

# **The Quatrain**

Volume 1: Spring 2015

# The Quatrain

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*The Quatrain* is managed by students from the College of Liberal Arts at Louisiana Tech University. The journal is housed in George T. Madison Hall, where students and graduate assistants collect, assess, and edit submissions from colleges and universities in the four-state region and make recommendations to faculty regarding their acceptance.

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## From The Dean



It is with great pleasure that I introduce the first volume of The Quatrain, a peer-reviewed journal published by the Department of English at Louisiana Tech University. The journal seeks to recognize the best creative and critical work by emerging talents in the four-state region of Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and Mississippi—our geographical quatrain. Begun through the efforts of the Louisiana Tech Poetry Society, The Quatrain is the collective effort of a select group of undergraduate and graduate students under the guidance of Dr. Ernie Ruffeth, Assistant Professor of English. The journal is supported by funds from the College of Liberal Arts and the George E. Pankey Eminent Scholar Chair in English. Although The Quatrain seeks to publish a variety of writing and art, this first volume is dedicated to poetry by current students from disciplines throughout the university. With over 80 poems chosen from a vast array of submissions, the volume shows the diverse talent and thematic concerns of students living in the early decades of the 21st century. In some ways, the themes are not new—faith, love, death—others show a generation struggling with difficulties of gender identity and the anxiety of daily violence in a post 9/11 world.

In future issues, we will feature other forms of creative and critical expression, including academic essays, cultural criticism, fiction writing, photography, and original art, and the journal will appear in both print and electronic form. We hope you enjoy the imaginative and intellectual energy these poems display; and we look forward to recognizing the interesting and innovative work by undergraduates in the region.

Best wishes,

Sincerely,

Donald P. Kaczvinsky

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald J. Kaczvinsky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donald Kaczvinsky  
Dean, College of Liberal Arts  
Louisiana Tech University

Olivia Miles

---

## 5 Haikus

#1

Fuzz touches my tongue  
Sweetness from red-orange juice  
Seeps out beneath flesh

#2

I hear a whisper  
An eerie air fills the room  
Cool breath chills my spine

#3

Water trickles slow  
Across a stony stream and  
Flows into abyss

#4

Face of white and black  
Two hands that tell of the time  
Cogs in perfect synch

#5

Liquid emotion  
Compacted in clear droplets  
Falling down my face

Evan Harris

---

## Advice

"You must change your life," that's what he had said,  
Linoleum voice with an octagon head,  
His words flew crooked from what I observed,  
Consonants whirling while vowels swerved,  
The ears didn't want it, they'd seen enough,  
Blocking the sound with that wet, waxy stuff,  
But some had snuck in, planting seeds in the brain,  
Stretching gray tissue without even a strain.

Evan Harris

---

## Armor

Time after time, you used it again,  
 Shielding yourself with one simple grin.  
 When the grin didn't work, you brandished a smile,  
 It fit so well you even believed it a while.  
 The armory grew, the best weapon was laughter,  
 Only used during the fights, never seen again after.  
 Here's the plate mail you made and look how it lies,  
 But there is a weak spot that looks through the eyes  
 Perhaps an arrow could just clear the slit,  
 With the head piercing through what blades can't hit.  
 There will come a day that the knight will fall,  
 Shrouded in dark, never a knight at all.

Devan Tant

---

## § Ashes to Dust

At the start, who could have predicted the tears,  
 When every word you spoke could silence my fears?  
 I was drunk on potential, like my own Dionysus.  
 Too lost in thought to force the moment to crisis.  
 I wanted to give it my all, be my best,  
 Which is hard to do when you rip the heart out my chest  
 See, I tried to be tinder but a spark of doubt  
 Set us aflame - now I'm all burned out.  
 So please; make your jokes. Feel free to scoff.  
 Men reduced to ash now dust themselves off.

I hear you cry "Havoc!" and let slip dogs of war.  
 I guess that's one thing a bitch is good for.  
 But this isn't war, it's "Panic!" I'm singing,  
 Like 10 minutes past an alarm clock ringing  
 in the still of the night (What's 'still' I don't know)  
 I'm turning over thinking of seeds that you'd sow.  
 I can't say what it was, some alien force  
 that enticed you to yell until you went hoarse.  
 So get out of my way, go back to your trough.  
 Men reduced to ash now dust themselves off.

I thought 'If my cup runneth over, I'd use it to fill yours.'  
 Yet I found no cup behind all these closed doors.  
 I gave you up just like you gave it away.  
 Every saint has a past, every poet a cliché  
 Well hey, here's mine for good measure:  
 One man's trash is another man's pleasure.  
 Even though you left, I was right.  
 I was the symptom to which you were the blight.  
 You're a terminal disease; I saw blood in each cough.  
 You reduced me to ash, now watch me dust myself off.

Devan Tant

---

## § Automated

*Thank you for calling the Bureau of Civil Harmony:  
Peaceful solutions for a violent world.  
This call is being recorded for quality assurance purposes.  
If you know your party's extension,  
you may know too much.*

Big brother's been here since before you existed,  
And it's become the sum of all our fears.  
Isn't it about time we resisted?  
Weren't we supposed to throw our bodies on the gears?

Letters flash arrogantly across the screen,  
assuring us all that we're free.  
We're not just cogs left in the machine,  
we're Artistic Autonomy.

For "The Betterment of The Nation"  
we suffer from lives precluded.  
And any thoughts of reclamation  
are naught but dreams deluded.

What is Freedom? What is slavery?  
But the whims of the ruling classes.  
Is this stupidity, or is it bravery?  
The cries of the angry masses.

*For immediate incarceration, please push the envelope.  
For more dire results, please press the issue.  
Dial 'O' to give up your options,  
or hold on the line to speak to a representative.*

Why, when men waste away  
in the throes of minimum wage,  
do we let ourselves be led astray  
instead of giving in to rage?

This cause is more urgent each hour  
so voice what you object.  
We cannot allow perpetuation of power  
to continue so unchecked.

They claim we seek only to infect the youth,  
instead we tell them what awaited:  
nothing now, save the truth,  
can save them from being automated.

This 'infection' has no cure, no remedy.  
Undoubted, Death will take its toll.  
But if we don't try to seize our destiny,  
there'll be none left to control.

*A team has been sent to your location.  
Please, do not resist.*

If you needed proof of their transgression,  
you need only contradictions.  
They claim no part in gilded oppression  
as they hand out crucifixions.

If it's freedom you wish to attain,  
you cannot avoid the violence.  
But to live forever with a ball and chain  
you need only offer them silence.

There's no hope for a solution,  
save what's found on battlefields.  
High is the cost of revolution,  
paid with blood on riot shields.

*Thank you again for calling the Bureau of Civil Harmony;  
Peaceful solutions for a violent world.*

Robert Westley

## Beach Combing

One day I stepped lightly  
 upon the ocean shore:  
 soft sand squished  
 beneath my feet-  
 I saw selfish  
 shellfish-  
 snap shut as  
 the ocean  
 swooshed in-  
 and whooshed out-  
 several sea birds  
 scuttling,  
 clawing at the sand  
 looking for something  
 tiny, quick, and tasty-  
 The sky splashed with  
 so many lovely colors:  
 reds and oranges-  
 and yellows, so  
 beautiful-  
 the sun setting  
 behind a fiery sea:  
 blissful serenity-  
 seemingly washed-  
 up on the shore-  
 to be shared by:  
 everything

Devan Tant

## § Beyond the Veil

I've often wondered just who's to blame  
 for all these things that we became.  
 They remind me that life is just a game  
 but I've lost all the pieces.

So how exactly should I engage  
 my audience from this dark stage?  
 With poems scrawled on crumpled page;  
 Words lost among the creases?

I tried to speak but nothing remains  
 except fingerprints in crimson stains.  
 What's the point of our growing pains  
 that ultimately fail?

Because lost are tales of vicious kings,  
 committing murders and other things,  
 on puppets strangled by their strings  
 soon sent beyond the veil.

With every second that I devote  
 I realize more that every note  
 is catching, choking, in the throat  
 like concessions for the play.

So it seems the deaf have come tonight  
 to hear the dumb and mute recite.  
 Yet they know that something isn't right  
 with this morbid cabaret.

Without the words, they judge instead  
 the character they see ahead:  
 "His clothes are trite, and it must be said-  
 He looks so drawn and pale."  
 Perhaps because he's sick and tired  
 of the dealers you so admired.  
 Their trade, at most, only required  
 travel beyond the veil.

