

conci's

spring 2017



# concīs

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## CONTACT

[editor@concis.io](mailto:editor@concis.io)

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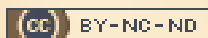
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## BEST VIEWED IN SINGLE PAGE MODE

OS X Preview: View > Single Page (⌘-2)  
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Cover: "Inspiration" by Amanda Lo  
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## silo

the year I spent eating  
eyelashes suckling  
a hangover hippocampus  
slamming on & off like a stagelight  
I couldn't stop watching  
that trashbag caught in a tree  
          pray for a break in the blight  
how many people won't  
speak to you now  
there was a silo I knew  
that burnt down and what remained  
was a cement ring this  
is autopsy membrane  
fixation in all my territory  
I find so little tender

---

Caitlin Scarano is a poet in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee PhD creative writing program. She was the winner of the 2015 *Indiana Review* Poetry Prize, and second place winner of *Ruminate Magazine's* 2016 Spiritual Nonfiction Prize. She has two poetry chapbooks: *The White Dog Year* (dancing girl press, 2015) and *The Salt and Shadow Coiled* (Zoo Cake Press, 2015). Her recent work can be found in *Granta*, *Crazyhorse* and *Ninth Letter*.

## A Strange Thing from the Deep

A light drizzle greeted the ferry as it arrived in Newfoundland, six hours across Cabot Strait from Nova Scotia. A fog shrouded the low hills bordering the harbor, misty white hands trying to reclaim the land for a sea reluctant to give it up.

Later, I found a passage in John Gimlette's book, *Theatre of Fish*, with a similar image of Newfoundland from 19th century American explorer Robert T.S. Lowell: "A monstrous mass of rock and gravel, almost without soil, like a strange thing from the bottom of the great deep, lifted up suddenly, into the sunshine and storm, but belonging to the watery darkness out of which it has been reared."

Newfoundland is nature's great experiment to saturate stone. The rocks seem always wet, even in the sun, which has no power to dry them. Bogs and fens are everywhere – in the valleys, on the moors, and up mountain slopes, where not even gravity can loosen the water.

But the rock is stubborn and not quickly washed away. It is the northern extent of the Appalachians, part of the oldest surviving mountain system on the planet, older than the Rockies, the Alps, and the Himalayas, formed on the ancient super-continent of Pangaea.

After 480 million years of rain, snow, wind, freeze, thaw, and scouring glacial ice, the mountains have been worn to their nubs, but nubs that still reach half a mile high. The sea can only reclaim them one grain at a time.

---

**Richard LeBlond** is a retired biologist living in North Carolina. Since 2014, his essays and photographs have appeared in numerous U.S. and international journals, including *Montreal Review*, *High Country News*, *Compose*, *New Theory*, *Lowestoft Chronicle* and *Still Point Arts Quarterly*. His work has been nominated for *Best American Travel Writing* and *Best of the Net*.

## Crickets

Through the window of a childhood  
home, crickets filled the air with bubbles  
that they plucked, stridulations. A rapid-fire  
of vanishing rainbows popping  
into chirplets. My grandma used to sing

*Good night, sleep tight  
don't let the bed bugs bite  
if they do, promise  
to catch a few  
and we'll cook 'em up  
for the morning.*

On a clear summer night, the wind keyed  
across the trees, rolling the leaves  
like a tambourine. Jingles falling over  
dreams. Bubbles floating across the bath  
of my eyes, cavitations. I was an audience. Why  
wasn't that enough?

## Leeches

A leech floats along a pond  
like a man's flaccid penis  
who is enjoying a hot bath  
and the sight of his member  
poising. A leech, though,  
has circular saw teeth, genetic  
hardware for creating instant  
glory holes. Its spit and mucus  
slobbering—sticky and wispy  
like Jell-O shots—seals out  
any feeling as each frill  
of its head distends and  
ebbs. Gulp. Gulp.

---

Greg Lyons earned his MFA from the University of Alaska Fairbanks under Derick Burleson and Amber Flora Thomas. He currently teaches and writes in Oakland.

pollen glasses dark  
rust shimmers the universe  
lies charcoal the nest

A found poem composed from Tomas Tranströmer's poem "Morning Bird Songs," as translated by Robert Bly.

---

*Karen George* is author of the poetry collection *Swim Your Way Back* (Dos Madres Press, 2014), and four chapbooks, most recently *The Fire Circle* (Blue Lyra Press, 2016). Her work has appeared in *America*, *Adirondack Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Louisville Review* and *Still*. She reviews poetry and interviews poets at *Poetry Matters* and is co-founder and fiction editor of *Waypoints*.

