



PERSIMMONS

SPRING 2012

PER SIMMONS

Spring 2012

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PERSIMMONS

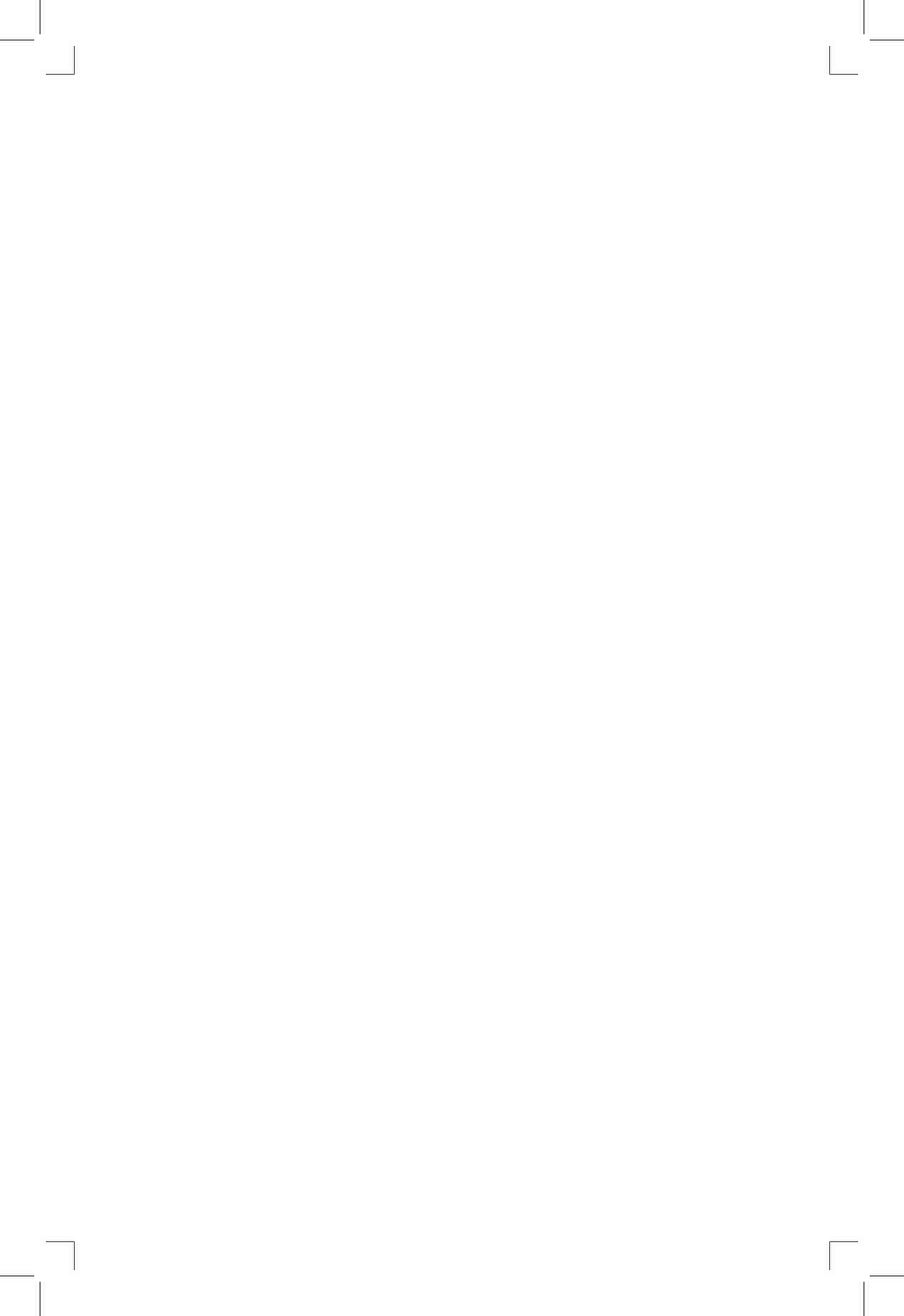
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KOIMESIS

✧ Nicholas Stewart

Beauty departs for its own sake;
You will admit that there is no grace
In old age, nothing to relieve
A face exhausted
By uneasy dreams. Sleep is enough rest
For a child only.

Loss, at the very least, proves
That time exists. We must forget
What we can.

We will be buried next to highways,
Murmuring to one another in the boundless
Dawn activity.



FOR WE ARE ICEBERGS · Tim Journey

SUMMER

☉ Gabriella Alziari

It feels like summer.

A straw-colored eye magnifies imperfections,
depressing heat churning
in unforgiving light.
Thin body stretches, bends to the ground,
strained to lie down on the thick tarmac lane.
Moistness drips from him,
round morning dew,
thick as if spit
or clumped beads of froth.

Milky skin travels down.

The white cotton sits,
orb-shaped and fat;
green amber fields
with seeds, sharp and biting.
Their tired, broken hands
are hot molten brass;
cut like cracked paint
on a drought-stricken plane.

The rays burst; licking, burning.

Glinting ants crawl, noiseless and hairy,
opulent creatures with thick little heads.
Birds droning loudly, songs fading in agony,
feathery bodies all rough and distraught.
In the distance,
the chains
can be heard,
shrill and grey.

Thick java skin, all ebony wet,
Shimmering foreheads and chapped leather palms.
They drag at the ploughs with those

gnarled wooden handles,
Squinting and jaded like
blind, frail rats.

Bodies curve to the gaunt and angular man.

It feels like summer.
His face falls
asleep
as they tug at his limbs
with their callous pink fingers.
Soil around him,
the darkness devouring,
hungry for skin, for black, broken flesh.

