
The Quatrain

Volume 2: Fall 2016

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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. Thanks go out to the Louisiana Tech Poetry Society for their continuing and unflagging support.

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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 style with a large, stylized 'D'.

Donald Kaczvinsky
Dean, College of Liberal Arts
Louisiana Tech University

The Quatrain

Gabrielle Boyce

Ender's Note

The sun is setting,
the sky is waning,
the trees are swaying,
the wind is blowing,
the birds are chirping,
the world is turning.

I lay still.

My eyes are closing
and
my sight is going—

Gabrielle Boyce

Fickle Haven

And then came the night,
where his voice was
a low, longing rumble
against my ear.
Where his breath was
a warm, caressing brush
against my neck.
Where his thought was
a sweet, loving whisper
against my mind.
Where his touch was
a soft, gentle embrace
against my skin.
And then came the day,
where his love melted away.

Gabrielle Boyce

Midnight's Song

I weave to you the song of Midnight-
 So soft and delicate its notes,
 so somber is its tune.
 Crying in its melody,
 most sharp in solitude.

Played in the stillness of night,
 when there is no hope to fight.
 Sung by past monsters and fears,
 hope deteriorating by the years.

Filling your mind with anxiety and doubt,
 when not a soul to hear you shout.
 You may utter, you may scream,
 but the only way to end it,
 is to dream.

Gabrielle Boyce

Solace

It called her name
 in an enticing, bittersweet note:
 Happily, she obliged.
 She stood in the lost garden
 with a soft smile.
 Here, she could forget.
 The ribbons of the sun
 wrapped her like a
 warm, delicate kiss.
 Purples, yellows, greens-
 Quietly caught in a dance.
 Mosses, flowers, trees-
 Rhythmically swaying in the wind.
 Dragons, butterflies, bees-
 Gently humming in a harmony.
 It had called her name
 in a jarring, world-shattering shrill:
 Regretfully, she obliged.
 She stood in the dismal room
 with a slight frown.
 Here, she remembered.
 The rays of dust
 caked her like a
 thick, trapping shroud.
 She heaved a sigh
 and returned to the place
 all too familiar.

Gabrielle Boyce

Crossroads

CAST: Lenora Aust, a student, about twenty
Nora, an elderly woman

At Rise: Sounds play of a subway slowing to a stop and subway doors sliding open. Light gradually fills the stage and reveals the setting of the inside a subway car. Lenora and Nora exit the subway via the opened doors. Lenora quickly enters through the doors with a clipboard and hesitantly sits at the seat nearest to the entrance. She crosses her legs, has a worried expression, and presents an air of distress. She pulls a pen from her pocket and begins to write on the clipboard. She is dressed professionally with makeup and her hair is tied back in a smooth, tight bun. Moments later, Nora enters with a rolled up newspaper and casually shuffles to a seat farthest from the entrance. She appears happy and is dressed in simple, comfortable clothing. Her silver hair is loose upon her shoulders. The doors close, and sounds play of the subway beginning to move. Lenora checks her watch. Nora begins to read the Obituaries section of the paper.

Nora: (*gesturing the paper to Lenora*) I always check to see if my friends are in here. (*notices Lenora's urgency*) Oh dear, are you late for something?

Lenora: (*her eyes not leaving her clipboard*) Excuse me?

Nora: I saw you looking at your watch with great concern.

Lenora: I see.

Nora: (*laughing*) It might just be my eyes, though. They do fail me more often than not these days. (*she pauses*) You must be headed somewhere important to be so busy.

Lenora: (*meeting her eyes with a twinge of annoyance*) If you simply must inquire about my plans, I am going to a job interview.

Nora: Oh, an interview! Is this your first one?

Lenora: Yes, it is. (*she runs a hand over her hair and once more checks her watch*)

Nora: I remember my first interview. I'd practiced my speech over and over again the night before. I showed up in my best attire. I sat down with nearly perfect posture. The first question they'd asked was my name, and you know what I did? I could barely utter the first syllable! My own name! Oh, the irony.