So check and hope your heart's still beating,  
 because it will now be competing  
 with the regrets that are repeating  
 forever in your mind.

And after all the tears are cried  
 you'll realize that suicide  
 offered no real place to hide  
 as the veil swung shut behind.

You'll be trapped, alone, and in the dark,  
 stumbling, wishing to disembark.  
 There's no escaping the tyrant's mark  
 that both your hands impale.

You'll know by then that it's much too late;  
 You've self-inflicted your grisly fate.  
 Nothing better than life could await  
 us beyond the veil.

The music's playing, but the dancing has stopped.  
 No one knows how it started.  
 Perhaps we should focus, and resume the ball,  
 lest we become the dearly departed.

Kenneth West

---

## blissing

i met a monk  
in kathmandu  
and this he said  
is my blessing for you

i hope you're as obstinate  
as an ox  
in pursuing your dreams

and never acquiesce  
to the tug of the crowd

i hope you  
retain your integrity  
and always stand proud

i hope you  
embrace all men  
as brothers

for that is who we are

you have as many siblings  
as there are stars

i hope you hold these stars  
fixed in your heart

so that no matter where you  
walk it never grows dark

i hope you remember  
to release the butterflies  
that flutter in your gut

and never stop searching but  
remain aware that the sun  
is the eye of god

and the wind is her caress  
and she brings abiding rest  
to all of the blessed

i hope you  
accept from me  
this garland of peace

Michelle Boudreau

---

## Careless Savior

There is a man that makes me whole  
He don't know what he does at all  
And I hang on every graceful word he says

Each night before I go to sleep  
I pray the Lord his soul to keep  
Then ask God why he hurts me this way  
Careless savior, careless savior

The only one in pain is me  
I fought for life in an endless sea  
And landed on the isle of punch-drunk lust

They say that love is give and take  
This one wants to make my spirit break  
But we took vows so what do we do now?  
Careless savior, careless savior



Kenneth West

---

## christ at calvary

he came to us  
 in a tattered tunic his  
 back beaten by our musings  
 our asphyxiated aspirations  
 of a utopia incapable

of conception ideas aborted  
 ripped from the womb  
 in its embryonic stages  
 while the thirst  
 for meaning rages

he wanted us to breathe deeper  
 so they bound him to a tree  
 in an act of irony

he came to preach a love  
 that liberates but perhaps  
 people prefer slavery to  
 the stumblings you must make

after you unshackle your  
 soul from the  
 pillar of materialism  
 a fawn taking its  
 first steps without  
 its mother's nuzzlings

philosophy is a crown of thorns  
 the longer you wear it  
 the more you bleed but  
 i would gladly bleed what

is blood if not the  
 fluid of man's bloated delusions  
 the pounding of nails drove  
 christ to agony

and on the cross  
 he discovered that we are  
 more than the elongated  
 sum of limbs and sinews  
 we are celestial  
 the sons of suns

we are luminous

Evan Harris

---

## Clocks

Beware their faces as they often deceive.  
 All of the minute details might escape  
 at first glance  
 When everything comes winding  
 down  
 through that mechanism of life  
 Make the most of it.  
 It is hours after all.

Sarah Houten

---

## Confused

Head spinning  
Thoughts running through my mind  
Trying to listen to everything at once  
Waiting for a moment of silence  
Wanting it all to end  
Wishing to just hide  
Wanting to get away  
There is no way out  
No way of running  
No way of shutting my head down  
These are the thoughts I live with.

Bianca Jackson

---

## The Crutch and Reality

They drink and smoke to escape because sober this world is too much.  
They are consuming liquor like water to drain out the emotion.  
They take in the smoke like it is the oxygen our bodies need to survive.  
They are hiding behind walls of substances to deplete the reality  
within their own existence.  
They do not know they are only prolonging the trauma.  
They feel so good when they are in their own world until the  
intoxication and cloud nine fades to black and reality stabs them in  
the back.  
They look around and those friends have disappeared and the liquor  
and substances no longer exist on that table in their face.  
Their crutches no longer exist and they have to walk on that broken leg  
to keep up... when their own reality becomes too much then what?  
Drinking and smoking may not be your crutch but imagine your  
life without that thing you need to get through a down day or your  
everyday life!  
Would your reality be too much?

Lacey Hanemann

---

## The Dance

In a chair that rocks slightly,  
 enough to make distracted bodies think  
 they're falling, I sit.  
 Window open,  
 the world outside is moving,  
 dancing with the wind as if they're old lovers,  
 and I think maybe they are.  
 The trees rest, waiting always,  
 on something to make them tremble,  
 finding that only the breeze can  
 stir their roots.  
 The wind roams begging to be detected,  
 finding that only the trees can make its song heard.  
 A give and take fabrication that instead of taking,  
 gives more.  
 And I wonder when we'll find the balance.  
 With appetitive souls that  
 scream louder than the spirit.  
 We are a being that wants,  
 and in determination finds means to  
 ease unjustified whimpering.

A. B. Harrison

---

## Dark Symphony of Keyboard Keys

At my computer I sit in the solemn dark  
 With cast shadows lying still around me  
 As they watch me slowly write.  
 My eyes are fixated at the bright screen;  
 My mind stuck in an unwavering trance  
 With my clammy fingers hungrily  
 Tapping at the black plastic keys.  
 Words flood through my excited fingers  
 As I make the keyboard keys click away.

Slowly, but surely,  
 The once pale white screen is filling  
 With tiny, yet humble black letters  
 Forming bold and colorfully loud ideas,  
 Contaminating purity with a plague.  
 The room's cold, crisp night air  
 Tickles me at the cheek and up my body  
 As goose bumps run down my skin. Still  
 I tap on, with words blazing in my mind.

The fragrant smell of day old coffee  
 Still lingers in the air and in my nostrils  
 As the rhythm of the keyboard plays  
 Like a dark symphony in my ears  
 As my frantic fingers beat away  
 Pulling images out of my head  
 Then staining them upon the page.  
 The room gets darker, my soul brighter,  
 With each keyboard key clicking away.

ReAnna Rowden

---

## Day Walk

Leaves

jive around plaza road  
and I pass them  
wondering if, as creatures led in tandem,  
they feel only providence  
aside commands spit from foreign tongue.

Megan Jones

---

## Dear Paul Baulmer

All is Quiet on the Western Front  
Or so it may seem that all is none.  
Another stool, another crib, another spineless green is done.  
Where are the school boys you once knew?  
Fighting for your home, but in Timbuktu.  
Another unaided, another unfaded, another screw yet skewed  
and spewed.  
How is your father? Your sister? Your mother?  
On your way on leave, do you think about those others?  
Another whines, another cries, and these naïve are sure to die.  
But that's the funniest bit of all!  
How to cope when your "comrades" fall.  
Weren't you the vets, the honored, the best?  
Another jest, another guess, another brother didn't pass the test.  
Your generation was simple but vast  
Still will fall, but now the anger has passed.  
Another soul, another taken, another...there will always be others.  
How does it feel to be the last to die?  
When you pray to God, do you look to the sky?  
Another is brave, another is silenced, how long till you are another?  
Bombs are flying, bullets will soar  
But don't you worry, for it is only war.  
Another sorry, another sad, another weeping for their son is fled.  
But that's the funniest bit of all!  
How to cope when you're the last to fall?

Robert Westley

---

## A Delightful Hobby

Here in my cellar  
 I set out tools of the trade  
 before me on a large clean table  
 a lifeless stranger is laid  
 I pick up the scalpel  
 in my nicely gloved hand  
 and I feel the skin splitting  
 as it slides across the man  
 cooling blood starts pooling  
 as I pierce the silent flesh  
 ruby red and beautiful  
 as well as nice and fresh  
 I like how it stains  
 makes everything  
 the same  
 great color  
 it drips onto the table  
 it sticks onto my gloves  
 and as I chop  
 and tweeze  
 and pull  
 the metal  
 in the bright  
 fluorescent light  
 turns red with all the rage  
 I chop the poor stiff up  
 late into the peaceful night

gaze into his lifeless eyes  
 and finish off this sight  
 All the little pieces  
 gently wrapped up in a bag  
 a sack of once-humanity  
 and light up a cancer fag  
 I think about morality  
 and how it has been viewed  
 I chuckle at my own bad joke  
 at the expense of this poor dude  
 I take him to a lonely freezer  
 and put him with the rest  
 thinking to myself,  
 'Man, that was the best.'  
 Tearing off my bloody apron,  
 I hang it on the hook  
 I take a drag on my cigarette  
 and begin to clean my nook  
 I wipe the table  
 until it's clean  
 and soak my tools  
 until they gleam  
 I climb back up into the light  
 and leave this pleasant place  
 to look for signs of dinner  
 that I smell my wife just made

Devin Tant

---

## § Eclipse

It's amazing, looking at the sun.  
 "You'll go blind" they tell me. "Don't look directly into it!"  
 But how can I not? My entire life circles around it. A looming  
 source of heat in an otherwise cold and dark existence.  
 "It's not worth it! You'll go blind!"  
 That's fine. I only had eyes for this reason anyway.