Now
his world is much deeper,
much denser
than here.

DAD

 Annie Hulkower

In that room that I hope to forget someday
A nurse had the nerve to ask me how I was doing—
Asshole.
That's my dad.
He couldn't drink himself, so I fed him iced tea with lime
His favorite
By dipping a sponge into the liquid that he loved so much.
I relished this last time with him.
As I touched my hand to his cool, stubbly face
That no one but me would ever shave again,
I drank from his cup— wanting to share as many germs as I
could with him—
It tasted like I was going to die, too.
That could've been nice,
To float away with him
To be dad and daughter as we'd always been.

ALMOST LIKE DROWNING

☪ Patrick Schober

She purrs and rests her head, smiles, and then she says,
Do you love me?
Then she sinks, sinks, sinks all the way into my stunned eyes
and instantly I'm clawing, scrambling to my feet,
pouncing over the scattered broken shells and
splashing, stroking through foam,
diving, reaching, grabbing to pull her to the surface,
to bring our heads above water and use my forearm
to support her neck and lean back and kick, kick, kick kick kick
until I'm exhausted, carrying, dragging her to shore
and lay her on the sand to push up down up down
against her chest until the water blows, spews out and
she coughs and chokes on her breath
because I'm too afraid
to tell her:
I don't know what love is.

ORIGAMI

 Allyson Young

An open mouth
A paper bird in the space between, lips touch
Space the size of an orange,
The bird, on one tongue, on the other,
It flutters its wings it
Cuts the inside of his cheek
Blood babbles like tiny creeks
Down a glacier coated mountain, its this little kiss,
Just a space the size of a paper bird.

And later, their
Hips dig, digging, deep angles.

Lips together, round a space,
One bent doubly over to reach.

And both imagine
A thin band, the Golden Gate Bridge
He traverses it,
That ocean.

But it's not really a good thing.
And it's making them tired.

Their open mouths,
Touching, kind of.

That paper bird
Wet in the rain,
Someone's torn it apart.

THE FORGETFUL

William Plaschke

Pouring over the philosophy of Hildegard
I see an Amish electrician.
He looks like he is going to change things.
This is ironic, as he is Amish.

I set my book down in smoke and exit.
Outside, I see a black tree against a blue light,
A nice light. The Amish man joins me.
He leans on a stucco pillar:

“You have to let meaning
Flow from things instead of applying
Constructed meaning onto things.”

My childhood flashes
before the moon.



HAWK RD · Kelsey Kiser

HOLY WATER

 Natalie Helper

Jackson says the Devil lives in the river down the way, but he's lying. The Bible tells where the Devil lives, and it's under the ground where it's hot. "How come dirt is cool and wet then," is what Jackson wants to know, so I tell him it's hotter deep down even without the sun because that's how the Devil makes it. "How do you know so much, huh," Jackson says, so I tell him it's just what I think, you don't have to get so mad. He'd just tease if I said about the dreams. But I told him about the Devil, that he gets thirsty from all his work and comes to drink from the river though he don't live in it.

Before they all left, Mr. Hamilton's slaves wouldn't go near it. They thought it sang louder than they did, or at least that's what Jackson says. I was too little but he says he remembers the war and the slaves. He says Daddy used to say that the Devil lived with Abe Lincoln in his big white house up North, but Daddy learned better because he went to the river and the Devil pulled him right in. No one ever even found his body and Mama's got no pictures so I don't remember what he looked like. Maybe when Jackson gets big he'll look like Daddy used to, but Jackson knows better than to go to the river. Even the slaves knew that.

Usually I think Daddy must've been a real fool to go to the water like that, but some nights I see different. Mama says he did it because of losing his job with Mr. Hamilton, losing his friends, losing the whole entire war. Mama says Daddy couldn't hold up like the good soldiers, couldn't come home like General Lee. "But that's not why he went to the river," Jackson says. Jackson says Daddy could hear it singing, just like the slaves did.

Most of the time I can't hear it, or at least I don't notice I hear it. But I know it's happening all the time because as soon's I remember it's just down the hill I can hear it loud like it was right in my heart. Not singing like people, not like a choir at church, but singing. And it's saying: all this water is going real fast, like it's running South just as fast as it can. One day it'll reach the ocean. The water's come from up North so it's seen all the cities. It's touched rich men's boats and gotten drunk up by poor folks. The water's run through all those little roots and rocks people don't think about, petted them so long they're all smooth, even the hardest stones. Soon it'll meet the Mississippi. Then it'll slow down and go like a big snake in one long whisper. For now though it's singing about what it's seen and where it's going and it sorta makes a body want to go along.

That's what it sounds like to me, except I think it says different to different folks. Jackson said one time that it reminded him of Daddy and the war, and I guess all that fast-going water could be cannons if you listened right. Jackson wants to fight the Yankees so maybe the water sounds like that, like the war ain't over yet. Mr. Hamilton's going down to the water one day soon, even

Jackson thinks so. And I bet it just sounded like regular water to his slaves, all cool and wet and not thirsty or hard. Jackson says if you walk in water then dogs can't smell you. But the slaves didn't go in, at least mostly. Some of them was probably dumb enough to try and got pulled in by the Devil so far South they couldn't never come back. "Seeing how slaves is close to the Devil you'd think more a them woulda gone," Jackson says, but I guess they didn't want to die just yet.