Lenora: Did you get the job?

Nora: Don't know. I never answered when they called.

Lenora: Well I doubt I'll forget my name.

Nora: Who knows. I suppose if you really want the job, you'll be ready for it.

Lenora: Hardly.

Nora: You think so?

Lenora: Well. I hardly want it.

Nora: Why so?

Lenora: I've conformed. (*she gestures to her hair*) I never enjoy my hair like this. But I always wear it in this manner. (*she gestures to her clothes*) This outfit I can barely breathe in. (*she lifts her clipboard*) This is not the person I am. It's who I'm expected to be.

Nora: Then why apply?

Lenora: Because my parents strongly recommended that I do. Because it makes decent money. Because it's the kind of life I've trained for. Because...a million reasons.

Nora: But would you be happy with that job?

Lenora: (*scoffing*) Happiness doesn't matter. Not when you've got places to go and things to do. Not when you've got events to schedule and work to always tend to. Not when the future is the most important. Not when preparing for the future is the most important.

Nora: Now that is nonsense. Let me tell you, I've been alive for quite a while, and whatever happens in the future, happens. Enjoy it while you can. (*she pauses, then laughs and lifts up the newspaper*) For all I know, I could be a name on this paper next week. But I've enjoyed this life, doing what I love. I've lived.

Lenora: That's easy to say. But regardless, I'm going to the interview, and I'm saying my name with ease.

Nora: It wouldn't hurt to practice.

Lenora: (*sighing*) Lenora. My name is Lenora. It's nice to meet you, Sir/Madame. My name is Lenora. Lennnnnoooooora. Hire me, please.

Nora: You don't say? We have the same name, Lenora!

Lenora: We do? I've never met anyone with my name. It's a fossil. (*she continues to write on her clipboard*)

Nora: Of course I just go by Nora now. The whole thing never fit me. But if you think that's an uncommon name, you should try having Aust for a last name.

Lenora: (*stops writing and looks at her with concern*) What?

Nora: Pardon?

Lenora: How did you know that?

Nora: Know what?

Lenora: My last name.

Nora: Your last name?

Lenora: Lenora Aust.

Nora: That's my name.

Lenora: You're joking!

Nora: I'm most certainly not. (*she thinks a moment*) What year were you born?

BOTH: 1993.

Lenora: What is my mother's name?

Nora: Sharon. Your father's?

BOTH: Shaun.

Nora: ...Well, I guess I must have gotten on the wrong subway.

Lenora: This isn't funny.

Nora: I suppose it isn't. Maybe it was meant to happen.

Lenora: (*pacing*) No, no, no. No. I can't do this. Not right now. Not today. (*she looks at her accusingly*) You're lying! (*her yell causes Nora to drop the paper; Lenora moves to pick it up*)

Lenora: What's this? (*she reads*) L. Aust, deceased? Tuesday, June 4th, 2058? Died of myocardial infarction...survived by no one. Remembered as the CEO of Elated Electronics. (*she drops the paper on the ground*) This some kind of sick joke. (*she smooths some loose hairs on her head and checks her watch*)

Nora: (*thoughtfully*) Well that can't be true. I should be alive in the year 2064. And I've never associated with Elated Electronics... That L. Aust must have been lost.

Lenora: Okay, I get it. You're saying if I take this job, I'll die alone. So who put you up to this? Was it Jamie?

Nora: I don't...I don't know. I don't know what's going on. I shouldn't be here—(*she quizzically places her hand on her chin*)—or should I?

Lenora: Alright, if you're really me, then what did I do at William's birthday party that I have never told a soul?

Nora: (*she thinks; after a moment, she laughs*) I remember that! I spilt grape juice on the white carpet and never did confess. I was afraid-

Lenora: I'd get grounded when a new game was coming out. (*she sits down and puts her head in her hands*) So are you here to give me some message? Warn me of the future? Tell me about a plague? Does something happen? (*she smooths her hair*)

Nora: I'm not sure why I'm here. But wherever it takes me, I shall go, as they say, with the flow and live in my present.

