostic, and that he should have known that—when you see the Devil face to face...the Devil, remember, *literally* the Devil—you don’t continue your agnosticism. That’s stupid. Instead of trying to talk shit to the Devil and trying to make a great final scene for a movie, shouldn’t you have recited John 3:16 or something, because now, Giles, you will literally see the Devil in Hell—no pun intended, hey, these are the rules of the world, sir, and you had your chance—and in the end, the most accurate depiction of your confrontation with the Devil was a 1990 movie called *Dark Side of the Moon* that is available on Netflix Instant Play, but who will ever watch it? And on Earth, rumors will circulate about the ship explosion, and do you really expect that

anyone will imagine that you—Giles, the mullet-haired guy from the sex tape—sacrificed your ship and your crew in order to destroy Satan? I mean, really. Is that what you think?

The more likely question asked by Earthlings on the ground will be this: Did you see that one of the pilots in the spaceship explosion was in an amateur porno? Dude *must* have been unstable.

Among the hundreds of thousands of online comments and blogs and news articles written about the space tragedy, not one will hypothesize that Giles might have stared the Devil down and uttered such a big-balled statement.

To the contrary: after the tragedy, Shannon the Cocoa Beach waitress will finally, under pressure from both NASA and her new agent (“I see big roles in your future, baby,” he’ll tell her, rubbing her leg), remove the video from YouTubeXXX, and the TV movies about the explosion will not resemble the 1990 film *Dark Side of the Moon* in the slightest, will not characterize Giles as Bruce Willis but instead as a weird Hal 2000/Paris Hilton/Ash-the-insane-android-from-*Alien* hybrid, a malfunctioning sex-crazed spaceman who went crazy and obliterated his colleagues, and film critics will lament that the story offered so little honest exploration of the tragic explosion, that the villain at the story’s center—Giles—felt like one of the biggest rip-off characters in cinematic history.

Chris Wiewiora

Halfway to Everywhere

You can't believe what your daughter did. Heather just unzipped her jacket and then crossed her arms, pushing up her teenage cleavage at the college boy standing behind the register here at Smash Burger. It's too late to do anything other than grab Heather by the elbow and pull her away to a table.

You don't know where Heather got one of those plunging deep v-neck halter-tops and why she would wear it today. You don't know a lot about where your daughter has been and why she does the things she does. You promised yourself that you would try not to say anything about anything. So, disregarding the death-stare Heather gives you; you go back, pay, and pick up the two all-Angus-beef burgers and one order of rosemary fries. You expect the college boy to say something about the two of you looking like sisters, but he doesn't.

At the table, Heather stares at the floor. She scuffs her feet on the restaurant's linoleum and you remember how when you still thought of her as your little girl she used to sit on the swing at the playground and drag her shoes through the mulch chips.

As soon as you sit down, Heather gets up.

"What are you doing?" you ask, condemning and congratulating yourself for taking this long to ask that question.

"Going to the bathroom," Heather says. "Okay?" She lifts her eyebrows and tilts her head toward the side hallway.

You realize whether or not she has to go she'll walk by the boy again, but you think she's already done everything anyway. Heather doesn't see you nod. You think how easy it is to just let them go, do anything.

This morning—one day before Heather made today's appointment at the agency, two days before she told you that she was pregnant, and three days before she found out—you glanced at the World-Herald's headline about the Greeks leaving their kids in the streets, because they couldn't afford them. You remember a few years ago when a man right here in Omaha left his nine children at a hospital. He could afford them, he just didn't want them.

Heather comes back to your table and sits down. She puffs a breath from her bottom lip to get her bangs out of her face.

"They put mustard on my burger," Heather says, slumping into her chair.

"Just scrape it off," you say, reaching for some fries.

"I can't eat this," Heather says.

You want to tell Heather that she doesn't know about sacrifice. It isn't about eating mustard on a burger. Still, you trade burgers with your daughter.

"Thanks," Heather says. Her cheeks pull into a closed-mouth smile.

After lunch, on the ride home, you glance at Heather nodding off in the co-pilot chair of your sedan. You remember when she was a newborn and would fall asleep in the backseat with that gummy, toothless grin of hers and you couldn't help but smile back and coo in the rearview mirror. You realize you were Heather's age now when you were pregnant. You consider how you knew then as you know now—regardless of everything—you could never give away your child and you wonder how Heather was able to make that decision.

Contributors' Notes

Robyn Art's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Denver Quarterly*, *Conduit*, *Slope*, *The Hat*, *The New Delta Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *LaPetiteZine*, *Coconut*, *Shampoo*, and *canwehaveourballback*. She is the author of *The Stunt Double In Winter* (Dusie Press 2008), which was selected as a Finalist for the 2005 Sawtooth Poetry Prize.