Yet now, something new has come up. The moon, impertinent and  
 impetuous,  
 has turned this perfect source of life into nothing more than a  
 glowing ring.

We never pay it any attention, until it's gone.

Kenneth West

---

## extraneous solutions

boredom is the alligator  
 inside of the elevator  
 writhing against the walls  
 suffocating on its own stench  
 limbs moving in vain  
 seeking freedom it can't attain

newton, distraught  
 by life's banality  
 tossed an apple in the air  
 an act of despair  
 and resuscitated from forgotten  
 waters a theory of originality

in old age newton's  
 beloved gravity  
 in an act of depravity  
 seized his sleeve  
 and his universe ended  
 not with a bang  
 but with a sneeze

science's labors  
 cannot know love's favors  
 the pleasures of affairs  
 the treasures of drink

only repetition, elephant steps  
 discovery's dull rhythms  
 poor newton's angst never  
 expressed with stiff  
 formulas laid to rest

Bianca Jackson

---

## The Eye of the Storm

I stare in the face of danger and I do not even know it.  
 I'm blinded by my own love-meter.  
 Why does my heart always surrender?  
 Bound by laws and chains I created,  
 I created a monster that has a hold on me and I can't even hate it.  
 We were helping each other create these beautiful gigantic waves  
 but I couldn't feel myself being swept away and pushed from the land.  
 I'm inhaling water and trying to fight the current.  
 As I'm being pushed further out to sea I realize the tragedy happening  
 to me.  
 So while he took over my heart I fell victim to his deceit.  
 I couldn't see the storm rolling in while so focused on the waves  
 and sunrise.  
 Now I'm stuck in this hurricane as it sweeps my life away!  
 I stared dead in the eye of storm too blinded by its beauty to see  
 the damage it would until do it was too late!

A. B. Harrison

---

## Falling with Eyes Shut

Two birds  
 Are calling  
 My name  
 In the distance.  
 Their chirps  
 Ring  
 Through my  
 Head like  
 A pair of  
 Church bells  
 Bringing me  
 To attention:  
 Alert.

The wind chills  
 My bones:  
 Unrelenting.  
 I sit wrapped  
 In tattered  
 Dreams  
 Torn from  
 Skin and  
 Turned to dust,  
 Left to  
 Blow away.

The park bench  
 I sit upon  
 Is all  
 I can call  
 My own  
 With a broken  
 Heart beating:  
 Alone.  
 I can feel  
 The world  
 Closing in:  
 Crushing.  
 I close  
 My eyes shut  
 As the birds  
 Chirp and  
 Bells ring.  
 Time stops,  
 And the world  
 Just  
 Falls.

Devin Tant

---

## § Fireworks

Do you remember the fireworks?  
 They were born from touch- human combustion at a primal level.  
 You had followed me into that field to watch them, feel them  
 Bursting with colors and scattering themselves wide as they'd reach  
 With a pop and sizzle that would echo against the mountainsides.  
 Your black powder eyelashes fluttered when you had said  
 These were your first fireworks, but it wasn't their intention to lie  
 When you said you would never enjoy fireworks with another.  
 You could have said anything- we were fuses ready to explode,  
 Twisted, tangled, inextricably linked and loving every second of it.  
 Others would set off Roman Candles, bottle rockets and sparkles,  
 But no one gave a finale like you could. The sort of combination that  
 Echoed in your chest and left no doubt that this-  
 This was as good as it would get.

Cody McCullin

---

## Flannel and Linoleum

I am the son of Saturday morning.  
 My brothers, linoleum and flannel.  
 The last to ignore surgeon general warnings,  
 The first to sit down and change the channel.

Asphalt loved these elbows of mine,  
 My heart carried the other scars.  
 That was me balancing the fine line,  
 That was me in the field, gazing at stars.

Life came and found us in our world,  
 With our hearts still new, brought us to heel.  
 Colored eyes in red, white, and blue unfurled  
 To see an empty throne as we kneeled.

I am the father of nine to five,  
 His sister, a world uncertain.  
 Into grungy chords I often dive,  
 To pull back the flannel and linoleum curtain.

Kierria Matthews

---

## Foolish for Him

Foolish for him  
 Doing things that are silly  
 Smiling stupidly, gaily giggling  
 Dumbly daydreaming  
 Of him and me

Foolish for him  
 Thinking of him  
 How it's just "me"  
 But I want "we"  
 Just him and me

Foolish for him  
 Stumbling over words  
 Nervously laughing  
 Awkward yet charming  
 Yes, this is me

Foolish for him  
 His eyes, his smile  
 His voice, his laugh  
 Smooth yet comforting  
 Can we be, him and me?

Foolish for him  
 Falling for him  
 Addicted to him  
 Longing for him  
 Hugging him  
 Kissing him  
 Just him and me

Foolish for him  
 Constantly crying  
 Damned depression  
 Crippled confession  
 Why him and me?

Foolish for him  
 Released sorrows  
 No more tears  
 Not worth crying for  
 Silly, stupid me



A. B. Harrison

---

## Forest of Nameless Creatures

Into the forest of dark shadows  
 Where evil lurks in hidden burrows  
 I find myself in utter defeat  
 By journey's vile act of deceit.  
 Once deep inside its cold, wet maze,  
 Fears, like kindling, are set ablaze.  
 Nights are haunted, nameless creatures,  
 Those who roam with wicked features.  
 Days are long but who can tell,  
 With this dark forest's ingenious spell:  
 Dense canopy captures and destroys  
 Whatever hopes the sun deploys.

It would be foolish of me to deny  
 That in this spider trap I am the fly.  
 Tricked by the couple at the Jolly Fern,  
 Those who enter unaware never return.  
 Here I am, cold, scared, wishing I knew  
 What more I was getting myself into:  
 Nameless creatures that haunt the night,  
 Those who take, prey, trick, and bite;  
 Plants whose silent vines twist and turn,  
 Silencing prey without concern.  
 Here I STAND, as I tremble and shout,  
 Stuck in a maze, with no way out.

Lacey Hanemann

---

## Ghost Story

With no anticipation of halting pace,  
 my body froze,  
 soul hitting  
 then resonating off my chest  
 backwards into my heels,  
 "Hallie,"  
 That's all he said;  
 my name rose up from some place  
 he had buried away next to  
 childhood scraped knees  
 and the high school girl  
 who wouldn't kiss him  
 when he loved her  
 and the woman  
 who scorned him when  
 he didn't.  
 "Hallie."  
 That's all he said,  
 as if he had stood, before,  
 looking down at my casket,  
 as if his muscles strained  
 to grip the rope that lowered me  
 into the ground one dark day in his past.  
 "Hallie."  
 That's all he said,  
 and I felt as though  
 I was a ghost,  
 shoes caught in tar,  
 only existing in the increments of breaths  
 that fall out and whisper, "Hallie"

Matt Parrish

---

## The Gift

What is that aroma  
 that compels me to search  
 As the bird eyes me warily from atop its tall perch?  
 It envelopes and cradles me in its familiar embrace  
 and wraps me up tight with its elegant grace.  
 What is that aroma  
 that begs me to follow?  
 My nose to the ground like a hound in the hollow.  
 Wait! Stop! I know that scent!  
 Is it you?  
 It simply MUST be!  
 My heart swells with the possibility.

No, my love, it is not I.  
 I fly with the angels. I watch you cry.  
 You can follow your nose but you will only find  
 that I have left your world behind.  
 No, my dear, I am not there  
 but I left you a gift that floats through the air.  
 The answer you seek can be found on that bush;  
 a gardenia blossom to give you a push.  
 When you long for my touch  
 turn your nose to the air  
 and if the blossom is blooming  
 it will be just like I'm there.