Lenora: How do you do that? How do I do that? All I do is prepare for my future, studying and working and studying and working and studying and working, and...breathing.

Nora: It sounds like you're not enjoying the life you have.

Lenora: That's just it! It's not even life. Everyday doing the same thing over and over. Everyday doing what other people think is best for me. Everyday being...lost.

Nora: It sounds like you're not yourself.

Lenora: I'm not. I'm Lenora the worker. Lenora the straight A student. Lenora, the girl who dresses professionally and wears her hair in tight buns-and it doesn't even feel nice! It just hurts! (*she pulls her hair down and lets it hang on her shoulders; she runs her hands through it, fluffing it out*) Lenora, with the pretty makeup! (*she yanks a cloth from her pocket and vigorously wipes the makeup off*) Lenora, the girl always wearing jewelry! (*she takes off her jewelry with a sigh*) But...I'm not Lenora. I don't know who I am. Just who I'm expected to be. Who I will become. (*she gestures to the paper*

on the floor) A CEO of some cheesy-named future big company. But at what cost? Just to die of a heart attack? To have no descendants? No loved ones? No friends? Just alone, surrounded by stacks of money?

Nora: Who do you want to be?

Lenora: I don't know... Not this. Not what I'm supposed to be. I want to be who I am. And I don't even know who that is.

Nora: You don't have to go to that interview, Lenora.

Lenora: Then where do I go? All the people that would be disappointed. My parents, my friends...

Nora: People forgive and forget. What matters most is being who you are, and doing what you love. Worry not of the future, but of the present. Be happy. For if you're not happy, you're not living.

Lenora: But I'm afraid. I've never just lived before.

Nora: Face your fears. It will be worth it.

Lenora: But where do I start? (*the subway slows to a stop, the doors open, and Nora gestures to the doors*) This isn't where I get off.

Nora: Go where the world takes you, Dear.

Lenora: But how will I know if it's the right direction?

Nora: You will know in your heart, Lenora.

Lenora: (*she looks at the doors, then looks at Nora*) My name is Nora. (*she exits the car. blackout*)

END OF PLAY

Sarah Bryant

Chess

So far apart
 perspectives that exist worlds away
 awake I sit
 shifting, moving, replacing
 revolving the pieces in my head
 heavy piece after immovable piece,
 peace not something to be had,
 held only in painful competition, a battle
 back and forth.
 For Black King,
 White Queen
 keep dancing in diagonals—
 distant at once, brought close again.
 Always passing, never harmony,
 hardly together, no never.
 Needless patterns, endless strategies
 stuck in a rehearsal, a distant
 denotation of a visceral truth.
 Turned at a moment face to face,
 finally within reach
 we reach
 Checkmate

Parker Carwile

Ode to a Sidewalk Thong

Public peepshow!
 At midday, you lay
 exposed--
 dropped--
 forgotten?

Or placed...

On a sidewalk you scream,
 "I AM THONG!"

A rave paint splatter
 crowned in lace,
 your cotton string
 crumbles
 under UV rays.

Secrets old Vicky
 couldn't keep,
 so she gave you the slip--

No more tongue
 in her cheeks!

Parker Carwile

Could you just—

"Look."
 "What?"
 "See...?"
 "... No."

"It's not getting better."
 "Ok..."

"Well if you were me—"
 "I'm not."
 "Well if you could—"
 "I can't."

"It's all..."
 "... It'll get better."

"How do you—"
 "I don't."

"Well if you were me—"
 "I'm not."
 "Well if you could—"
 "I can't!"

"It's all..."
 "... What?"

"How do you—"
 "I don't..."

"... See?"
 "No..."

"Look!"
 "It'll get better—"

"It's not getting better."
 "Ok..."

Parker Carwile

There was this one time...