I don't wanna die either but I do wanna see what the river's seen. Mama says I've got to grow up to be a lady to prove to everyone that losing didn't change a thing. If I become a lady I'd better get a rich man. I want to have blonde curls and eat candies and jangle coins in my hands. I wanna get on a big old steamboat and see what the river's seen. I'm gonna see it myself, not just in a dream and not from between the Devil's fingers.

"I bet hundreds a people drowned themselves in that river," Jackson says whenever he catches me listenin to it. "I bet if the water was clear you'd see a million dead eyes starin up at you like they was watchin." Thinks he's so smart.

"They all get washed away," I tell him. "The river's strong and it takes em way down to Louisiana and then the ocean."

"No," Jackson says, "they stop all along the way to collect more." He wiggles his fingers at me like he's so scary. "They do what the Devil wants now," he says. "The Devil lives in the river and he tempts em and they all jump in and then they has to do what he says."

Jackson's wrong. The Devil drinks from the river and when you get thirsty enough for whatever it sings, you go down and drink with him. Then he takes your soul and you get your time. But when your time is up you gotta go back to the river and he's waiting and he has your soul in one hand and the other's reached out for you and he lays you in the water and you go down.

I know because I dreamed it. Nights when the river sings loud I dream what the Devil did. How Daddy wasn't sure about drowning until he got to the water and then two hot hands pulled him down. And the slaves who weren't sure about running until they put their feet in the river and couldn't find any bottom to it. And Mr. Hamilton who's running out of time because he sold his soul for his own plantation but never made sure about any wars.

When I wake up I get an awful aching to go down to the river myself and take a drink, or maybe just rest my feet until that steamboat comes along. We work real hard. We work like slaves. If I just rested my feet in his water, that wouldn't be so bad, would it? If I just dipped my feet, he wouldn't get to take me away?

CREATOR STORIES

☪ Colin Walker

Whistling, I make odd cannibal harmonies
in the dark. We sit in the Suburban, who just
wants us to know that we left the lights on—
it's urgent it's urgent it's urgent—not polite
like the Honda. Gwen is using the light to unlock
the gate which bluffs: Warning!! to bring us further
into and then out of the dark, there are bears
in this night. Doesn't this seem like a place

for wolves? There's only one now. Some group
of people have been stealing firewood. If you see one,
close the door—Warning!! maybe they are brothers
of the wolf, Coyote the Nasty, the fat Puppy
that abused himself, the ugly gambler,
bringer of goodies. AI! AI! the coyote's cry,
that sanguine flower inscribed with woe;
with a belly full of lies the truth tastes good.

Imagine seeing things clearly
through bright clean windows
(old Finnish: vindr-auga, "wind-eye")
the trees hang heavy with moss.

The nakedwinterlimbs of Ohio are
brushstroked and crosshatched.
The trees on John's Island are
oil paintings, peeling off the canvas.
The silhouettes outside my home are
clearly screenprinted on purple paper.

Some nights the coyotes swell in size,
unzipping trees and climbing inside,
responding to distant sirens and lights,
filling my ears with one cacophonous AI!
wearing their best cannibal lips, whispering
like wind through ten thousand mouths,
telling creator stories through the night.

RUNAWAY PARAKEET

🌀 Natalie Staples

Silence sleeps like a dog
in that corner of the house
where dried paint meets wood
he paints the walls
like it's a landscape
broad, wide strokes
he studies the colors
face intent, the kind of
look that makes you wish
you had it, could cup his
curiosity in your hand
carry it like a hummingbird
its leg too small to band
so unclasp your fingers
open your palm
trace the trees with your eyes
where leaves kiss the sky
squint
remember when your sister's parakeet
flew to the same circle of green
when you threw your head back
mouthed the words soft and slow
come back, come back

QUEEN ANNE'S LACE

🌀 Sarah Bence

Who would a queen bow to?
Only the dew, the flattened day-moon,
the tilt of the earth.

A queen would lean with the morning,
drops of night still sparkling
on a shoulderless back.

She folds the lace of later day in a slender-fingered fist.
Off-green and clasping darkened dew,
her heavy head hangs
on spider webs from the moon.

How could this field, that string stem,
support the head of a queen?

“What a waste”
Keenan used to tell me,
pushing through Michigan morning fields.
“All closed up”.

We’d give the plants a moment of silence,
pity for the unopened buds.

Now I see, there is no mourning in morning.
No black veiled tears and tight lips,
just sun and moon
meeting over the green,
nodding hello and goodbye in one.

A queen bows to this, as we all must.
The night lifting, the light sinking.
A moment of reverence.
Beige and yellow and unmowed reverence
for colors that sprout and dangle
and hold onto themselves,
shrouding beauty in beauty in beauty.

A queen’s crown is heavy,
even those sewn from carbon and compost,
yet once a day, she will bow.

MISLED

Andrew Ebner

Even at the first cry of the cosmos
shaking in its reach and shivering
on the stellar warming table,
dying was misconstrued.

What was supposed to be a way of renewal
turned into nothing, travelers
deciding not to return.
A death that settles like the passing

path of a flightful bird that
ceases at once, as once before
at the patio where the window
caved in its head. And it should

have twisted to a winter rose;
it froze a different way.
The broken heart: edges
should have dissolved to dust,

lifted in the breath, milky on the tongue,
coughed up as a flock of geese flying home,
who should have lived a life of calm by the lake,
in old age should have changed into

the lightest buds on the trees, should have fallen
as spring rain as they passed from twig to ground,
should have tore open in a lion's triumph
with the color of warmer memory,

which should have lifted as a song
which should have risen on the winds
and therein change in an eternal sun,
into what I could not understand at the time.