Parker Carwile

---

## Glass Nativity

None may touch this perfect, pristine,  
 Mirror-based nativity.  
 Carved in glass, each figurine,  
 Fragile and vacant, cannot redeem.

The stable dirt remains unseen  
 For processed glass brings clarity.

Looking down upon the scene,  
 For enlightenment in Heaven's King,  
 The crystal myths are overseen  
 By reflected flesh so vain.

Eyes must avert to keep Christ clean  
 For they warp the beauty of rescuing.

So better left in a solid screen  
 Of sturdy glass, this nativity,  
 For filth hands will soil the sheen  
 Of cold Mary's faceless gleam.  
 So fine a thing for dust to glean,  
 But what a breakable, Bible  
 Inadequacy!

Lacey Hanemann

---

## The Good Life

At times it seems  
 I understand it,  
 most of it,  
 that I can find its eyes  
 in the night,  
 or hear its song  
 playing gently in the  
 background  
 of every  
 background.  
 But I don't  
 understand even  
 a strand of it,  
 and I know it  
 and it knows it,  
 only letting me pretend  
 for a moment that  
 I see it.  
 I think some nights,  
 "Oh that's it;  
 hear it  
 in the blackbird's song?"  
 and my mind answers  
 "No, that's just a  
 drunk crying  
 in the room above  
 yours."  
 And then I say,  
 "Oh,"  
 and fall back asleep.

Parker Carwile

---

## The Growing End

I spot a ring of golden thread—  
 Fixed upon my finger—  
 Dare I not pull the gentle string  
 Who dies without me—

Time creeps—the crawling twine—it sneaks  
 Past my better eye—rising  
 Up my arm, but like angel hair—  
 Dare I not tear this snare—

The angry web climbs—climbs—with Time  
 And up—up it goes my neck—I  
 Dare I not yank this witch's hair—  
 I die without this vine—

Surrounded—too late to turn—  
 Thirsty veins start to seize my face—  
 The devil's guts gouge my narrow sight—  
 I lay as twisted lace.

A. B. Harrison

## The Heart in its Cage

As a painting depicted in colors of love:  
 Red crimson and holy white, travel  
 Flowing immortal through time.  
 Two walk together in perfect stride,  
 Hand in hand along fields of daffodil.  
 Each mile of open pasture to devour  
 Through sight and smell as the couple  
 Sails to their consummation spot  
 On floral waves of yellow and orange.

Looking over at his blushing new bride  
 His heart is powerless to Cupid's will.  
 Her long strapless white dress clings  
 To the slight curves of her tall frame.  
 Her braided blonde hair draped over  
 Freckled shoulders; sun bathed skin,  
 And tied together in two red ribbons:  
 Whicker picnic basket in one small hand,  
 His warm grasp intertwined in the other.  
 The feel of his newly ringed finger  
 Sends a grin to form and lie  
 Comfortably about her made up face.

Forever bound as one this nuptial day  
 His heart is hers; her life is his endlessly.  
 Their footsteps beat harmoniously  
 Like music over the smooth stone way.  
 Her long silk veil flows in the wind as  
 The two start to run for cover as distant  
 Dark clouds hold rain in giant hands  
 Over the fields in the distant county.

A quaint cottage resides over the hills  
 About two miles but neither can see it.  
 Bride starts to worry; her groom begins  
 To pant and loosen his sweat soaked tie.  
 Inside his chest under a suit three pieces

The heart beats in its cage, irregular.  
 Pounding bruised arms against the bars  
 As if trying desperately to be set free,  
 To escape its confines and embrace  
 The woman of its little heart's dream.  
 Its vessels pounding, hardly keeping up.

The man tumbles. Hands break apart.  
 He crawls a few feet and sits speechless  
 Under the limbs of a red apple tree;  
 The storm fully engulfs the sun.  
 The painting turns dark: colors of grief.  
 Lightning strikes; tree cracks overhead.  
 The man's bride falls to her knees  
 Upon apples long fallen, now rotten.  
 Rain starts to pour, uncontrollable  
 As if the angels were to weep  
 While their cold, icy tears start to turn  
 Her beautiful ivory dress translucent.  
 Her heart begins to break, pounding  
 In her slim white chest rapidly.  
 She wraps her arms around his neck.  
 While his hands clutch his chest  
 Then fall . . . limp.

Tears begin to roll down her face  
 Like streaks of black water paint  
 Upon her pale canvas of a face.  
 The bride opens. Erupts.  
 Screams in agony. In horror.  
 But is muffled by the overhead thunder.  
 Far away from distant folk  
 Not a soul is able to hear her despair  
 Of two hearts breaking in their own.  
 Each is broken like a porcelain doll.  
 A smashed chest lies gaping:  
 Hearts lost forever in an abyssal crater.

A. B. Harrison

## Heart's Travels: A Love Ghazal

Embedded in my chest rests a stain of love,  
 For there is no greater pain, than the pain of love.

Life's most treasured moments do exist  
 When one travels along the lane of love.

Butterflies will flutter inside our hearts  
 As we travelers travel the terrain of love.

Our titanic mountains turn to tiny plains  
 While we are ruled by the reign of love.

For lugubrious souls do find exuberance  
 When shackled in a chain of love.

Dalton Russell

---

## Her body fell lifeless onto the bed

Her body fell lifeless onto the bed  
Feeling like her life was a minefield  
And she had magnetic shoes.  
She buried her face into the pillow and screamed  
As the mascara fleeted from her eyes  
Staining masterpieces of sorrow  
On a white canvas.

Trey Dees

---

## I eat from the loaves

I eat from the loaves.  
I drink from the well.  
But what does it mean?  
Do I walk as he walked?  
Do I live as he lived?  
If not, then what purpose remains?  
A vision without action is naught but an idea.  
And of what worth is an idea alone?  
It is only a thought,  
An overlooked suggestion.  
And so the question remains:  
Do I live as you lived,  
Or am I living a lie?

Kenneth West

---

## if i were your mirror

if i were your mirror

i would awaken you  
each morning  
with musings of your winsomeness

of my longing to wrap  
myself in the curls  
of your luscious hair

and suffocate slowly  
with your sweet smelling locks  
around my neck

or how your eyes  
look exactly how i had  
envisioned the first sunset

with the novitiate star  
shining lustrous light all  
around reflecting even the  
tint of the tree leaves

if i were your mirror

i would remind you  
that your smile  
has more magic than  
india's ancient mantras  
and araby's enchantments

if i were your mirror

i would pine and whine  
through the inclement night

starving for the sensation  
of your warm breath  
upon my glassy surface

Dalton Russell

---

## I found her in the wreckage

I found her in the wreckage.  
Her world had collapsed into rubble.  
I built new cities within her mind to live  
Only they could not harbor us both.  
She is the West  
And I am the East.  
Cursed to always be apart.  
Her heart no longer had a home.

ReAnna Rowden

---

## Infatuation in Autumn

Infatuation in autumn is hope  
 encroaching toward meandering mortal  
 that by enrapture:  
 use  
 of another,  
 frost can be forgotten  
 as it settles  
 and wedges beneath tract.  
 Be damned  
 minute hour.  
 or relapse.

Abhishek Panchal

---

## A Journey that I missed

There was a house atop a cliff,  
 Perched amongst the winds swift;  
 My eyes took in the scenery,  
 Ear heeded to the symphony,  
 So, my nose said to me,  
 'Why don't we get a sniff?'

So on and on my little feet went  
 My, what an aroma simmered  
 through the vent!  
 The board said, 'Childhood on rent'  
 On and on, inside I went:

The years I spent there with glee  
 But they passed by in a spree.  
 The sights now enchanted me no more  
 So I decided to cross the door.

'Halt!', said the Housekeeper,  
 'No leave without paying your debt'  
 Irately, I replied  
 'Only to you, this knowledge you kept!  
 Free me at once, aside you step!'  
 But He was adamant even when I wept  
 He made me toil, he made me sweat,  
 Tending to the joys in which I slept.

And when He was bored of me,  
 Off the cliff he tossed me free!  
 Down, down and down I dropped  
 On hard land I stopped.  
 Everything was black, white and grey,  
 I asked a passer-by, 'the city of 'Adulthood' we say.'  
 Here, there were no woods, no grass  
 Everything was dull, coarse and crass.  
 My feet grew sore walking on the street  
 And then it hit me like a lightning streak!!

I had skipped the garden of youth,  
 I had missed the meadow of youth  
 In my toil and in my sweat,  
 Time had got the better of me:  
 Never will I sip from the fountain,  
 Never will I taste the apple  
 That lie in the midst of greens.  
 I have crossed over the years, it seems.