"... It was raining."
 "Uhuh."
 "Like really hard! And it was
 nighttime..."
 "Yeah."
 "I was driving on the highway..."
 "Ok."
 "Pouring rain!"
 "Yeah."
 "And this guy..."
 "Uhuh."
 "No kidding!"
 "Yeah."
 "He ran right out in front of me!"
 "Mmm."
 "Yeah! Pitch black, pouring rain,
 ran right across the highway..."
 "Mmm."
 "No kidding! He ran! It was
 pouring!"
 "Man."
 "I know! It was pitch black and
 everything..."
 "Mmm."
 "Like right in the middle of the
 highway!"
 "Man."

"I mean the rain was
 ridiculous..."
 "Why do you—"
 "No idea! He just ran! Right in
 the middle of the night... It was
 pouring!"
 "Man."
 "Like who does that? Across a
 highway!"
 "Yeah."
 "I mean doing that in the day
 would be bad enough..."
 "Yeah."
 "He did that at night and in the
 rain!"
 "Mmm."
 "Like pouring rain! I could hardly
 see him..."
 "Man."
 "And across the highway for
 crying out loud!"
 "Mmm."
 "I mean really! Some people..."
 "Yeah. That's something."
 "Yeah... well anyway..."

Parker Carwile

Notice

The rainbow on the white walls--
 The boxed butterflies, plaques for pillows--
 The rug beater left hanging
 Next to bottled petals in leather-bound ink--

The calligraphy on the shelf--
 The tethered teapots, bowls for balancing--
 Where two owls, elephants, and giraffes
 Press perfumes never turned or creased--

The heap of fuzz worn--
 The sapphires lost
 With the rubies left--

The doghouse for the spiders--
 The windows for the mold--
 The fence for the door--
 And the swing swung,

Broken by an emptied room.

Parker Carwile

A New Dress

Sarah sat on the kitchen stool and looked at the clock. Half past three. She could hear her sandal clap rhythmically with the second hand.

"Should be soon", she muttered to herself.

She got up to look through the blinds over the kitchen door that led to the driveway. Her eyes scanned for the red truck. Not yet.

She took the time to smooth her new dress and admire herself in the next room's mirror. The dress was a playful blue with spaghetti straps that had tiny fish swimming all across the hem. She especially liked the little peephole right between her breasts that gave it extra sex appeal.

Sarah smiled back at her shorthaired reflection.

"I hope he likes it," she said to herself.

A car horn sounded off near the carport which made her run to the kitchen door; the red truck was here.

It was a beautiful April day in Ruston, Louisiana. The Bradford Pear trees were that new, spring green and the mocking birds were chasing each other. Heat waves had fermented the air born pollen into a scent like a fine wine. Sarah drank it heavily as she bounded to the truck, her mind clouded with the taste of magnolias.

"Hey!" she said as she climbed in. "We ready?"

Drooping blue eyes looked back at her.

"Yup."

He was a lean fellow with coarse red arms and a thrusting chin. The guy Tanner that his parents decided to spell "Tannor" had been Sarah's boyfriend for exactly five months, 1 week, and 4 days. His blonde bangs were starting to curl and his neck beard was coming in. He needed a trim. Sarah smiled and seized his hard hand as they backed out.

With the country music cranked and the windows rolled down, they started on the long, twisty road to Dubach to visit Tannor's friend Kyle. Bent road signs and glass bottles glared from the street sides as they passed up a crowd of buzzards gathered around a dead dog. The smell of rotting meat lingered in the truck.

"It's a beautiful day isn't it?" Sarah said.

"Yeah."

"So what are we doing at Kyle's house?"

"Paintin' the baby's wardrobe, maybe eat dinner."

"It's hard to believe they're having a baby, huh?"

"Yeah. But they've been wanting it."

Sarah looked at her reflection in the side mirror. Hot wind whipped about. Her face was flushed but she looked great, her hair was hardly blowing since it was so short. She began to count the fish on her hem.

"Somethin's in the road," Tannor said.

Sarah looked up and saw a tiny mass approaching. It appeared to be a turtle.

"Well aren't you going to stop?" Sarah said.

"No, I'll go around."

The shell was getting closer.

"But it's right in the middle. Someone will hit it!" Sarah said.

"It'll live."