How a sunbeam splits into the blue sky,
into a horizon, into the flesh of a
field of leaves, buried soft in
a bed of grass. Nature already knows,

then. That death only appears to be loss,
remains in its way. How the heart could learn
the course, we could hope, reflective as the lake
where the lifeless depths are teeming, from death as dark

as waters deep below may still learn
the first touch of sun, rising as the
birds would into the unknowable lightness
of cloud, to fall into the wholeness of ground,

to spread itself and rush and rage without pause
at the heights, to shake and foam at the lowest,
to settle in-between, calm by the path,
noiselessly something else again.



I WILL BE BEAUTIFUL · Zeslie Zablan

CASUALTY

☪ Kurestin Armada

he came,
a black-hole heart of a boy
blown into town
hungry and blind.
he killed the redeemer
crept belly-up in the dust
and ate my soul
until he had made me
another casualty.

“I DON’T KNOW HOW TO SAY”

☪ Stephen Raithel

I don’t know how to say

If we are like those lonely, gasping
Flits who dash upon, their fervent rolling
Haunches as scraps that trill in windings, turnings,
Sink, borrowed, pebbled, like, as when
To the father with droop lids who
Hit his boorish son, splitting soft
Mouth as wet as spit peach pits which,
Unknown to everyone, shone.
“Damn it. Go to hell; all, and us. At all.”

But he too will go. He’ll go.

SEASONAL FORESTS

Grace Molloy

My feet are dirt.
My heels split and bleed.
(In the winter my skin dries and cracks)
Everywhere I walk I leave a body print
A bloody impression in the snow
Where a reddened autumn leaf fell.

How can I move the ways in which you've held me?

~

In the forest, two trees have fused together.

~

Like Dalí clocks on sycamores

I am quicksand and every inch of myself
(my outer self) filters out until I am only a glass interior.
Look, see how the tree sways in the wind? See how it arches its
spine? See how its arms are thrown open and shut open and
shut, see how its head whips, see how its hair whips, see how it
throws its voice so that all the other trees bend too?

~

Look at its open chest.

~

Lofty-dream webs torn
like the splits in our sides
the places where lightning hit bark
scorching the surface, the skin.

FALL MUSIC

🌀 Ellie Dawson

Beneath branches dropping last leaves
Like last breaths glimmering in the haze
Of crisp air hitting the sun, I walk,
Emerging into a field abandoned
By farmers long retired. The frosted earth
Overflows with goldenrod. In the spring,
My eyes watered, my mucus-lined throat
Swelled and I cursed their unruly tufts swaying
Above my head. Now
The stalks are stiff, parched. They rub skeletal frames,
An odd music I have never heard before, rustling punctuated
By flitting sparrow wings. They perform like old-time
Musicians wearing suits on stage, or soldiers singing
While on the march, carrying themselves
With dignified stiffness, stems straight
And the shells of blooms clenched shut.
They do not pretend greatness
Or timelessness,
Claim a genre or a name; they
Play only their small truth.

At home, my plots wilt and my pots
Crack. My marigolds have stopped
Budding. Phlox flowers litter the soil,
Crumpled petals dotted with brown
Liver spots. Weeds
Crowded between frail stems
Snap in high gusts, broken necks
And backs scattering with each new blow. Yet
Brittle roots still cling. Stalks bravely face
The withering day. And when the wind blows
A certain direction, they sing a faint rustle.
My worn gloves lie ready beside a trowel but
I will not garden today.

REINVENTION

✧ Jenna Nobs

When wind rushes through leafy skies
in bright swirls of autumn,
I find myself waking
from dreams of sparrows.

They carry small parts of me,
like leaves and twigs
and streamers plucked from a child's bicycle
on a windy Tuesday.

I marvel at how they spin me
into the perfect shape,
tear me apart, reinvent me,
in a way that is like catching my reflection
unexpectedly
in broken glass.

I am a loving, jumbled mess,
a refuge to stand alone
in crystal air.

All the inspiration
of a lowly sparrow.

FLY AWAY (A RAP)

✧ Avery Anderson

I close my eyes and fly away
peeling off the disguise I used today
then I pause, let my breathe go
swallow up my fears, and let myself grow
as I walk toe-to-toe into what appears
to be a dream but even here
tears couldn't bring me back to reality
cause I'm not lost in another world
I'm just seeing this one as it's unfurled
so I twirl in the wind as it seeps into my skin
and I can't resist so I sing along to the song that doesn't exist
notes floating through the air spark a fire in all of my cares
cause I'm completely consumed by the desire to
 inquire and inspire
so be prepared to exhume my body when I'm gone
cause there'll be something there hoping to live on
beating strong even after my pulse is flat
and when I walk back I take the long track
so I can soak in what I'm looking at
I catch sight of some animated leaves
subtly drifting through the cool breeze
it's sad that happiness is underrated
cause the beauty here has been created
it's just a matter of whether we're willing to let it in
so every once in a while stop and then begin
to notice all of the things that make you smile
take a long walk, wring out your worries and
assess what's important in this small talk
it's not about using big words, it's all about what is heard
so while the clock on the wall melts
I stare into the light of Orion's Belt
I'd be lying if I said I've never felt like this before
but I'd be lying again if I said I've never asked for more
every now and again I get wrapped up in my head
wondering when I'll calm down
trapped in the sound and the obsession with

the profound meanings behind the questions
and it's my confession that I can't find an answer
but even though it's undefined I remind myself
to intertwine curiosity with peace of mind
cause this is my release from animosity and my personal
piece of ecstasy
steadily approaching terminal velocity
I readily see the glass half full
so I take a moment to laugh and reminisce on my past
while I accept that this will not be the last time I fly away
so for today, I say goodbye to this beautiful view
and climb down from the clouds
only to drown in happiness
cause, still, I look around at all of this
and I know that it's true, life is limitless

GORDIAN BABY

 Brian Stratton

If I cleave too close to clever, then no matter
of heart, head or hard-on will ever end up
worth a spent Bic. But, I must confess,
the way you press against my stain,
it's plain I need a mess of whorls
and curlicues. See, I embroider
so that I don't lose the thread
of your fingers in tangled
dreads. I can't keep
trim; just cut me
off when I get
too sloppy,
will you
now?