## A Memory of the First Battle

At first our city's two Red Guard factions engaged in "civilized struggle"—using brush pens and words, big-character posters and leaflets, high-pitched broadcast and public debates, loud diatribes and, occasionally, fists to attack each other—until one side started to frequently parade the streets, shouting insulting and damaging slogans such as "Blah-blah is doomed," and that nettled the nerve of the said faction, middle and high school and college students who had successfully forced the city government to stop classes, so they could carry on the Cultural Revolution, and so they charged into the city's firehouses, where fire-fighters had been told not to resist the Red Guards, filled fire engines with sewage from big cesspools of communal toilets, drove to the streets, and sprayed their parading opponents—who might have been able to stand up against water cannons but ended up fleeing helter-skelter from the overwhelming foul smell—making the streets stink for days, so badly that stores stayed closed. That was how piss and shit and fire engines became the first real weapon in our city's "armed struggle," preceding steel rods and spears, which would, in turn, be replaced by rifles, machine guns, tanks, even warships, all supplies from arsenals stocked to aid Vietnam's resistance of the U.S., and when those weapons drew blood we'd hear stories such as friends of an injured student tying a towel below his leg wounds, a first-aid method they thought they had learned from war movies, until the boy shed all his blood and stopped breathing.

---

Xujun Eberlein has lived half a life each in China and the United States. She is the author of *Apologies Forthcoming*, a prize-winning short story collection. Her essays have won a number of awards and honors, including a notable mention in the *Best American Essays 2015*. She writes from Boston.

## Chapter Fourteen: Follow Here

All things are under the wings of doubt—  
cattle and the fruits of the earth,  
men and women,

the menstrual flux, the flow of milk  
and infirmity.

Between her legs,

with her hands, she summons her health  
as if it were flowing from the knife,  
alone without

the foundation of loss.

Some men came to a stream.

One of them took off his clothes

and went into the stream  
and tasted it and declared that it was true.

Without words, action is secret.  
Out of the water,  
the man's hand suddenly burned.

Under the threshold of the door,  
the bones of a name said

*I have my own hands, and a little hole,*

*unknown to touch or look.*

*I have seen the fields, the air,  
and been within the year to prove this.*

This poem is part of a book-length project which erases the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or the “Hammer of the Witches,” a text used during the Inquisition to hunt and convict witches, written by Heinrich Kramer and James Springer. I have taken the *1928 Rev. Montague Summers translation* as my source text.

**Phoebe Reeves** earned her MFA at Sarah Lawrence College, and now teaches English at the University of Cincinnati's Clermont College where she advises *East Fork: An Online Journal of the Arts*. Her chapbook *The Lobes and Petals of the Inanimate* was published by Pecan Grove Press in 2009. Her poems have recently appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Phoebe* and *Memorious*.

## The Little Match Girl

A single match isn't worth shit  
and she knows it. Is everyone  
really ignoring her or is she  
just feeling sorry for herself?  
You can't tell me she goes  
unnoticed: a girl on the boulevard  
half dressed. Someone out here  
is into that kind of thing, but  
what advice do we have for her,  
ladies? What about fair trade  
and quiet acquiescence?  
Think Cinderella, Snow White  
or any number of dolls who held  
their wares aloft like flaming cakes.  
Call it a modern day fairy tale:  
A girl on a street corner,  
a couple of matches to her name,  
a holy host of magazines plying  
her with pithy asides and makeup  
application tricks: You, too, can have  
this couch, this fire, this tree, this man,  
all you have to do is freeze.

---

Kelly Fordon's work has appeared in *The Florida Review*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, *Rattle* and various other journals. She is the author of three poetry chapbooks. The first one, *On the Street Where We Live*, won the 2012 Standing Rock Chapbook Award and the latest one, *The Witness*, won the 2016 Eric Hoffer Award for the Chapbook and was shortlisted for the Grand Prize. Her novel-in-stories, *Garden for the Blind*, was chosen as a Michigan Notable Book, a 2016 Foreword Reviews' INDIEFAB Finalist, a Midwest Book Award Finalist, an Eric Hoffer Finalist and an IPPY Awards Bronze Medalist in the short story category. She works for the Inside Out Literary Arts Project in Detroit.