It was a few yards away—Feet—

"STOP!" Sarah shrieked.

The truck screeched to a stop and their heads were throttled forward and back.

"Damn it!" Tannor yelled.

He jerked the truck into park and slammed the door behind him. Sarah watched him stomp towards the turtle and wrench it from the pavement to toss it in the grass. She smirked as he came back to the truck.

When Tannor started the engine, Sarah bent down to recount her fish. The satin blue of the dress had now crinkled from the heat. Tannor hadn't noticed.

"So what do you think of this new dress I'm wearing?" she

asked.

Tannor's eyes remained forward. "It's great."

Sarah became more interested in the scenery after that.

Kyle's house was in a rural neighborhood. The road was dirt and gravel and his front yard was filled with rusty equipment and tall grass that hummed with bugs. Steam rose from every direction, even the paint on the house appeared to sweat. Sarah went inside to dab herself while Tannor and Kyle started to paint. She kind of wished Kyle would keep his door shut so the inside would stay cool for her.

The porch light was lit when Sarah snuck back outside. As she swatted horse flies with the back of her hand, Tannor and Kyle painted the second coat on the baby's wardrobe.

"Y'all want anything to drink?" Sarah called.

"Sweet tea," Tannor said.

Sweat was dripping from his curling bangs; she wished he would wipe it off.

"Ok." Sarah smiled and went to go fix the drink.

She should have worn something more comfortable. Sarah could feel her dress sticking uncomfortably to her legs and breasts. She went to the bathroom for a moment to check for pit stains but it was fine for now.

After she gave Tannor his drink, she decided to stay inside and try to cool off. She would have helped paint but her dress was brand new; Sarah did not want to risk it.

Another hour or so passed and Kyle and Tannor finally came in and shut the door.

"Man. Hot today." Kyle said.

Sarah could hear the noisy clatter of dishes as Kyle went to the kitchen to splash water on his face from the sink. She had gone to the old patterned couch in the living room to wait on them when they were still painting. Her face had fallen slightly since the car ride.

Pretending she was napping, Sarah listened to the sound of work boots clunking up behind her. A coarse hand touched her arm.

"Hey," Tannor breathed.

For the first time in hours, a genuine smile had crept on her face.
 Her eyes fluttered open. "Hey."
 "You want to go lay down for a bit?" Tannor asked.
 Sarah's smile grew wider. "Ok," she whispered.
 Tannor and Sarah entered Kyle and his wife's bedroom and got under the dingy quilt. Their clothes were sticky with sweat but they nestled together close. They gazed and smiled at one another only inches apart.
 "How are you?" Tannor asked.
 Sarah hesitated long enough to listen to a bird outside.
 "Good." Her eyes darted to the window.
 Tannor looked away and closed his eyes.
 "Good," he sighed.
 Sarah looked back at him in secret. The smile had disappeared from her face.
 His curled bangs were plastered unattractively across his grit filled eyebrows. His droopy eyes looked dog-like and his chin jutted arrogantly. As she tried to look at the entirety of his face, all she could see was that backwoods stubble on his neck that she wished he had shaved off.
 She slowly felt the useless dress clinging to her; it had twisted and now restrained her in a tight, sticky cocoon. Unable to move or sleep, she watched the light dance across the ceiling until dinner.
 Tannor finally woke up and they went into the kitchen after sharing a few kisses. Sarah tried to help Kyle prepare dinner as much as she could but she mainly sat idly clapping her sandal against her heel. He was making some freezer aisle pasta and chicken that only had to be heated up in a skillet. They quickly ate and stood around in the kitchen until Kyle decided to go look for his cat they had not seen all night. Tannor and Sarah were left alone.
 Tannor smiled at her as if waiting for her to ask him a question but none came. Sarah had run out of questions since the car ride; she could now only make statements. "Y'all did a good job on the wardrobe," she said.