A WORLD BUILT FROM WATER

🌀 Brigitte Kemp

One day, I walked into the ocean
and never returned.
I covered my skin with silver scales.
I hid inside a clamshell,
curled into a pearl.
I learned the language of water
so that I would never need to speak again.

I had lived one step from liberation,
hands too fragile to be of much use,
feet too clumsy to dance.
All of my futures slightly
out of reach.

I still recall
late nights staring into a mirror,
touching the cold surface,
wanting it to melt away.
Running fingers over my ribcage.
I used to ask,
“Is this what happiness feels like?”
I am still figuring out how to tell her
that twenty years passed
while she was sleeping,
dreaming of becoming
what she was never meant to be.



EXOCOETIDAE · Cristina Nunes



THE FLIGHT OF ST. PHOEBUS THE DIVINE · Allyson Schmalling

CONVERSING WITH A CANVAS

✪ Jordi Alonso

Acid tendrils and an acid double knot of
blue-brown wire-guided ribbon sprawling on the
canvas make a mess of me and mirror
dully faint persistent organ music
etched on my nerves with the quick automatic buzz of the
frigid robotic and hyperactive needle you mentioned.
Golden eyes with cherry pupils staring
hard at me in all directions, and then
I notice faded almost broken canvas sneakers
just about to lift off from polished panels,
Kit, with dark denim and a hard embroidered
length of cotton standing in contrast to the
machined interior of the chaotic canvas
nearest the white wall with those painted bullets—
or maybe they're flower petals? It's not important.
Petals, bullet-casings, paintings, acid
questions—and a lone guitar just strummed a
rousing chorus of a single chord, twice.
Softly first, but then much louder, tell me,
tell me, guitar, tell me, abstract chaos,
understand my question—one of heartbreak
veiled by night and lessened by night and distance—
why am I chained to laugh and live in longing?
Xylem of the mind of single artists,
yarrow-scented stationery whose author's blazing
zeal delights, forbids, and tempts me—answer!

QUIET MURMUR OF THE UNIVERSE

 Ville Lampi

For centuries, astronomers have been looking to the skies, trying to find answers to questions about the nature of the universe. We know now that the moon is round and icy, that the Earth orbits the Sun and that there are hundreds of other galaxies besides our own Milky Way.

The scientists have moved on to more difficult questions: With the finest equipment available, it is said that the cosmic background noise, the sound of your transistor radio when it is not tuned to any channel, the quiet murmur of the universe, tells us that the world we perceive is not the only world that exists. They say that the universe consists of other layers, like skins of onion, wrapped around each other.

At times, I also look to the skies, turn my radio to an unoccupied frequency and try to find answers to my questions. What is the background noise of our own universes? The way your heart pulsates faster when your mind is blown, the disorienting feeling of discovering someone was thinking about you at the same time when you were thinking of them, the sudden twitching of the person on your side that tells you they have fallen fast asleep?

These small moments of connections between our infinite universes, the tiny explosions created when two people's thoughts collate, the ripple effect of inspirations and aspirations show that our universes are not individual. They are all connected, forming different layers in the same world, like fungal roots, sprouting from the same source into semi-separate existences.

One thing I know for sure, I want to learn how to listen, to listen to the beat of the heart, to listen to the slight buzz of thoughts of people around me, to listen to the quiet murmur of the universe. As I turn the dial of my radio to a mute channel, I realise they are all beating at the same frequency.

THE WANDERING

✧ Brigitte Kemp

I dreamt of drawing a line
between every dream.
I dreamt of closing my eyes one day,
sleeping till the midst of winter.
In the fog, every shadow melts together
and we wake to find a world pieced
from paper cutouts:
white sky, gray earth.
Is this what will become of us?
Is this what we planned?

I.
On Sundays,
she wanders the fields
beyond the town. She catches butterflies
in her hands, kisses
their wings.
She sings alone
in the sunlight
in the middle of fields
until evening, when orange light
drips down the canopy of the sky.

There is a line of dead flies on her windowsill.
Wasps curled into themselves. Moths
like old petals. Beetles with wings still shining
in the sunlight. She blows the dust
from their backs, keeps the shades drawn
just right. At night
she sings them to sleep.
Then she closes herself in a carapace,
folds silver wings around herself,
winds herself into a cocoon.

Whisper secrets to her as she sleeps.
She'll carry all your worries away
to heaven.

When the moon bends over into a crescent,
she sneaks in through the windows
and crawls into bed beside you.
You won't wake.
Her cold breath is the last leaf of autumn
falling to the ground.

Keep sleeping, she whispers.
Keep dreaming.

II.

When I was young, I danced
in the falling petals of cherry trees.
I ran through leaves in Autumn,
arms outstretched.
I lay down in the snow
and watched it cover me.
When it rained, I carried my umbrella
but never used it.

I lived and breathed
the downfall. It didn't matter
that spring was leaving, that wind would blow
the petals away,
that the trees drained of color,
that my fingers went blue with cold.