Savannah Woods

---

## Metaphor

Metaphor  
 Makes method of madness.  
 Prodigious poetry  
 Placates the masses.  
 Mendacious politicians  
 Make people millions;  
 Melting pot politics  
 Not made for civilians.  
 Pernicious persons  
 Make penurious nations;  
 Prosperous prospects  
 Not meant for our stations.  
 Maniacal media  
 Makes meaningless protagonists.  
 Amateur poetry  
 Shows methodical antagonists.

Jennifer Haley

---

## Mimi

Old woman,  
 why do you sit slumped in your chair,  
 withered and faded like the garden  
 you stare at through your dusty,  
 translucent-brown window?  
 Old woman rise,  
 pick up your tawny-rusted spade,  
 wear your red-faded-pink kerchief,  
 use your matriarchal hands again,  
 and recapture your mother-earth spirit.  
 Old woman rise exuberantly,  
 plunge your hands in the dirt,  
 feel the sweat run down your face.  
 Let it renew your shriveled soul.

Dillon Nelson

## Modest Considerations

A chance to prove wit sends your heart aflutter.  
 You, yearning to let ideas twirl and tumble.  
 Synapses soaring, you spit and sputter.  
 The master asking the meaning of the word "humble"  
 A quick, thick question is posed,  
 But you use pen and pad to try and sketch it.  
 You say, "An evident answer's close!"  
 But use a drawn out method to fetch it.  
 You're left to fret and stutter;  
 As the question is answered and past,  
 You start to shout but only mutter,  
 Stuttering as you "damn it" with a "blast!"  
 The chance was ripe and had risen,  
 But passed! You've held out your tongue  
 Trying the scope on the horizon widening  
 What was expressly needed, is quickly left unsung.

You rave and you rant, only on the inside  
 And yet, with pursed lips, let sweat sting your eyes  
 Subtly shaking your head and choking down pride.  
 Vehemently praying to nothing,  
 Cursing the blue in the skies,  
 And all answers to any amount of "whys."  
 While looking from peer to peer,  
 Feeling fear at perceived leers,  
 They seem to simper at such impotent temper.  
 Even the master joins in with the jeers,  
 Points his finger here and here  
 Singing in your ear  
 A disheartening timbre.

So with thoughts swimming and your arm erect  
 And excitement in your face scarlet, flushed:  
 Anxiety sways circumspect.  
 You're called to answer,  
 "Never mind,"  
 And are hushed.

Zoe Stone

## Morning Cup of Coffee

And they all stood and told stories of past loves  
 and part of their hearts spoke words eloquently  
 and bounced off the ears of strangers  
 all held together with love instead of fear.

We were all bound together,

the people who show me more about myself than  
 a mirror,  
 bound together with old songs.  
 Dirty mirrors and the cemetery sing-alongs.

Hands held on winter's first chill,  
 our spine hairs raised and the parts of our lungs  
 that were destined to speak of old broke down  
 heart-aches,  
 the winter brought out the best in us,  
 and pushed us down until only feelings were left.  
 We learned to love the depressed mind  
 and plant flowers around it and  
 bind it and intertwine it in the spine of another.

We all carry this thing above us  
 and it makes sense when we meet,  
 I see it in you and you see it in me.

We carry these things under our bones  
 locked away in those hidden diaries of a fifth grade  
 past,  
 little sister's peering eyes into the secret stories  
 of first kisses and beer wishes.

Pipe dreams and stitched up seams  
 in the dresses once made long.  
 Once summer ends  
 we push up all of our dead ends  
 and stories of pretend,  
 morphing minds  
 and pouring into each other  
 like morning cups of coffee.

A. B. Harrison

## Mouse Trap

Helpless and small.  
 Under the sink and in the open cabinet  
 Stuck between two black glue traps  
 It lingers captive waiting for us.  
 Its little white legs scurry in place.  
 Its haunting squeaks echo in the room,  
 A painful nightmare for listeners to bear.  
 Helpless and defeated.  
 The mouse calls out in its shrill voice  
 As if to beg for mercy to those who  
 linger about and watch in horror  
 Or to bid farewell to those he loves  
 Who wait horrified behind the wall.  
 I get onto one knee to assess the damage.  
 The mouse's body frantically squirms  
 With its mangled and torn abdomen  
 Cemented in gluey strands to each  
 Foul and cruel death-dealing board.  
 Its mutilated grey fur torn from its flesh.  
 Blood trickling from its mouth.  
 Helpless and scared.  
 It looks up at me like caught prey  
 With black beady eyes radiating sorrow  
 Waiting for the sticky pain to stop.  
 Folks start growling tired of seeing  
 The mouse they had caught in pain and  
 Beg for me to put it out of its misery.  
 I do not want to kill the mouse, but  
 Neither do I want it to suffer any longer.  
 Gently, I pick up the traps and the mouse  
 With my hands and slowly place them  
 Inside the white plastic bag that waits.  
 I pick up the bag as the mouse squeals.  
 I walk outside to the back of the building  
 And gently place the bag upon the street.  
 Opening up the bag, the mouse stares

As our eyes meet in joint horror.  
 Tenderly, I open the two glue traps  
 To expose its small, grey head.  
 Looking to my right to avoid its stare,  
 I realize what must be done as I reach  
 Over to grab the large, siltstone rock  
 Lying carelessly alongside the building.  
 I look back into the mouse's eyes  
 As we share one final look at one other.  
 The mouse begins to squeal in panic.  
 My heart fills with dread as I raise  
 The large rock in my hands and say  
 That I am sorry my brother, so sorry.  
 I swing the rock down towards the neck  
 As hard as I think it will vitally need.  
 But the mouse remains still, barely alive  
 As it scurries in place in fear.  
 The siltstone's orange tip now covered  
 In bits of the mouse's fur and blood.  
 Reluctantly, I am forced to finish.  
 Thus, I swing the rock again and again  
 Until the mouse squeaks no more  
 And its little legs lie still upon the traps.  
 Helpless and dead.  
 The mouse lies still in the plastic bag  
 As I tie it up and walk slowly  
 To the nearby trashcan upon the street.  
 Holding out my hand, I drop it inside.  
 My heart is filled with sorrow and guilt  
 For this is the first animal whose life  
 Has ended by my conscious hands.  
 Helpless and troubled.  
 With the mouse's final squeak  
 Resonating inside my head,  
 The horrified feeling that rests inside me  
 Simply, just does not feel right.

Lacey Hanemann

## The Name

There are ways to make the body numb  
 Simply by a thought  
 To sit, perched and paralyzed  
 Staring at a tear in the carpet  
 To wonder if your hair's messed up  
 To forget you have hair at all  
 Say a name, the name that's your own "the name"  
 Say it,  
 I dare you

Teeth are clenched,  
 Legs are loose  
 This is real life, this feeling  
 Feeling's not the right word  
 That suggests that the body  
 Believes what it thinks  
 To be true  
 No not feeling

An energy  
 That breaks knee caps  
 And makes the preacher curse  
 The whole congregation laughing  
 Red faced and overfed  
 It's an energy that's been  
 Waiting  
 And now it's found  
 So what

Nothing is different  
 It's been there  
 Always  
 We haven't found the energy  
 This nonsense spark  
 We've simply taught  
 The other  
 To see it without knowing  
 Grabbed the other's face and shouted  
 "Look at me!  
 Look at me!"

There's a spark  
 Blue and green  
 With a little bit of  
 Yellow red.  
 Yeah, there's a fire

Dillon Nelson

---

## Night Cession

Wouldn't you do whatever possible to avoid nodding,  
When night comes 'round a-poking and a-prodding?

Slinging steaming sand in your eyes,  
Leaving you keenly considering pointed lies,  
You might have told others, yourself,  
To prolong a fancy dream of health,  
With a penetrating gale ripping through covers  
Its baleful wail the din of former, future lovers  
With a familiar haze, invariable, with its inward gaze  
Twisting it until face to face with ideals base  
And immaterial pits of sickly, sordid, crippling Shame  
Crying and moaning, begging to know its name,  
Leaving you dumbly posing on spotted podium,  
Causing unknown audience raging odium  
With scoffs and boos and other sounds seldom heard,  
You bowing into a pitfall, the stage having stirred  
Casting you out into the depths of the starlit sea  
Watery eyes scanning inner darkness for infinity.  
Obscene, dead masses hurry in your direction  
Carrying back degrees of introspection  
On forgotten convictions trodden, bereft  
Shocking you to the brink of death,  
Remembering what someone once said,  
"Unconscious swimming could leave you dead."  
In waking to life, shouting as if this were true,  
To your uncanny father tying his shoe.