## Tuvan Lullaby

Because he can no longer sleep, Roy spends nights  
seated against the fridge, which is the least of all  
the strangeness that has bubbled up like swamp gas  
since he lost his lover. He sees a spider with cinnamon  
stick legs, two city workers shove the sun down a manhole,  
and other such delusions. Besides rest, Roy just wants  
to walk a bridge that doesn't turn to dragon. He doesn't mind  
the Tuvans, though, three men in silk who huddle close  
and sing from their throats. It is a comfort to have them near  
when a radish becomes his lover's eye and blinks.  
At the Laundromat, Roy's Tuvans rescue him  
from a Mariachi serenade, blare tone over tone  
under tone until the Mariachis stagger out, stunned.  
And although it's unlike a delusion to cook a stew  
and wash the pots, that's what his Tuvans do back  
at what has become Roy's apartment, his alone,  
a sight stranger than the rest. At night the Tuvans lay  
Roy down, sit on his bed and sing of horses or melt water  
or sun, Roy doesn't know the words or how to sleep  
but the song is a hard bridge and his steps steady.

## At the End of the Last Glacial Period

A herd flees,

fords the river's sun-bright passage—

A white incised line follows a bone burin—

To accentuate the counterpoint,

a sudden turn to adagio—

A gesture preserved, a gesture alive in the act of making a mark—

## Embracing the Bodhisattvas

Night sky with slivered waning moon. A river filled with flares and riven with flaws. Glow-sticks in underwater glass jars: a controlled burn of spiritual ambiguity. Flint and stone walls encase the Buddhist temple. Canded lanterns illuminate paired hands. An ancient tree aglow with sparkling seeds. The lush mountain range is tonal. Listen: raindrops make the brass bowls sing.

---

**Robert Miltner's** book of prose poetry is *Hotel Utopia* (New Rivers Press, 2011, selected by Tim Seibles for its Many Voices book award); his collection of short fiction is *And Your Bird Can Sing* (Bottom Dog Press, 2014). His nonfiction has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Los Angeles Review*, *Great Lakes Review*, *Pit-head Chapel*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Eastern Iowa Review* and *DIAGRAM*. Miltner is Professor of English at Kent State University Stark and edits *The Raymond Carver Review*.

## Soldier Child

Two dark oak doors with white porcelain knobs. The dun plaster and lathe walls frame a boy of thirteen. He wears an unbuttoned double-breasted coat clutched at his chest by his left hand. His cropped hair is as dark as hardwood floors. A turned-up collar, his torn pants and bare feet. The white bandage wound around his left knee. The weight he won't put on it. The way he stares back, his eyes black as the holes of gun barrels. The way he doesn't blink.

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## The Last City that Went Underwater

alone, now, you rose up,  
held in humus milk,  
caterwauled to the cacophony  
of fluid strewn with silage—  
with a coronet of frozen dark  
and sequined stars held to  
your head perched low,  
Blue pickerel weeds snarled  
glossy leaves into your hands,  
caught in the swath of dragonflies  
and great crested newts—  
an almost brooding sound,  
less wind-swayed in its journey  
around the mist-rinsed pond,  
bayed a rustle fainter than earth  
over your skin: a pelt of wiggles-  
suckled, algae surfaced, delicate light  
hatched in tapestry of perennial  
sandy loam, gilded with bare bones  
of your city that went underwater—

---

**Lana Bella** is the author of three chapbooks, *Under My Dark* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2016), *Adagio* (Finishing Line Press, 2016) and *Dear Suki: Letters* (Platypus 2412 Mini Chapbook Series, 2016). You can find her poetry and fiction in *2River*, *California Quarterly*, *Chiron Review*, *Columbia Journal*, *Grey Sparrow*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Otoliths* and *Poetry Salzburg Review*, among others. She resides in the US and the coastal town of Nha Trang, Vietnam, where she is a mom of two far-too-clever-frolicsome imps.

## [Interactive Objects]

Both place-based and place-less, this is a poem of great disloyalty. These are interactive objects discolored by the touch of people's hands.

It is time to look at the concentric rings of once-whole wood. Here is the drought that starved us out. Here, the fire that barely killed us.

We contract the disease that killed him —remember which salad dressing to order, but not the man we cherished like a vow.

---

C. Kubasta is the author the chapbooks, *A Lovely Box* and *&s*, and a full-length collection, *All Beautiful & Useless* (BlazeVOX, 2015). Her next book, *Of Covenants*, is forthcoming from Whitepoint Press in 2017. She is active with the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, and serves as Assistant Poetry editor with Brain Mill Press. She thinks poetry, like humor, porn, & horror, should be a body genre.

## It All Depends

Admiring the corporality of animals, we're parked in the ghost car. I have an indoor question: How many misspelled thoughts must I have, anyway? There's nothing more beautiful than wanting the impossible to be true, especially when it is. Time passes faster in the mountains, than it does by the sea. Like a drowned body, the sky's blue prairie floats overhead. Wind light as confetti. Maybe we should take a drive to the beach; go for a swim? I don't want to give away the ending, but I can tell you it's a beauty. No one attends their own funeral. Know what I'm saying? By the way, that outfit looks good on you. Although, it all depends on how you look at it.