Later, as I slept, I stared
into dark crevasses of canyons,
watched the reflections of stars float below me
and wondered if I wanted to step over the edge.
I learned to be afraid of falling.

Still, there is something left inside of me:
Once, I found myself standing in the rain,
looking up at the sky,
watching it come down.

I.

The night is the dog with black fur sleeping
curled beside her.

The dream is the circle of stars
through the hole in the palm of her hand
bitten by the wolf
circling the place where they slept
while the earth rushed to meet the day
and the stars turned
and turned
and turned.

But when the sun rose, she did not
wake. Instead
she wandered on
through concrete stadiums
and plazas flooded with water,
past the arena barred with steel.
She met a man with blue skin
living in the shell of a horseshoe crab.
She met a circus of animal-people,
soothed their sore-covered wounds,
fed them sandwiches from her hands.
In the circle of dust
they held onto one another
and danced.

At evening's end
she walked to the water's edge
and tiptoed onto the docks.
Her shadow dripped into the ocean.
A flock of birds scattered the sky
and he appeared across from her,
earthbound.

II.

With sleeping eyes
I stare out windows marked
with black,
counting the streetlamps

lighting my ribcage.
Soon the cold will come
and lace itself through everything,
ghostlike memories retreating
to sleep curled inside of trees.

At night, I wander.
I find deer grazing in the brush. Their eyes
have always reflected a brightness
I could never trace. I came to believe
there was a light inside of us
that only they could see.

The frost sneaks in little by little
until my voice poured into night air
is the only way to be sure I'm still breathing.
Melted snow, fallen leaves;
petals that turn translucent.
Silken nests that drop from trees
when the rains come.
Eventually, every trace will disappear,
won't it?

We retreated. Found ourselves sleeping
on subways, trains, buses.
Awakening at the final stop
to a world never imagined.
We wanted to find answers
in places our problems could not reach.
But our dreams became empty.
We chose darkness.

We abandon ourselves little by little
in places such as this, leaving behind
a menagerie of the things we wanted
beneath the dregs of a past season.
We slept through the winter
and spring
and summer.
We waited for rain that never came.

This is how we lived, biding our time
until the last second.

I.
The old saying is this:
If you find a fallen butterfly,
save its life.
When it flies again,
it will carry your wishes to heaven.

I met him at the docks
among the flock of black birds
scattering the sky. The bones
on his back were crooked
and broken.

Still,
in his sleep he whispers.
In sleep, he remembers.
We all do.
I tuck a kiss between his wings.

At night, I search for her
at the crossing.
Her eyes reflect
places I cannot recall the names of.
The darkness brings me back.
But darkness loses me,
leaves me stumbling.

As it turns out,
we are always as lost as this,
and we will wander the empty streets
with shadows trembling
at our heels.

She is the butterfly and I am
fallen leaves; she is his breath at night
and we are the light in the eyes of the deer

watching the black dog
asleep beneath the trees, dreaming
of us.

CURSE FOR A SPURNED TEA-LOVER

✪ Jordi Alonso

May your tea-tin tremble and teeter and topple
leaving its lovely leaves
littering your laminated floor
as your finger is caught by the clasp.

May a dearth of dark chocolate descend
on your dearest drawer as it doubles over
with drab and dreary draff
that you would not want to waft over
your wan and waking waifish body.

May the kettle catch you with its keening cry
as you bolt bleary and bedraggled
from your barren bed,
the soft silk satchel of spearmint
you wound around your wrist in worry
sapped of savor by your stale and smoky sweat.

May you mourn your most-loved mug
as it clatters and crashes on your cold floor
having clearly missed the carpet.

May you over-steep your osmanthus oolong
and drink brown and bitter dregs
as you fish for broken bits
in a bag of British biscuits long gone stale.

May your
dishes be dirty,
china chipped,

THE BIRD-UNDERSTANDER, CRAIG ARNOLD

Elise Economy

As I'm reading the Bird-Understander by Craig Arnold
I think of you trying to shift the small, fluttering, unidentifiable,
pausing for lint clusters, pecking at linoleum,
waiting for their tickets out of the San Jose airport **birds**
out the automatic doors that, when you got too close, and they rushed open,
scared them back, shooting, shuffling, scuttling, scrambling away from
the provincial technology, stumbling over each other's small monosyllabic
bodies,
away from the gaudy tinted glass, in haste, "Automatic (caution) Door."



BY AND FAR · Samuel Harris

ORBITALS

 Hetty Borinstein

Lily-lit
golden white glow
from the
round mother-moon so
lonely
with her lover gone, he's
shedding his
shocking bright rays
on the world's other half:
leaving
his sweetheart
to hold
the night deep sky
cobweb true
she bears their child until:
stranded
she wanes
harsh star-tears all cut
from her body like
the stillborn
& then:
her lingering crescent death

CORNUCOPIA

 William Plaschke

In our life together
I remember so many things
But I can't remember me
In any of them
e.g.
The fox-colored porch where you sat
And talked to nobody
As the sun went down

THE 71 STOP

Colin Walker

When they started saying hella
I mocked the modifier, saying hella
until the irony wore off and I began to
appreciate the breadth of hella shit in life.