Wouldn't you give any amount of wealth,  
Rather than nodding when your father tells you he's  
been there himself?

Megan Jones

---

## The Once Green Past

Fall blew a breeze near my knees,  
Whisking away all that was green.  
A golden grace and a hint of cold,  
Darker lace and thick coats to hold.  
But Fall fades away, for it cannot stay,  
So Winter may come the very next day.  
Winter brought ice, wind, frost, and snow.  
Spring can fight that when the flowers grow.  
Those coats peel off when they see the sun rise,  
And none of them button back until it starts to die.  
That's not till Fall blows yet another chilly breeze,  
Closing in, wrapping around my covered knees.  
The reds and oranges litter all the grass,  
Leaving behind the once green past.

Parker Carwhile

---

## Our Epic Hero

Steadfast and strong, our stoic hero stands;  
 He is all brawn with a hollowed-out head.  
 He blunders about, a sword in his hands;  
 Swinging it senselessly, slashing foes dead.

Bragging about his vast might goes this fool;  
 He is clueless of the monster within.  
 A cunning creature that is vile and cruel;  
 Known as pride that supplants comprehension.

With each triumph, his demon takes control;  
 He proclaims to all "I cannot be slain!"  
 Until a night challenger takes his soul  
 And rips him apart, scattering his brain.

And so our epic hero is revealed:  
 One who is smart enough to wield a shield.

ReAnna Rowden

---

## Perdition's Inferno

Perdition's inferno  
 can very well be the modest tangent of God,  
 the desperate fervor,  
 in worship where apology absently  
 saturates  
 every other verse of discord,  
 every other aid trailing  
 figment.

Savannah Woods

---

## **A Poem for Skye** (Dedicated to Skye McFarland)

Colors swirl around your abandoned body like a shroud.  
 Your 12"x11" room is a sepulcher.  
 Abandoned mugs, half-filled with now cold liquid  
 Are positioned like altar candles.

Your memory haunts this building.  
 The phantom sound of your laughter walks the corridors.  
 Illusions of you turning corners.  
 The loss is palpable; thick as viscera.

Kelli Miley

---

## **Prayer**

Broken words

Scatter

into

empty

space

Tempered silence

Bated Breath

I wait

And hope.

For an answer

Or a whisper

The Quiet Suffocates.

Devin Tant

---

## § Prescriptions

It's nights like this that I start to think  
there's nothing I could do, here on the brink.

I remember that the cause was lost before I started.  
Everything that gathers is destined to be parted.  
So why am I here, so deep in the pursuit,  
Of a life that's yet to even bear fruit?  
Oh that's right, the image remains.  
"Heads up, chest out, put back on your chains.  
Here's the medicine, be sure you're complying.  
And forget about her." (God help me I'm trying)

The smile hides the question "Is this the new me?"  
I take another pill with "Who am I meant to be?"  
Maybe this is simply where the problem begins-  
pills can't absolve me of all my sins  
No better than white paint poured from gasoline tanks  
Given to the oppressed as an offer of thanks.  
No, I'm the one at fault, the cause of this grief  
So chant with me, children; "Hell to the Chief."

I come back to myself, in small bursts of creativity.  
Are these pills what's natural, or is this proclivity?  
What's the difference between depression and disgrace  
To one who feels they're just taking up space?  
To people who can't look up from shuffling their feet,  
For whom life's looking both ways to cross a one-way street;  
Pointless. Useless. This is the fifth time for this scolding.  
Once for each finger on the hand she's not holding.  
It's no coincidence that these cries of the forlorn  
repeat "You must die to be reborn."

You can't tell me anything that I haven't told myself.  
I'll take your damn pill, return my soul to the shelf,  
Becoming, once again, this creature so hollow,  
That's learned Life's always been the hardest pill to swallow.

Kathryn McCrary

---

## Promises Not Vain

Rising early, it is a dreary morning  
News of another's loss, it is a darker day  
Tears and heartbreak, it is all our loss  
Fathers cry, hopes are dashed  
Then, thoughts fly Heavenward  
There, little ones are safe in love  
His promises, called to mind  
They will sustain

Dalton Russell

---

## She drank me

She drank me  
Without hesitation.  
Like a shot she took me quickly  
Not to the head but the heart.  
Intoxicated, she danced as pure desire  
dripped from her pores  
Covering me completely  
Reigning over me.  
She was given two choices,  
Stand on the cliff  
And enjoy the view,  
Or jump  
And enjoy the fall.

Kenneth West

---

## shell shock

i am a soldier  
shackled not by  
foreign mercenaries  
but by my own self hate  
a fungus  
festering and feeding  
on my joy until

i am nothing

but a skeleton  
a wingless eagle

who each morning  
launches out of bed

screaming  
at the invisible gun  
held to my head



Olivia Thomas

---

## Son of the Sabi Sands

A crack in the air, the crack of a skull,  
 Another head down in the cull of innocents.  
 A newborn orphan's scream goes unheard by the world,  
 For a sporty genocide that has been happening for hundreds of years.  
 The black market's lottery outweighs the gods they worship.

Gravestones on a hearth, positioned ever so slightly,  
 Under an oil-colored canvas of a self-imposed king.  
 For the rumored cancer myths and self-esteem of lovers who know no  
 better.  
 The witchcraft of keratin holds no gold  
 .....so the foreigners say.

Now the babe, lone son of the Sabi Sands,  
 The silver shelling of his mother's reaper now lodged under iron skin.  
 It burns in tune with his pulse.  
 Her life lost for a lock of hair or the clip of a nail.  
 Only half the world sees it as a waste.

The killer's kin is the son's salvation.  
 They blindfold him to save his sight.  
 They cage him to save his life, to survive these harsh lands.  
 Only in green windows they stand,  
 Baring crisp salads and creamy sweets.

The son's guardians constantly change, rarely is there a familiar face.  
 They all come cloaked in kakis and boots,  
 Their gilded skin splotched with rivers of mud and sweat.  
 They all find love in his eyes  
 And he fits himself into a corner of their hearts.

His night terrors are soothed by rifle wielding shepherds that guard him  
 at night.  
 Soon, a sister is gained by his side, her story the same as his.  
 They live together, growing up with their ever changing caretakers.  
 And the son lengthens, strengthens, and holds his head high.  
 The lone son is happy, for he does not know any better.  
 But he is kind and he is gentle.  
 He knows they saved his life, and he is forever grateful.  
 He smiles, though they are blind, and thanks them, though they are deaf.  
 They take care of him.  
 Their lives and time in exchange for his.

But one night, as he sleeps, he is struck by thunder.  
 He sinks to his knees in an all too familiar burn.  
 It is spreading far, he feels his traitorous pulse pull the poison deeper.  
 The pain flares out, like the hood around a bitter cobra.  
 No. No. No.

Then they are on him, lapping up their undeserved fortunes  
 Like feral dogs quenching their thirst at sewer water.  
 They scalp him, despite his still beating heart.  
 His sister watches from a distance,  
 Horrified as his screams tear apart the night,  
 Witnessing the same horror for a second time.  
 A safe haven now red, turned a scene of crime.  
 And, just like that, the son follows his mother's fate.

Worlds away, his previous guardians flinch violently.  
 They feel the fatal bullet, it resonates against their bones.  
 They are helpless as his life is torn away from them.  
 Their eyes burn, their hearts bleed.  
 The handful of souls fall to their knees, and let out a broken wail.  
 For one thought will forever torture them.

We failed.

Matt Parrish

---

## The Shortcut

The brown crackling gate whines.  
 I saunter down the meandering pathway  
 surrounded by desolate faces, long forgotten.  
 The mossy stones whisper as I tread past;  
*Remember me...*

The grey chill slowly crawls up my neck;  
 lacy fingers tickling, scratching at my skin.  
 The whispers, earnestly raising in pitch  
 Beckoning, pleading;  
*Remember me...*

The gnarled leggy branches outstretched  
 obliging them to rise from their eternal slumber.  
 Struggling to escape the squelching stink  
 Stony eyes staring, imploring  
*Remember me...*

They grasp at me with earnest  
 Imposing dread settles around my shoulders  
 My pace quickens as I retreat;  
 icy breath trailing behind me.  
 Bellowing louder as the rusted metal slams;  
*Remember me...*

Savannah Woods

---

## Stains

She smokes to take the pain away,  
 Because the world she sees today  
 Is not the world inside her mind,  
 So she pretends that she is blind.  
 Losing sight and losing seeing  
 Lets the girl remember being  
 The girl that once was innocent,  
 Before the night that she spent  
 On his bed with gritted teeth,  
 Thought love was being underneath.  
 Red stained more than the sheets.  
 Red stained more than the sheets.