Wes Benson is the poetry editor of *Cranky*. His work has appeared in *Convergence*, *The Cortland Review*, *The Cultural Society*, and other journals (several of which begin with letters other than "C").

Adam Braffman resides in Syracuse, New York. His work has appeared in *>killauthor* and elsewhere.

Teege Braune lives in Orlando, FL with his girlfriend and two cats. He is a bartender who struggles with daily road rage. Recently, he has been included in *Burrow Press Review's 15 Views of Orlando*.

Joel Chace has published work in print and electronic magazines such as **6ix*, *The Tip of the Knife*, *Counterexample Poetics*, *OR*, *Country Music*, *Infinity's Kitchen*, and *Jacket*. He has published more than a dozen print and electronic collections, most recently *Sharpsburg*, from *Cy Gist Press*, and *Blake's Tree*, from *Blue & Yellow Dog Press*.

Robin Clarke's poetry and prose has appeared or is forthcoming in *Conduit*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Fence*, *Sentence*, *Slope* and elsewhere. She teaches writing at the University of Pittsburgh, where she received an MFA in poetry and MA in Literature.

Jesse DeLong lives in Tuscaloosa where he is an MFA candidate at the University of Alabama. This poem is from the manuscript *The Amateur Scientist's Notebook*. Other work can be found or is forthcoming from *Best New Poets 2011*, *Mid-American Review*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Indiana Review* and elsewhere. His chapbook, *Tearings, and Other Poems*, was released by *Curly Head Press*. Listen to him reading at <http://vimeo.com/20156489>.

Dot Devota's book *And The Girls Worried Terribly* is forthcoming from *Noemi Press*. She is the author of *The Eternal Wall* (*Cannibal Books*) and *MW: A Field Guide to the Midwest* (*Editions 19*).

KP Giordano's fiction and nonfiction has appeared in *The Fanzine*, *Trillium*, and *About Place Journal*.

Victoria Henry's work has appeared in *Enormous Rooms*, the literary journal of the University of Utah.

Nathan Holic teaches writing courses at the University of Central Florida and serves as the Graphic Narrative Editor at *The Florida Review*. He is also the editor of the anthology *15 Views of Orlando* (*Burrow Press*), a literary portrait of the city featuring short fiction from fifteen Orlando authors young and old, local and far-removed, established and aspiring. His fiction has appeared in print at *Iron Horse* and *The Apalachee Review*, and online at *Hobart* and *Necessary Fiction*, and his graphic narratives—which include the serialized adaptation of Alex Kudera's novel *Fight For Your Long Day* (available monthly at *Atticus Review*), and "Clutter," a story structured as a home décor catalogue (available at the *Smalldoggies Magazine*)—have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

Jane Lewty is currently an assistant professor of English Literature and creative writing at the University of Amsterdam and holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her poems and reviews have appeared in numerous magazines. Her first collection, *Bravura Cool*, was the winner of the 1913 First Book Prize in 2011, and will be published later this year.

Diana Magallon is an experimental artist and the author of *Del oiseau et del ogre*.

bruno neiva is a Portuguese writer, poet and artist. He has published several chapbooks, such as: "early-natttura", "polar coordinates and N2OC10H12", "sad items" "natttura1-7", "Nuvem Ruim", "o livro das minhas proezas de pesca 1-8", "Samples 17-24.", "Samples 9-16" and "Samples 1-8". His work can also be found in *otoliths*, *BlazeVox*, *moria*, *ditch*, and *The Anemone Sidecar*. His work has been exhibited in Portugal and Spain. He has a blog at umaestruturassimsempudor.blogspot.com

Fabio Sassi is a visual artist from Bologna, Italy.

Adam Strauss has poems appearing or forthcoming in *The Offending Adam*, *Raft*, *Spiral Orb*, *Upstairs At Duroc*, *the Tusculum Review*, and *the Parthenon West Review*.

Lynn Strongin is a native New Yorker who has published over 14 books of poetry, plus the novel *Nikko's Child*. She is also the editor of the anthologies *The Sorrow Psalms: A Book of Twentieth Century Elegy* (University of Iowa Press), and its follow-up *Crazed by the Sun: Poems of Ecstasy*. She lives in British Columbia..

Chris Wiewiora is a MFA candidate at Iowa State University's Creative Writing and Environment program. His fiction has been published on *YouMustBeThisTalltoRide.net*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The Planet Formerly Known As Earth*, *The Quotable*, and *Saw Palm* as well as in the e-anthology "Realist Fiction" by *CICADA* and *15 Views of Orlando* by Burrow Press. He mostly writes nonfiction and regularly contributes to *the Good Men Project*. Read more at www.chriswiewiora.com.

Jane Wong is a recent graduate from the MFA program in Poetry at the University of Iowa and am currently writing and working in Missoula. Some of her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Versal*, *Born Magazine*, *Octopus*, and *Guernica*.