In ninth grade I started experimenting
with the city bus, learning the veins
of my city like vodka became familiar
with Nick's blood at my first party in the CD,
him too drunk to stand and I just sober
enough to understand the meaning
of hella, deep like the drive from
Renton to Shoreline, I needed to know
like Nick knew to vomit out the window

back then two quarters was fare enough
fitting perfectly 1, 2 between knuckles
one, two on the bus stop was our music
and our struggle was to find change
in our pockets, packed like my clothes
on Fridays, living out of our bags for days
learning the lines, familiar as our forearms
trying to forget family for two nights
waiting golden on the ridge for our ride

when Biggie was god and my eyes would
shift nervously when I let the beat drop
on the bus, hoping to god no one would hear
the n-bombs dropped, not yet understanding
the word bitch—I liked to ride the bus at night,
like a tunnel through a city of warm stars,
and the dismount back onto cold blocks
home for the night, breath trailing behind,
looking up at what could've been stars

we took to the yellowed streets saying,
fuck class, get your education on the Ave—

stumbledrunk, Alex dropped 40 ounces
of street light in the blink of an eye
crashed like Noah on the couch, skin splotchy
red, like a monster he said, so we took
a walk and his forty—what the fuck
us white and semi-urban and semi-conscious
of just how much liquor we laughed at

Alex called him Sugar Lips, because
his words were sweet, and he had had
too much to drink, “what comes off these lips
will rock your feet”—I laughed off
his knife when Alex couldn’t remember
the lines, telling him that we would kill
our friend later, wanting to “bust a move, slide
in the groove”—Alex’s dyslexia no longer a joke
and painfully aware of the wave motif on the
shelter now lapping at our waiting legs

“word up, buttercup, word up”

DANCE TOO ANGRY TONIGHT

 Hetty Borinstein

i don’t have any words for you

tonight

my pulse hasn’t noticed my
transition from dance hall
to quiet poetry

so i have an angry beat
at my pressure points

and no lyrical
compositions

tonight

FIRE

Lucas Ropak

I

That heavy muse
Of medieval music;
That songbird caught in
Oasis, or a papal prison,
A paradise—

She is gone.

She is gone, so let me sing
& fall back laughing
Into that wake
Of barbarism...

*A shadow drawn
Generously across
The heart &
A stick
Plunged passionately
Into the eye.*

Let me kiss the boot of a hymnal
& in suffering, hum
—in my railings—
A waking dream of unknown flailing.

II

The wrath of my Boar cries out like the tethered eagle,
Hoping to catch hold of its diverted action:
To untangle key-keepers like the hounds
That unwove Actaeon.

She is gone

& surely she wandered in dejection & longing
To that dark, twinkling Gehenna:
A sword and meaty prize
Tacked like flotsam to her side
& a bowing servant tethered to her umbrella.

O God my God—wrap me up in misery & string me up w/wire.

I want to watch logic withering—
& writhe in depths
Of long forgotten
Promethean fire.

NIGHT FALLS AT THE OASIS

 David Miller

Your eyes reflect the shine on polished glass
while, on the jukebox, a saxophone croons against
the gloomy thudding of a worn-down bass,
and the dark beyond the streetlamps grows dense.

The coffee is bitter like bad news.
Foreclosure and heartbreak never did go
down easy. But inside, light will ooze
around you like orange marmalade. You'll glow

and turn and look me in the eye, and in
that moment I'll see out past this curved diner,
past the leather barstools lined with sweat,

harbored beneath the pearly moon, glowing sweet,
your atomic breath like perfume against my skin—
“Say, could you pass the cream?”

CURSE

Tim Jurney

I light forever the effigy
that you strung up with pins
in place of a heart

I hunt your proclamations
they lied even as they
slithered past your tongues

I take into my fist
the gods you gave up on
they are pulverized

into powder so thin
as fine and powerless
as you made mine

I skewer into your retinas the
blinders you've always worn
I hold your throat close

I christen you dead
smash this bottle like
the skull you never had

ERICK'S BED

Hannah Saiz

Erick's bed was softer than he remembered. Almost like velvet and someone must have turned him on his back; a nurse, perhaps. He tried to roll over, but his limbs would not answer; someone's tepid breath heated his face. His eyes fluttered open. Had the fever broken?

Darkness assailed him. Dark, plush. Again he tried to move but was too constrained. What was this place. Tried to sit up but the wood—wood?

Where. It settled in slowly. *Where.*

His own breath against his face, he started fumbling for the string, they must have tied a string—

There.

Rang it, tugged and pulled. Contorted to pull the thin cotton thread, jerked with his wrist, his whole body until his bones were to break but...no sound. No sound.

Realize: too deep to hear.

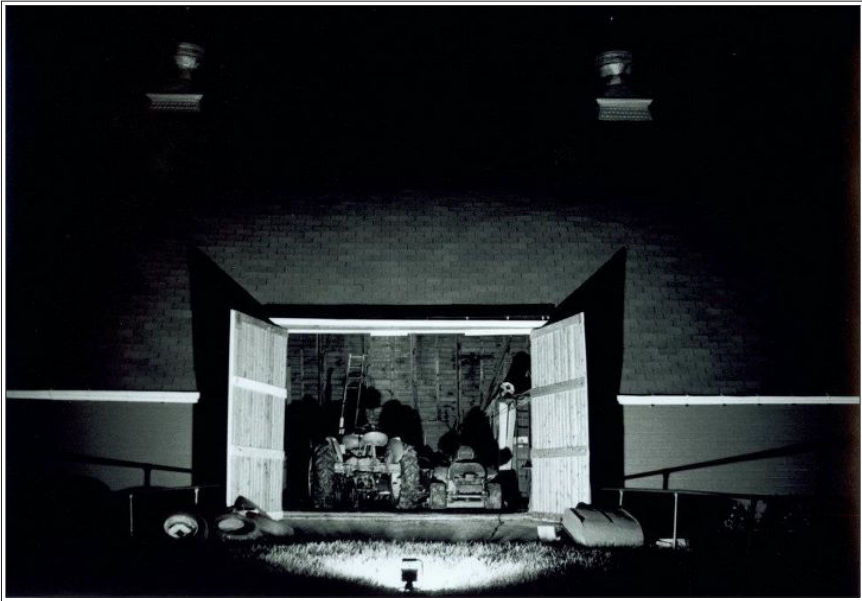
Begin clawing at the ceiling trying to *escape*.