Now she sleeps in bed alone,  
 An empty room is not a home.  
 Pillows soaked with her tears  
 She's trapped inside with her fears.  
 She cries for the girl she once was  
 Who's gone from the world because  
 She loved the boy who could not love;  
 Her body was to push and shove.  
 He did not love her as a wife;  
 Her only lover is her knife.  
 Red stained more than the sheets.  
 Red stained more than the sheets.

Parker Carwile

## Stitched Lips

I have a pair of stitched lips,  
 Never to part  
 For fear they'll rip.  
 So no one will know how much I  
 think and  
 feel;  
 Nods  
 "Yes" and "No"  
 can be my only  
 spiel.

I sewed them shut long ago.  
 I sewed them shut.  
 I sewed them.  
 I sewed.

Thread  
 upon thread,  
 Fear  
           upon fear.

Needle  
 in and  
 out,

Tear  
 upon  
 Tear.

The threads are weak  
 But they seem so strong;  
 It seems like they've been with me all  
 along.

But I can't pull; it will hurt me so.  
 I just know it will hurt.  
 I just know it.  
 I know!

So that decides it, just not today.  
 It's not like I had something  
 to say,  
 Anyway.

Kenneth West

## the stonethrowers

there he goes again  
 bernardo, basket-thief  
 being flogged for the  
 fourth time this fortnight

but is it truly a sin  
 when your loved ones holler  
 in hunger because magicians  
 are no longer needed and no

one wants to see an  
 old man pull a speckled  
 rabbit from a torn  
 sombrero seven-hundred times

and even the proud beak-nosed  
 patricians stop  
 tossing their corroded  
 sticky, gum-growing pennies  
 at you and your songs

twisted by the anguish  
 of existence surrender their  
 sweet sound and the only  
 tunes that throttle from  
 your throat are sustained  
 strained symphonies of  
 sorrow that in more eloquent

terms than i can here  
 express attest to the  
 sanctity you possess  
 and the purity of the  
 heart in your breast  
 (but i digress)

and all of the injustices  
 are reinforced with the  
 whip's thwack and crack

as bernardo, basket-thief,  
 short and skinny but  
 beautiful-souled stands

stiff and silent unaghost  
 compliant accepting our  
 acrimonious penalty  
 resolutely at ease under  
 the sting of our scorn

unbudging beneath the weight  
 of our hypocrisy

unphased by our laughter

our unnatural laughter

our inharmonious laughter

our secretly self-loathing  
 laughter

Hunter Pittman

---

## TG

I'm tired of being beaten.  
 I'm tired of being hit.  
 I'm tired of being told that I am an abomination.  
 It's not like I chose this life.  
 I am this was way for a reason.  
 But they say that is not a reason.  
 They don't know me.  
 They send me to therapist after therapist  
 Thinking that I have a mental disease.  
 I am not mentally sick.  
 I was made this way.  
 But still they don't believe.  
 Let me be the person I want to be.  
 Stop forcing me to be how I was created.  
 The church says this, the church says that, but the church is wrong.  
 I just want to leave, to just go away, and to just die.  
 I want to be a girl not a boy.  
 I want to have all the things a girl would have, everything.  
 But they won't allow it.  
 They think that God and the church can change me.  
 But God made me this way and I know it.  
 And if they refuse to accept then I might as well die.  
 I get my secret stash of clothing out and get dressed,  
 Put my makeup on and do my hair.  
 As I get the knife out and start to slit my wrists, I say,  
 "If they don't want a transgender kid then they will have a dead one."

Simanta Lamichhane

---

## Thoughts

I don't know  
 From where these thoughts come  
 However, I am standing here like a flag in a maize field  
 blowing to the right  
 blowing to the left  
 as dictated by a gust of wind  
 It's not me who decides which way to blow  
 It's the wind of thoughts  
 Sometimes they make me feel happy  
 As does a cool breeze in spring  
 Sometimes they make me feel terrified  
 As does a storm in summer  
 This forces me to believe  
 my body, my behaviors  
 They are not my identity  
 Nor is my life and its events  
 It's that thought aroused in the fraction of a second  
 That holds my true identity  
 So my friends  
 I am just a thought  
 Aroused in a fraction of a second

John Wagner

---

## Timeless Tales in Chapel Chambers

Timeless tales were trapped in chapel chambers  
 As history was decoded through Renaissance painters.  
 Tapestries were woven with wool from the Lamb  
 The artist held the brush, but who was in command?  
 Candles were lit as maps were restructured,  
 Retracing paths that were previously uncovered.  
 The equator realigned all of those in search,  
 Which held greater power, Royalty or the Church?  
 In Sacred Sanctuaries where Saints now worship,  
 Are where unbound books are written in cursive.  
 Fire arose where manna fell from the sky,  
 As flames were dispersed in symmetric of pi.  
 Sand buried the secrets then they resurfaced in pyramids,  
 Where pharaoh solely permitted those that were spirited.  
 Burial grounds where we now gather for wisdom,  
 Were the birthing place of fate's next victim.  
 Ancient artifacts valued with eternal treasure-  
 With wisdom or gold will you choose to be measured?...

Devin Tant

---

## § A Toast! (A Curtal Sonnet)

Here's to stars in blackened skies,  
 always watching from above.  
 Here's to flowers' failing beauty,  
 teaching us to never love.  
 Here's to accusations flying,  
 each that fit us like a glove.

To chances lost to negligence,  
 far past the hope of recompense.  
 To pledges, faith, and dedication.  
 To lives we gave in immolation.

To us.

Kenneth West

---

## the tree chant

the tree's trunk is sawed  
there is no more dancing  
in her sacred shadow

no longer  
will she shed her leaves  
in autumn

no longer  
will children climb  
her craggy girth  
trying to touch the  
toes of god

no longer  
will the birds soar  
through her hair scouting  
for a branch  
in which to nest

no longer  
will beaver admire  
the expansiveness of her  
trunk never daring to  
gnaw her gargantuan body

no longer  
will cat consider climbing  
her heartbreaking heights  
hoping to escape dog's wrath  
while he hashes out his anger  
on something else

the earth is emptier now

the tree's trunk is sawed

there is no more dancing  
in her sacred shadow

Parker Carwile

---

## Two Doves

We would sit—  
Like two doves on a wire—  
Waiting for morning—  
For mourning—  
We knew would come.

At dawn's break—  
I would break—  
Down, and you would—  
Cope—  
Somehow.

I would fly south—  
And far away—  
From the wire—  
My mourning—  
And you.

But you would stay put—  
In the shallow grave—  
Of my greeting—  
And leaving—  
So soon.

The wire grew cold—  
For it takes two—  
Two doves—  
For the wire—  
To warm.

You chose flight—  
And I chose flight—  
But still—  
You would sit—  
Alone.

A morning dove—  
A mourning dove—  
There—  
You would sit—  
And wait.

Why did you, no—  
How did you know—  
That I would—  
Be arriving—  
Late?

So we would sit—  
Two doves on a wire—  
Waiting for mourning—  
We knew—  
Would come.

Though in our name—  
Though in our nature—  
Mourning broke—  
And the wire—  
Warmed.

R.E.M.

---

## The Vultures

Pour me another glass,  
 Something sweeter now,  
 And feed me, too;  
 The vultures here are foul.

Send me far from here,  
 To your snows and your sands,  
 Where feet may tell a tale  
 To fall between your hands.

Whisk me away now,  
 To your fields and trees.  
 Plow the grain behind me;  
 Let there be nothing left to please.

Pay my fare;  
 Your forests reek of rot.  
 The treetops rustle rabid,  
 I'll lend the sea my thoughts!

Throw me overboard,  
 The skies are becoming dark.  
 What ghost anchors our ship?  
 I must hasten this little lark!

Find me your foreign horse,  
 May she carry me farther still?  
 I seek that house of drink  
 With my compass on the sill.

The compass tells me now  
 No direction to desire.  
 You promised the sound would cease  
 Back at that bloodied briar!