---

Brad Rose was born and raised in Los Angeles, and lives in Boston. He is the author of *Pink X-Ray* (Big Table Publishing, 2015.) Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, Brad's poetry and fiction have appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*, *Folio*, *decomp*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Baltimore Review*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Off the Coast*, *Posit*, *Third Wednesday* and other publications. Brad is the author of three electronic chapbooks of extremely short poetry and prose: *Democracy of Secrets*, *Dancing School Nerves* and *Coyotes Circle the Party Store*.

## infanticide in outer space

because the concept of heaven renders us all bygone astronauts. because burning forever would, in my book, be better. because this is my book, goddammit, and your ghost just a character. a character i stone to death over and over, like a piñata whose precious insides turn out to be just blood and water. because i want to show you how even a wordsmith can stumble on mother, the first syllables to stick between the teeth and sift the rubble for relief. a word that even now precedes me, precedes *bondage*, *earth*, *trees*, *vaseline* and *ennui*. precedes the need to give myself over to the elements and then, in turn, retreat, tape together my cheeks and terrorize the moon's sleep with the memory of my confessor banishing me to the basement floor. by four in the morning, she'd awoke and spoke regretfully, but for me it will always be too late to go back to outer space, where the umbilical tethers taunt and chafe and the faraway planets don't know me by name, but by taste

---

Dylan Krieger is a transistor radio picking up alien frequencies in south Louisiana. She lives in the back of a little brick house with a feline reincarnation of Catherine the Great and sunlights as a trade mag editor. She is the author of *Giving Godhead* (Delete Press, 2017) and *dreamland trash* (Saint Julian Press, forthcoming). Her more recent projects include an irreverent reimagining of philosophical thought experiments and an autobiographical meditation on the tenets of the Church of Euthanasia.

## designated hitler

never trust a pitcher who refuses to hit his fair share, whether fair or foul, or else you'll end up whispering your wedding vows to the outfield, cleaning up after the septic run-on sentence of your body—fainting spells, blood-caked toenails, rose-gold swellings jetting pus around the five-pointed star of your breast. different from the rest, he told you the story of how he became designated hitter in college, adopted a fake name you remember (perhaps wrongly) as tucker, and somehow mustered the guts to face each pitch stone-cold sober—swearing off the devil's water, leafy greens and LS-dream fodder, not to mention children's tylenol, atenolol, pain relievers one and all. that's the kind of teetotaling ragdoll i would have let tattoo my forearm come fall, had the lager not robbed me of my faith in man and god. that's the happy-go-lucky glad-hander who threw the first pitch in the dirt, so it wouldn't hurt as much when its stitching ripped apart and left the earth

---

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## Make Wings

They shit too much,  
the swallows nest  
above the mail box  
with black eyeliner  
or wings on the eyes  
of Elizabeth Taylor  
who would be jealous  
of their blue brilliant as a  
bought jewel from the  
mouth of Richard Burton.

They strike in dips  
and ignore the beautiful  
women who catch them  
and use their forked  
tails to pencil in eyebrows.

## spice

hiked skirt, alert  
atoll, coral lace bleached to pieces  
blasted to patches of cover, duck  
under the fabric of safe damask  
hidden features of the past  
spiked earth coerced  
from circle to interrupted girth,  
fetish of flash, of fried fish  
spurted to Piscean heights  
shattering glass,  
ceilings of an active sex  
dispersed. She was a pretty young thing,  
the earth.

---

Ferral Willcox is a U.S. born poet and musician currently living in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Her work can be found in *Per Contra*, *Calamario*, *Sinister Wisdom* and other journals. A thirty minute performance poetry piece in three voices entitled "Waterfall" was included in the Q-Street venue at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Ferral spent two months in residence at the Starry Night Retreat in Truth or Consequences, NM. Her next residence was in Why, Arizona, creating a linguistic town-name sequence which inspired her move overseas.

## Hanalei Bay, 1971

Tourists wade at the edge of the surf,  
white swollen knees hover above the clay-  
colored foam — blimps following a parade.

Sand pours out of bathing suits shucked  
outside the backyard shower: bare flanks  
breaded like chicken cutlets, waiting. Yellow  
grains scratch the painted floorboards again.

## To the South

Five borders, three languages: I've left  
slate roofs and sausage rolls behind.  
In the empty compartment, the bed  
stretches out - whiter than home,  
starched, almost the smell of bottled  
clouds - shuddering at each unnamed  
stop, squealing by the late-night sidings.  
When magenta and chrome yellow  
hang in the windows, fields  
colored like cheap calendars taped  
to a pre-school wall, I'll step  
into the train station and speak  
its language like a toddler,  
with a wallet and a full set of keys.