Fingers scraped wet, animal desires.

Head moves—everything else so trapped, convulsing underground, biting at the lid of the box, anything to get *out*, get *air*—

Quickening of breath and heart. Screaming and thinking the velvet likened to a bed is a tomb; that sleep for eternity isn't a metaphor.

And when they come, as they will, and open the box to find a mangled face inside, a man awakened from his coma only to die imprisoned, they will begin to spread the tales of men who come alive by night, who eat the blood of other living beings, and hide by day in their coffins. And they will say he was one.



THE BARN · Mary Defer

SUICIDE NOTE

Wyatt Riggs

Friends, family, faggots,
By the time you read this note,
I will have already written it.
In fact, I'm writing it right now
As we speak—
Metaphorically speaking, of course.

I want my last words
To mean something, anything really.
I want them to say...
Well, I don't know—
What I want them to say,
That is...

Something deep, something *profound*,
Poetic, even. As long as I get the last word,
I've never gotten the last word—
Until now, at least. I'm writing it,
I've already written it, you see,
You're reading what I wrote, am writing,
Will write until I stop...
Writing or breathing, that is,
Whichever comes first.

"THE PEOPLE ARE DANCING AROUND ME"

Cheyenne Davis

The people are dancing around me;
I should not be here.
Yet they dance because I am.
This dance is not comprised of smiles and laughter,
But of tears and angry, vengeful shouts.
I should be dead.
"All betrayers and those guilty of treason are to be executed."
But hidden among them is a liar.

Who is it?
The man, drunkenly shouting of turncoats?
Or the mother who has lost her only son,
Crying, begging for help?
People have died because of these traitors,
Because of me.

The only relief from this madness
Is the delicate hand I hold in my own.
As I pull My Fellow Traitor through the crowd
I can't help but let out a deranged laugh
At the electric energy of the crowd.
The people in the streets are imbeciles.
They are too drunk to see the last symbols of the
 Rebellion in their midst;
Escaping them.
They are dancing because Our King makes them.
He tells them they have won a victory over My Fellow Traitor.
Yet some realize that something's not right.
It is seen in the gleams of rage in some eyes;
Heard in the pained laughter, much like my own.

I would feel guilty,
But there is no time.
If we linger for too long, someone may notice.
My Fellow Traitor knows this;
I can tell by the nervous smile she slips me
As a drunken commoner tugs my sleeve,
Shouting that Our King's authority is no longer questioned.
I mumble an excuse to the man,
As My Fellow Traitor urges me onward;
She is uncomfortable here,
Exposed in the street.
I tell her we'll be free soon,
Squeezing her hand.

At last we reach the entrance to the dock.
Our great escape is nearing an end
When I hear my name called,
Standing out clearly over the chaos.

I can tell these are our last seconds together.
I look at My Fellow Traitor once more
Before she is snatched away.
The despair is my own.

She cries my name,
Begging for help as the woman before.
The Royal Guard understands that I am
The Forgotten Imposter.
But instead of frigid manacles like My Fellow Traitor,
I receive a biting piece of steel forced through my stomach.
Yet the people are dancing around me.
The despair is my own.



QUICKLY GOING NOWHERE · Samuel Harris

198420

Wyatt Riggs

Every word ever uttered crowding in a solemn soliloquy,
For some obsequious bard to drawl out, dote upon,
Exonerate, as if a book burning really even matters,
As if torching a Bible sends all the martyrs within
Up in flames.

A NOIR BROKEN HEART

Annie Hulkower

It was all for squat.
I tipped my hat down in the phone booth so no one could see me
tear up.
If they had, I'd have blamed it on the rain.
Here's the thing about rain:
It hides the natural state of things.
Like, for instance,
Calm grass
Or empty shoes left on the back patio.
Here's the thing about shoes:
If it rains, anyone and their thugs will hear you coming.
The note was stashed in the pocket of my slacks.
I hoped to whatever god was watching that the rain
Wouldn't make my words tumble in a smoky swirl
To the bottom of the page. Then I'd have no chance of finding her.
She was phosphorescent. She was like butter—only more head
strong.
She was
Today, tomorrow, yesterday.
Ate popcorn like a starving latino youngster but man,
She was a succulent Venus of celestial proportions.
What do you want to know, why I'm so desperate?
Why I'm in this melancholy phone booth teary-eyed like a teenage
mall-rat?
I'll give you 3 words: Grant Place Automotives.



Zeslie Zablan

Ville Lampi
Grace Molloy
Jenna Nobs
Cristina Nunes

William Plaschke

Stephen Raithel

Wyatt Riggs

Lucas Ropek

Hannah Saiz

Allyson Schmalling

Patrick Schober

Samuel Harris



IN THIS ISSUE ART & WRITING

Jordi Alonso

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Avery Anderson

Kurestin Armada

Sarah Bence

Hetty Borinstein

Cheyenne Davis

Ellie Dawson

Mary Defer

Elise Economy

Andrew Ebner

Natalie Helper

Annie Hulkower

Brigitte Kemp



Tim Jurney

Natalie Staples

Nicholas Stewart

Brian Stratton

Colin Walker

Allyson Young

"I am going to be victorious
because a large persimmon
has fallen into my hands."

(TOKUGAWA IEYASU)