Tannor snorted.
 "I didn't think you saw it!" he grinned. "You were inside the whole time."
 "No, I wasn't" Sarah said, "But maybe if you looked up every now and again, you would have noticed."
 Tannor's brow furrowed. "Is something wrong?" he asked.
 "It's nothing," Sarah said.
 She clapped her sandal louder.
 "Hey!"
 They heard Kyle yell outside. There was suddenly a clatter that sounded like pans hitting the floor outside. The missing cat dashed in in a fright, its hind legs skidding on the kitchen floor.
 As Sarah's eyes followed the frightened cat, in horror she noticed something in its mouth.
 "It's got a baby squirrel!" Sarah shrieked.
 She stood up not knowing what to do but pace in a tiny oval. Tannor stood stupidly with his eyes bulging.
 "Drop it!" Kyle stormed in with a broom in his hand. Just as the cat darted through Tannor's legs, Kyle slammed the broom on the kitchen floor, right in front of the cat's path. The cat snarled in surprise, causing him to drop the tiny creature before he scampered out the door.
 An Arkansas razorback plate fell with a clatter and the screen door banged a beat.
 They all looked to the creature in silence.
 "Is it dead?" Sarah asked.
 Her hands were over her mouth.
 Kyle ripped off a paper towel and bent down to scoop it up. "Don't—" Sarah stopped.
 The tiny baby was now in Kyle's hand, looking no bigger than the peephole in Sarah's dress. As he carefully unwrapped the paper towel, Sarah darted forward to look.
 It wasn't a baby squirrel. It was a bunny.
 Two silken slippers for ears hugged its head as it nestled deep in the folds of Kyle's hands. Its stub of a tail quivered.

"It's alive," Sarah breathed.

A smile had crept on her face.

"It even seems to be ok," Kyle replied. "Let's get a shoe box and a hand towel."

Although Tannor and Kyle were still in the room, Sarah would not have noticed. Discussions of gun laws and engineering internships bounced off her ears as she cradled the shoebox like it was her own child. She leaned over and pulled up the towel to see the tiny bunny's nose sniff the air. The bunny was still blind. It was so new to the world that it was not ready to see it yet.

After checking the time, Tannor looked over to the shoebox.

"So what are we going to do with it?" Tannor asked.

Sarah's heart gave a jolt.

"Well I sure as heck don't want it," Kyle said. "That thing will need constant care, I'm talking milk with an eyedropper."

"Yeah I know, my PawPaw used to raise 'um," Tannor said.

"I wouldn't have time anyway with all that engineering homework I got."

Sarah looked down at the bunny. If Tannor or Kyle couldn't keep it, where would it go? Sarah still lived with her parents and four cats. She didn't know anything about bunnies.

Sarah clutched the shoebox close to her chest.

"Well, what if I keep it?" Sarah asked.

Tannor turned and laughed at her.

"That might work," Tannor said.

When she got home, she carefully hid the bunny under her bedside table. She would tell her parents about it in the morning.

With her bedroom doors sealed to keep out the cats, she picked up the corner of the hand towel to look at the bunny. Its silk brown back rose and fell with sleep and its little face was tucked away in the folds. Sarah gently stroked its back with one of her fingers. It felt like velvet, velvet that belonged to her. She said a quick prayer, tucking it beneath the towel.

Sarah peeled her dress off and threw it on the floor. She had completely forgotten that Tannor hadn't noticed it. All she remembered as she fell asleep was the bunny.

When Sarah woke up the next morning, the bunny was still alive. Her parents shook their heads and exhaled sharply, but allowed her to keep it. After squeals and embraces, Sarah hopped in her car and drove to the closest grocery store for evaporated milk. When she got home, she found their old heating pad and picked some fresh grass to line the shoebox and shut her bedroom door behind her.

The bunny was hers now to keep.

She filled the eyedropper from her parents' medicine cabinet with her freshly bought evaporated milk and scooped up the bunny in her free hand to feed it. Eyes still closed, it felt the milk on its lip and suckled gingerly as its hind leg pushed into her palm. Sarah smiled.

He looked like he was going to make it.