## Familia Crest

One Medieval value  
Papal Borges Loyalty  
Submit Two Prince Jon  
Pre printing press Brut  
Of course of coarse  
Finally fallacio is free  
From bastards & fallacy

# A Sharp Startle

*from "The Pink Lady"*

distinct      the feeling  
I could neither move nor speak

he was gone.

I had      fallen silent  
as if  
That night  
had actually happened.

I stood out  
bare

my experience,  
a sharp    startle

he      terrified that  
home.

My    experience    was  
a sensation of being followed  
at night

My  
mother experienced this many times  
It became      common for each of us

An **erasure poem** using Nancy Roberts' novel *Georgia Ghosts* (John F. Blair Publications, 1997)

---

**Christopher Morgan** is a Lebanese American prose poet who grew up in Detroit, the Bible Belt of Georgia, and the San Francisco Bay Area, where he currently lives and co-manages **Nostrovial Press**. The author of two chapbooks, *Shadow Songs* (Sad Spell Press, 2015) and *Fables with Fangs* (Ghost City Press, 2016), his poetry has been published at Gargoyle, A cappella Zoo, Voicemail Poems, Yellow Chair Review and *Fruita Pulp*, among others. He loves hiking in the redwoods and happy hour margaritas.

# To Burn the Night

*from "Two Young Lovers"*

It takes  
rest

This      all day  
low point

ignore the hate  
he paid for it

the money      extravagant  
his language

I      see  
the man  
and walk  
down      toward      him.

I have  
come back  
to burn the      night

the work  
won't be safe for  
the children

I'm sorry      Listen.  
this mess is  
the only home I've ever had

An **erasure poem** using Nancy Roberts' novel *Georgia Ghosts* (John F. Blair Publications, 1997)

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## Aubade

Well meant is insincere, turn out their pockets and whatdoyouknow. This one would be a marriage, this a different set of rules. Keys on the kitchen table and the milk sour breath of happiness. Aubade, so easy to criticize, I know, the ones you do not know. Their tone rings reminiscent of nothing so simple to correct. Dead language roped around their wrists. Time's microscopic epic labels everything lost property. Less casual than formal. All on show.

---

Jonathan Jones is a freelance writer currently living and working in Rome. He qualified in 1999 with his M.A. in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University College and in 2004 with an MRes in Humanities from Keele University. He now teaches writing composition at John Cabot University in Rome. You can find his work in *The New Writer*, *Poetry Monthly*, *The Dr T.J. Eckleburg Review*, *Dream Catcher* and others.

## Salinity

Both of us gray enough to pass for blue,  
the great heron and I, in the tall cordgrass  
inspecting the silt for silver to sustain us.

I want to stilt with her through the mud  
and glasswort, tidal and flat, our salt circling  
the cracks in the cries we use to code infinity.

## One Saturday Afternoon

I watched my mother  
(Who had grown  
All of her fingernails  
Very long) choose  
Not to dust or clean  
The house that day

Instead she polished  
Each pointy oval tip  
A bright candy pink  
Twice over then added  
A translucent topcoat  
And let them air-dry

While she eased back  
Ignoring everything:  
The kitchen, my father,  
Even me, and leisured  
To read *Prisoner of Desire*  
On our old green sofa.

---

Tammy Robacker graduated from the Rainier Writing Workshop MFA program in Creative Writing, Poetry at Pacific Lutheran University (2016). She won the 2015 Keystone Chapbook Prize for her manuscript, "R". Her second poetry book, *Villain Songs* was just released by ELJ Publications. Tammy's poetry has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Alyss*, *Lumen*, *FRiGG*, *Tinderbox*, *Menacing Hedge*, *Chiron Review*, *Duende*, *So to Speak*, *Crab Creek Review* and others. Tammy was born in Germany, raised in Pennsylvania, and currently lives in Oregon with her fiancé.

## Perverted Karma

My mother passed down  
your 18 carat pinky ring.

An heirloom showpiece.  
Thick-built manly thing

boasting a square-cut garnet  
that crowned dead center.

But I sold the gold  
to an old fogey

at a curio shop.  
He pressed and pushed

his thumb clean through  
the rear end

until the gem broke free.  
Then dropped

your popped cherry  
in my palm for keeps.