The noise – it deafens me now,  
 That wretched, damned beating.  
 There's no more bread and no more wine...  
 On what could you be feasting?

Nicholas Todd

---

## We donned the faces of ghosts

We heard the cracking thunder,  
 The banshee's call.  
 We donned the faces of ghosts,  
 Each one of us the same.

Our cadaverous skin sagging,  
 Putrid and void of life.  
 Our sub-terrestrial eyes stare blankly,  
 Windows into oblivion.

Protruding from the front  
 Was no mouth but a tentacle,  
 The snout of some carrion drone  
 Feeding off of death and decay.

No longer are we  
 The brothers, the fathers, the sons  
 Of those we left behind.  
 We are the harbingers of Pestilence.

Never to return  
 No more fates  
 To try and discern.

Megan Jones

---

## We Take the Blow

Inconspicuous as it seems,  
Monday was the day.  
The night before was spent in merriment;  
The joy was not to stay.

A call dispatched,  
That's when we got word,  
For voices that are not spoken,  
Will often go unheard.

There had to be something,  
Something to keep you here.  
A song, a voice, a small person  
Who wanted to keep you near.

Candles were raised,  
And a sad date was set  
To honor the man  
We once thought of with respect.

Why was today different?  
How did the world shift?  
I'd ask you to explain,  
But today you cease to exist.

There had to be something,  
Something of worth.  
A song, a voice, the laughter of a child.  
All these memories now under the earth.

There had to be something.  
Anything at all.  
When the shadows surrounded you,  
You didn't have to fall.

There had to be something,  
But we will never know.  
A song, a voice, it wasn't enough  
And now we take the blow.

Parker Carwile

---

## What Comes Into View

The Sun: gone,  
Withdrawn, our eyes see  
Old vibrant blood, smeared and dry,  
Left low and vast in drained sky.

All is Same,  
Whose purpose was ease.  
Their sleek, superb silhouettes  
Tower all in lifeless sets.

Such backdrop does make them stand--  
Out from shadows of deceit.  
Edges are abrupt;  
Columns: cut.

Their smoke and flame of our kind  
Fudges the blood orange shine  
And so it swallows  
Us in night.

Deep blue is the Dark.  
Overtaken are we  
By the Dream.

Mystery surrounds.  
We frantically search  
For our sight.

Many choose to follow  
The bright of ours that blinds  
The Abyssal Wonder  
We are leaving behind.

But steady Oh silver handle  
Above hangs waiting, waiting.

*Dare to grab hold It speaks  
Seek true sight in me.  
Come off the curb.  
Further in  
Unknown  
Come...*

Desolate is the Dark.  
I stand lost.

I regret my stillness.  
I fear now.

Rusted Herald handle  
Hangs too low.

My sight: blocked, blocked by black:  
Stark shadow.

All here stands overcame;  
Us to blame.

Most scream for a change...  
Nothing.

But some count the  
Seconds till  
Sun... *Rise!*



Savannah Woods

---

## Who Am I? I Don't Know

Who am I? I don't know.

I was born. "It's a girl!" I was pink.  
I cried often. I'm still crying.  
I grew up. I grew out. I'm still growing.  
My heart broke. My heart swelled. It's still beating.  
My heart's tenacious. So am I.

Physically, I'm weak.  
My spine curves. My heart flutters. Blood doesn't pump.  
Then I faint.  
Then I fall.  
Bruises litter me. But I heal.  
I'm still alive. I'm still breathing.

My hair's purple. I'm only 5'3".  
I'm kinda fat. That's not me.  
That's my reflection.  
Who am I? I don't know.  
I'm only 19.  
I'm a child. I'm an adult.  
I'm stuck in-between.

What are taxes? What's a 401K?  
I know cartoons. I know comics. I like anime.  
That isn't grownup. Is existentialism grownup?

I am trying.  
I am failing.  
I am drowning.

Breathe deeply, girl.  
Take it easy. Anxiety isn't childish.  
Kids don't worry. Worrying's for adults.  
Am I grownup? Are zits grownup? Do grownups burp?  
Is poetry grownup? My poetry's shit.

I hate myself.  
Sometimes, I do. Often, I do.  
I take medication.  
Sometimes, I do. Often, I don't.  
I don't know.

Am I pretty? I don't know.  
I'm probably not.  
Am I worthy? I don't know.  
I'm probably not.

I contemplate suicide. Is that normal?  
It's gotten better.

Who am I? I don't know.

Lacey Hanemann

---

## Who Can Swing the Highest?

And that's how it goes,  
you laugh and you lie  
and your eyes get heavy.  
You eat and you play and  
you walk on tiptoes.  
You swing and you jump  
and you fly,  
for a moment.

You laugh and you lie  
and your eyes glaze over.  
You eat and you play  
and your feet ache.  
You swing and you jump  
and you land on your knees,  
sand in your teeth.

And that's how it goes,  
but you never notice a change  
because you never notice a moment.  
And that's how it goes,  
your eyes never open.

A. B. Harrison

---

## Woman at the Tall Wooden Bridge

She walks along the tall wooden bridge  
High above a shallow creek.

I watch her as she walks along,  
As I have every day for the past week.

Sitting at my usual park bench  
I look up from my half read book.

She stops at the middle of the bridge  
Peering over the side at the water.

Scarf wrapped tightly around her neck.  
Hands placed gracefully on the rail.

There she stands for the world to watch  
And gaze in awe at a living masterpiece.

There she stands for my eyes only:  
A youthful beauty sculpted to perfection.

Slowly she climbs upon the rail  
Arching her back with arms spread wide

She smiles with her head held high  
As wind blows through her auburn hair.

Though she cannot tell, will never know  
Her presence brings me peace.

Her eyes slowly open; smile disappears.  
Wind stops blowing but colder I feel.

The sun slowly starts to set.  
Skies fill with shades of blue and orange.

Suddenly, she steps off the ledge  
As I watch helplessly from afar.

As she plummets to her riverbed death,  
A priceless vase has shattered.

John Sadler

---

## You've found a career, darling

I want to let you know that you are a movie star  
You are

Mamie Van Doren and  
Jayne Mansfield and  
Jane Russell

You are a bombshell and you are sex in flesh  
You are a bombshell like Marilyn Monroe

and you can't wait to blow up  
And when you do blow up the world will watch and say  
"oh I love her"

I want to let you know that we could weaponize your beauty  
And if we did

the world would pine for war  
Trenches filled with smiling men would yell

"here comes the movie star"

---

## Acknowledgments

What a journey this school year has been in reviving and growing the Poetry Society at Louisiana Tech University. I am so proud of what we have accomplished.

In creating this collection of student poetic works, the other editors and I attempted and perhaps succeeded in creating a diverse representation of the creative minds that attend the university, not just in the English department; therefore, we opened up submissions for the poetry collection in three phases over the school year while allowing any current student to submit new and/or old poetry of their own work. By doing this, we allowed a variety of students, those in and out of the English Department, to be credited and showcased for the creative talents that lie within all of us.

In choosing and voting on the poems that would be included in the collection, the members of the selection committee based their decisions by weighing each submitted poem's poetic merit on overall composition, quality, and style while insuring that no poet's work be censored for any political, religious, or social reasons. To all the students at Louisiana Tech University who submitted works, both chosen and not, we thank you for your time and effort. We look forward to receiving more submissions next year.

We would like to thank the Dean of Liberal Arts at the university, Dr. Kaczvinsky, for funding our literary publication.

In accordance with the above, we would also like to thank our academic advisor, Dr. Ruffeth, for allowing, assisting, and encouraging us to publish our poetry collection.

Most of all, I would like to thank my fellow editors and selection committee members Devin, Dillon, Kenneth, and Parker for their time and effort on our publication. On a personal level, I must thank them for putting up with my persistence, compulsive need for punctuality, and enjoyment of a good argument. We, as a team, made this collection a success. Congratulations!

Apologies to anyone I may have forgotten.

Austin Harrison



Volume Editor

An Online Journal of Art,  
Literature, and Culture

# The Quatrain

*The Quatrain* is a print and electronic project for people who value quality Undergraduate writing and art. Full-dress researched, academic essays and scholarly explorations, photography, life-writing, sculpture, cultural criticism, work that has a reflective, autobiographical style, and creative writing in all its forms: We simply seek to display samples of the interesting, original, and quality work being produced by gifted students and emerging talents from Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas and Mississippi. This four state region, our geographical quatrain, is our primary interest.

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