Once his feeding was done, she put the bunny on the heating pad and wrapped the towel around him. After several minutes of stroking his exposed forehead and slipper-like ears, Sarah shut him away in her bedroom for an hour. What happened in that hour was unclear. As Sarah watched TV and tried to distract herself from the fact that there was a bunny in the next room, something had gone horribly wrong. When Sarah entered her bedroom to check on the bunny, she found him stretching his hind legs uncomfortably while gasping for air. She turned off the heating pad immediately and scooped up her bunny. She watched his suffocating movements helplessly a moment before grabbing the eyedropper to feed him once more.

She eased the evaporated milk to his struggling mouth only to see it drip from the sides. The bunny was unable to drink. What else could she do?

Sarah began to massage his tiny belly in desperation, seeing if that helped him breathe better. His wheezing noises continued but his legs were quieting.

The bunny could not breathe, it was dying.

Tears began to flood her eyes. She placed the bunny gently on its towel once more and ran to go find her phone in the kitchen.

Maybe Tannor knew what to do, maybe it could fix it.

The phone rang a couple of times and he answered.

"Hello?" he said familiarly.

Tears streamed down Sarah's face.

"Tannor!" she cried "The bunny! The bunny is dying, suffocating. I don't know—help. Can you help? What should I do?"

There was a long pause.

"There's nothing you can do, Sarah," Tannor said.

His tone was cold, matter-of-fact.

"No!" Sarah cried "There has to be—I can't just let it—why?"

Sarah could feel her face getting hot, her fist was shaking.

"The bunny is going to die, Sarah," Tannor said, "They are prone to suffocation if not handled properly. You most likely fed him too much."

Sarah almost threw the phone at the wall.

"So that's it then. That's all you have to say?" she snapped.

"I'm sorry, Sarah."

"No you're not." Her voice shook. "How dare you say it's my fault when I'm falling apart?"

Silence.

"I can't take it anymore—Do you know how much I've done for you? Put up with you?"

Tannor remained silent.

"Last week I surprised you with magnolias all over your car. You hardly said anything and threw them away."

Tannor tried to speak, but Sarah plowed on.

"I got up at 4 in the morning to go fishing with you even though I hate fishing and never complained. I've sat for hours, patiently waiting on you when you have to do engineering homework or do some project with Kyle like painting a baby's wardrobe!"

Fresh tears were coming.

"And after demonstrating again and again my affection for you, you can't even comfort me about a dying bunny or notice when I'm wearing a new dress!"

Sarah was shaking now, her fist clenched.

She heard Tannor exhale on the other end.

"I'm sorry you feel that way," he said.

His voice was pinched, closed off. He had not apologized; he had just shut down.

Sarah hung up and sat on the stool. She took a moment just to breathe and looked at the clock.

Half past three.

She was afraid to go look, but she had to find out. Slowly, she went back to her bedroom and bent down by the bunny. Its legs were sprawled and very still. She gently stroked its soft slipper ear and silken back. It was cold and its eyes would never open.

Sarah placed the body in the shoebox and looked to the dress on the floor. It lay in a crumpled heap where the peephole fell like a gaping mouth.

She kicked it to the side as she left the room.

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—
 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.

Michelle Boudreau

Lux

Distance is a distraction
 Location restricts the body
 Nothing restricts the spirit
 It's free to live anywhere
 Because we are the light

We were the stars that dimmed
 And we were not forgotten
 Instead reborn; together
 When again we fade
 We will rise again from the ashes
 You will always be with me
 Even when you are not

Time and distance may be present
 Only as obstacles
 When you need warmth
 Feel my luminosity from across the sky

Parker Carwile

Lying With the Dark

Get the lights;
 We want to hide.
 We know what
 You want inside.
 Just come closer;
 Better blind—
 To feel around.
 We don't mind.
 Shut your thoughts
 To shut your eyes.
 It's not real.
 Just lie
 Down,
 Down,
 And die.

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 growing 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

TC

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 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 fight—
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.

The Quatrain accepts unsolicited work throughout the year. Allow six weeks for editorial decisions, longer if submitted from June through August.

Visit us at thequatrain.com to submit.