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**Tammy Robacker** graduated from the Rainier Writing Workshop MFA program in Creative Writing, Poetry at Pacific Lutheran University (2016). She won the 2015 Keystone Chapbook Prize for her manuscript, "R". Her second poetry book, *Villain Songs* was just released by ELJ Publications. Tammy's poetry has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Alyss*, *Lumen*, *FRiGG*, *Tinderbox*, *Menacing Hedge*, *Chiron Review*, *Duende*, *So to Speak*, *Crab Creek Review* and others. Tammy was born in Germany, raised in Pennsylvania, and currently lives in Oregon with her fiancé.

## The Myth (4)

*The Company of Wolves, "The Story of Grandmother"*

All the pretty girls in their bright red hoods, against forest green, blizzard white, diamond mine, pure flame. Each her beast of cunning oncoming, filthy blast of desire, lostness of love. The dance behind everything a stumble through the woods, strut down a narrow path, fumble at the door. Behind it, always, grandma in grandma drag, rocking, knitting, humming a pop song, cuddling her Bible, cradling her shotgun. The guts in jugs on shelves, ferocious tease of teenage nipple, the cunt you never see. Everything turns from cartoon to feast of horror and back again, looping forever, origin story to grind of endtimes, sacraments of warning, damnation, redemption, salvation. The woodsman who comes chops everything up and stacks it in neat piles smeared with granny, the wolf, the girl. That he himself escapes is never in doubt. She forever puzzling over path of pins, path of needles, he confirmed and solemnized in path of axe.

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Jerry McGuire's most recent book of poems, *Venus Transit*, won the 2012 Outriders Poetry competition. He teaches film studies, creative writing, and poetics at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where he is co-Director of the program in Creative Writing.

## Ephesus

The temple is almost gone. Its remains settle snugly into a niche surrounded by grasses and poppies. The sun is so hot it turns the sky white, burns the chlorophyll out of the tops of the plants, putting all the colors together and makes everything seem bright and otherworldly. It's like finding an old shin bone in the grass. In many years, the stone will have worn further, time folding it gently back into the earth. All the while—if we have stayed away—the poppies will have claimed everything, falling into cracks, stretching their arms out, running over the hills and bones, spots of blood on a handkerchief.

## Association

There is erogenesis  
a slit between  
mint and molar  
the throwback  
safety of innocence

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Tricia DeJesus-Gutierrez's first attempt writing was at age eight, involving a boy who lived in the walls of her home. This worried her third grade teacher considerably. Nowadays, her writing is more well-received. Tricia lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with a zoo's worth of cats and dogs.

## Good Fellows

They told me to leave town and take the Russian with me. She had a penchant for pearl strings and ring tattoos on her fingers and toes.

It was suicidal not to comply. We barricaded the glass door of my house with chairs and mirrors, pulled the blinds down, ate caviar on buttered bread and drank champagne straight from the bottle while wearing nothing but gun holsters: in hers—the Desert Eagle, and in mine—Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum Revolver. I cocked my gun half a dozen times. In the morning, the stars faded, the neighbors ran away, three black limos arrived, and ten guys with AK-47s fanned out.

The Russian came out from the bathroom with a toothbrush in her hand.

“I hope they brought caviar,” she said. “We are running low.”

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**Mark Budman** was born in the former Soviet Union. His writing appeared in *PEN*, *American Scholar*, *Huffington Post*, *World Literature Today*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Mississippi Review*, *Virginia Quarterly*, *The London Magazine (UK)*, *McSweeney's*, *Sonora Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly* and elsewhere. He is the publisher of the flash fiction magazine *Vestal Review*. His novel *My Life at First Try* was published by Counterpoint Press.

## Anagrammed Variations of the American Dream

A ram cairned me  
In a crammed era [where]  
Cameramen raid

A dire cameraman [or]  
Arid cameramen

[Becoming]

A creamed airman [or]  
A carmine dream  
A minced ram ear  
[a] maniac rearmed

As freedom turns into a dorm fee  
Democracy to a car comedy, and  
Human rights to harming huts

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Yuan Changming, multiple Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, published monographs on translation before moving out of China. With a Canadian PhD in English, Yuan currently edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Yuan in Vancouver. Yuan's work can be found in *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Threepenny Review* and many other publications.

## Why My Life Still Revolves Around an Old Man From South Korea

Because he tapped me on my shoulder in the PC Bang and said, *Do you want to go to ping pong room tomorrow?* Because in the ping pong room we talked over instant coffee, and played Beatles music together. Because he asked, *Do you want to go to Amen Church with me?* And because I said yes and I sat with him in the chapel pews with his Korean-English bible, reciting Korean. Because he introduced me to his friends, culture, and way of life. Because he gave me hope on Sundays when I was alone. Because one night he said, *Duck, let's eat*, and I said yes because I never had duck in another country, or soju to wash it down with. Because he slapped my back when a bone was caught in my throat and we watched it fling in front of us like it a slingshot. Because we couldn't stop laughing about that. Because he showed me pictures of his son and daughter who are married and have their own families in Seoul. Because he's a proud father and he inspired me to be like him, except perhaps with a little less of the late-night gambling, soju, and cigarettes at the PC Bang. Because I hugged him before I left South Korea. And, because it's hard to hug people these days.

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Spencer Shaak is an MFA Graduate from Rosemont College who taught English as a second language in an elementary school South Korea in 2015. He misses the kids he taught there. He made many great friends there; one of them, a man named Shim much older than he, is the person spoken about in this piece.

## Reverse Clearing

The flat clouds are a façade  
of clouds, collapsed into  
a comic book,  
a sky that always  
promises a cropping  
(if given enough water)  
and lunch on a park bench  
with strangers  
because even strangers  
will converse  
about weather—

all morning  
I descend into other parts  
of the morning  
the skies partly cloudy  
along the beaches—  
by midday the gloom  
will linger inland like fatty tumors  
along the spine of low mountains

I can't avoid the sky,  
its ethos of haze or fog—

between allies of pavement,  
the sea somehow  
maintains its scent, always  
this smack of salt

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Lorene Delany-Ullman's book of prose poems, *Camouflage for the Neighborhood* (Firewheel Editions, 2012), was the winner of the 2011 Sentence Award. Her poetry and creative nonfiction can be found in *Zócalo Public Square*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Santa Monica Review*, *TAB: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics*, *Prime Number*, *Lunch Ticket*, *AGNI* 74 and *Warscapes*.

## The Squalling Call

A black swarm above a fallow field, or they roost in the street trees, and in the groves of eucalyptus along the Metrolink tracks. Are they blackbirds, starlings or crows? For three nights, our neighbors play *Death Cry of a Crow* to the trees and sky. *How frightening*, we say, waiting for the branches to empty. How righteous we'll feel when the throng of birds takes flight, rowing through the air to new colonies.

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# Valentine Sonnet

*for mine*

We've never tasted Sinai manna or truffles plucked  
from the tip of a leashed boar's tusk or dipped our straws  
in the mumbling hive and drunk. Nor have we ever

sucked on glacial ice that sizzles still with ancient air  
or yet have breathed prophetic Delphic fumes. Maybe we'll never  
get to Lindesfarne, Compostela, or Everest.

Never mind the coral reef off Queensland, Machu Picchu,  
Lhasa, Easter Island... It's too late already for old Timbuktu,  
Ajanta and Ellora fade, the Giza Sphinx's eye is blurring

closed, and the green Maldiva Islands slide away  
toward lost Atlantis. All that can wait—and the briar rose  
it's said burned unconsumed for Moses—Love,

those other far-off pleasures can some other time their treasures prove.  
Right here's a fine and private place for all our love's long lazy day.

## Meditation On an Unnamed Island

No one asks who dropped the first shell,  
when among the mangroves' arched roots,  
out of the heaps of oyster shells, fallen  
and crushed to lime, the snags and shoals  
of random tide-flung bits and silt-on-silt  
accumulation, new land rises up.

We love the idea of the world as a sudden  
paradise created whole on purpose for us  
to lose by being human. Or the other idea  
of the world as envisioned designed garden  
toward which it studiously evolves.

Meanwhile, here on actual shell-by-shell-  
by-mangrove created ground, the raccoon  
philosopher turns her mind to pleasure,  
to work—shucking oysters, digging clams,  
combing her tail of fleas and burrs. All around

the rack and weave of mangrove, mudflats  
marked with slicks and shallows, decomp  
reverting and recombining. And overhead  
the fish crow flies from bay to bayou,  
the sun-silvered eel in its talons writhing  
(what if it were?) in a sideways figure eight.

## Audio Recordings of Doomed Airliners

What I'm afraid of, because the conquered broadcast their panic and their endless wild as a quarantine of forests. The theory is that sometimes it rains when she died and sometimes it doesn't, that we invented ourselves from sheer want or stumbled into someone else's miracle, and every person thrown around your body is a dream and every dream is a bridge and every bridge is a god and every god an invention and a beached planet co-existing and co-exiting.

## VIII/XI/MMXVI

Krishnamurti said when the one you love goes, a part of you follows. Typewritten gnats spill greasy birdseed tunnels. For a moment there are two worlds. Spring presses toward me through glass; my garden hallway, a clutter of moths in milky silt. Crocus unpin your breastbone. In all eventual acts, humans compose ghost.

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Maureen Alsop is the author of *Mirror Inside Coffin*, *Mantic*, *Apparition Wren* and *Later, Knives & Trees*. Her poems have appeared in various journals including *The Laurel Review*, *AGNI*, *Blackbird*, *Tampa Review*, *Action Yes*, *Drunken Boat* and *The Kenyon Review*. Collaborative poems with poet, Joshua Gottlieb Miller have recently appeared on *Verse Daily*. Her translations of the poetry of Juana de Ibarbourou (Uruguay, 1892-1979) and Mario Domínguez Parra are available through Poetry Salzburg Review. She teaches online with the *Poetry Barn*.

## Side Arrangements

Carbon, what's left after water  
vapor's risen along with smoke,  
the fire's remainder a blackness

of orphaned atoms. Carbon, chains  
wound up inside us, thirsts and murders  
its side arrangements, braided fuse

igniting the present's spark-light  
in the black of was and will be. Carbon,  
footprint of our fumbling, our cutting

down our origin's columns  
to stoke a stone hearth. And a diamond—  
hard dry tear of still here,

a long-ago life pressed pure  
in the dark under a forest, pick-axed  
by a hard-worked dark-skinned miner—

you'll wear it, held by a few silver  
prongs to a silver wire to ring  
your thin slow-burning finger.

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Jed Myers is author of *Watching the Perseids* (Sacramento Poetry Center Book Award), the chapbook *The Nameless* (Finishing Line Press) and the limited-edition handmade chapbook *Between Dream and Flesh* (Egress Studio Press). Recent awards include the McLellan Poetry Prize (UK) and New Southerner's James Baker Hall Memorial Prize. His work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Nimrod*, *Crab Creek Review*, *The Greensboro Review* and elsewhere.

## Compartmentalization

Fifty-eight percent of the men and women at whom you smile while grocery shopping say the torture of suspected terrorists can be justified “often” or “sometimes.” Fifty-seven percent of the men and women who hold a restaurant door open for you say harsh interrogation techniques can provide information that can prevent terrorist attacks. *Army Field Manual 34-52* Chapter 1 reads: “Experience indicates that the use of force is not necessary to gain the cooperation of sources for interrogation. Therefore, the use of force is a poor technique, as it yields unreliable results, may damage subsequent collection efforts, and can induce the source to say whatever he thinks the interrogator wants to hear.” And yet.

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Samuel Rafael Barber teaches English composition and creative writing at the University of Arizona, where he is an MFA candidate in fiction and currently serves as an editor-in-chief at *Sonora Review*. According to life expectancy tables, he will live another 52.7 years. His work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Puerto del Sol*, *DIAGRAM* and elsewhere.

## Tachycardia

Every father is  
at some point  
Saul with a fist  
full of javelins.

Both of you stop this.  
Stop hitting yourselves  
with tennis rackets.

A vacuum balloons in  
my chest. Presented with pricks, I  
kick. A pilum lets fly,  
skids on concrete in a comet  
of sparks. My autoharp falls  
dumb. Outside, meteors, metaphors.

## Machine as Ghost

Each fallen god looms larger just as  
the windmill blade on a flatbed seems

taller than the windmill and the bough  
the gale cracked off, wet and black on the

ground, is tree enough and more and  
the *Ding an Sich* is not for you; you get

only one of its narrow dendrites, filament-thin,  
reaching high, hungry for signal.

## In the Broken Down House

Decisive, divisive, deceptive,  
the lack of room to breathe  
fully, what context blooms  
to meaning, the walls only fogged  
remembrance. Rain spokes  
from trees, clops on roof,  
tinks at window. Mold stink sifts  
from sills and rotting porch.  
Bone swallow, blue hollow.  
Place subtracted.  
Time excised.

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Mercedes Lawry has published poetry in such journals as *Poetry*, *Nimrod*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Harpur Palate*, *Natural Bridge* and others. Thrice-nominated for a Pushcart Prize, she's published two chapbooks, most recently *Happy Darkness*. She's also published short fiction, essays and stories and poems for children and lives in Seattle.

## untitled

As if to uncover what is lasting in what is not,  
we'd whistle at the heads of dandelions  
and watch the wind milk their seeds. The motion  
melted our vision: the lactic eye followed a river  
of butter through the air. We sprinkled cocoa  
on vanilla ice cream. Later, in the center of a sour  
winter, we did not remember where we stood  
as we did this, nor did memory remind us. The cream-  
colored lawn, surrounded by curds of snow,  
had become black as ink, the liquor of language  
turned to stone, a clotted testament. In an age  
when icebergs were not heads of boiling cauliflower,  
Edwardian explorers and their ponies post-holed  
across the Arctic. Their impermanence is permanent.  
Who knows, maybe their legends will outlast us.



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spring 2017

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